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THE INSIGHT AND THE ERROR OF EUCKEN IN REGARD TO CHRISTIANITY.

PROFESSOR W. O. CARVER, LOUISVILLE, KY.

Christian theologians and leaders in Christian work ought not to be unwilling to learn from any competent thinker or worker whose suggestions come from outside the Church. One may gain wisdom from an enemy; and when the teacher is no enemy but an earnest seeker after truth and goodness, one may surely give heed to any word of wisdom that may be spoken. The angle of vision has much to do with the view and the ideas it awakens. It is a good thing to know how Christianity looks from the outside. In our generation we have not been lacking in men who, claiming no allegiance to the Church, were yet ready enough to give it advice. Some have given criticism and advice in a genuinely friendly spirit. William James was of this number, and Professor Royce, as also Professor Rudolph Eucken. Eucken has gained the ear of serious men in our day as possibly no other philosopher has. He has seemed to many to have a needed message for his age. In an age largely preoccupied with the things of sense and seeking to establish a philosophic attitude, in harmony with its dominant scientific methods

and conclusions, and in harmony with its engrossing absorption in gigantic tasks, Eucken came forward with a plea for spiritual values and insisted that there can be no worthy interpretation of things that does not begin and end with life; and by life he means not biological energy, but vital and voluntary intelligence. Eucken felt deeply that the age was so enamored of the ideas of evolution, and so engrossed with work, that men were largely losing consciousness of "the Meaning and Value of Life." Because so many others were feeling the same loss, when the philosopher came forward with a vigorous and prophetic call, voiced in clear and passionate phraseology, he found a large and eager audience. But the sage was not specific where definiteness was needed. The strongest force in history, that which most of all had made for the culture of our modern world, had come to be questioned on every hand and at its deepest doctrines. Christianity was largely on trial. That was an anomalous position, for it is just the business of Christianity to put men on trial and call them to repentance toward all sin and error and into faith that works by love to realize Christianity's ideals. Above all others, Eucken seemed to be the man who could resolve this anomaly, could rebuke the error of a self-conceited age, chide the blindness of a too conservative theology and put the Church in possession of the principles by which the life of the age might be brought under the strong influence of the Church without sacrificing its scientific results or its metaphysical insights.

Eucken was fundamentally a religious soul, a passionately earnest teacher, and at least a reverent critic of Christianity. Hence he was much drawn upon by the apologetes; and his writings lent themselves to extensive quotation and more extensive interpretation in support of the Christian positions.

In "Can We Still Be Christians?" Eucken himself, at length, took up the question of the relation of his views

to Christian theology and Christian work. In that book, brief and very condensed as it is, Eucken has done at least four things. He has given a remarkably clear and essentially comprehensive statement of the content of historical Christianity, so far as that statement can be made in terms of doctrine; he has given to the world a much needed and a vigorously unsparing rebuke of the "merely naturalistic culture" that has been so dominant and so domineering this last half century, or so; he has shown with incisive frankness some of the basal incongruities of formal theology and of ecclesiastical organization with the spirit and ideals most influential in the life of today; he has made perfectly clear to such as will study closely his suggestions to Christianity that Eucken himself cannot be taken as a leader of Christian thought and action in the present crisis in its position in the world, and for the reason that he is not acquainted with the deepest feeling of our religion and has no adequate understanding of the basal doctrine of our faith nor of the power which that doctrine is meant to define. So long as the issue is drawn between traditional dogmatism in theology and ecclesiastical organizations that were shaped to fit other periods of European history when the ideas of absolutism and aristocracy controlled the political and social organization of life, and, on the other hand, the thought and tasks of the modern world dominated by the ideals of democracy and social unity, there can be no rational doubt which will win. But the winning of this issue will not mean the saving of religion, nor yet the proof that religion may be substituted with culture or social service. The world's need of a vital religion, vitalizing the whole life of men, will remain and be more insistent than ever.

Eucken has been the most emphatic of many voices calling for a new conception of the task of philosophy. Once the conception was that the function of philosophy was to explain how the world order came to be. It offered

a theory of existence. But with the evolutionary way of thinking about the world order and of all life, and with the introduction of the biological principle into the interpretation of all this order, the old way of thinking of the task of philosophy could no longer be satisfactory. We want of our philosophers not merely some rational theories as to the source and manner of our getting to be, but we seek even more an account of the meaning and direction of our being. We have come to feel intensely that we are in the midst of a process. The older static idea of existence is repudiated. All is mobile. We want the present facts interpreted as part of the process. And we want some real light on the meaning of the process and the goal, or at least the direction, of the process. Further still, we have grown into the conception of work. We want to know all that we may of the force, or forces, that carry on the process, and of the place our own will and energy have in the ongoing. Thus philosophy is required to consider the end of the process as well as the beginning and the present stage; and, having reference to the task of man in the process it must include a program of life. Ethics must be distinctly taken up into the system, suggestion must be offered as to what influence man may have in the order and how he may exert it.

Materialism in its balder forms has long been dead, but so long as the human race is looked upon as contained within a system of being basally physical and his presence and growth in the system as inseparably connected with, if not inseparably dependent on, the physical unfolding, philosophy remained at least materialistic. Whatever we knew or might know about the soul and spirit of man we must learn by approach through the physical order. The system is closed and when this doctrine was understood it always implied that man was gripped in a deterministic order. At all events, in the last analysis his own life, individual and racial, was determined by the physical conditioning. For a long while

the majority of men were too much taken with the fascinations of the rapidly unfolding physical sciences and with the varied and complex new forms of activity and interest that the application of physical laws and forces afforded to be too careful of the losses that were sustained in the spiritual sphere. If the preachers called on men to take concern for the spiritual and eternal interests, they were too often speaking in the terms of a former age and won little notice. The new age was so occupied with gaining the whole world of matter so richly revealed in the modern sciences that it was losing its soul, and men were so full of the intoxication and the fascination of the new activities and the new toys that they were not taking time to consider that they so much as had souls. Eucken is a thinker who has won the ear of the generation while he tells them that in pursuing the lesser they are losing the supreme good. And he tells the message in terms of the very knowledge that has led us astray. The world is being called back to the permanent values and to the truth that no matter how much a man hath yet his life consisteth not in the things he possesseth, for the things that are seen are temporary and man is not made for time alone, especially for the little span of time that measures the physical existence of the individual man.

Back from a philosophy which sought to explain geological facts and ages and astronomical expanses and systems, by means of either blind forces operating on dead matter or biological forces and formulas building matter into living form, this generation needed to be called to the fundamental question of the purpose of it all. We have begun to "evaluate" our facts and to interpret our experiences.

It is in the interest of such a call as this that Eucken has worked, and nobly has he worked. There were many all the while who knew that God was engaged in something deeper and infinitely more meaningful than making

forests and mountains, seas and continents, geological ages and biological eras, or even resplendent suns and illimitable systems. The interpretation of all matter is to be sought in personal spirit and the end of the cosmic order is a society of persons, or there is no order but a meaningless process with all the semblance of rationality but with no *rationale*. This is the conclusion toward which the best thought of the day has been leading. Eucken has not gone so far in this as some others. What he has done is to rebuke with more effectiveness than any others the effort to satisfy man with naturalism or with mere humanism, or even to stop in the assertion of a pragmatic attitude toward the deeper meaning of life and reality. He has shown how, for reaching any genuine appreciation of the world itself, man must travel the way of the soul back to a spiritual source of all; else in losing his soul in his world man will find that he has lost his world also. He has shown that for any worthy valuation of human nature, particularly for any advance in human life, any real growth in human civilization there must be an inflow of spiritual life into humanity lifting it to higher levels. Mere accumulation and increased complexity of materials and of contacts, for individuals remaining spiritually the same, can yield no increase of essential worth in humanity. "The small can never become great through any amount of accumulation." "Outward greatness with inward pettiness, wealth and diversity of achievement with hollow emptiness of spirit,—such is the mark of the merely naturalistic and humanistic culture." The very success of this culture in that at which it aims, and beyond which it cannot aim, renders the more complete and convincing its reputation as a philosophy of life. Unless your process is based on some power that is changing man, the race moves in a circle ever on one plane, not on a spiral stair to higher levels. "Since the naturalistic culture recognizes no such power, it must regard historical succession as devoid of all inner connec-

tion," and so of all meaning. Once more, Eucken insists that for "the inner shaping of work," if we are to be artists and not mere artisans, work must become creative, and this it can become only by direct and definite coöperative response to "a unifying power." Without this basal relation to an absolute spiritual power we have, just what we are finding today in naturalistic culture, "a laming of activity full in the middle of its progress," in science, in history and in practical life. "Everywhere spirit is driven out to make room for a soulless but steady-going mechanism, and this is then termed exactness or objectivity." Our over-insistence on scientific objectivity is so much pleading for ineffectiveness in life's work.

Here is Eucken's great help to Christianity. He makes clear the futility of seeking to get on without religion. Already he has shown how far-reaching and how deep-reaching is the breach of modern life with Christianity as Christianity is usually understood. Now that man must have religion, and Christianity is out of tune with the age, what are we to do? Obviously we must either find a substitute or we must change Christianity. No substitute is in sight, Christianity is historically the force that has most of all contributed to man's progress—real progress. What is the matter with Christianity now? Its morality is negative and its chief promise is rest, its chief effort the saving of the soul: our age wants positive morality, it wants activity and not rest and wants social regeneration and the onward impulsion of the whole being and not the traditional saving of the soul. Any Christian who knows the meaning of his religion can see at once how little Eucken comprehends the morality and the spirit of our religion. Paul would say: "Ye did not so learn the Christ, if so be it was he whom you heard as the truth is in Jesus," but very differently.

Again, says Eucken, the Church is out of harmony with the age; it is aristocratic, the age is democratic; it is cere-

monial and legalistic, the age is free and spiritual; it is dogmatic and creed-bound, the age is vital and truth-seeking; the Church emphasizes the visible organization, the age wants its religious treasures to be sought in the invisible things of the spirit. Here again the understanding Christian can only lament that Eucken, and so many millions of Christians with him, know Christianity only in the ecclesiasticisms of Europe. Eucken is convinced that neither the Roman Church nor Protestantism is equal to the demands for a universal religion or capable of such modification as will enable it to meet these demands. In Protestantism he distinguishes two forms, "old" and "new," both of which have valuable elements, "but every attempt to grasp the peculiarities of each more precisely shows that they cannot exist directly alongside in one church" for "the main directions" of the two "part asunder, nay even run counter to each other, both as regards doctrines and in the shaping of life," and "neither seems in a position to surmount the present crisis by itself." "The old Protestantism" is hindered "by the complications involved in the old Christian doctrine of the Atonement" and by the effect of Biblical criticism on the position of the Bible on which it is "wholly" based. "The new Protestantism" is "open-minded" and "closely linked with the work of science," but is "too dependent upon the pantheism of the classical period" to gain the "necessary supremacy" over life or to "oppose a more central truth to the tremendous complexities of the age." In a word, it is subjective and mystical and, consequently, lacking in renewing energy for the strenuous tasks of a conquering religion. One may quite appreciatively accept the criticisms of each type of Christianity without accepting Eucken's conclusion that all are incapable of conquering adjustment to the present demands. Christianity is more than any of its forms, and there is a type of Christianity that Eucken ignores wholly. Essential Christianity, of which the New Testa-

ment furnishes us the principles and normative examples in organization, is still to be found in the increasingly free types of Christianity to be seen in a limited way in Europe although overshadowed by the "established" churches, to be seen in greater measure in the United States. With the ever increasing freedom from fixity of dogmatic formulation and adaptability of organization we find here the possibility of a doctrine of life and an institutional organization of religion that will at once conserve the historical gains of Christianity and equip it for the creative work of a constructive age. Eucken is troubled over the idea of historical continuity of the Church and well he may be while under the influence of clamorous claims of succession and Apostolic order. But once let us see that the Church in its deepest reality is a life and not an organization and we can dismiss the nightmare of continuity and seek only to know whether essential Christianity has been the formative influence in the progress of western civilization and whether it contains also the force which can inspire, guide and support the growth that is struggling to realization under modern conditions. Here, too, it is well to take account of a constantly recurring question of the adaptability of Christianity to the thought and conditions of our present day world, and to consider whether we are not allowing to the "modern world" quite too much authority and self-assertion. Christianity is not set to save itself but to save the world and it is not primarily to seek to adapt itself to the age or to conform to conditions. It must always, if it is true Christianity, seek to regenerate the age and transform conditions so far as they are out of harmony with the true ideals of life. It must ever be true to the summons of the Spirit, that it "be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of its mind so that it may put to proof the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." The form of its message and the type of its organization Christianity can, and must,

adapt to the age so that it may transform the age and carry forward its reconstruction, but that adaptation must not obscure the essence of Christianity nor lose the institutional type of the organism. To do so would be at once to destroy itself and to leave the world to its destruction.

What then is the essence of Christianity? Here it is that Eucken strikes most deeply at the vitals of our religion and with a subtlety, of which one thinks he is largely unconscious, leads his followers astray on a blind trail. He is not wholly unconscious of his blindness. He recognizes that he and his followers are in a wilderness. He confesses that he does not know just where the road is nor whither it will lead, but he thinks we may come "to an agreement as to the main direction of our quest." Still, "How far this course will take us and what further problems we shall find upon the road, it is for the future to determine and our own united effort." In this vague encouragement there is one sound word that comports with one striking fact of our time, "our own united effort." We have come upon a time when pre-eminently it is true that the man who would know the truth must will to do the truth. Only the man who responds to God's will and will work at the construction of the right can have peace in belief of the truth. Unless a man is seeking the kingdom of heaven he can no more be a thinking Christian. The problems of doubt are so wrapped up with character and with the world's progress that mere intellectualism and blind faith will no longer serve for rod and staff in the valley of darkness.

What now, is Eucken's positive word? This, first of all; that reality consists in spiritual life, absolute spiritual life in which we live and move and have our being. This spiritual life is "no mere utilization of given elements" but "a source of independent life," "an inwardly uplifting power." This life "can never be merely a product of man himself. We are obliged to see in it

some cosmic movement, the emergence of a new stage of life which breaks into view in man and demands his co-operation." But here man discovers a "dualism in the [his] innermost soul." "There is a certain will in operation, but it is not strong enough to be effective." "The chasm is much too deep * * for any gradual accession of human strength to have produced such a result," and we must conclude that spirituality in man derives its being and its independent status from the spiritual life as a whole." "This whole movement is not just a development of ordinary human capacity; it can arise only through a decisive break with ordinary conditions; it involves a rupture, a discontinuity of life. This contrast is of the very essence of religion." "There is no greatness and no freedom apart from such recourse to the divine." "To use religious phraseology, it is the highest manifestation of grace." "In the relationship of man to man the inward elevation of life shows up still more clearly." "Only a life which includes us all root and branch and melts down all rigid distinctions can produce genuine humanity, kindness, sympathy and love, not as passing emotions of a merely subjective mood—which count for very little in bringing about the great end—but as mighty currents flowing from within outwards, making every man feel with his fellow, sorrow and rejoice with him, assimilate his life directly to his own." "All this implies a transcendence and reversal of man's original state." It is even found that "a lower element still persists" and "does all it can by its pettiness and sluggishness to resist the ascending movement." The significance of history is to be found only as "the elaboration of a realm of inwardness." Thus alone do we arrive at "the meaning and value of life" insistence on which is the heart of Eucken's great message to his age. And it all sounds very Christian indeed: the basal spiritual life, man's entire dependence upon that life; the absolute necessity for regeneration and the continuous inflow of di-

vine life into human experience; the necessity that man shall apprehend and respond to this life coming to independence within him; and the outworking of the life in ethical human relationships; and all working toward spiritual "self-immediacy" and entire freedom through the grace of God. Withal there is inevitableness of a society of the spiritual workers to unite them in their struggle against the force of opposing immediate environment, in a word, the necessity for a church. It all seems very Christian and very comprehensive, until we ask for the face and place of the Christ in it. Then it is we find Eucken thoroughly anti-Christian. He goes quite beyond Royce who contents himself, in his "The Problem of Christianity," with a flat refusal to offer any explanation of Jesus of Nazareth. Eucken gives larger recognition to Jesus for mediating this divine life for His generation and is sure that for Christian history all the way down to modern times the interpretation of Christ in the ecumenical doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement has stood for and preserved this fact of the spiritual life and for man's dependence upon it. But "the whole second clause of the creed, comprising the doctrines which are really distinctive of Christianity—all this has now become the subject of doubt, denial and conflict." And Eucken leaves no sort of room for question that he rejects it entirely. We can not "make the divine love and grace depend on the one manifestation of it in Jesus Christ" and we are bound to reject any Christianity that is "completely bound down to this one point and incapable of anything more than holding fast to the truth as it was realized in Jesus." This rejection he urges because he thinks that it is no longer possible to think of the life of God being one with the life of man, although, as it seems to this writer, his whole explanation of man's nature and his rise to spirituality had prepared the way for an easy acceptance of this idea. And he rejects the whole notion of mediation and atonement as being ir-

rational, unethical and irreligious in the light of our present high conception of spiritual life. In this part of his argument Eucken is, unconsciously, guilty of evasion of essential considerations and of self-delusion. His course of reasoning is difficult to understand until one has searched carefully into it. Then one sees how fully Eucken has apprehended Christianity's great basal assumptions and its high ends. To these he fully, even passionately commits himself, but Christianity's way of realizing these he wholly repudiates. As a religion Eucken holds that Christianity consists in these values, these fundamental realities and that the form of their cognition and realization by man is subject to the development of thought and life. Up to now the idea of the divine Christ mediating spiritual life by means of sacrificial atonement has been an effective channel for spiritual development. But now we leave the Christ behind. We have outgrown Him. How is it that Eucken has made this error? For answer, search in vain for any clear description, anything approaching a definition of the absolute spiritual life basal for, active in, and transcendent of man's life in time and space. Next examine well his idea of Jesus Christ and see how little he has come to comprehend the Biblical idea of the Redeemer. The cosmic Christ of Paul, the eternal Logos of John; the oneness of the Christ with God; the fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; the pleromatic function of the Christ in all history; the Lamb that was slain, alone able to interpret the sealed book of God's relations with human history, all this is to Eucken *terra incognita*. In a word, "the secret of the Messiah" which was revealed to Paul who in turn was set to illumine all men as to "the dispensation of this secret" is all a riddle to Eucken. Indeed he seems never so much as to have heard of it. Jesus' own frequent expressions of that divine insight which His Spirit communicated to John and to Paul have all escaped Eucken. Like another Nicodemus he would say:

"How can these things be?" but unlike Nicodemus he does not seem even concerned to inquire.

If one is "to know Christ after the flesh" only, surely he may join Eucken and in the interest of religion itself appeal from the Church's interpretation of Him to the direct presence of God in man. So long as Jesus Christ is for us exclusively identified in Jesus of Nazareth, a concrete person merely, occupying a brief space and place in history, Eucken's contention is natural and his conclusion true. So long as we find in Christianity simply one form of religion of the spirit with reason for its differentiation from "the universal religion" and for its peculiarities exactly similar to those that apply to other religions so long must we accept the possibility and the desirability, under certain conditions, of outgrowing and transcending our Founder, just as we are hoping and seeking to see Mohammed, Confucius and Gautama outgrown. But once we agree with John that Christ is the eternal Word by which God speaks in human history, and with Paul that He is the cosmic Life redemptively active in all the history of our world, then we can find peace only in Him and can accept His word when he says: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." If only Eucken knew the Bible, if only he had come to know our Christ, he had been a mighty prophet in a needy hour. For all that Christianity has to offer, Eucken sees the need most keenly and calls his fellowmen to seek it. Christianity's way of gaining these things Eucken rejects. If successful such a religion would be spiritual but it would not be Christianity. But this goal is not to be reached apart from the Christ. Eucken nowhere tells us where to find it nor how. He calls to higher life and bids us depend upon the absolute spirit and respond to Him (although "it" is Eucken's word). He does not convict us of sin nor call us to repentance, and so he needs no Christ. It has again come to pass that

“in their wisdom men knew not God.” The philosopher has sought to convict the theologians of folly without first knowing our theology. His philosophy and our theology are both of one, and each needs the other for its own completeness. Go and read Blewitt’s “Christian View of the World” or Bowne’s “Immanence of God” or Fairbairn’s “Philosophy of the Christian Religion.” Best of all go again to your John, to Ephesians and Colossians, and to Romans.