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pendent judgment. He always seemed to be reading the Bible for the first time, and was therefore impressed by many things which escape the attention of the casual reader, or even of the close student in search of support for various hypotheses. Everywhere in these pages we have the testimony of the eyewitness, one who has reflected on the meaning of the Tower of Babel under the shadow of the mighty ruins of the ziggurat at Borsippa, or who has read the Pilgrim Psalms as he journeyed westward in the hot days and cold nights along the Euphrates, with the camp fires of the Bedouin gleaming threateningly around him, or who has sought to look beneath the surface of Jerusalem and thus to reconstruct the true background for the dramatic scenes which have crowded its narrow streets throughout the ages. The reviewer used to feel, himself, that he could never penetrate the mysteries of that most fascinating city in the world until the soles of his feet had become so sensitive that he could distinguish between a twenty-foot layer of débris and a forty-foot layer just by walking over them. As one reads his pages, the joy which Dr. Peters experienced in revisiting the Holy City only a few months before his death, his growing certainty of the genuineness of the tradition as to many of the sacred sites (the City of David, the Temple, the Holy Sepulchre, Gethsemane, the Praetorium), become contagious. The fact is, the force and value of tradition are factors which those who have never felt its mysterious power, because the privilege of a lengthened sojourn in the Near East has been denied them, are tempted to underestimate. It was an especially kindly providence which permitted this veteran traveler and excavator and devout biblical student to revisit at the end of his life the scenes he loved so well, and to record for us his final impressions of what they signify for the understanding of the Scriptures.

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CREATIVE CHRISTIANITY

For two or three decades Christian theology has been hampered with a negative conception of the significance of historical criticism. The historical investigation of the Bible and of the events of Christian history has made it evident that traditional views must be revised in the light of more exact knowledge. Inasmuch as theology in the past has undertaken to set forth an unchanging truth, this demand of historical criticism has been unwelcome. For the most part theologians have attempted

to redefine the nature and method of theology so as to avoid any entangling alliance with the tentative and varying outcome of historical criticism.

There are signs that a new era of theological scholarship is beginning. Historical investigation has now come to be primarily social in its character. It discloses the vital movements of human thought and activity, and uses the records of the past as the means by which we may discover the rich content of ongoing human life. Professor George Cross has made a valuable contribution to this conception of theology in his recent lectures delivered on the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation at Yale.¹ He begins by stating with admirable candor the significance of critical historical study. The general outcome of this criticism may be said to be the elimination of the possibility of any fixed and final tests. We discover that the personality, with its ideals and its limitations, of every reporter of historical facts is so blended with the facts which he records that what we have in any document is quite as much the personal confession of faith of the writer as it is a record of historical events. Moreover, it is impossible by any process of historical analysis to draw with absolute certainty a dividing line between the facts-in-themselves and the person-in-himself who records the facts. The two are indissolubly blended in the record. This means that in our Bible we have the convictions of the writers and compilers so interwoven with the events which they narrate that we are inevitably left with a large personal equation in the biblical records. On the older hypothesis that we ought to seek to attain the unmixed divine as the basis of our theology, such an interweaving of the human element is a disturbing factor. Professor Cross, however, sees clearly that a constructive use may be made of this personal equation. If, instead of regarding the biblical writers as mere channels through which a message comes to us, we give them their proper creative place in the making of an ever-developing faith, we have the clue to a conception of religion which the author happily calls "creative" Christianity.

Professor Cross makes use of this aspect of the matter by turning theological interpretation in the direction of personal idealism. In his second lecture, entitled "The Discovery of the Perfect Personality," he sympathetically sketches the various attempts to describe Jesus as the absolutely perfect one, and shows how these descriptions, in so far as they leave the character of Christ sharply contrasted with humanity, will require some artificial means of bridging the chasm. The perfect

¹ *Creative Christianity*. By George Cross. New York: Macmillan, 1922. 164 pages. \$1.50.

personality of Jesus is actually to be discovered in the creative life which he produces in those who have come into contact with him. Thus the perfect personality is best defined, not in terms of opposition to humanity, but in terms of creative personal relationship by which those who become Christians share the life of Jesus.

If this is the significant thing about Christianity, it faces us toward the future rather than toward the past. The third and fourth lectures deal with this future-looking Christian faith. The making of a better world is the characteristic outcome of this discovery of the power of creative personality. For a long time that better world seemed to be out of reach of human endeavor, and so was located in a transcendent realm. But our present-day Christianity is daring to hope for the transformation of our present social order through the power of a creative social Christianity. The final lecture indicates the consequences of this faith in the realm of cosmic interpretation. Here Dr. Cross builds on the foundations of an idealistic philosophy and indicates that just because the idealist, with his creative interpretation, is part and parcel of the cosmos his interpretation is more valid than any account which omits the factor of personal consciousness. Believing in the unity of the cosmic order, we are compelled to attribute to the whole of it the spiritual realities which we find in any part of it. The personal faith of the Christian thus becomes the ground for a religious interpretation of the world with its hope of eternal life.

The suggestiveness of Dr. Cross's book is out of all proportion to its modest size. It is a sign of a new constructive era that theologians have passed beyond the Ritschlian attempt to make theology immune from historical criticism, and are beginning to make positive and constructive use of the social interpretation of history which is so fruitful in other realms of thought. One may raise the question whether the particular solution toward which Professor Cross points does not depend too much upon an a priori idealistic philosophy to be convincing to everybody. It is probable that some theologians will take a less metaphysical pathway. They will define Christianity in terms of a social movement, namely, the life of the ever-living church rather than in terms of so individualistic a religious philosophy as that which Professor Cross suggests. But the conception of Christianity as a creative force rather than as an officially fixed system will give new vitality and impetus to theological interpretation.

The interpretation of Christianity by a representative of a church which claims to possess its authority on the basis of an official ministry descending in unbroken line from the apostles is always of great interest

to dissenters. As a rule these interpretations show an admirable zeal and devotion coupled with an exclusively rigid conception of a valid ministry. It is refreshing to read so broad-minded and searching a message as that of Dr. Leighton Parks, the gifted rector of St. Bartholomew's Church in New York.¹ Written in brilliant style and with charming candor, this book will doubtless challenge fruitful discussion. Dr. Parks first confronts us with the formidable question as to whether our civilization can endure. His recital of the number and the power of the forces which may overthrow our culture is enough to make everyone stop and think. He declares that the spiritual force of Christianity will possibly be the determining factor in the answer to this question which confronts the world. In the light of this unexampled responsibility and opportunity he inquires whether the churches are equal to the task. He finds that at present Christianity is weakened and divided by sectarian disputes. Sectarianism he rightly sees to be an expression of the habit of claiming exclusive divine authority for some one branch of the Christian church. Such a claim of authority means that men are always looking backward and are attempting to vindicate a divine commission which they believe to have been officially given. In particular, Dr. Parks boldly criticizes the proposals for organic church unity which are advocated by some leaders in his own communion. In emphatic terms he declares that neither his communion nor any other can claim to be the sole "true" church in contrast to other bodies. He would recognize without qualification the entire validity of all Christian denominations. When this is once recognized he finds that there is as a matter of fact a real spiritual unity of Christendom which binds men together in a common purpose and a common faith shared by Christians of all periods of history and of all varieties of belief and practice. Says he: "I see no sign that the spiritual unity of the church has been broken. What I do see is that another sort of unity has been substituted for the original one, and that because of that the rivalries of the churches have been increased. I think the time has come when we should ask ourselves whether a more spiritual union should not be sought."

Having thus eliminated all suspicion of superior claims on his own part, Dr. Parks then indicates why he believes that the Protestant Episcopal church has a great mission. He holds that it is in a peculiarly favorable position to bring to realization that actual spiritual unity which has been obscured because of emphasis upon technical questions of authority. The Christian church which is to serve the needs of the world

¹ *The Crisis of the Churches*. By Leighton Parks. New York: Scribner, 1922. xxx+256 pages. \$2.50.

today must make abundant room for self-determination, must recognize that the forms and the creeds of historical Christianity stand as landmarks of a living and growing faith rather than as rigid forms to which life must perpetually be molded. The Apostles' Creed, for example, is to be used not as an adequate intellectual expression of the faith of today, but as a great historical statement of the faith of an earlier century. In repeating it we signify our purpose to continue the spiritual vitality of that faith in our own day and to interpret it in our own language.

While this book is not a theological treatise, it nevertheless implies a conception of Christianity which is historical in the best sense of the word. It would conserve for us the driving power of the church in the past centuries without in any way impairing our freedom and our responsibility to create expressions of Christianity adequate in our day for the task which confronts us. When leaders of all denominations shall come to share Dr. Parks's point of view the practical unity of Christendom will not be far away, and this newly united Christendom will be one which makes a positive and constructive use of the best historical scholarship.

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For a review of *The Reconstruction of Religion*, by Charles A. Ellwood, see article, "Social Science and Religion," by Harry F. Ward.