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WHO WROTE THE GOSPELS?

I

LET me say at once that this paper is to be a plea for old-fashioned views of the authorship of the Gospels, a plea that these views are more reasonable, and demand less credulity than recent opinions and theories.

The various views and theories as to the authorship of the Gospels fall roughly into three groups. There is first of all the traditional view, namely, that they were written by the four men whose names are generally attached to them—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Secondly there are the various earlier theories of the Higher Criticism which hold that they were written as continuous sketches of Christ's ministry by authors working on the writings of earlier scribes, as is suggested by the preface of what we call the Gospel according to Luke. Thirdly there is the most recent type—what is called Form Criticism—according to which the contents of the Gospels are collections of sayings of Jesus which were in current use among early preachers and evangelists, which are arranged in the four Gospels without any thought of chronological sequence.

The second and third types of theory have come into existence as the result of various attempts to account for the similarities and dissimilarities between the Gospels as wholes and still more in the details of individual incidents and sayings. This is especially true in reference to the Synoptic Gospels. Why, for instance, have Mark and Matthew left out the large section which is peculiar to Luke with the great parable of the Prodigal Son in the heart of it; or why have not the synoptics any account of the raising of Lazarus or the wonderful words in John xiii-xvii? Such inquiries are very natural and legitimate subjects for study. The question before us is, which seems the

PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATIONS¹

I

Philosophic Foundations is a book worthy of careful study. The author is a man of philosophical insight and erudition. He has a definite philosophical principle in accord with which he interprets reality. By the help of his philosophy Mr. Thomas desires to bring men "to the gates of the gospel".

Mr. Thomas writes in the spirit of one who is deeply convinced of the truth of his position and of the crying need of such a philosophy as he presents. In an address delivered after the publication of his book he says: "I saw that the freedom of the Absolute Spirit must be as absolute as His Rational essence. I know it was a daring step to take, but further philosophic investigation has convinced me of its fundamental necessity and truth. I set idealism afresh on the way of development by affirming the absolute freedom of the Absolute Spirit as the second foundation-stone of the New Philosophy. I know that such a fundamental revolution as this in Philosophy will startle many minds, and will surely meet with all possible criticism and opposition from the sponsors of modern scepticism; but I have found it shed such amazing light upon the problems of the universe that I am convinced that it, or some philosophy closely akin to it, will shape the thoughts of the philosophic future."² The author, though speaking of his philosophy as a new philosophy is perfectly frank to admit that he follows the idealist tradition. He speaks with great appreciation of Plato and Hegel while yet he departs appreciably from the latter's dialectical method and "determinist" conclusions. He seems to have profited greatly from the recent development in British idealist philosophy represented by such men as Pringle Patison, James Ward, Clement C. J. Webb, Hastings Rashdall

¹ *Philosophic Foundations*. By John Thomas, M.A. (Westminster City Publishing Co., Ltd., 94 Clapham Park Road, London, S.W.4.)

² *The Spiritual Nature and Constitution of the Universe*. Reprinted from *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, Vol. LXXI., p. 67.

and others, though he does not mention them. With them he sets aside the "block universe" of Hegel and the more absolute idealists like F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet. By asserting the "absolute freedom of the Absolute Spirit" Thomas feels he has laid the true foundation for life and all its manifestations.

To catch the spirit of the book under discussion we must first note its great emphasis upon reason, and the place assigned to it. Mr. Thomas is careful to emphasise from time to time that he has reached his philosophical conclusions quite independently of Scripture. In the address mentioned above he says: "The revelation of Holy Scripture is *sui generis*, and every reasonable man must admit that outside of that revelation God has allowed and arranged a wide field of truth for the investigation of the human mind."¹ Or again: "The conclusion from all I have said is this: While Divine Revelation has its own special range, the quest of mind has also an appointed range of its own, and this quest in a true Philosophy is in necessary and vital alliance with true religion and its Divine Revelation. There is a true Philosophy of being, whether we have discovered it or not, on which all the truths of life, from the lowest to the highest, must be based, and with which they must be in harmony. It is on these foundations of universal reason that all the heavens rest, and truth towers upwards into its highest Divine revelation."²

These quotations already suggest to us a difficulty that we meet again and again in the philosophy of Mr. Thomas. We are told that philosophy and Revelation each have an area of investigation of their own. On the other hand it is evident that his philosophy covers the whole of reality in its quest. "All the truths of life" must be based on this philosophy and be in accord with it. Is it clear that on such a basis there is really any room left for Revelation at all?

At any rate Scriptural revelation, such as Christianity holds to, seems to us to be at variance with the conception of Reason entertained by Mr. Thomas. Scriptural revelation itself brings to us what for the moment we may call a "philosophy of being" an interpretation of the whole of life. Scripture offers a "life and world view". It says something very distinctive and significant about what is often spoken of as the domain of philosophy

¹ *Idem*, p. 61.

² *Idem*, p. 62.

and the domain of science. The "facts" of the scientist are, according to Scripture, created by God. They fit into the plan of God. They are therefore God-structured. God works all things after the counsel of His will. Scripture is specific on this point. There are no "brute facts" i.e., facts uninterpreted by God as well as by man. We may even say that it is God's interpretation that is epistemologically prior to the existence of any fact in the universe.

To this something must be added with respect to the mind of man. Of this too, Scripture says something specific. In the first place Scripture says that man's mind is a *created* mind. This is of basic importance. A philosophy that recognises the created character of the human mind is one kind of philosophy; a philosophy that denies or ignores the created character of the human mind is another kind of philosophy. The two cannot walk together. A created mind recognises or ought to recognise the fact that the Creator's thoughts are high above its own thoughts. Isaiah speaks oft of this. Thus there is a Christian Irrationalism that is not only consistent with but the necessary implicate of the ultimate Rationality that is God and His plan. Man must think God's thoughts after Him as far as it is possible for a creature to do so. But man can see only the beginning of God's ways. By his intellectual efforts man must seek to bring as much coherence into his experience as he can. In doing so he must presuppose the Absolute Coherence that is in God. In God's light man sees the light. But man must not presume to be as God. He must allow for that which to him is new before him and out of reach above him simply because in the nature of the case he cannot fathom the thought of God. God is and must be incomprehensible to man. Not as though God is a limiting concept for man, a concept which will always recede as the horizon but which he may legitimately seek to exhaust. God as the ultimate self-contained absolute rationality must reveal Himself spontaneously before man can know ought of Him. True, in creating man God has already revealed Himself to some extent. But even so, as Scripture tells us in its very beginning, God planned to have man know much more of Himself than he could naturally know from the fact of his creation in the image of God. If then man seeks for coherence in his experience he should always realize that his coherence, though to be sure analogical of

God's internal coherence and therefore basically true, can yet be no more than analogical coherence.

This implies therefore (a) that a Christian is in the nature of the case utterly opposed to all forms of Irrationalism and (b) that a Christian is in the nature of the case utterly opposed to all forms of Rationalism. With respect to the first point we can rejoice in the effort of Mr. Thomas to oppose Barthianism. With respect to the second point, however, we are bound to maintain that he has been insufficiently critical of idealist philosophy. To be sufficiently critical of idealist philosophy is to reject its basic interpretative principle. Idealist philosophy speaks simply of Reason without making a genuine distinction between divine reason and human reason. I do not say that idealism makes no distinction at all between human and divine reason. It makes a distinction, to be sure, but merely a quantitative one. At bottom all Reason, divine, no less than human, is, for idealism, confronted with utterly brute fact. Plato worried about "unthought thoughts" about a "something" that stood in a manner of independence over against God and in terms of correlativity with which God had to be defined. And even Hegel, though as a limiting concept he honoured the Absolute, and sometimes speaks as though by his formula, the Real is the Rational and the Rational is the Real, he has slain the spectre of brute fact, none the less equates Being and non-Being at the beginning of his philosophy. Accordingly his dialectical method, itself born of illegitimate correlativity between bare potentiality and equally bare actuality passes on beyond God. Thus all forms of Rationalism, and, we may add, all forms of historic idealism are really irrationalistic at the core. Thus Rationalism is but a stepping-stone to Irrationalism.

Mr. Thomas is basically right, we believe, in saying that in Christianity we have a philosophy of the Absolute Spirit and therefore a philosophy of Absolute Rationality. In its notion of the self-contained ontological Trinity there is given us a Concrete Universal. In it unity and diversity are mutually exhaustive of one another. Thus, as Mr. Thomas says so well, there is within the Godhead a self-sufficient intercommunication. "The Christian conception of God is that, in His own Absolute and Infinite Personality He must be conceived as completely independent of the Finite creation. If we could conceive of the whole creation as being dissolved and swept into nothingness,

the Infinite Spirit would abide in the unassailable and undiminished perfection and glory of His own Absoluteness" (p. 28). Or again: "In Philosophy itself, to face the truth with complete sincerity and simplicity, we must accept the idea of Infinite or limitative definitions, for even the profoundest metaphysic must condescend to accept terms and phrases in their patent meanings—the meanings which they convey to the general intelligence of Man" (p. 28). If he had boldly maintained this fundamental contention in his book, Mr. Thomas would have cut himself loose completely from the idealist principle of interpretation. Idealist philosophy, in assuming that it may rightfully speak of Reason without reference to the creation idea, in assuming that "all possible experience" is essentially on one level, thereby makes God correlative to man. He who builds his philosophy on the uncritical assumption of the essential oneness in ontological status of divine and human reason, must, if he is not to lose himself in a formal identity philosophy, eventually confront God, no less than man, with brute fact and thus reduce God Himself to an abstract principle of unity that is somehow to string into unity equally abstract non-intelligible particularities.

Mr. Thomas, in spite of his best intentions to defend a truly rational philosophy and in spite of his best intentions to defend the doctrine of a God who is really Absolute, has been compelled by the force of his adopted principle of interpretation to fall into a species of Irrationalism and to make his God interdependent with the universe.

It is with reluctance that we make this basic criticism. But if we are ever to have a truly "evangelical philosophy", a philosophy calculated to bring unity of thought to the Christian student's mind, a philosophy that shall really challenge the mind of those we as Christians are seeking to win, we must needs be clear on our basic principle of interpretation. That basic principle of interpretation, there is no help for it, we must simply and frankly take from Scripture. It is nowhere else to be found. If sin had not come into the world this would be otherwise. Then man would, of his own accord, wish to interpret the whole of his experience in terms of the self-contained ontological Trinity. He would then wish to think God's thoughts after Him. As it is the sinner seeks to do the opposite. Born and conceived in sin as he is, he prostrates his intellectual efforts

to the justification of his self-assumed autonomy. The natural man—on this too, Scripture appears to be plain enough—hates God in the inmost core of his being. Even if by God's restraining grace he is far from being in the manifestation of his personality as bad as he might be and one day will be, this does not change the fact that underneath all of the efforts of the natural man there is hatred of God. He has "worshipped and served" the creature rather than the Creator.

It is accordingly not too severe a stricture on non-Christian systems of philosophy to say that underneath them all there is the sinner's effort at self-justification of his declaration of independence from God. The sinner is so utterly powerless in the vice of sin that he cannot of himself really attempt to interpret experience in terms of God. For him to do so would be to deny himself as a sinner. It is by grace alone that men can be saved from their never-ending efforts at interpreting life as ultimate autonomous interpreters instead of as derivative reinterpreters. It is therefore the frank acceptance of the Bible as the Voice of the Absolute and the acceptance of the regeneration of the mind of man which enables one truly to recognise the God which Mr. Thomas says a true philosophy requires. It appears to be quite impossible to divide experience into two domains, one of which is to be interpreted by reason and the other by revelation. Reason in the sense of man's ratiocinative powers must always and everywhere be used. But Reason as an epistemological principle is a fiction and a snare. There is no escape from the simple alternative that faces every man. He may either interpret all of the universe, himself included, in terms of God or he may interpret all of the universe, himself included, in terms of himself. If he does the former he does so because he has by the Holy Spirit's illuminating power accepted Scripture as God's revelation. If he does the latter he does so because he persists in holding, whether psychologically conscious of the fact or not, two false assumptions, namely: (a) that he is not a sinner and (b) that he is not created by God. These two are naturally involved in one another. The sinner may speak in exalted phraseology of Reason and of his desire to follow Reason fearlessly, what he really means, according to the basic principle of his being, is, that he will seek to interpret life as an ultimate interpreter who faces a universe

utterly non-structural in nature till he comes with his categories bringing order into chaos.

II

Before seeking to substantiate our main criticism of the book under discussion we would briefly examine one objection that has constantly been raised to the position we have taken on the relation of Scripture and human reason. Mr. Thomas himself really voices the objection we have in mind when he says: "It was through the truths which God has placed within the reach of human reason that Paul introduced the message of the Gospel to the Athenian idolators. He told them that God has so arranged the scheme of things that men might 'seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him; though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being. As certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring'. It was by this clear journey of the rational mind that Paul led the Athenians to the gates of the gospel, and some of them entered in, and found life."¹ To this he adds some familiar passages from the first section of Romans.

A careful exegesis of what Paul says in Romans and elsewhere does, however, not require us to reject the plain teachings of Scripture we have brought forward. For it should be clearly noted that if Paul meant to teach in the first section of Romans that the "natural man" can by the exercise of that *principium* of interpretation which alone as a natural man he honours, be led to the "gates of the gospel" he would have to contradict what he so plainly teaches, in Romans as elsewhere, that the natural man is at enmity against God and cannot discern the things of God. For Paul to ask men to find God by the exercise of their Reason according to their assumed principle of interpretation would be for him to ask them to find a finite God. All so-called "theistic proofs" built up on the basis of the natural man's use of "Reason" have, as a matter of historical fact, led to a finite God. The "clear journey of the rational mind" could never lead men to the "gates of the gospel". What Paul did was not to recognise and honour the natural man's principle of interpretation but to challenge it. He

¹ *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, Vol. LXXI, p. 62.

told the Romans what they *should have known* had they rightly interpreted nature. He told them that the revelation of God was all about and even immediately within them, rendering them without excuse. He further told them, that as a matter of fact, none of them had truly interpreted experience. All of them as Calvin, following Paul, says of the "divine Plato" have lost themselves in their round globe. All of them have given exclusively immanentistic interpretations of reality. Paul seeks to bring men to the gates of the gospel and seeks to have them enter these gates by asking them to make a Copernican revolution. They are asked to worship and serve the Creator instead of the creature as they have formerly done. He points out to them that unless they interpret life on a new and radically different principle they are lost. He places himself upon their position, not really, but for argument's sake, and points out to them that unless they accept the new principle they are lost. His argument in Romans is not inconsistent with his challenge in First Corinthians: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe."

If it be said that we must be on common ground with those we seek to win for Christ we would reply that if we were really on common ground with them we should together be lost. The blind cannot lead the blind. And if it be said that reasoning with men is of as little use as a display of colours would be in the valley of the blind, we reply that Jesus made the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He spoke to Lazarus in the tomb. Did He place Himself on common ground with Lazarus? And if He did not was there no purpose in His speaking to him? Jesus gave Lazarus life, as He spake to him. Thus, if only we speak in the name and by the authority of our Sender, we may reason with men, preach to men, in short make every form of appeal to men, confident, that in ways above our understanding, the Holy Spirit will enlighten them so that they may see and accept the truth.

Only thus, it seems to us, can we avoid perplexing "embranglements" with any and every form of non-Christian philosophy. We do not say that non-Christian philosophy is absolutely wrong in every sense. Just as men are restrained by

God's "common grace" from running into the consummation of wickedness the principle of which is in them, so they may set forth many things that are far from fully wrong in every respect. We dare even say that they can produce that which is "good". Even Satan does much "good" in the world. Through his efforts to the contrary God's grace and general virtues are set before the eyes of men in ever greater splendour. Any God-made mind, operating on the material of God's universe, is bound to help display the truth. Accordingly we as Christians may do what Solomon did when he built the temple of God. He had skilled artisans, not partakers of the covenant, prepare material for him. So we, as long as we ourselves assume the responsibility of the architect, can use much of that which an idealist or even a pragmatist philosophy has said.

When first we take hold of the book of Mr. Thomas we might be encouraged to think that it is along such lines as these that he plans to develop his philosophy. We have already quoted his excellent statement about the doctrine of God. We are to have an absolute Spirit "without qualification or limitative definitions". The transcendence of God is said to be "as necessary a metaphysical idea" as His immanence. Against Hegel's "block universe" he insists on the freedom and independence of God. Says he: "Since this ordered universe has therefore only a relative and dependent existence, it is useless and unphilosophical to attempt to find the absolute *within* its dependency, as Hegel seems to have done by his evolving scheme of metaphysical logic; for the Absolute cannot be reached from below, but must be immediately apprehended from above" (p. 101).

It soon appears, however, that Mr. Thomas is evolving his Absolute "from below". Following the idealist tradition he fails to do justice to the Biblical truths of creation and the fall in the assumptions he makes with respect to Reason. Nowhere in his book does he speak in the Biblical sense of created and sinful reason as over against uncreated and perfect Reason. True, Mr. Thomas makes a distinction between finite and Infinite Reason, but the distinction is patterned after the idealism of J. Caird. Speaking of the finite mind he says: "It is conscious of the Infinite, both in the measureless possibilities of its advance and in the mental equipment of universal Ideas through which this advance is achieved. But it is also conscious

of vast limitation in its powers and achievements, and of an encompassing Universe of Infinity which it must for ever explore, and can never exhaust. In this way the Human Mind and the Infinite Mind in and through which it realises itself are fundamentally and for ever distinguished from one another" (p. 20). All this seems sufficiently specific for us to feel that in it the Biblical distinction between Creator and creature is before us and that the absolute God is really "presupposed". The fact of man's limitation may simply mean what in fact it does mean to many philosophers and scientists, namely, that there is an utterly uncharted realm of non-structured existence as a primeval forest for man to explore. The question is whether God too is in the woods surrounded by a still larger and ever expanding universe of brute fact. If God is *also* roaming in the primeval He may be ever so mighty a hunter and ever so far ahead of man, but He is not essentially different from man. The mind of a great scientist may be far ahead of me as I seek to make a few experiments of my own, but after all we are fellow men surrounded by the uninterpreted. I may be well-advised to take note of what, coming before me, and with far greater capacity than I have, God has already explored, but my interpretation need not be and cannot be a reinterpretation of His. He is not my Creator nor the Creator of the facts I seek to know.

But have we not seen that Mr. Thomas insists strongly on the necessity of believing in a really absolute God? We have, but we are disheartened when he virtually identifies his God with Plato's God. When he has told us that the Absolute "must be immediately apprehended from above" he adds in the immediate context: "There can scarcely be any doubt that the Absolute was thus conceived by the mighty mind of Plato, when he set as the foundation of all Reality the 'Idea of the Good', that is, of the philosophically good, the Absolute Potentiality of all that is true and beautiful. This 'Idea' was transcendent, distinguished from the 'Ideas' impressed upon the objects of the phenomenal world. It was the Absolute of Rational Intuition, abiding in its own eternal glory" (p. 101). We are not concerned here with the contention that the Absolute must be reached by intuition rather than by the intellect in order to be seen "from above". We are concerned merely with the nature of the Absolute itself. And on that score it is,

we believe, highly confusing to speak as though Plato's theism and Biblical theism were virtually identical. Whether we take the "Good" or the God of Plato, both were confronted with brute Irrationality. Neither can with fairness be said to be absolute as the God of the Christian faith is absolute.

Speaking of his conclusion that the Absolute God must be transcendent, Mr. Thomas says: "There is nothing disappointing or strange or surprising in this, for Reason is the ultimate authority in all knowledge, and we can never go behind or beyond it. Since it is valid as the active agent in knowledge, it must be valid also in presenting and conceiving the Absolute after its own image" (p. 102). Thus Mr. Thomas has arrived at his virtual identification of the Absolute of Plato with the Absolute of Christianity by working "from below". It is to contradict the idea of creation when he says: "It is in the pure self-conscious Reason of Man, raised to Infinity by the operations of the same Reason, that we must seek to find the nature of the transcendent Absolute" (p. 103). It is this sort of thing that Plato and idealists after him have sought to do with the result that for them the Absolute is an abstract principle of identity that must somehow bring into unity abstract factuality. An Absolute reached "from below" is no Absolute.

There is a sense, to be sure, in which we must start "from below". Psychologically we must start our process of interpretation with ourselves. We cannot escape from ourselves and jump into the being of God. But this is not the point at issue. The real question is one of epistemology and not of psychology. And in epistemology we must begin "from above". That is, we must presuppose God. Which is to say that we must take the notion of the self-contained, self-sufficient God as the most basic notion of all our interpretative efforts. If we fail to make God epistemologically prior to ourselves we cannot fail to descend with Plato and the idealists into a final Irrationality after all.

III

We turn now to see more specifically how Mr. Thomas gradually brings down his Absolute from a self-contained eternity to dependence on the created universe. One point on which Mr. Thomas constantly dwells is that of the "freedom of the Absolute Spirit". Summing up in the lecture referred to what

he had written in his book he says: "I saw that the freedom of the Absolute Spirit must be as Absolute as His rational essence" (p. 67). At an early point in his book this point comes to the fore: "To the Absolute Spirit, Free Volition is as fundamental as the Infinite Essence of Rational Thought. A metaphysic of Infinite Reason without Free Volition leads inevitably to the mechanical enclosure of a 'block Universe', in which Man is no more than a pulse in the ticking of an Infinite Machine" (p. 30). A little later he adds: "The infinitely Rational Spirit is also Infinitely Free. After the vast and inevitable Rational mechanism of Hegel, such a thesis as this will startle many, but it is the only way out from the Rational 'block house' into the Freedom of the Universe, and is therefore unhesitatingly accepted as the Foundation of the Philosophy of this book" (p. 31).

We can have no possible quarrel with an insistence on the freedom of God. The question is, What is the nature of this freedom and how is it obtained? Is it identical with God's necessary self-existence, with His absolute freedom from dependence upon anything beyond Himself? We can most heartily agree with the form of statement which says that "the infinitely Rational Spirit is also infinitely Free", but we are worried when Mr. Thomas speaks of the "Freedom of the Universe" as though it were virtually the same as the Freedom of God. By asserting the Freedom of God, Mr. Thomas argues: "The process of the Universe appears no longer as a pre-determined Mechanism, but as a great and inspiring Idealism both for God and man" (p. 35). It is perfectly apparent here that Mr. Thomas has sought for the freedom of God not by stressing His self-contained independence, but by opening up to Him an area of brute fact. Nothing could destroy both the freedom and the absolute rationality of God more effectively than to speak of a "process of the Universe" as an area of adventure for God. The Biblical doctrine of God is, we believe, altogether at variance with this. God's rationality and freedom are, according to Scripture, self-contained. This is the presupposition of that teaching which tells us that the process of the Universe is determined by God. The doctrine of the foreordination of all things in the Universe is based upon the absolute self-contained Freedom of God. To confront God with a structureless Universe is to make Him dependent on that

Universe. Absolute Freedom in God consists, according to Scripture, in His absolute self-confrontation in the ontological Trinity.

The capitulation to the Irrational at this early point is fatal in its consequences. After this God is endowed with the freedom of the Mighty Hunter in the dark Forest. The idea of God's Self-limitation is introduced as fundamental to the philosophy of the book (p. 35). "When we pass from the Absolute to the Ordered world," says Mr. Thomas, "we speedily discern that we have passed from a Timeless and Spaceless Rational Infinity to a Universe of which the perceptions are conditioned, and hence limited, by Time and Space. Consequently it is by this Self-Limitation through Time and Space that the Absolute Spirit wills to pass into the multiplicity of a Finite Universe" (p. 121).

Space and time, Mr. Thomas contends, are the "Willed Self-Limitation of the Absolute Spirit of Reason" (p. 122). Thus the "Rational Spirit of the Absolute" is "conditioned by Time and Space" (p. 138), while "continual change is metaphysically necessary in a Universe conditioned by Time and Space" (p. 156). The Self-Limitation of God later appears to be an act of "Self-renunciation" (p. 190) "so that the whole of Being can be regarded as an act or process of sacrificial love" (p. 197). God "adventures a Universe on the astonishing basis of perfect Moral freedom" (p. 236). Thus we come to what Mr. Thomas says he is almost ready to call the "*romance* of the Absolute Spirit" (p. 236). "Here," he said, "are all the materials for history in excelsis. Here is the free arena for the Moral battle of the Universe. Here is the complete potentiality of world-agonies and world-ecstasies. Here are fought out the issues of Being amid the din of many voices and the clash of many forces. Here the Absolute Spirit adventures all on the victorious power of the free Moral ideal. And here He Himself, the Lord of the powers of freedom, is the omnipresent Warrior in the arena of conflict. This is history indeed" (p. 236). Once more he adds: "There is an element of freedom in history which cannot be bound or measured by the categories, and there is enough of irrational thinking and doing to throw all the Rational categories into confusion. History is not the production of a 'block Universe'. The history of mankind is real history, and truly belongs to the 'Universe in the making'. It

is the creation of minds that are free, and are given the power of initiative because, as Rational Beings, they are also Moral Beings" (p. 252).

Enough has been said to prove that Mr. Thomas has sought for God's freedom by conditioning Him by forms of existence not under His control. On such a basis as this Mr. Thomas is not entitled to say that "the irresistible teleological force of the Absolute Spirit," is bound to realise "the perfect end," of "this Moral 'Universe in the making'" (p. 256). First to say that there are irrational forces, forces beyond God's control, and then to say that God's teleological force is irresistible is to take back with one hand what you have given with the other. If we make the Rational and the Irrational equally ultimate correlative forces in Reality we have reached a point where we ought to abstain from further mention of the Absolute God.

The sad consequences of following the dictates of an uncritically accepted Divine-human Reason to the end appear perhaps most fully when Mr. Thomas approaches the person and work of Christ. The work of redemption is presented as really being the natural consequence of the work of creation. In creation God has given to men as the makers of history the freedom "even to be irrational". God had to make this adventure for purposes of Self-realisation (p. 208). And God is bound to succeed. So He must and does follow up creation with redemption. We quote: "But the attainment of the Moral ideal is written in the nature of the Absolute Spirit and in the purpose of creation, and it cannot fail. The Absolute Spirit cannot rest until He sees His own Moral image in the Rational Spirits He has produced. His great Self-renunciation in creation must culminate in perfect Self-realisation, when Moral harmony shall be for ever complete. The passions of men must be subdued and the Moral ideal must be all in all. Either by penal judgment or by Moral attraction the Moral evil that opposes the Absolute must be destroyed" (p. 261).

Our objection to all this is not that God has a unified plan and that this plan includes redemption as well as creation. Our objection is to pooling God with the Universe in order then to speak of Reason as controlling all. A truly Christian philosophy should, it seems to us, begin with the notion of God as self-contained. Then there never can be irrational forces beside

Him. Then creation exists really by the fiat of His will. Then creation is perfect at the outset. Creation is no adventure for God. He is not as it were taking chances with millions of little ultimate creators who are free to produce the ultimately irrational. Thus God does not need to realise Himself through a huge adventure. If man sins against Him, He does not need, for purposes of Self-realisation, to follow up creation with salvation. When God saves men He saves them *by grace*. An "evangelical philosophy" should not be fundamentally inimical to the evangel. So far from leading men "to the gates of the gospel" a philosophy of abstract Reason leads, however unintentionally, to naturalistic conclusions. It is bound to trim the message of the Gospel till it fits into an impersonal pattern of Rationality. The postulates of such a Reason are no doubt "imperative" but they are not "convincing" (p. 85).

We deal with a major effort of interpretation in the work of Mr. Thomas. He has tried anew to make a modified form of idealist philosophy the theistic foundation of Christianity. He has made a splendid effort, but the best man cannot do the impossible. Mr. Thomas finds himself compelled to appeal from formal logic to a "unity of contradiction" (p. 88). In this he frankly follows Hegel. Life, he argues, "is far profounder and more complex than Formal Logic" (p. 273). Contradictions are said to be inherent in the relation of the Infinite and Finite (p. 273). No one need imagine for a moment then, that Mr. Thomas pretends to offer a philosophy of Rationality in which the union of all the dimensions of reality will be immediately penetrable by man's discursive intellect. It is to a *higher* Rationality that the appeal is made. Scarcely any serious philosopher to-day would do otherwise. That mystery out-stretches even the most penetrating efforts of man's intellect hardly a scientist or philosopher to-day denies. Thus we are face to face again with a simple alternative. Christianity really presupposes a Rationality that is *higher* than man can reach. It takes its position frankly on the doctrine of the self-contained Rational deity. It therefore does not believe in a union of contradictories. For God there are no unthought thoughts; He is the self-consistent ultimate Self-affirmative one who needs no correlative of irrationality in contrast with which He may define Himself. Such a God is really free. Such a God it is that has freely created the world according to a rational

plan which man can only in part understand. Such a God it is who alone can save by grace.

On the other hand all non-Christian philosophies, idealism no less than others, start with man. They first try to fix all reality by the pattern of formal logic. Then, driven to despair, lost in the woods of ultimate Irrationality, they resort to a logic of contradictions. Thus a philosophy of Rationality not based on the God of Scripture refutes itself by culminating in Irrationality.

If theological students are to be warned against Barthian irrationality, if science and philosophy students are to evaluate the "abstractions" of science aright they ought to be offered a truly rational philosophy, a philosophy rational from beginning to end, the philosophy based on the God of the Christian Scriptures.

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