

A Modern Heresy

By the Rev. David S. Clark, D.D.

PROF. Virgilius Ferm, professor of Philosophy in the College of Wooster, Ohio, has recently issued a book, entitled "First Chapters in Religious Philosophy." The book has been reviewed by Joseph D. Ryan in the columns of THE PRESBYTERIAN, and by Prof. D. M. Allan, Ph.D., in the *Union Seminary Review*, Richmond, Va. Both reviewers agree that the author is an extreme liberal. One reviewer does not recommend it to the general or evangelical reader. The other concludes that the author's theism is substantial, but his Christianity tenuous.

The subjects treated are God, values, good and evil, soul and body, human freedom, prayer, and immortality. The evolutionary science, and modern critical scholarship are accepted as verities not needing present proof. The treatment is technical and abstruse, and might be interesting to men with a liking for the philosophical intricacies of theological discussion.

But what the present writer is interested in is not the heresy of the author, however obvious that may be, or however much it may need refutation. But what disturbed our irenic dreams was the remark of the reviewer, Professor Allan, who observes: "Two serious gaps lie in failure to bring the philosophy of mind or soul up to date, and in slighting the 'new teleology' that has supplanted the outworn Paley Design Argument." One sits up and rubs his eyes, and wonders what sort of philosophy is taught at Hampden-Sydney.

It would be interesting to know what Professor Allan regards as an up-to-date theory of the soul. Since he has not told us, we can only conjecture. There are several theories which have been exploited recently, all of which deny the reality of the soul as a spiritual entity.

SOUL THEORIES

One such is associated with Prof. William James, who says: "Souls are out of fashion. The soul is dead as the Dodo. Souls have worn out both themselves and their welcome. As psychologists, we need not be metaphysical at all. There is and can be no compulsion for the empiricist to admit the existence of a soul." That is plain enough—a bald denial that there is any immaterial entity which we call soul or spirit. Such a theory is not so modern after all. It is just a recrudescence of the philosophy of David Hume, and is the Sensationalism known today as the Serial Theory which recognizes only a series of experiences or psychoses, without a connecting link, or a substantial substratum of which they are the expression.

This theory has met its Waterloo in a recent work, "Philosophical Theology," by Prof. Francis R. Tennant,

of Cambridge, England, to which the inquiring student is referred. It requires only ordinary intelligence to understand that if there is any memory, assurance of personal identity, and sense of responsibility, there must be a perduring subject.

BEHAVIORISM

This is another modern soul-theory associated with the names of John B. Dewey and John B. Watson. It has at least the virtue of assigning a substantial basis of mental phenomena, even if that basis be material. Even matter has some properties and powers, even if they are limited; and it is better to rest mental phenomena on some recognized substance than to rest them on nothing. In this respect, Behaviorism has the advantage of some other theories.

But Behaviorism is too materialistic. All the arguments against materialism hold good after Behaviorism. And as materialism is out of favor today, Behaviorism has not met with much success. Haeckel and other materialistic monists assigned a species of mentality to the atom. This was only to confess that pure materialism does not satisfy all demands. But if the atom has an element of mentality, then man may have a soul and the universe an immanent God.

Another modern soul-theory may be called Super-Behaviorism, for want of a better name. See G. T. W. Patrick, of Iowa State University, and Prof. Joseph Coffin, of Whittier College. The latter wrote a book, entitled "The Soul Comes Back." But alas it was not the soul that had been taken away, but a nonentity as unreal as the dream of a dream.

The theory in question repudiates any substantial reality or spiritual entity that is called soul, mind or spirit. In this theory the soul is not a substance, but a power or capacity or activity of the organism when the neural and vital forces are organized and developed to the point of exhibiting psychological phenomena. It is the epiphenomena of organization, not substance. But what is organized? It is assumed that at the basis of our being lie those conative tendencies or biological interests called urge, desire, hunger, longing, appetite, libido, sex, want, striving, instinct, will, craving, wish, impulse, etc., etc. These at first are rather tendencies than activities. The conative tendencies constitute the beginning of a process which develops into the power and capacity of mental acts or phenomena. Yet the question persists. What bears these impulses if not a soul? Are they purely physical and immanent in the body, or are they psychical or spiritual from the start? Can such "interests" exist without any metaphysical source?

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The mind is said to be the fruition of the body and not a spiritual entity. It is not so crude as Behaviorism assumes. It is not exactly the epiphenomenalism of Professor Huxley, but not far from it. It is the effervescence of highly organized bodily powers and forces—not the attribute of substance either material or spiritual, but act, power, capacity, forces issuing from the organism. As one sums up the plan from the beginning, he concludes that the rabbit was put into the hat before it was taken out. But, in short, it is just the psychology of materialistic Evolution. If Professor Ferm failed, in his book, to O. K. these theories of mind or soul, he showed incidentally that in so much he was blessed with good sense.

THE NEW TELEOLOGY

But what particularly disturbed our dogmatic slumber was that Professor Ferm had "slighted the 'New Teleology' that has supplanted the outworn Paley Design Argument." What is the "new teleology"? We are all familiar with the dictum that design implies a designer, and that intelligence in the design implies—nay, necessitates—intelligence in the designer. But the new teleology says: Nay, the intelligence is not in any designer, but the intelligence is in the result or final cause. It is expressed by the antinomy of "Push or Pull."

Is the intelligence at the beginning or at the end? Does an intelligence conceive an end, institute a process, superintend its execution, and culminate a preconceived result? Or does the *end* pull along the process and culminate that process in itself? Does the end determine all antecedents and bring them to pass, so that no efficient Cause or Designer needs to be assumed? To say that the end determines the means gives to the word "determine" a meaning of efficiency not legitimate. Can the final cause act efficiently before it exists? It cannot act at all, it is but the reason, not the cause.

We are familiar with the plea that the intelligence is *in* the process. But the question will not down, who put it in? How did it get there? Does a process require a producer? Does intelligence *in* the process require intelligence in the maker of the process, or do processes involving intelligence arise automatically? The assumption that the intelligence is wholly within the process leads to logical absurdities.

The old Design Argument is not outworn and never will be while men remain sane and rational. If Professor Ferm slighted the "new teleology" he simply gave it its dues, and showed that he is still to be credited with some common sense.

These modern views! How modern are they? The sensational view of the mind is as old as David Hume, and probably much older, and the "new teleology" is said on competent authority to be as old as Protagoras who antedated Socrates.

We Quote

Faith really is holding out your hand in the dark and finding it held.

Expediency is man's wisdom: doing right is God's.—*George Meredith.*

Quotation, sir, is a good thing; there is a community of mind in it.—*Johnson.*

*Give all thou canst; High Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely calculated less or more.*

—WORDSWORTH.

Behind all work for God stands God Himself, its inspiration and its assurance, its warrant and its reward. Let us believe that His command constitutes authority and His promise security.—*A. T. Pierson.*

Wherever the interests of peace can be conserved through the sacrifice of your own interests be prepared to forfeit the advantage, but stand like a rock when God's truth is in the balance!—*F. B. Meyer.*

What happens to you after you have been with Jesus? The world will see that you have been with Him and learned of Him, and that the Jesus you reflect will cure all the ills of this world.—*Melvin E. Trotter.*

Men are saying that we are in the midst of a great revolution. The religious truth is that we are in the midst of a great revelation if our eyes are not too blind to see and our ears too deaf to hear!—*A. W. Palmer.*

The God who is better to you than all your fears, yea, better than your hopes, perhaps, intends the affliction to remain with you until it lifts the latch of heaven for you and lets you into your eternal rest.—*Charles Haddon Spurgeon.*

Whether Kagawa in Japan is menaced by it with prison for speaking the Christian word fearlessly about Japanese imperialism in China; or Karl Barth is forced to escape from Germany into Switzerland, or unknown German confessional pastors go cheerfully to prison rather than bow the knee to Baal, here is the new barbarism that confronts Christianity with an ultimate challenge. Even in our so-called Western democracies, where the nation is taking on more and more power with its control of education, broadcasting, the press and all means of shaping the minds of men, we are faced by the subtler but not less dangerous menace of paganism.—*Basil Mathews, in Shaping the Future.*