



The Foundation in Royce's Philosophy for Christian Theism

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THE FOUNDATION IN ROYCE'S PHILOSOPHY FOR CHRISTIAN THEISM.¹

THEISM is a philosophy, a system of thought about the ultimate nature of reality. Christianity is a religion, the relation of person to person—in Royce's words, a "form of communion with the master of life";² Christian theism is the form of philosophy reached by the reasoning which starts from the experience of the Christian life. In this brief paper which, from the limits of time imposed, must be mainly expository, only secondarily critical, and not in any degree constructive—I wish to set forth the teachings of Professor Royce which seem to me in essential harmony with those of Christian theism. My exposition is based largely, though not entirely, upon two works of what might be called his middle period, *The Conception of God* and *The World and the Individual*; and I have a two-fold justification for this restriction. In the first place, Royce says explicitly in the preface of *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) that he has no change to report in his "fundamental metaphysical theses"; and he characterizes the teachings of *The Problem of Christianity* (1914) as in "essential harmony with the bases of the philosophical idealism set forth in earlier volumes."³ My second reason for treating only incidentally the later books in which Dr. Royce concerns himself specifically with problems of religion is that these books avowedly or implicitly discuss religion in its non-theistic aspect. In *The Problem of Christianity* this limitation of the subject is avowed over and over again. Consideration of the relation between God and man is dismissed as a 'metaphysical issue'; and the discussion is restricted to 'human objects' in order 'deliberately [to] avoid theology.'⁴ Of necessity, therefore, if we seek the foundations of theism we must seek

¹ Substantially as read at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association, December 28, 1915.

² *Sources of Religious Insight*, p. 220.

³ *The Problem of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. X. Cf. Vol. II, pp. 292, 295.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 374.

them in the earlier and less predominantly ethical and psychological works of Professor Royce.

In *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (1892) Dr. Royce explicitly labels himself as "a theist."¹ In *The Conception of God* (1895 and 1897) he characterizes his view as "distinctly theistic and not pantheistic,"² and insists that "what the faith of our fathers has genuinely meant by God is . . . identical with the inevitable outcome of a reflective philosophy."³ The argument by which this theistic position is reached is so well-known that it need be suggested in only the briefest fashion. It will be found, in greater or less elaboration, in every one of Royce's books, beginning with *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. The realistic conception of reality external to mind is found to involve internal inconsistency⁴ and the universe is accordingly conceived as through and through ideal. This ideal world, in the second place, is shown to be rightly viewed only as a world of interrelated selves.⁵ And each of these selves, it is argued, directly knows—as well through its error as through its aspiration—the existence of a reality-greater-than-itself. This Greater Reality must, finally—in accordance with the personalistic premiss of the argument—be a Greater Self of which each lesser self is an identical part yet by which it is transcended.⁶ The specifically theistic form of this argument stresses the infinite possibility of error and thus leads inevitably to the conclusion⁷ that the transcending (yet immanent) Self is infinite, all-including. The characteristic features of this argument, as is well known, are, first, the completely empirical starting-point from facts of the scientific and the moral life, and, second, the substitution for a causal argument to the existence of God of an argument based, in Royce's phrase, on correspondence⁸

¹ P. 347.

² *The Conception of God*, second edition, p. 49.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴ Cf. especially, *The World and the Individual*, I, Lecture III.

⁵ Cf. especially, *The World and the Individual*, II, Lectures IV. and V.

⁶ Cf. *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 422 ff.; *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 380; *The Conception of God*, second edition, pp. 41 et al.; *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 298 f., *Sources of Religious Insight*, pp. 108 f.

⁷ Cf. *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, chapter XI, especially, pp. 424 ff., and *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, end of p. 425.

⁸ *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 354.

—the correspondence of individual purpose with super-individual experience. The outcome is the conception of the Universe as Absolute Self—as All-Knower to whom “is present all possible truth”;¹ as Infinite Will² realizing itself ‘in the unity of its one life.’ And this ‘Supreme Person’ is, furthermore, conceived as All-Enfolder,³ as organic unity of all the myriads of existent partial selves.

The main purpose of this paper, as already stated, is to point out the theistic conceptions inherent in the philosophical system so summarily formulated and, in particular, to emphasize the peculiarly Christian features of the teaching.

I. “God” in the words of the Westminster Catechism “is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” In essential conformity with this doctrine, Royce teaches that God is an infinite,⁴ or absolute,⁵ self-conscious⁶ person,⁷ an Individual,⁸ in fact “the only ultimately real individual,” to whom the whole temporal process is eternally present.⁹

There is no need to argue that the conception of God as spirit, or person, is fundamental to Christian theism but I must make good my assertion that Royce should be interpreted as using the words ‘self-conscious,’ ‘person,’ and ‘individual’ in what is *qualitatively* the sense in which they are applied to human beings. Christian theism is distinguished from many forms of ‘natural religion’ by its conception of God as essentially like-minded with us human selves. There can be no doubt that this is also Royce’s

¹ *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 424²; *The Conception of God*, pp. 12 f.; *The World and the Individual*, I, p. 426; *Ibid.*, II, pp. 299, 364; *Sources of Religious Insight*, p. 134.

² *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 452; *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 429 f., 436²; *The Conception of God*, pp. 13, 202 f., 272; *The World and the Individual*, I, pp. 459², 461; *Ibid.*, II, p. 398.

³ *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 435, 441; *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 373², 379⁴, 418²; *The World and the Individual*, I, pp. 341, 418³.

⁴ *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 434 et al., 483.

⁵ *The Conception of God*, and *The World and Individual*, *passim*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 336; *Conception of God*, p. 302.

⁷ *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 380; *The Conception of God*, p. 349; *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 418.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I., pp. 40,

⁹ *Ibid.*, II.

teaching about the Absolute. "Unless," he says, "the Absolute knows what we know when we endure and wait, . . . when we long and suffer, the Absolute in so far is less and not more than we are."¹ In truth, all that exists, including my own feeling and thought and percept, exists only by virtue of being experienced by the Absolute Self.

To prove the equivalence of the Absolute to the Christian's God it is, in the second place, necessary to show that by 'Absolute Self' Royce means a genuine person who "is . . . and knows us,"² in whose 'presence' I may stand,³ who "values and needs" my "deed";⁴ and, conversely, that he does *not* mean by 'Absolute Self' a mere aggregate of finite selves; that his self-conscious, absolute person is not an unknown Absolute 'coming to consciousness' in the totality of finite, or partial, selves. In truth, Professor Royce has fully guarded himself against this essentially pluralistic interpretation of his doctrine. "The Absolute Unity of Consciousness," he writes, "contains not merely finite types of self-consciousness but the . . . consciousness of its own being as Thinker, Experiencer, Seer, Love, Will."⁵ By this statement Dr. Royce invests the Absolute with a 'consciousness of its own' explicitly contrasted with 'finite types of consciousness.' In the following words he attributes to the Absolute *both* the human and the more-than-human experience. "I hold," he says, "that all finite consciousness *just as it is in us*—ignorance, striving, defeat . . . narrowness—is all present from the Absolute point of view but *is also* seen in unity with the solution of problems . . . the overcoming of defeats . . . the supplementing of all narrowness."⁶ By these words Royce clearly indicates that, in his view, the Absolute has an experience transcending, though not 'external to,' that of the human selves. Many other quotations might be made to substantiate my conclusion that the Absolute of Royce's system is 'a person' *in the*

¹ *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 364.

² *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 471.

³ *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 150.

⁴ *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, pp. 396-397.

⁵ *The Conception of God*, p. 301.

⁶ *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 302. Italics of second phrase mine.

sense in which the Christian's God is a person, and neither an aggregate nor an Unknown Reality. A similar conclusion must be drawn from Royce's trenchant criticism of Bradley's conception of an Absolute Experience which is not to be regarded as an Absolute Self. "The Absolute," Royce concludes "escapes from selfhood and all that selfhood implies, or even transcends selfhood, only, by remaining to the end a Self."¹

This conclusion can not, however, fairly be stated without consideration of the question whether it rightly represents the outcome of Professor Royce's most recent thinking. In his later books *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, *Sources of Religious Insight* and *The Problem of Christianity* the expression 'Absolute Self' occurs incidentally or not at all; and the experience, referred to in all these books, which transcends and completes that of the human self is variously known as the 'wider' or 'superhuman' or 'superindividual insight,'² 'the conscious and superhuman unity of life'³ or 'conspectus of the totality of life';⁴ and, finally, as the 'Beloved Community.'⁵ We may profitably neglect the vaguer and less closely analyzed terms 'superhuman insight' and 'unity of life' and confine our attention to the problem presented to us by Dr. Royce's explicit statement of "the thesis . . . that the essence of Christianity, as the Apostle Paul stated the essence, depends upon regarding the being [called] . . . the 'Beloved Community' as the true source, through loyalty, of the salvation of man"⁶ and by his further declaration that he holds "this doctrine . . . to be both empirically verifiable within the limits of our experience and metaphysically defensible as an expression of the life and spiritual significance of the whole universe." Our problem of interpretation is precisely formulated in the question: does Royce intend either to supplant or to reinterpret his earlier conception of the Absolute Self by the doctrine of the Beloved Community? An affirmative answer

¹ *The World and the Individual*, I, p. 552.

² *Sources of Religious Insight*, pp. 108, 112 et al.

³ *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, p. 357, 376.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 395, Cf. pp. 369, 372.

⁵ *The Problem of Christianity*, *passim*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 26. Cf. p. 417 and II, p. 390.

to the question would of course invalidate the conclusion, based on the study of Royce's earlier books, that his position coincides with that of the Christian theist, for every theist distinguishes between God and the church.¹ To the discussion of this problem the next following paragraphs are devoted.

Unquestionably, Royce seems by certain statements to make the universal community equivalent to the Self of his earlier books. He declares "this essentially social universe . . . to be real, and to be in fact the sole and supreme reality—the Absolute,"² and he asks: "What kind of salvation does it offer? . . . What does it call upon a reasonable man to do?" Yet, in spite of expressions like these, I believe that Royce does not actually identify the Absolute Self with the Universal Community. His meaning, as I conceive it, is more exactly stated when he says that "the divine life is *expressed* in the form of a community" and that "the whole real world is the *expression* of one divine process . . . the process of the Spirit."³ 'To be expressed by' does not mean 'to be constituted by'; and the 'divine life' and 'the spirit' are distinguished from the 'community' and from the world, though not external to them.⁴ This is the meaning, also, of the repeated assertion that the real world, conceived in Charles Peirce's fashion, as a vast system of signs, "contains the interpreter of these signs. . . . Its processes," Royce adds, "are infinite in their temporal varieties. But their interpreter, the spirit of this universal community,—never absorbing varieties nor permitting them to blend—compares, and, through a real life, interprets them all."⁵ The plain implication of these passages is that 'interpreter' and 'spirit' not only include but transcend world and church. Thus, it is at least compatible with the main trend of *The Problem of Christianity* to suppose that Royce, while primarily conceiving Christianity in its relation to the church, or beloved community, none the less distinguishes God as spirit, counsellor, or interpreter from

¹ Cf. *The Problem of Christianity*, I, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 296; cf. pp. 281, 390.

³ *The Problem of Christianity*, II, pp. 388, 373. Italics mine.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 359, 362, 373.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 291, 324; cf. p. 272.

the church in which he expresses himself and from the world which he interprets. (The Christian theologian will not fail to remark the virtual identity, explicitly stressed by Royce, between God conceived as spirit indwelling in the beloved community and the Holy Spirit, third Person of the Christian Trinity.¹ The conception of the Beloved Community thus illuminates one of the most dimly apprehended of Christian doctrines.)² A second confirmation of this view, that Royce distinguishes God from the community, is gained by a scrutiny of the argument by which he seeks to establish the existence of the community as 'a sort of supra-personal being'³ with 'a mind of its own.'⁴ The argument, like most of those in Royce's later books, differs *toto cælo* from the closely articulated, logically ordered reasoning of his strictly metaphysical works. It consists partly in the observation that custom, language, and religions are products of community life⁵ and partly in the significant teaching that an individual "may love his community as if it were a person."⁶ But all this proves not at all that a community is a self, or person, but merely—to quote Royce himself—that it 'behaves' and is treated 'as if' a person.

This interpretation of Royce's conception is in complete harmony with the detailed teaching of a relatively recent paper.⁷ "God," he writes, "as our philosophy ought to conceive him, is indeed a spirit and a person; but he is not a being who exists in separation from the world, simply as its external creator. He expresses himself in the world, and the world is simply his own life as he lives it out. . . . You can indeed distinguish between the world as our common sense, properly but fragmentarily, has to view it and as our sciences study it . . . and God, who is

¹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 14 ff. It may be noted that this doctrine is in harmony with Hegel's teaching, though entirely independent of it.

² The two preceding sentences have been added to the paper as read.

³ *The Problem of Christianity*, I, p. 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62; cf. II, p. 87.

⁵ *The Problem of Christianity*, I, p. 62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67; cf. p. 101 and II, pp. 91 ff.

⁷ "What is Vital in Christianity." Prepared for a series of addresses to the Young Men's Christian Association of Harvard University in 1909. In *William James and Other Essays*.

infinitely more than any finite system of natural facts or of human lives can express. . . . This entire world is present at once to the eternal, divine consciousness as a single whole, and this whole is what the absolute chooses as his own expression."¹ Evidently Royce teaches, to use the traditional theological phraseology, not only the immanence but the transcendence of God; he conceives God not only as "the divine being" who is "the very life of the community"² but as a spirit who views the world "from above."³

II. Royce's doctrine of the relation of man to God more obviously coincides with the teaching of Christian theism. In conformity with the profoundest Christian conceptions he holds (a) that God shares every human experience, and that the life which man shares with God is essentially good, not evil; (b) that every human being is an expression of God's individuating will; (c) that the human self has a relative freedom; that he may and actually does, act in opposition to the divine will and that his sin must be atoned for; (d) that the human self is an essentially social being.

(a) The Christian conception, based on the Master's teaching, of God as father, although not literally an innovation in religious doctrine, was so vitalized by the life and words of Jesus that it rooted itself in the hearts of men. Perhaps the most fundamental contribution of Royce to Christian thought consists precisely in the fact that he argues the inherent metaphysical necessity of this conception which Jesus revealed to his disciples and which traditional theology laboriously tries to establish by a 'cosmological' argument to God as 'first' of temporal causes or by a design-argument based on arbitrarily selected facts. To Royce, on the other hand, this doctrine is an immediate consequence of the conception of God as All-Experiencer, as Absolute Knower. For, according to his absolutistic yet personalistic philosophy, the percepts, the thoughts, the sorrows, the fidelities of every least human self are real only in so far as the Absolute Self

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 167-169.

² *The Problem of Christianity*, II, p. 75.

³ "What is Vital in Christianity," *op. cit.*, p. 168.

experiences them and "knows [them] to be whatever they are."¹

Even in its supreme conception of God as suffering, as 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' and 'afflicted in our affliction,' the Christian doctrine that God is Father of men follows at once from the absolutist's conception of God—and from this conception only. The pluralistic theist, who teaches that God shares human experience, must meet insistent difficulties: How should God know me if I am separate from him? And how can he share my experience when he is all-wise and all-powerful and I am so palpably ignorant and so piteously ineffective? But this Roycean God is my Greater Self; I am 'identically a part' of him. I exist, and even my erroneous conception exists, only as each is a transcended object of his experience. He is indeed afflicted in my affliction, for it is real only as he experiences it.

At this point emerges another peculiarly Christian feature of Royce's theism. "God, in his being," the Westminster catechism continues, "is wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." But Christian philosophy from its very beginning has found difficulty in justifying God and has found itself obliged to sacrifice now the belief in God's goodness, now the conviction of his power, to the flinty facts of pain, stupidity, and sin. Royce's philosophy is, as all readers of him know, an optimistic conception of a good God. It is an invincible optimism for it cherishes no illusions, and affirms instead of ignoring the 'capriciousness of life,' 'the degradation of the sinner's passive victim,' the 'brute chance' and the mechanical accidents to which the nature-world is prey.² Professor Royce does not, to be sure, claim to offer a specific explanation of specific evils. But he guides the thought of the Christian philosopher into a peaceful way, a metaphysical assurance that the world, inclusive of this my dastard sin or blinding grief, is expression of the will of an all-wise chooser who is himself suffering every grief and stung by every sin. Though "he knows [the evils] as we in our finitude can not," yet "he endures them as we do. And so, if knowing

¹ *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 346.

² *Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 467-468.

them he wills these horrors for himself, must he not know wherefore?"¹

(b) The Christian doctrine of the fatherhood of God directly implies that other Christian doctrine of the uniqueness and value of the human soul. For it belongs to every parent to individualize his children. The most ordinary child in a long school procession of little replicas of himself is instantly descried and selected by the individualizing eye of watching father and mother. And Christianity, which teaches that God is a father, of necessity teaches that the human soul is a 'pearl of great price,' a 'treasure hid in a field'—a coin, a sheep which, if lost, must be sought for till it is found. Now this religious teaching, also, is metaphysically justified by the Roycean doctrine that every man is the expression of a unique purpose of the Absolute Self. To the conventional critic's protest that the human self would be lost in the Absolute 'as a river in the sea,' Royce replies that on the contrary, the rich variety, the distinctness, and the stability of the Absolute's purposes furnish the only guarantee of the individuality of the human self. . . . The identity of the partial self with the Absolute is never, in his view, a mere identity without a difference."

(c) Royce teaches, in the third place, that the partial or human self has a 'relatively free' will.² He accepts ("provisionally" however) "so much of the verdict of common sense as any man accepts when he says: That was my own voluntary deed, and was knowingly and willingly sinful." The metaphysical reconciliation of the absoluteness of the divine will and the divine experience with even this relative human freedom Royce has, in my opinion, insufficiently worked out. To be sure, he regards the freedom as merely relative: the Absolute is the triumphing, creative Will. And it is the temporal, not the more-than-temporal, finite self of which Royce says that "it was good that he should be free." Yet with all these qualifications the question persists: how can a human self be free to oppose the will of Him by whose selective attention all that exists has its being? how

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 469-70.

² *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 426; cf. p. 398.

can I, in Royce's phrase, "choose to forget"? how can I "become a conscious and deliberate traitor"?¹ The truth is that Royce seems to discuss sin psychologically and ethically rather than metaphysically. And the result is that we have in his pages a masterly psychological analysis of that violation of moral loyalty which he calls sin² and which he will not have smoothed away or ignored. Organically related to this conception of sin³ is Royce's formulation of the great doctrine of the atonement—an idea, Royce says, which "if there were no Christianity would have to be invented before the higher levels of our moral existence could be fairly understood."⁴ There is atonement, Royce proceeds, when a creative deed is made possible by a treason and when "the world, as transformed by this creative deed, is better than it would have been had that deed of treason not been done at all."⁵ Atonement, in this sense, as he rightly asserts, is a fact "as familiar and empirical as death or grief."⁶ Evidently, this teaching interprets the experience of a suffering and atoning God as truly as it describes a human consciousness, but—true to the arbitrary limits which he has set to his discussion—Royce simply 'ignores' atonement 'as between God and man.'⁷

(d) There is little time, and probably little need, to summarize Royce's description of the Church, or 'Beloved Community.' The meaning of the term 'community' is precisely stated and richly illustrated. "There are," Royce points out, "in the human world two profoundly different grades, or levels, of mental beings—namely the beings that we usually call human individuals and the beings that we call communities. . . . Of the second of these levels, a well-trained chorus, . . . or an athletic team during a contest, or a committee in deliberation . . . —all these are good examples."⁸ "And yet a community is not," Royce repeatedly

¹ *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 359; *Problem of Christianity*, I, p. 252.

² *The Problem of Christianity*, I, p. 242.

³ It is beside the purpose of this paper to stress the fact that in spite of Royce's over-emphasis of the Pauline factor of Christianity he explicitly adopts Jesus's teaching about sin rather than Paul's. Cf. *Problem of Christianity*, I, pp. 225, 227 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271 et al.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁸ *The Problem of Christianity*, I, pp. 164–165.

states, "a mere collection of individuals."¹ It is, on the contrary "a sort of live unit that has organs";² it "grows and decays"³; it "has a mind" whose "intelligent mental products," namely, languages, customs, and religions, "follow psychological laws."⁴ "A community behaves like an entity, with a mind of its own,"⁵ it "can love" and act;⁶ and, conversely, it can be loved and served.⁷ The Beloved Community, or Church, which now becomes for Royce at once the 'human founder'⁶ of Christianity, the source of salvation, and the object of the characteristically Christian consciousness—the Beloved Community is distinguished from the ordinary community by its comprehensiveness, and by its 'uniting many selves into one': it is, in a word, the 'Universal Community.'⁸ To discuss, in any detail, the implications of this conception would far overflow the boundaries of time allotted to this paper. But a final comment must be made on the inadequacy of the doctrine of the Beloved Community if it must be regarded, as apparently its author regards it, as an account of the historic Christian Church. [The cardinal defect in Royce's conception is—psychologically stated—his undue subordination of the rôle of the leader to that of the group, or—historically stated—his underestimation of the fact that passionate loyalty to the person of Christ was the bond of unity in the early Christian church. On the other hand, Christianity truly is, as Royce insists, an inherently social religion; and loyalty to the universal community is indeed the essential moral factor of the Christian religion.

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COMMENT BY PROFESSOR ROYCE. EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER
TO MISS CALKINS, MARCH 20, 1916.

"The account which you kindly give of the position taken in my earlier books,—that is, in all the books that precede *The*

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65; cf. p. 167.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 95, 101.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212 *et al.*

Problem of Christianity,—is as accurate and scholarly as it is friendly. I am not conscious of having taken in my recent work a position inconsistent in its genuine meaning with the positions which you recognize. Therefore, precisely in so far, I have and can have only thanks for your interpretation and for your aid.

“But the two central ideas upon which my *Problem of Christianity* turns, the idea of the community, and the idea of what the historical theology of the Christian church early learned to call ‘the holy spirit’ are ideas which are as living, and growing, as they are ancient. They grew when the prophets of Israel began to formulate their doctrine of Jerusalem, which, in the beginning was a city, of somewhat questionable architecture and morals, in the hill districts of Judea; but which, in the end, became the heavenly realm of which the mystic author of the well-known mediaeval hymn wrote, and which the world is still trying to understand. These two ideas, the Community, and the Spirit, have been growing ever since. They are growing today. They certainly have assumed, in my own mind, a new vitality, and a very much deeper significance than, for me, they ever had before I wrote my *Problem of Christianity*. That book records the experience and the reflections which have been working in my mind daily more and more ever since I wrote it. These reflections constitute for me, not something inconsistent with my former position, but a distinct addition to my former position, a new attainment,—I believe a new growth. I do not believe that you change in a way involving inconsistency when you reinterpret former ideas.

“To borrow a figure from a remote field, I do not believe that Lincoln acted in a manner essentially inconsistent with his earlier political ideas when he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and freed the slaves. To be sure, before he wrote that Proclamation, he had seen a new light. My poor little book on *The Problem of Christianity* is certainly no Emancipation Proclamation, and is certainly no document of any considerable importance. But it certainly is the product of what for me is a new light, of a new experience, of ideas which are as new to me as the original form of my idealism was new to me when I first defined it.

“As for what my present position means, let me say only this: For me, at present, a genuinely and loyally united community which lives a coherent life, is, in a perfectly literal sense, a person. Such a person, for Paul, the Church of Christ was. On the other hand, any human individual person, in a perfectly literal sense, is a community. The coherent life which includes past, present, and future, and holds them reasonably together, is the life of what I have called a Community of Interpretation, in which the present, with an endless fecundity of invention, interprets the past to the future, precisely as, in the Pauline-Johannine type of theology, Christ, or the Spirit, interprets the united individuals who constitute the human aspect of the Church to the divine being in whom these members seek, at once their fulfilment, their unity, their diversity, and the goal of their loyalty. All this is a scrap of theology, which serves as a hint of what I have been trying to formulate in this recent phase, not merely of my thinking, but of my experience. I do not know any reason why this phase of my thinking should attract any other interest than what may be due to its actual relations to a process which has been going on in human thought ever since Heraclitus remarked that the Logos is fluent, and ever since Israel began to idealize the life of a little hill town in Judea.

“I stand for the importance of this process, which has led Christianity to regard a community not merely as an aggregate but as a Person, and at the same time to enrich its ideal memory of a person until he became transformed into a Community.

“The process in question is not merely theological, and is not merely mystical, still less merely mythical. Nor is it a process invented merely by abstract metaphysicians. It is the process which Victor Hugo expressed in *Les Misérables* when he put into the mouth of Enjolras the words, ‘Ma mère, c’est la république.’ As I write you these words, Frenchmen are writing the meaning of these words in their blood, about Verdun. The mother which is a republic is a community which is also a person, and not merely an aggregate, and not merely by metaphor a person. Precisely so, the individual patriot who leaves his home behind and steadfastly serving presses on in ardent quest of the moment

when his life can be fulfilled by his death for his country, is all the more richly and deeply an individual that he is also a community of interpretation, whose life has its unity in its restless search for death on behalf of the great good cause,—its ever-living Logos in its fluent quest for the goal.

“Now this view is at present an essential part of my idealism. In essential meaning I suppose that it always was such an essential part. But I do not believe that I ever told my tale as fully, or with the same approach to the far-off goal of saying something some time that might prove helpful to students of idealism as in the *Problem of Christianity*.”