

THE MAKING OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND

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PREFACE

IT HAS long been the habit of authors to furnish their books with a preface. They thus take the public into their confidence, explaining why they have written the book at all, and giving an account of its genesis and such other matters as may be expected to satisfy an always natural and sometimes lively curiosity. A preface also makes it possible for an author handsomely to acknowledge his debts to others.

Having his hand well in and being reluctant to conclude an enterprise in which he has been so long engaged, the author often goes on to furnish an introduction, which may clear the ground for the more serious and weighty matter of the book itself, and properly prepare the reader for that which he is so soon to encounter. The dividing line between a Preface and an Introduction may be so uncertain as to make it possible, with no great loss to the particular book thus introduced and with some general economy of print and paper and a reader's time, to combine the two.

Any book which has substance enough to justify its adventuring into a world already well supplied with books, is always deeply rooted in the general order of the literature to which it belongs and draws its content from many sources, which the author with the best will in the world can not enumerate. It is also likely to have been long thought over and so to share something of the mystery which attaches to any growth, however modest.

If the book which this foreword introduces had really been written by a teacher of the difficult art of preaching, a reader might reasonably be persuaded that the author had taken considerable pains to leave a field in which he might be expected to be a specialist and adventure into the demesne of his colleagues in theology and church history, with little enough ex-

cuse for so doing and by way of being a warning rather than an example.

But this particular book is the avocation of a pastorate, being mostly conceived and partly written during the latter part of my pastorate in Detroit. There was an interval between the beginning and ending of it long enough to be reflected in the construction of at least the earlier chapters, and to be responsible for some things in expression and connection which I could wish changed. The book itself reflects the author's long interest in church history and religious temperament, and a way into which he has grown of trying to connect the two and finding in their reconciliation the key to many otherwise puzzling things. A good many years ago I gave considerable attention to the classics of religious Confessional literature and made a book of such studies, given to a world, which received it placidly enough under the title "The Pilgrims of the Lonely Road."

I came to know thus that the sources of the great creative theologies are in the experiences of the men who cast their systems out of what has been first molten in their souls and so make doctrine and history. Also that because of the range of these experiences, a vast and inclusive movement like Christianity would naturally organize itself, down to divisive varieties of detail, about the forces and understandings released by these creative temperaments.

A few years later I studied all this in action in our own time in those outstanding and unstandardized forms which offer, as William James said, the best laboratory material and called the result "Modern Religious Cults and Movements." These two books seemed to demand a third which should trace the action and interaction of the varieties of religious temperament through the course of church history. This book is the last, therefore, of a trilogy, though its considerate publisher has been good enough to suggest still one more, "Faiths Ancient and Modern," material for which is already partly in hand and which should appear after a not too long interval.

If I may write with perfect frankness, the sense of the difficulty of the task here undertaken has weighed upon me during

the five years this book has been in gestation, leaving me no satisfaction of mind till I had finished it and a very qualified satisfaction thereafter. It is the sort of thing only a specialist in the whole great region could adequately carry through and only a scholar establish in undisputed solidities.

Dr. Percy Gardner's "The Growth of Christianity" supplied the suggestion around which the organization of what is here presented took form—though with considerable additions. The organization is in a way structural in the development of Christianity itself and one has only to follow the contour of the Christian centuries from peak to peak to find it. But Dr. Gardner supplied a guiding vision.

The first title I chose was "The Changing Phases of the Christian Ideal" and I am still persuaded there was much in that title to commend it. The title finally chosen was itself suggested by Stawell and Marvin's extremely creative book "The Making of the Western Mind." The discerning critic will likely discover evidences of the effect of the change of titles upon the book.

I can only hope that somewhere in a book in debt to Gardner for organization contours and to Marvin for title suggestion there is something which can be claimed as the author's own offering. A good deal of my reading and some of my meditation for a long period has gone into the general substance of what follows. I have taken great pains to acknowledge every indebtedness for which a footnote can be supplied, but if the discerning reader discovers the source of this or that in general authorities and the general mind of the time—he will doubtless be quite right. I have used recognized authorities in every department to check off the accuracy of facts and positions and, in most cases, two or three whose names are as useful as a longer list. Guinebert's "Christianity" appeared just as the book was getting finished. He is a brilliant authority in the new historical interpretation of Christianity and I have had a certain satisfaction in finding the general approaches here set out supported by so eminent a specialist.

Some of my colleagues in Auburn Seminary read chapters belonging to their special departments. Their gracious services are

acknowledged in the proper places. I am in debt to them for criticism and correction but they have no responsibility for positions taken or conclusions advanced.

The plan which is here developed is uniformly followed: to establish the historical basis for the successive phases of developing Christianity, then consider the effect upon the general mind of the church. In the actual structure of the book the historical has taken, perhaps, a larger place than the title would seem to justify and there is an alternative of discussion and generalization which, if it had been carried through as it might be, would have made a book of different character; not quite so fact burdened and freer from matter of more interest to the theologians than to the general reader. But I found it impossible to go on in any chapter without establishing the fact basis for its conclusions. A few chapters, not too many I trust, use technical matter. I do not see how that could be helped. If one is to consider the making of the doctrinal mind, one must deal with the doctrines as they took form, and so with the rooting of Christianity in the hopes and expectations—which we call prophecy—of the Hebrew people.

Many of the subjects here considered belong to controversial regions and sharply divide the Christian mind. It is quite impossible, I am persuaded, to reach conclusions which can satisfy everybody. Any man who writes upon such themes will be influenced by forces far more subtle than any statement of fact he can manage.

Points of view, then, which are native to my own mind have left their mark upon these pages. The discerning critic, again, would be able to place the author in his own classification of temperaments and attitudes. I can only say that I have tried to be as fair as I know how and if the strength of positions to which I was not born is somehow missed, it is through an inescapable limitation which deserves pity rather than blame.

For the Christian mind is strangely hard to write about. It is a mind of central unities with marginal variations so opposed as sometimes to hide its unity. It is the creation of manifold forces working through almost three thousand years, and it is the creation of a lonely teacher whose brief ministry began

and ended in the high-lands of Palestine. It has a power to subdue changing civilizations and diverse races to its own essential character and yet it has taken colour from every considerable influence which has touched it, every outstanding situation of which it has been a part.

There are sub-levels of temperament which lie beneath the Christian mind to give it its dominant qualities. I would not say that all its defences of polity and its interpretation of liturgies and symbols have been word patterns embroidered upon forms and attitudes created by the persistent and elemental, but to a degree that is true.

The mystic, the rationalist and the administrator have divided the empire of the Christian mind between them and, having drawn the frontiers of their provinces, have defended and explained positions taken in answer to some deeper necessity of their souls. The Christian mind has been created by these profoundly various approaches to the mind of Jesus, by inheritances older than the Gospels and by the interplay of the forces, the passions, the races, and the destinies of all of Europe and a little of Asia and Africa for two thousand years.

The outcome has been the historic communions, the great creeds, the wealth of liturgies haunted by old memories and older hopes and the Christian attitude toward life and all its issues seen and unseen, temporal and eternal.

There has been nothing like it since our knowledge of our humanity and its ways began, and the story of how it has all come to pass would be the most wonderful story in the world—if only one knew how to tell it.

Here is the key to the understanding of these differences which are of such serious concern to all who dream of a united Christendom. The knowledge of this will not make the resolution of our difficulties more easy. Nothing is so persistent as a human attitude matured through long periods of time, incarnate in massive institutions and supported by pride and loyalty and ancient habit. But if we should recognize the deep rooting of these venerable growths in varieties of temperament and inheritances, and recognize at the same time how inevitable it has all been, we should be kinder in our judgments

of one another and gladly confess the reality of the Christian revelation in those whose mind about it is not, in these marginal regions, our own. Whatever there is to say beyond this I leave to the book itself to say.

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THE MAKING OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND

Chapter I

THE THREE GREAT INHERITANCES OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND

CHRISTIANITY began with three great inheritances: a hope, a song, and a law. These might seem an insubstantial foundation upon which to build a world religion, but the event has demonstrated their solidity. For the song was the grave music of the psalmists which sounds the heights and depths of the ways of God with the soul and the ways of the soul with God, and voices the religious assurances and experiences of the Hebrew people in universal forms for all devout to take and make their own. Christianity has kept the Psalms to supply a substance for its liturgies. It has made chants of their strophes and dignified them with majestic Latin titles. It has sung them in forbidden assemblies, woven their phrases into its prayers, and repeated their assurances in its pilgrimages through shadowed valleys and in engagements on desperate battlefields.

The inheritance of the Psalms carried with it the substance of Hebrew faith. There was, two thousand years ago, no other adequate point of departure for a world religion. Hebraism had its limitations but there was then nothing to compare with it in a lofty monotheistic faith and a rich assurance of the meaning of God for life. The Psalms were only the hymn book of the Jewish faith and, like hymn books ever since, the songs of it were written out of theologies and understandings

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of earth and sky, memory and history, the experiences of the state and singers whose names are lost in the general oblivion of time.

The Psalms have kept—as hymns always do—what is truest and most universal in the Hebrew faith. Christianity has had its own difficulties with other elements in its Hebrew inheritance. It has not found all the Psalms proper voices for the expression of its own spirit. But they have continued, as noble poetry always does, what is timeless and native to the needs and assurances of the soul. But if Christianity had done no more than take over and continue the finest elements of Hebrew faith and devotion, it would not be Christianity.

The law was the ethics of the Old Testament. The ethical system of Judaism was equally strong and unique. The Jew has associated righteousness and religion in most intimate and commanding ways. He offered their interwoven regnancy through his sacred books as God's authoritative revelation. His decalogue had been, he believed, written on tables of stone by the finger of God Himself; the very details of his sacrifices had been dictated by Jehovah. The ethics of the Jewish religion were centrally grounded in the fundamental moralities, but there was a marginal region in which an endless detail of religious ceremonial was given the same authority as the purely ethical. Christianity freed itself from Jewish ceremonial, though it did not find the process easy—and the conservative Christian mind has never questioned the divine enactment of the Jewish ritual and particularly the sacrificial system, making it all a "prophetic" anticipation of the final Christian system.

The Christian religion has built its ethics upon the Ten Commandments. It has continued and reinforced the Hebrew insistence upon the indivisible unity of religion and righteousness, the assurance that the moral law is the revelation of God's will, supported by divinely adjudicated rewards and punishments. Christianity has kept also something of the hard legalistic mind of its Judaic inheritance, an element hard to reconcile with the free and loving goodness taught by Jesus Christ. In the general strength and contour of it, the

moral law which Christianity has thus inherited is austere noble. It has supplied an ample support for conduct and legislation. It has become a part of the common law of the English-speaking peoples; it has invested morality with the awesome sanction of a divine decree and illumined the roads of duty with an unfailing light. But Christianity would not be Christianity if it had done no more than continue what was universal in the Jewish law.

I

Christianity is directly approached through a great hope

The hope was the Messianic expectation and the direct approach to Christianity is through this hope. A great religion like a great tree has a tremendous spread of root.

Christianity would not have maintained itself as an increasing force through the centuries unless on the human side it was strongly rooted in the most persistent and pregnant needs of the human spirit, and nothing is more persistent or pregnant than a commanding hope. Christianity holds its supreme place in history because it fulfilled a supreme hope. The tap-root of it is in the Hebrew expectation of the Kingdom of God and a heaven-sent Leader.

The elements which combine to create a great hope

The very greatest hopes are persistent aspects of creative idealism. They are born of conditions peculiar to no single time or place. They grow out of the passion of the oppressed for freedom, or the thwarted for opportunity, or the sorrowing for comfort, or the stained for forgiveness. Deeper still, if possible, is some sense of fretting maladjustment between ourselves and our general environment. A man makes any present order the homeland of his soul at sore cost to something within him which claims another birthright. If he can find no other avenue of escape, he builds himself, at least, some shining road of hope.

Once the mind is engaged upon a task like this there is no limit to its range. It will call imagination to its aid and build for itself a jeweled city, a state adorned with justice, peace,

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and righteousness. It will be compelled to consider whether its ideal order may be realized in this world or in another. It will speculate also on the course of the human history, and whether things have always been so bad, and whether men can manage their own deliverance or whether God alone can deliver them, and when and how.

Hope takes distinctive national and religious forms

There are, then in any long held hope, elements common to all human protest against unhappy state. Nothing else is so deeply involved in the contrasts of life, the mysteries of existence. Hope is the ageless appeal of humanity to an ultimate justice and love. But, if the hope has become a recognized expression of the idealism of a particular nation you will find in it some peculiar genius of the nation which conceived it, the prophets and poets who voiced it, and the circumstances which shaped and enriched it. Where the ruling interests of a people are religious and the prophet is the accredited spokesman of God, these hopes take a definitely religious and ethical line. Their realization is conditioned upon the religious faith and devotion of the people, and above all dependent upon the sovereign will of God.

The Jewish Messianic hope took this high ethical and religious line. Hebrew prophecy shares such backgrounds as we have been considering with other hopes and ideals, which have for one reason or another long fallen out of the common mind, but it developed them in its own peculiar way. A great fellowship of prophets, whose faith in God and understanding of Him begins a new epoch in the history of religion, make hope the motif of their message, and through their combined ministry the Jewish Messianic expectation emerges with certain massive and cumulative unity. Goodspeed defines it as "the fixed social belief of the Jewish people that Jehovah would deliver Israel and erect it into a glorious empire to which a conquered world would be subject." "The Messianic idea," says Knudson, "embraces at least four distinct elements. Primarily, it is concerned with the *new age* and the redemption of Israel, but with these ideas is associated the thought of Judgment, a judgment both upon foreign nations and upon

Israel, and to this again, is to be added the belief in a *personal Messiah*.”¹ These definitions, which might be endlessly enlarged upon from the massive literature upon the subject, are both too technical and too simple. We must know the mind of Israel and how the Hebrew people came to think of themselves as a chosen race with a birthright of destiny before we can understand the genesis of this expectancy at all.

II

So tremendous an adventure of the spirit naturally moves along a wide front. Even quite conservative scholars do not seek to focus every passage in the Old Testament, which breathes a hope or sings a song of expected deliverance, upon one point. It is always easy to see after some event upon which vast issues turned, how everything led up to it. But before the event great hopes and dreams are like searchlights playing along wide horizons; what they seek is there, but they will find it only by seeking. Prophecy is in a very true sense only the assumption of something which the prophet believes must happen because he sees all the facts and forces of his time fatefully converging upon it and because it is, besides, the will of God. The prophet is sure of the issue; but he cannot particularize it.

If the Messianic hope had ended with Jerusalem, and remained thereafter only an unfilled splendour of expectation for the Jew to puzzle over and adjust to the outcome of his checkered history as best he could, it would be no concern of Christian thought. It would be a fascinating theme for the student of ideals, and he could treat it with a freedom and insight now sadly wanting in many studies of it. It needs to be understood always from the inside through some sure imaginative sharing of the fateful destiny of the Jew. How can we make so splendid and strange a passion real unless we go down the streets of Babylon with the exiled, or see the Greek profane the temple, or watch a Roman soldier ride down a Jew who was in his way, while the people who suffered

¹*The Religious Teachings of the Old Testament*, p. 351.

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all this believed themselves God's elect and holding the future in fee?

But it did not end with Jerusalem. It was continued in two lines, neither of which could have lain within the most daring reach of the prophet's vision. The consciousness of favour and destiny in which Israel so long lived, has been fulfilled for the Jewish people beyond the dream of any prophet or any psalmist either. How could Isaiah have foreseen that his interpretation of history in terms of the will of God would control the devout thinking of civilizations not to be born for twenty centuries? Or how could the prophet of the exile know that his ideals of peace and justice would become the luring dream of nations yet unborn? Or how could the psalmists know that their music of faith and struggle and hope would be sung around the world?

*The true destiny
of Israel*

It was the appointed destiny of Israel, not to rule a little state from David's throne in gray old Jerusalem, but rather to lay the foundations upon which the faith and devotions of the ages should build their temples; to supply to liturgies their most majestic phrases; to furnish the jurisprudence of nations with its decalogues; to voice a hope which, reborn in Christianity, has lived across the ages. This is destiny enough for any race.

For the Messianic hope became a Christian inheritance and something more. Without it, humanly speaking, there would have been no Christianity at all, and without Christianity Jewish Messianism would be, save among the orthodox Jews, only one more fascinating chapter in the long history of human Utopias.

III

*We begin to trace
its historic de-
velopment*

But we need to deal a little more definitely with the development of Messianic hope in the Old Testament. Goodspeed traces this developments in so fine and clear a way as to make his divisions and subdivisions signposts to go by.² Back

²*Israel's Messianic Hope*, generally.

of all Old Testament prophecy is an ideal conception of man and his destiny. The Jewish religion shares with many other religions the retrospect of a ruined humanity and the anticipation of a redeemed humanity, but differs from them in its strongly stressed ethical elements. Sin has ruined paradise, and the assurance of victory over sin is the key to the hope of Paradise Restored. These dim and general expectations become more bright and definite in their hope of national home and glory and the expectation of the leader strong enough to guide the people toward a far-off but splendid destiny.

*The Jewish hope
of national
home and glory*

With the beginnings of the monarchy and a more regnant sense of national unity, the expectation of a royal nation appears; this is sustained by and, in turn, strengthens one of the tenacious and formative forces in Hebrew religion—the persuasion that the Jews are a chosen people, having Jehovah for their portion, whose they are by a blood-bond covenant. Such royal figures as David and Solomon—David preëminently—captured the imaginations of the people, and naturally of the psalmists, whose poetry, though always religious, was often both patriotic and occasional, when it was not the exquisite and timeless lyric of the travail and the triumph of the psalmist's own soul in his quest for God. Poets, being generous minded, have always sung the praises of reigning houses. It would be strange if the psalmist also were not sometimes a poet laureate, singing the glory of his king and yet, in his praise, anticipating another King, more truly great and royal.

Great words which still rule the realm of the ideal now begin to emerge—peace and justice and righteousness—each one of them a hope-lit summit against a background of shadowed actuality. The ideal king is to be a warrior or a royal bridegroom or a royal benefactor. Zion is to be his capital, the city of the Great King. One has only to repeat such phrases, all of them taken from the Messianic psalms, to see how deeply they are now established in the very heart of Christianity, sing themselves still in Christian hymns, voice themselves anew in Christian prayer.

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How history dealt with this hope The familiar course of Jewish history did more than postpone these hopes. It seemed in every successive phase of it always more deeply to deny them. History is full of contradictions, but I wonder if there is anywhere any witness to the force of a great hope more arresting than the Jew in his upland country, at the mercy of Philistia, or Syria, or Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylon, or Persia, or Greece, or the scavengers of the empire of Alexander, or Rome, or his own divided and embittered partisanships; never great, never free for long, but unconquerable in hope, tenacious in dreams, and dowering his expectation of the future with an always more ample splendour as the shadows of the present closed down forebodingly.

The prophets never doubted God Hope deferred often makes the heart sick, it also turns the saddened spirit searchingly back upon the causes of its disappointment. The prophets never doubted God. He was just and true. The fault, then, must be in the people themselves. Kings and commoners were adjourning the realization of the Divine purpose by their wickedness and impiety. National calamity, they passionately proclaimed, was a just punishment for individual and national sins; they had no hope of better things until the accounts had been balanced. This insight, this persuasion has persisted and still colours the Christian outlook upon history.

But the more sensitive felt that something more than justice was involved. Love also was involved, and love would neither let go nor be defeated. There is in Hosea, for example, a note of mercy and a haunting and dearly bought certainty that love is the one unconquerable force. Jehovah's love will reclaim and heal His backsliding people, the dew of God's mercy refresh a parched land and make it the Garden of the Lord.

IV

Isaiah's expectations The prophecies of Isaiah move between two expectations of a God-sent deliverer whose birth will be marked by wonder and who is to bear mighty symbolic names; the other that Jehovah