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SOME RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

In 1864 Dr. James McCosh published a brief essay on "The Philosophic Principles involved in the Puritan Theology."¹ Our present world shows no marked interest either in Puritan theology or in its underlying philosophy, while Dr. McCosh himself is remembered more by the walk and the building called by his name in the University over which he once presided than by that philosophy of common sense he so firmly believed and so earnestly advocated. Nevertheless common sense has a curious way of mixing the obvious and the striking, and in the essay referred to there will be found a statement and an exhortation worthy of remembrance—Philosophy is of great importance to theology, but Biblical theologians as such should always avoid identifying their systems with any peculiar metaphysical system.

The statement is obvious; the exhortation is more often honored in the breach than the observance; and sixty years have brought some striking changes. The term theology is for many obsolescent and is being replaced by the term religion; again *Biblical* Theologians are notably few, and systematizers of religion are very many. Religion has no need of philosophy, argue some; philosophy must produce a new substitute for decaying Christianity, assert others. In this essay we shall attempt to give some account of the latter effort, but let us remember our text: Philosophy is of use to

¹ This was part of the Introduction to the Complete Works of Stephen Charnock, B.D., pp. vi-xlviii of *The Works of Stephen Charnock* (Nicol's Series of Standard Divines. Puritan Period). Edinburgh, 1864.

THE MODERN USE OF THE BIBLE*

The "modern use of the Bible," as Dr. Fosdick sets it forth, consists first in a somewhat naïve application of the evolutionary point of view, and second in a separation between "abiding experiences" and the temporary "mental categories" in which those experiences were expressed. These two closely related aspects of the book may be considered briefly in turn.

In the first place, then, our author applies to the Bible the evolutionary point of view; the Bible, he insists, must not be treated as though it lay all on the same plane, but on the contrary "the new approach to the Bible saves us from the necessity of apologizing for immature stages in the development of the Biblical revelation."¹

From the purely scientific point of view this [the arrangement of the documents of the Bible in their approximately chronological order] is an absorbingly interesting matter, but even more from the standpoint of practical results its importance is difficult to exaggerate. It means that we can trace the great ideas of Scripture in their development from their simple and elementary forms, when they first appear in the earliest writings, until they come to their full maturity in the latest books. Indeed, the general soundness of the critical results is tested by this fact that as one moves up from the earlier writings toward the later he can observe the development of any idea he chooses to select, such as God, man, duty, sin, worship.² . . . No longer can we think of the Book as on a level, no longer read its maturer messages back into its earlier sources. We know now that every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and, with however many setbacks and delays, grew in scope and height toward the culmination in Christ's Gospel. We know now that the Bible is the record of an amazing spiritual development.³

We have called this evolutionary view of the Bible "naïve" for several reasons. In the first place it does not do justice to

**The Modern Use of the Bible*. By HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, D. D., Morris K. Jessup Professor of Practical Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924. Pp. 291.

¹ P. 27.

² Pp. 7f.

³ Pp. 11f.

the possibility of retrogression as well as advance—a possibility which certainly exists if history be looked at from the naturalistic point of view. It is true that Dr. Fosdick speaks of the roadway that leads any religious and ethical idea of the Bible “to its climax in the teaching of Jesus” as a roadway that is “often uneven;”⁴ it is true that he speaks of “set-backs and delays” that occurred in the development. But despite these admissions it seems fairly clear that the fact of progress is a dogma with Dr. Fosdick. Yet we are inclined to doubt whether that dogma is in such complete accord with the findings of modern science as our author seems to suppose.

In the second place, Dr. Fosdick does not seem to see that the chronological arrangement of the Biblical sources upon which the evolutionary reconstruction depends is itself based upon that elimination of supernatural revelation which it in turn is made to support. As it stands, of course, the Biblical history does not fall into the evolutionary scheme, but involves supernatural interpositions of God in miracle and in revelation; and if, after the sources are first arranged at will in the order that will show a regular development from crude beginnings to a higher spiritual religion, the rearranged Bible shows that beautifully regular development which is the goal of the rearrangement, the result can scarcely be called significant. The truth is that the critical reconstruction itself presupposes the naturalistic principle which it is made to demonstrate. The whole argument moves in a vicious circle.

But we have not yet commented on the most astonishing thing about Dr. Fosdick's presentation of the modern use of the Bible. The most astonishing thing is that in exalting the historical method of approach our author displays so little acquaintance with that to which he himself appeals. It would be difficult to discover a book which exhibits less understanding than this book does for the historical point of view.

⁴ P. 8.

It is not merely misinformation in detail to which we refer. Such misinformation is indeed at times surprising. It is somewhat surprising, for example, to find a modern man, professor in Union Theological Seminary, writing about textual criticism as though it were "a powerful help in correcting obscure and perverted renderings," and as though it enabled us to select "the more ancient or more sensible renderings."⁵ What has textual criticism, which concerns, as Dr. Fosdick himself says, the task of getting back as nearly as possible to "the original autograph copies of the Scriptures," to do with the selection of the more ancient or more sensible "renderings"—that is, translations? The reader is almost tempted to doubt whether our author has any clear understanding of what textual criticism is.

But what is far more important than all such confusions in detail is the rejection of historical method at the central point—that is in the presentation of the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles. Our author is very severe upon the ancient allegorizers who read their own ideas into the Biblical writings; but what he does not seem to see is that he has made himself guilty, in a far more extreme form, of the fault which he blames in them. It would be difficult to discover a more complete abandonment of grammatico-historical exegesis, in fact though not in theory, than that which is to be found in the present book.

The prerequisite of grammatico-historical exegesis is a sharp separation between the question what the modern reader could have wished the Biblical writers to say and the question what the writers actually did say. This method has been practised, we believe, best of all by those scholars who have themselves been willing to learn from the Bible, who have been willing to mould their own views of God and the world and salvation upon the views which the Biblical writers present. But it has also been practised with considerable success by many modern scholars who have not at all accepted

⁵ Pp. 39f.

for themselves the teachings of the Biblical writers and yet have honestly endeavored to present those teachings as they are without admixture of their own modern predilections. In Dr. Fosdick's case, however, such historical method is abandoned, and the teachings of Jesus and of the apostles are presented not as the sources—even the critically reconstructed sources—show them to have been, but as the modern author would have liked to have them be.

We do not mean that our author is entirely unaware of the fact that the apostles and even Jesus taught things that he himself cannot believe to be true; he does, for example, face in passing the possibility that Jesus shared the apocalyptic ideas of His people, which "the modern man" of course rejects. He does, moreover, deal incidentally with the question of the Messianic consciousness. But at this point he finds refuge in an extreme skepticism about the Gospels which few even of modern naturalistic historians have been willing to share; he is doubtful whether Jesus ever presented himself as the Messiah—a view which makes the origin of the Church an insoluble enigma. At other points he takes refuge in a total ignoring of the problems. One could read Dr. Fosdick's presentation of the teaching of Jesus and not have the slightest inkling of the central place which Jesus gave, for example, to that theistic view of God which Dr. Fosdick so vigorously rejects, and to the awe-inspiring doctrine of heaven and hell which runs all through the words of Jesus and is at the very foundation of the terrible earnestness of His ethical demands. These central characteristics of Jesus' teaching are for Dr. Fosdick as though they did not exist; he does not even face the problem which they present to the "modern man." Very different is the attitude of real (however radical) scholarship like that of Dr. McGiffert, who in his *God of the Early Christians*,⁶ despite a false limitation of the sources, has presented, though of course not explicitly, as devastating a refutation of Dr. Fosdick's anti-historical account of Jesus as any refutation which we might undertake.

⁶ Cf. this REVIEW, Vol. xxiii (October 1924), pp. 544 ff.

Our author's abandonment of historical method appears at many points; it appears, for example, as has already been observed, in his ignoring of Jesus' theism and of His teaching about future rewards and punishments. But it appears most crassly of all, perhaps, in his complete failure to recognize the factual or dispensational basis of all the New Testament teaching. The plain fact of history, a fact which must be recognized by all impartial historians, is that Jesus was conscious of standing at the threshold of a new era which was to be begun by a catastrophic event, and that the apostles were conscious of looking back upon that event and of having had its meaning revealed to them by God. In Dr. Fosdick's book this central feature of the New Testament is consistently or almost consistently ignored. The result appears in exegetical monstrosities like the following:⁷

In the second place, having thus appealed to the Old Testament against the clever and sophisticated interpretations that had been fathered [?] on it, he [Jesus] distinguished in the Old Testament between significant and negligible elements. He rated ceremonial law low and ethical law high. The Mosaic laws of clean and unclean foods were plainly written in the Book, but Jesus abolished them from the category of the ethical. . . .

In the third place, having appealed from the oral law to the written law, and within the written law having appealed from ceremonial elements to ethical principles, he went on to recognize that some ethical principles in the written law had been outgrown His whole Sermon on the Mount, starting with its assurance that the old law is to be fulfilled and not destroyed, is a definite endeavor to see that it is fulfilled, carried to completion, with its outgrown elements superseded and its abiding ideals crowned and consummated.

What the Master did, in a word, was to plunge deep beneath the sophisticated exegesis of his time, the timid literalisms which bound men by a text instead of liberating them by a truth, and in the abiding experiences and principles of the Old Testament find a revelation of God that was fruitful and true.

Let it be clearly noted that this attitude of Jesus involved the recognition of the fact that the Scriptures did contain outgrown elements

Let us then frankly take our stand with the Master on this basic matter! Of course there are outgrown elements in Scripture. How could it be otherwise in a changing world?

⁷ Pp. 91 ff.

A similar method of treatment is applied even to Paul:

In this [that is, in "translating the formula back into the life out of which it came"] they [the modern liberals] are like Paul. Brought up a Jew, indoctrinated in the strictest sect of Hebrew orthodoxy, he discovered that much of the religious framework in which he had trusted was for him untenable. He gave up his old interpretation of the Scripture, dropped circumcision, clean and unclean foods, and the burden of ceremonial requirement. He gave up his old view of worship and left the temple behind. A more radical transition in mental framework and practical religious expression it would be hard to find. Paul, however, did not give up religion. He went deeper into it. His casting off of old forms sprang from the positive expansion of his religious experience. Cramped and prisoned in Judaism, he sought more room for his enlarging life. He became a liberal, from the standpoint of his older thinking, not because he was less religious, but because he was more religious. He struck out for air to breathe and he found it in the central regenerative experiences which lie at the heart of the Gospel. And when he was through he was sure that he understood the depths of the Old Testament as he had never understood them before. That is the very genius of liberalism. Its first step is to go through old formulas into the experiences out of which all religious formulas must come. In Phillips Brooks' figure, it beats the crust back into the batter.⁸

Such is Dr. Fosdick's presentation of Jesus and of Paul. Both Jesus and Paul appear, according to our author, to have been pragmatists of the most approved modern kind. But of course such a presentation has nothing in the world to do with history; it increases our knowledge of the agnostic Modernism of the present day, but as an account of those who lived in the first century it is nothing short of absurd.

To the historian, as distinguished from the propagandist, it should be abundantly plain that when Jesus opposed His stupendous "I say unto you" to the requirements of the Old Testament He was not appealing to a general right of man as man to take the commands of God with a grain of salt—to penetrate (if we may borrow from the very common misuse of 2 Cor. iii. 6) behind the "letter" to the "spirit;" but He was appealing to His own exalted right, as Messiah, to legislate for the new age which His coming was to usher in. Certainly He was not holding that the requirements of the Old Testament had been "outgrown" (what a really aston-

⁸ Pp. 186 ff.

ishing departure from historical method is involved in our author's repeated use, as expository of Jesus, of that word!); but He was announcing the beginning of an entirely new dispensation which was to be opened by an act of His which was also an act of God the Father.

So also it is an historical blunder of the crassest kind to represent Paul as though he were a "liberal" who rejected the ceremonial parts of the Old Testament law because of "the positive expansion of his religious experience." On the contrary the teaching of Paul is based, not upon a lax, but the strictest possible, understanding of the law. And, to speak precisely, he did not "give up" the ceremonial law at all; circumcision, just as truly as love and mercy, he believed, was a command of God. But it was a command intended for the old dispensation, and by the death and resurrection of Christ a new dispensation had been ushered in. The freedom of Paul was supported not by an appeal from positive commands to inner experiences, but by an exhibition of the epoch-making significance of the Cross of Christ. It was not an anticipation of modern liberalism but the diametrical opposite of it.

The whole of the New Testament centres in an event, the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection. To that event Jesus Himself in the days of His flesh pointed forward; to it the apostles looked back. But both in Jesus and in the apostles the "gospel" did not consist in the setting forth of what always had been true, but in the proclamation, whether in advance or in retrospect, of something that happened. When that central feature of the New Testament is ignored, true historical exegesis is impossible. And ignored it is in Dr. Fosdick's book from beginning to end. The author of this book displays little acquaintance with scientific historical study of the New Testament.

Before we turn from the first aspect of the book, it may be well to point out that the Christian, as well as the naturalistic historian, has a conception of progress in revelation, though a very different conception. The Christian thinks of

the progress as being due to the unfolding of a gracious plan of redemption on the part of the transcendent God. That conception is certainly not wanting in grandeur. And it has the advantage, as compared with the naturalistic conception, of being true.

The other principal aspect of "the modern use of the Bible" as Dr. Fosdick sets it forth, is the separation between "abiding experiences" and the "mental categories" in which those experiences were expressed. "All doctrines," he says, "spring from life," and peace can be attained in the midst of controversy if the doctrines will only be translated back into the life from which they came; the theologies of various ages (including the "mental categories" contained in the New Testament) are merely codes in which experience is expressed, and if these codes become obsolete all that we have to do is to decode the underlying experience and start fresh. It is true that according to Dr. Fosdick even modern liberalism cannot do without theology; it must seek to clothe the religious experience which it shares with Jesus and other men of Bible times in the forms of thought that are suited to the modern age. But in doing so it incurs the disadvantage of establishing a new orthodoxy, which in some future generation will have to give place to a new liberalism,⁹ and so on (we suppose) *ad infinitum*.

Dr. Fosdick places this theologizing which he thinks modern liberals must undertake in parallel with the creedmaking labors of the historic Church. But of course the difference is profound. It is not merely that the results of the activity are different in the two cases, but that the whole nature of the activity is different. The greatest difference between the doctrine which our author thinks that modern liberalism must produce and the great creeds of the Church is not that the historic creeds differ from the new doctrine in this detail or that, and it is not even that they differ from the new doctrine in *all* details. But the real difference is that the authors or

⁹ P. 190.

compilers of the historic creeds meant their creeds to be true, whereas the authors of these proposed Modernist compendia of belief do not believe their own assertions to be true but only believe them to be useful, as symbolic expressions of a really ineffable experience. But if theologizing is no more than that, we venture to think it is the most useless waste of time in which an able-bodied man could possibly engage. Very different were the great creeds of the Church, which were efforts to set forth what was not merely useful but also true.

There is no doubt that we have at this point the very centre and core of Dr. Fosdick's teaching. The assertion that "all doctrines spring from life" recurs like a refrain in the present work, and the changes are rung upon it in many different connections. But it involves of course the most radical skepticism that could possibly be conceived. It means simply that abandoning objective truth in the religious sphere, our author falls back upon pure positivism. Prior to all questions about God and creation and the future world, our lives can be changed, he holds, by the mere contemplation of the moral life of Jesus; we can enter into the experience which Jesus had. Then, Dr. Fosdick holds further, that experience into which Jesus leads us finds symbolic expression in doctrines like the divinity of Christ. Men used to apply the word "divinity" to a transcendent God, Maker and Ruler of the world. In such a God the Modernists no longer believe. But the word "God" or the word "divinity" is useful to express our veneration for the highest thing that we know; and the highest thing that Modernists know is the purely human Jesus of modern critical reconstruction.

At no point then does Dr. Fosdick's hostility to the Christian religion appear more clearly than in his assertion of the divinity of Christ. "Let us," he urges his readers, "say it abruptly: *it is not so much the humanity of Jesus that makes him imitable as it is his divinity.*"¹⁰ There we have Modern-

¹⁰ P. 270. The italics are Dr. Fosdick's.

ism in a nutshell—the misleading use of Christian terminology, the blatancy of human pride, the breakdown of the distinction between God and man, the degradation of Jesus and the obliteration of the very idea of God.

In view of the underlying pragmatist skepticism of our author it hardly seems worth while to examine his teaching in detail. Since he does not believe in the objective truth of his own teaching, but regards it only as the temporary intellectual form in which an experience is expressed, we might be pardoned if we failed to be interested in it. He might affirm every jot and tittle of the Westminster Confession, for example; yet, since he would be affirming it merely as useful and not as true, he would be separated by a tremendous gulf from the Reformed Faith. As a matter of fact, however, the system of belief which Dr. Fosdick does set forth (as the temporary intellectual form in which his experience is expressed) is somewhat as follows.

God, according to Dr. Fosdick, is to be thought of as the “ideal-realizing Capacity in the universe or the creative Spirit at the heart of it,”¹¹ and he quotes with approval¹² words of John Herman Randall that set forth the ancient pagan *anima mundi* view of God: “The universe as we see it is God’s body; then God is the soul of the universe, just as you are the soul of your body.” The transcendence of God, which is at the root of all the ethical glories of the Christian religion, is by this preacher vigorously denied; Dr. Fosdick’s whole teaching, in marked contrast to that of Jesus—even the reduced Jesus to whom he appeals—is passionately anti-theistic. He has a “live cosmos,” but has given up the living God.

Equally opposed to Christianity is his view of man, the root of which is found in his rejection of any real consciousness of sin. “I believe in man,” Dr. Fosdick thinks, according to a recent sermon and according to the plain implications of this book, ought to be a fundamental article in our creed.

¹¹ P. 161.

¹² P. 266.

Here we have the thoroughgoing paganism—the thoroughgoing confidence in human resources—which runs all through this preacher's teaching.

But if Dr. Fosdick is opposed to the Christian view of both these presuppositions of the Gospel, he is also opposed to the Christian view of the Book in which the gospel is set forth:

Men have always gone to any sacred scriptures they possessed primarily that they might find out how to live. That the Bible is "the infallible rule of faith and practise" is one of the most familiar statements which the church has ever framed, but in the historical development of our religion in the Old Testament the second item of that statement came first. The primary use of Scripture was to guide conduct, not to control belief. When, therefore, among the Hebrews we see the canon of sacred Scripture growing, when Josiah swore the people to a solemn league and covenant—the first example of a formal Hebrew Bible that we know—or when Ezra pledged the nation's loyalty to the keeping of the Levitical law, the Bible which thus was coming into being was primarily a book of divine requirements. It told the people what they ought to do. . . .¹³

Now it is true that according to Dr. Fosdick Jesus broke with this legalism of the Old Testament. But He did so, the author holds, not at all because He restored truth to the primary place as over against conduct, but because He substituted "a form of conduct, a quality of spirit"¹⁴ for detailed rules. Thus according to our author the New Testament as well as the Old Testament is valuable primarily as setting forth a way of life and not as recording facts.

But the Christian view is the exact opposite: the Bible according to the Christian first sets forth truth—both eternal truth regarding God and also redemptive facts of history—and upon that truth grounds its ethical demands. That is the case with the Old Testament as well as with the New Testament. Dr. Fosdick is quite wrong in thinking that the Old Testament law is, like the ethics of skeptical Modernism, left hanging in the air; on the contrary it is grounded throughout in the nature of God. Law in the Old Testament is

¹³ Pp. 235 ff.

¹⁴ P. 240.

always rooted in doctrine: the Ten Commandments are preceded by the words, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. xx. 2); and the law of love in Deuteronomy is based upon the great *Sh'ma*, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). Similar is the case with regard to the New Testament. The "practical" parts of the Epistles are always based upon the great doctrinal passages that precede them; and the ethical demands of Jesus are always based upon His presentation of the facts not only about God but about His own person and about heaven and hell.

Thus the Shorter Catechism is true to the Bible from beginning to end in the order which it observes in the answer to the question, "What do the Scriptures principally teach?" "The Scriptures principally teach," it says quite correctly, "*what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.*" The reversal of the order, or rather the virtual elimination of the former part of the answer, by Dr. Fosdick, exhibits the great gulf which exists between his teaching on the one side and the Christian religion on the other. Christianity, in accordance with the whole Bible but unlike Dr. Fosdick, founds morality upon truth, and life upon doctrine.

Of course, in speaking of Dr. Fosdick's view of the Bible it would be easy to point out the vast sections of Scripture which he holds to be directly untrue. He does not indeed make the matter always perfectly clear to the unsophisticated reader, and his failure to do so is from the ethical point of view one of the most disappointing features of the book. If this writer stated in plain language, which the lay reader could understand, his critical views about the New Testament, for example, the favor which he now enjoys among many misinformed but devout persons in the Church would at once be lost. But such frankness is not his; he prefers to undermine the faith of the Church by an entirely different

method—more immediately effective, perhaps, but ethically far inferior.

But if Dr. Fosdick is opposed to the presuppositions of the Christian message and the Christian view of the Book in which the message is set forth, he is also opposed to the Christian view of the Person whose redeeming work forms the substance of the message. Jesus, according to Dr. Fosdick, is simply the fairest flower of humanity, divine in the sense in which all men are divine, the culmination of a process not the entrance of a creative interposition of God. "That differential quality in Jesus," he says, "is the most impressive spiritual fact that this earth has seen. It is the best we know. It is the fairest production that the race has to show for its millenniums of travail."¹⁵ What an abysmal distance there is between this view of Christ as "the fairest production that the race has to show" and the Christian view of the eternal Son of God who entered freely into the world for our redemption!

Certainly the difference is not diminished but only exhibited in the clearer light when in the passage that has just been quoted the author speaks of the "differential quality in Jesus" as being "a revelation of creative reality." For here we have in striking form the degradation of the word "creative" which runs all through the book and which is involved in the passionate anti-theism which is a central characteristic of the Modernism of the present day.

The plain fact, of course, is that Dr. Fosdick eliminates from the pages of history all the miracles in the New Testament account of Jesus from the virgin birth to the empty tomb, as well as all the miracles in the Bible as a whole. He does speak, it is true, of miracles of Jesus that he accepts; but these "miracles," it turns out, are miracles which we also can experience. The miracles that show Jesus to have been unique are of course gone; what we have here is the elimination of the whole supernatural content of the Word of

¹⁵ P. 260.

God. And how indeed can it be otherwise? There can be no supernatural interposition of a transcendent God if no transcendent God exists—if “God,” like ourselves, is bound to the course of this world.

Corresponding to this degraded *view* of Jesus is the author’s *attitude* toward Jesus. There is not the slightest evidence in this book that Dr. Fosdick has ever exercised faith in Jesus or indeed has the slightest notion of what faith in Jesus means. Jesus is to him a leader whom he loves, but never really a Saviour whom he trusts. “Say ‘Jesus’ to a medieval Christian [rather, we should put it, to *any* Christian] and he instinctively would think of a king sitting on his throne or coming in the clouds of heaven. Say ‘Jesus’ to a man of to-day and he instinctly thinks of that gracious and courageous Nazarene who lived and worked and taught in ancient Palestine.”¹⁶ Here we have the contrast between the Christian attitude to Christ and Dr. Fosdick’s attitude: the Christian thinks of the Christ now living in glory, Dr. Fosdick thinks of the Christ who instituted a type of religious life long ago; Dr. Fosdick calls Christ “the Master,” the Christian calls Him “the Lord.” The difference is profound, and it is a difference of the heart and of the inner life fully as much as of the head. Dr. Fosdick speaks of a personal Saviour “with whom to fall in love;”¹⁷ the Christian thinks of Christ as one who first loved us. Dr. Fosdick *loves* the reconstructed Jesus of modern naturalism; the Christian *trusts* as well as loves the Jesus to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth.

In view of what has already been said, it is quite needless to point out our author’s scorn for the gospel itself—the account of the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection. “*The historic Jesus,*” he says, “*has given the world its most appealing and effective exhibition of vicarious sacrifice.*”¹⁸ Here the Cross of Christ is treated as a

¹⁶ P. 220.

¹⁷ P. 231.

¹⁸ P. 229. The italics are Dr. Fosdick’s.

mere member of a series of acts of self-sacrifice, and so it is treated in the book throughout. But to the Christian such words about the tenderest and holiest thing in the Christian religion seem so blasphemous that even in quotation he can hardly bear to take them on his lips.

In reply to such an estimate of Dr. Fosdick as that which has here been made, the exponents of naturalistic Modernism in the creedal Churches, who themselves are just as much opposed to Christianity as this author is, are accustomed to point to individual utterances in the book, torn from their context—individual utterances in which Christian terminology is used. But that use of Christian terminology only serves to set in sharper light the divergence between this preacher and the whole tendency of Christianity; for it involves a certain carelessness about plain straightforwardness of speech, which would be thoroughly abhorrent to anyone who appreciated the Christian point of view. The truth is that the similarity between Dr. Fosdick and the Christian religion is largely verbal; both in thought and in feeling (so far as the latter can be revealed by words) the divergence, despite undoubted influences of Christianity upon Dr. Fosdick in certain spheres, is profound.

In closing, a word of explanation may be due as to the reason why we have treated this book at such great length. It is because the author is representative of a very large body of persons in the modern world. He himself has asserted that theological views similar to his are held by hundreds of ministers in the Presbyterian Church, and certainly similar conditions prevail in most other ecclesiastical bodies. The author of this book represents in fairly typical, and certainly in very popular, fashion the attack upon Christianity which is being carried on with such vigor at the present time.

It cannot be said that this fact reflects credit upon the intellectual standards of the day; on the contrary it is only one among many instances of the intellectual decadence which has set in with such force. It is just the faults of Dr. Fosdick, as much as his undoubted gifts, which make him popular.

The disinclination of this writer to clear definitions, the use of Christian terminology to veil a totally alien meaning, the lack of that breadth of mind which leads a man to enter at least into some sort of comprehension of the thing against which he is directing his attack—these faults, distressing as they may be to thoughtful persons, make the book typical of the present age, and hence contribute no doubt very largely to the popularity which the author enjoys.

But this is not the first period of decadence through which the world has passed, as it is not the first period of desperate conflict in the Church. God still rules, and in the midst of the darkness there will come in His good time the shining of a clearer light. There will come a great revival of the Christian religion; and with it there will come, we believe, a revival of true learning: the new Reformation for which we long and pray may well be accompanied by a new Renaissance.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.