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Christianity and Idealism. by John Watson

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CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM. By John Watson, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. New York: The Macmillan Company. Pp. xxxviii., 216.

This is the first volume which has appeared of a series of philosophical works which the Philosophical Union of the University of California proposes to publish. The series is edited by Professor Howison, who contributes a prefatory note on the plan of the series. The "dominant tone of the Union," he tells us, "is affirmative and idealistic." It is held by many of the members "that the only safety for human practice henceforth, the practice of each or the practice of all, lies in founding it on a philosophic criticism that shall be luminous, unrelenting, penetrating to the bottom, and that yet, just because of this unsparing thoroughness, will affirm the reality of all those moral beliefs and religious hopes on which the achievements of western civilization have hitherto rested, and by the undermining of which the stability of society now threatens to give way."

Dr. Watson begins with a chapter on the connection of morality and religion, which he regards as extremely intimate. "There can be no morality without the belief in a life higher than sense and passion, and this belief must draw its support from faith in a divine principle which insures victory to the higher life." That is to say, it is impossible to be on the side of virtue unless you are sure of winning. If this is the truth, the Philosophical Union may reasonably be alarmed for the stability of society.

The second and third chapters deal with the Greek and Jewish ideals. It is scarcely possible to say anything new on such a subject in a popular treatise. Dr. Watson explains the main features of both religions in a clear and interesting manner, and passes on, in his fourth chapter, to the Christian ideal. This he endeavors to extract entirely from the teachings of Jesus himself, without reference to his successors, a method which can scarcely be considered adequate. In the next chapter, on Mediæval Christianity, he seems to regard all the work of the Fathers and Schoolmen as either useless or positively injurious.

Passing to the second part of the book, "Modern Idealism in its Relation to the Christian Ideal of Life," we have a chapter devoted to a "Statement and Defence of Idealism." Here Dr. Watson deals, in the first place, with Mr. Balfour's criticisms, but not, as it seems to me, very successfully. His position appears

to be almost identical with Green's. Dr. Watson then proceeds to criticise Mr. Bradley. This seems a grave mistake. Either this book was intended to be popular or it was not. In the latter case, it is difficult to justify chapters ii.-v., which are nothing but a popular summary. On the other hand, an attempt to refute Mr. Bradley's doctrine of the That and the What should not be made in fifteen pages of a text-book.

This is followed by a chapter on "Idealism in Relation to Agnosticism and the Special Sciences," which contains a discussion of the possibility of non-Euclidian space, and the book is concluded by a chapter on "Idealism and Christianity."

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PHILOSOPHY OF THEISM: Being the Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of Edinburgh in 1895-1896. Second Series. By Alexander Campbell Fraser, LL.D., Hon. D.C.L., Oxford; Emeritus Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh. William Blackwood & Sons: Edinburgh and London, 1896. Pp. xiii., 288.

In the first series of his Gifford lectures, Professor Fraser arrived at the conclusion that in man, as a self-conscious and self-determining agent, is to be found the best key we possess to the solution of the ultimate problem of the universe. In this second series he first deals with "the moral and intellectual *rationale* of Theism," and then proceeds to examine, from various points of view, the "chief enigma of theistic faith," the problem of evil.

The leading thought of the whole volume is that all our dealings with the world imply ultimately "moral faith" in the trustworthiness of the final principle of the universe. In working out this thought, Professor Fraser follows the order of the traditional "proofs" of the being of God. Change in nature finds its explanation in "continuous divine activity." Causation resolves itself into "intending will." And this, because moral experience reveals "will as the only absolutely originative cause of change that can be discerned." From this it follows that scientific thought about nature is not destructive of religious thought; on the contrary, these two ways of thinking "really strengthen one another." In his chapter on the ontological "proof," Professor Fraser includes a brief and interesting discussion of the Hegelian