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NOTICE

The members of the Commission on Education will be pleased to meet all persons interested in the Public Schools at the following times and places. Summerside; in the Market Hall on Tuesday, June 8th at 10 a m. Wellington; at the Public Hall on Wednesday June 9th at 2 p. m. Tignish, Tignish Hall, Thursday June 10th at 10 a. m. Alberton in Court House Friday, June 11th at 2 p. m.

Due notice will be given for meetings in Queen's and King's Counties.

S. N. ROBERTSON,
Secretary of the Commission.

Charlottetown, May 26th, 1909.

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DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

The Subject Taken By Rev. H. E. Thomas of This City at Recent Methodist Convention.

Read before a convention of Methodist Ministers of Prince Edward Island, held at Charlottetown, P. E. I. February, 1909.

In a consideration of the subject of the Divine Transcendence and Immanence we reach at once, the "CRUX" of many of those questions which assail to-day our Christian faith, and leave us oftentimes in doubt and disquietude. Were the question raised as to what is the one outstanding feature which distinguishes modern religious conceptions from those of another day the answer must be made that it consists in the Emphasis placed upon the doctrine of God's Immanence, if there be such a thing in the world as New Theology then we must recognize the fact that its fundamental postulate is the Immanence of God; in fact one might say that in considering God's Immanence we are really involved in the question of New Theology. It is this which lends importance to our subject and to sustain the point I use a few illustrations: Dr. Warschauer, who stood forth as the defender of Rev. R. J. Campbell against his assailants and who recently confessed his mistake in so doing, has this to say in his "The New Evangel," "the divine immanence, alike neglected by the agnostic philosophy of the last generation, and by the theology against which Agnosticism proved so damaging, furnishes that basal certainty from which the New Theology deduces its whole system." Listen to Rhoudda Williams as he replies to objections against the use of the term "New Theology." "I maintain its justification, Its foundamental idea that God is really in His World and not outside it is not new, but the adjustment of all other theological doctrines to this idea in the light of the present day knowledge, is new." When I turn to the eirenicon on the New Theology offered by Dr. Ballard I find that he gives first place to the claim of which New Theology for the Immanence of God. If we open that famous book of Rev. R. J. Campbell we are fair in judgment when we claim that all its positions are traceable to this one great basis of God's Immanence. We know also that this is the doctrine around which there wages that unbending warfare in The Roman Catholic Church known to us as "Modernism." If more evidence were needed I think it would be conceded that every preacher, modern in spirit has consciously or unconsciously adjusted all his doctrine conceptions to this one great doctrine of God's Immanence.

I have thus multiplied the references so that we might see clearly how important and practical are the issues involved in this discussion, and seeing this we are now ready to enquire whether we gain or lose by this much emphasized test of our faith. It can easily be shown I believe that rather than having anything here to fear we find much to strength en and sustain our faith.

When we affirm the Immanence of God we are certainly taking our stand upon a spiritual basis and we do not act our part well if we allow this doctrine to be presented as though it were a discovery of New Theology, or a product of new times. It is scriptural, and that means it is ancient, who would desire stronger language with which to express this phase of truth than that used in Psalm 139. O Lord thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence. If I ascend up into heaven thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me * * * * For thou hast possessed my reins, Thou has covered me in my mother's womb." Take a long leap from David to Paul and you have more philosophic language employed but the same truth. "In him we live and move and have our being." Can any immanental teaching be stronger than that? These two references are suggestive I believe of similar teaching from Genesis to Revelation.

The modern emphasis therefore is but a reinforcement, or if you prefer, a re-discovery of scriptural truth for from the Holy pages alone we would gain just such a conception of Deity as is expressed by that orthodox writer Dr. Fitchett in his Belief of Unbelief. "He dwells in the height of the Heavens, nay the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet he dwells, too, in the cup of the violet; He is present in the joy of a little child, in the sigh of the broken and contrite heart. He guides the planets thro space, but He watches too the flight of the sparrow; He numbers the footsteps of a child. From another viewpoint this doctrine becomes a strong weapon of our faith, when we seek for evidences of our christian belief from nature in all her varied forms. Thro all her changes nature reveals laws, laws which never change and these laws may properly be held forth as a proof and symbol of a God immanent in all changes from the formation of an Electron, to the formation of a crystal, from the guidance of an atom to the guidance of an earthquake upon the Straits of Messina. In view of what we know of nature's ways there is need for just such a conception of Deity as His Immanence presents. As Dr. Ballard says in "The True God" Pages 85 and 86: "The Deisno which only permits of the thought of an absentee God, and the careless anthropomophism which suggests for worship little more than a magnified man, are both alike as insufficient for all the higher needs of the modern humanity, as they are irreconcilable with that larger monotheism which alone is consistent with monism. Again he says: "It cannot be too plainly stated that todays acquaintance with the extent and methods of nature, compels the choice between Divine Immanence and Divine vacuity. And the Theism which protests against the latter must increasingly embody the former." When therefore God is placed in this relation to the universe we are in a position to reply to the materialist who says: "All is Law," by replying: "All is God," for law is but the evidence of His Immanence.

With this belief it is manifest that it is not so necessary now as it was formerly to solicit the evidence from miracles in order to prove God's existence in His world. It would be strange indeed if it were thought, that only the extraordinary, the supernatural, the miraculous were signs of intelligence. Surely the regular course of nature with its unbroken order of day, and night, and month, and seasons, speaks as truly of the God who fills the Universe with Himself as does the special, or supernatural course which we call a miracle, appropos indeed are the illustrations of Dr. Samuel Harris in his "Self Revelation of God" P. 3-17," Applied to ordinary life it would insist that while soldiers march keeping time with the music there is no thought guiding their movements, if they break into disorderly movements that would prove the presence and guidance of mind. If the Railroad train comes in every day at the same minute that proves that no mind regulated it. Only when it runs off the track and is delayed is the guidance of an Engineer revealed. If a merchant goes to his counting room and returns to his dinner at the same hour every day he acts irrationally; it is only when he acts haphazard that he reveals intelligence." The order therefore in the universe we submit as evidence of God's Immanence, and no discovery of the future, in sea, in sky, in air, in rock, or flower, or man can rob as of God, for Geologlist Botanist, Astronomer, Physiologist and Psychologist do but think God's thoughts after Him, do but reveal the method of his working, do but trace for us the foot prints of His stately march.

The Immenance of God one should notice, also, bears its relation to man's religious life, for the God who is so immanent in the world is no stranger to the heart of man.

"Wouldst thou with thy bounded sight,
Make survey of the Infinite,
Look right and left and everywhere

So says the german poet and catching his note the preacher will find much to inspire him as he points men to the God, who is immanent in Every man's Soul. We learn that every holy impulse, every good desire, every high ambition are evidence that God is our life and the Temple of our soul is holy. When the day's work is closed and there comes the feeling of regret and contrition as we remember the unkind word, the selfish act, the unchristlike temper of mind; joy should break through our swimming tears because this is the very best evidence that God is Immanent in our life.

"Every virtue we possess
And every victory won
And every thought of holiness"
Are his alone.

You may remember that Galbert Coe tells us of the boy who complained to his mother that although he persistently prayed yet prayer was never real to him, and how the wise mother suggested to him that possibly the fact that he had prayer instinct and the desire to pray might be the very best proof that prayer was real. The very best proof that prayer was answered, and likewise every instinct and sob, every whisper and thirst, and aspiration of the human spirit for Holiness and for God is proof that God is Immanent in our life and all ground is as sacred as that where in the presence of God Moses took the shoes from off his feet.

Having gone so far in one direction it would be proper under ordinary circumstances to now consider some of the errors and dangers involved in the emphasis placed upon this truth. This, however would require more time than is at my disposal and if we turn at once to a consideration of the Transcendence of God, it may be that these matters will appear in their true light and relation In passing I may express my conviction that a true representation of the Transcendence of God is a considertion of our time to as great a degree as that of the Immanence of God. During our last Conference I heard a brother minister say in the midst of a religious discussion that he did not believe that God was somewhere in the sky to be turned on as we turn water from a tap. Now in the literal sense no one will dispute this statement of the case, but from the view point of God's Transcendence I protest against all that is there implied. In any case it will serve to show that in order to maintain an intelligent christian Theistic belief, you and I must be ready to give answers to questions concerning the true relations of God's Immanence and Transcendence. Upon this point let me quote from Dr. Clarke, in his "Outline of Christian Theology," P130, "Transcendence without Immanence would give us Deism, cold and barren; Immanence without Transcendence would give us Pantheism, fatalistic and paralyzing, but neither is without the other; the the two consist in God." I quote also from W. L. Walker to the same effect. In reference to the distinction between Immanence and Transcendence he has this to say.

"The failure to make this distinction is, we believe an error of much of our modern thought concerning God in His relation to the Universe, and the source of most of the difficulties that are felt today to militate against a Theistic conception of the Universe."

So that I may as strongly as possible affirm the Transcendency of God I take this main position, that the Immanence of God in the Universe never implies the Immanence of God as He is in the Fullness and Perfection of his being.

When we assert the Transcendence of God we mean that God is the First Cause, the rational principle, and sustaining life of all things. He is neither an aspect of them, nor is He dependent upon them, on the contrary, they are an aspect of Him and entirely dependent upon Him. All things begin, continue and end in Him, but in Him as a Free, Unconditioned and Perfect Being

Whatever may be the manifestation of God's Wisdom, and Reason, and Power, and Beauty, we may be certain that these attributes are not completely manifested in the world which we know. All of God's Beauty and Power are not manifested in a star, no matter how broad be its diameter, or how far reaching its beams. God possesses Beauty and Power contained by no star flung forth from His hand. God transcends the star says Dr. Lidgett in "The Christian Religion," P. 497,

"The Infinite riches of His life are not completely manifest in the world which we know as it already exists. The deeper and wider fulfilments of the future are already real to Him. What they ultimately become will be a manifestation of what He eternally is."

I have taken the ground that God as He is in the fulness and perfection of His being, is not Immanent in the Universe and in the face of much of modern teaching, I believe that we may successfully show, that in this sense God is not in the Universe to any degree. Is God in a flower? Certainly not in this sense. Is God in his creation? No! Is God in man? No! Let us enquire for a moment regarding the nature of God. How shall we know Him? How distinguish Him? Who is He? It is elementary to reply that God is Infinite. God is absolute. God is unconditioned. But how can the Infinite dwell in the finite? How can the Absolute make his home in the relative? How can the unconditioned gain an entrance into the conditioned? God I hold as He is in the Infinite Perfection of his Being is not found in flower, or star, or fish, or man. Is not in his creation. He transcends it for the Heaven of Heavens can not contain Him. But is God in any sense in his creation? Yes, in this sense that the God who transcends it, the God who is unconditioned, conditions Himself; conditions His Reason, Conditions His Order, Conditions His Power, Conditions, His Beauty, and becomes Immanent in His creation, but it is in and in this alone.

If one might be so bold as to attack a very popular form of philosophy in our day, it is here it seems to me its position breaks down. God does not come to a realisation of Himself in his creation. At best there can only be such a realisation of his Power and Order and Reason as the creation permits. I call to my aid here, W. L. Walker in "Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism. P. 426: "It is manifest that our world is only one of innumerable scenes of creative activity, and that it bears witness to a constant process of development, the end of which is not yet reached. The whole of that which God is cannot be present and working at any given moment in any particular world—only so much of the Divine rational power can be at any moment so working or expressed in any particular world, while of course, God is behind it all, the source of all the working, which really takes place in Him as transcendant. This same writer says on P. 278, "In order to create at all or form or evolve the world, He must have prior existence in all the fulness of the highest life that can be realized in finite forms of being. In order to create, He must as it were Eternally go out from Himself into the creation."

But there is a phrase of this matter which especially concerns us as christian believers for God stands in moral and ethical relations to man, now, in all earnestness let us enquire of those who have apotheosized God's immanence, as to the degree of God's love or Righteousness which is to be found in a rose in the garden, or an alligator in the river, none whatever we must reply and it is here Transcendency asserts itself. Love alone can reveal love, and that human life in which God has been most Immanent, and which has been most responsive to Divine influences, has yet failed to express the love of God in its fullness. But there was one and one alone who was the effulgence of the Father's glory and the impress of his substance; One, alone "filled with all the fullness of God;" One alone who has been made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Here we have transcendency, here we have an ethical authority over us, here we have love declaring itself to be life's supreme law, here we have perfection to inspire, wisdom to guide, strength to help us "of his fullness," (transcendency, if you like) "have we all received and grace for grace." A position like this gives us good ground upon which to stand and defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is reasonable, it is tenable, and comforts well with other articles of our christian system. Standing on this firm basis we can look up to the glorious throne where sits the great king, before whom we bow as loyal subjects; can earnestly seek for the power from on high, whilst at the same time we know that this power now worketh mightily in them who believe; can move forward in christian enterprises depending upon that Holy Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and from the Son, that spirit which was immanent in creation at its dawning, hovered oer the Son of God at his birth and now speaks to every soul of man, here we find grounds for beseeching men to be reconciled to God and to so cleanse their life from all uncleanness that God with his transcendence may fill the temple of their soul, here we find a true, persuasive to prayer. Prayer to the all powerful sovereign, prayer to the source of power and life, prayer that is real, prayer that persists, prayer that prevails, here we find room for forgiveness of sins by Him, against whom alone we have sinned. Here is a conception of a God, who is at once transcendant and immanent, a conception satisfying to the heart illuminating to the mind and filling the whole soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Being of beings, May our praise
Thy courts with grateful fragrance fill;
Still may we stand before thy face,
Still hear and do thy sovereign will,
To Thee may all our thoughts arise,
Ceaseless, accepted sacrifice.

Time fails me in this brief paper to deal with this subject in its relation to Pantheism, to Deism, to Idealistic Philosophy and many other kindred positions so boldly taken to-day, but I may again iterate that the need of our day is for some such fair representation of God's relation to the universe as Creator Sovereign and Saviour, which while it recognises and sets forth his true immanence yet does not even for one moment remove from His Transcendent Throne, Him whom through endless days the angels praise.

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