

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

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DEDICATION

To my wife

Vivian Marie

Helpful and inspiring comrade

PREFACE

This study attempts to present the religious thought of the American philosopher, Borden Parker Bowne. Bowne was a figure of tremendous influence in the later part of the nineteenth century and his influence continues on. The task necessitated two years of research in the philosophy library of The University of Southern California. The University of Southern California is one of the main centers of Bowne's influence in America.

The author takes this occasion to express his gratitude to the Rev. Charles S. Duthie, Scottish Congregational College, whose direction and suggestions were invaluable throughout the preparation of this work. Many thanks are due, also, for the intellectual and spiritual stimulation of the New College faculty. This is especially true of Principal John Baillie and Dr. James Stewart under whom most of my studies were taken. In the United States, Dr. Carl F. H. Henry of the Fuller Theological Seminary, Dr. Ralph Tyler Flewelling of the University of Southern California, and the Reverend C. Rowan Lunsford of the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society, have all offered helpful suggestions and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

THE WORLD IN WHICH BOWNE LIVED

No man lives in a vacuum. He is a part of the community in which he lives. Whether his thinking is a reaction from his environment or a product of it, it is necessary to understand the environment to understand the man. The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief sketch of the world in which Borden Parker Bowne lived.

In the summer of 1850, Americans looked upon their country with eyes that glowed with pride and confidence. "Manifest Destiny" had been realized; the flag had been born in triumph to the Rio Grande and to the Pacific shore. The mountains of the Far West had loosed a mighty stream of gold, and the construction of railroads welded the East and West in a growing community of interest. The flood tide of westward movement continued and in the next decade the population of the United States increased from twenty-three million to nearly thirty-one million.¹

Factory production, introducing new and efficient methods of manufacturing, increasingly replaced the handicrafts. Huge fortunes were made rapidly--some by fraud and

¹ A. C. Cole, The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850-1865, p. 1.

corruption.¹ Fundamentally, however, the economic expansion was derived from access to sources of raw materials not previously available and from more efficient methods of exploitation and communication. It was a decade of fast living, dissipation and extravagance, but it was also a period of an awakening interest in cultural values. "While the 'frantic scramble for a share in the teeming prosperity' completely contradicted the romantic dream of Transcendentalism,² this period nevertheless showed the beginnings of a new national culture."³

¹ Ibid., p. 28.

² Cf. O. B. Frothingham, The Transcendentalism of New England, p. 150. When the romantic revolution in art and philosophy that had made such vast strides in Europe finally broke in upon the Puritan mind of America, the result was a unique venture in speculative philosophy and semireligious faith. The principal theme around which the whole movement centered was "self-culture" i.e., the perfect unfolding of our individual nature. These Transcendentalists believed in man's ability to apprehend absolute Truth, absolute Justice, absolute Rectitude, absolute Goodness. They spoke of The Right, The True, The Beautiful as eternal realities which man can discover in the world and which he can incorporate into his life. They were convinced of the unlimited perfectibility of man. They were satisfied with nothing so long as it did not correspond to the ideal in the enlightened soul. Dissatisfied with men as they are, they were enthusiastic reformers. Their method followed from their world view, i.e., the method of individual awakening and regeneration. This was to be conducted through the simplest ministries of family, neighborhood fraternity, quite wide of associations and institutions.

³ W. H. Werkmeister, A History of Philosophical Ideas in America, p. 55.

A. THE ST. LOUIS MOVEMENT

The new cultural interests were not restricted to the eastern part of America. As the city of St. Louis grew in numbers, wealth, prestige, and culture, it gave rise to a vigorous and influential philosophical movement. The beginnings of this movement may be traced to a chance meeting in 1858 of William T. Harris and Henry C. Brokmeyer. Brokmeyer heard Harris give a lecture on some philosophical subject at the St. Louis Theosophical Society. After the lecture the two men met and Brokmeyer tried to convince Harris that the questions raised by his lecture and left unanswered had actually been answered--completely and definitively--by the German philosopher Hegel; "that Hegel was the last word in philosophy, and that his position provided the key to the correct solution of all problems."¹ And so began a friendship "that was destined to exert a profound influence upon the intellectual life of St. Louis and of America as a whole."²

Under the dominant influence of Brokmeyer and Harris the "St. Louis Movement" sold the philosophy of Hegel to the thinking people of St. Louis and America. As we have mentioned, it was the practicality of Hegel's philosophy that

¹ Ibid., p. 57.

² Loc. cit.

impressed the American mind. "In the triadic movement of Hegel's dialectic they found a ready-made formula for their understanding of the conflicting trends in American culture and of the tragedy of the civil war."¹

The practical application of Hegelian philosophy was extensive because of its relation to the public school. Harris, himself, became superintendent of schools. As a result the whole school system of St. Louis was permeated with Hegelian philosophy. "We used it," says Harris, "to solve all problems connected with school-teaching and school management."²

B. WAR OF SECESSION AND AFTERMATH

Actual hostilities broke out in 1860 although the tension between the North and the South had been growing for a number of years. At the very time when the tidal wave of population moved westward across the American continent, the heart of the South "shifted with the culture of cotton to the Gulf States."³ The states of north and south were no longer bound together by a common frontier experience. "The barrier

¹ Ibid., p. 58.

² G. R. Dodson (Schaub, editor), "The St. Louis Philosophical Movement," William Torrey Harris, p. 27.

³ Cole, op. cit., p. 100.

between the 'free states' and 'slave states' became increasingly effective and was soon more formidable than the mountain barrier between the East and the West."¹

Fort Sumter was fired on and the war began. The next few years saw bloodshed cut across the course of normal development in the United States. These years marked the end of one epoch and the beginning of a new one in the history of the continent; for, "measured in terms of cultural achievement, the Union which arose from the ruins of that war had little in common with the nation that existed before the war."² The War of Secession broke down the barriers which up to that time had slowed the pace of nation-wide readjustment and it opened the floodgates wide to the surging forces of the new order. The postwar America that emerged was soon in the midst of an economic revolution which deeply affected the whole nation in all phases of its existence. Within a single generation the United States changed from a predominantly agrarian country which imported its goods from abroad, to an industrialized nation which sold the products of its own factories and mills in various parts of the world. The American mind was possessed with a new dream of empire building. An early manifestation of the new forces at work was the amazingly

¹ Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 60.

² Loc. cit.

swift settlement of the vast West.¹ The revolution in mining, transportation, and manufacturing was even more astounding.² The dynamic modern city became the nerve center of the rising industrial order. In the city the forces that shaped and determined the new order were concentrated. "Everywhere an intensely materialistic spirit reigned--the urge to exploit new sources of wealth, to make fortunes, to grasp power."³ Strong industrial centers sprang up across the nation and fabulous riches were acquired in a short time. The character of the "newly rich" who moved into the eastern cities is pictured by Werkmeister as:

. . . 'self-made' men and women who brought with them the spirit and taste of the market place and whose cultural interests were measured in dollars and cents. A 'parody on sober good sense' masqueraded as genteel manners and cultural achievement. The 'poison idle wealth' corrupted all appreciation of cultural values, and the men and women of the 'Gilded Age' substituted 'high living and plain thinking' for the old ideal of 'plain living and high thinking.'⁴

But not all were rich even during the "Gilded Age." In the back streets the slums could be found. There the

¹ A. M. Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1865-1940, p. 55.

² Ibid., p. 60. In thirty-four years America rose to first place.

³ Ibid., p. 41.

⁴ Werkmeister, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

large urban masses of factory workers and coal miners lived. In squalor, dirt, and disease the congregated hordes of new immigrants from Europe were herded together. The masses were kept pacified with vaudeville shows, prize fights, circuses, dime museums, cheap theaters, and other forms of entertainment.¹

Individualism, at this time, had become a matter of the "acquisitive instinct"--a matter of the "inalienable right to pre-empt, to exploit, and to squander." In such a society measuring all values in monetary terms, it was only a person possessing sufficient determination and self-assertion who could rise to the highest positions. "A sense of power and a spirit of arrogant self-assurance reigned."² American society was dominated by "strong, capable men, selfish, unenlightened, amoral." It provided "an excellent example of what human nature will do with undisciplined freedom."³

C. NEW CULTURAL INTERESTS

But despite these maladies, American life in Bowne's

¹ C. A. and M. R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, II, p. 397.

² Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 3.

³ V. L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, III, p. 17.

day was fundamentally progressive and fruitful. There were new cultural interests being developed. The American educational system was transformed and in two decades its institutions had achieved a respectable place in the world's education. A great revolution was carried through in medicine and the sciences. A new and critical approach to American history was developed, and the socio-economic conditions of the nation were critically handled by trained scholars. From 1876 on, public libraries were organized in all regions of the country. There was the development of the newspaper, and the more serious magazine such as Harper's Monthly, The Atlantic, The Century.¹ Serious drama was probably never better presented. Also in this period we see the rapid rise of the American playwright, the Symphony Orchestra, and American art. It was during this period that American philosophy received a new impetus and became an independent discipline. The intensely religious life of that day could hardly be considered a "new cultural interest." America was intensely religious from the beginning. This religious intensity brought by the early immigrants did not diminish. Under the leadership of men such as Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, and Dwight L. Moody, the nation was repeatedly swept by a revival spirit. It was this religious spirit that

¹ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 198.

inspired men to build colleges, seminaries, and universities to train Christian leaders and perpetuate the faith. For the most part, the theology propounded was a strict orthodoxy with an unquestioned reliance on the Bible as the very word of God. Andrew Landale Drummond gives something of the theological picture:

American Protestantism was overwhelmingly conservative in theological orientation when the Civil War closed in 1865. The Presbyterians might be Calvinists and the Methodists Arminians, but both were united by a common belief in a literally inspired Bible, and, like the Baptists, feared lest any presumptuous hand touch the ark of the Covenant.¹

D. THE IMPACT OF DARWIN'S THEORY

In 1859 the theory of evolution dropped like a bombshell into the materialistic, yet intensely religious, American republic. This startling event shocked the church and stampeded its leaders to mental activity. The impact of Darwin's theory and the mental activity it generated is one of the most significant epochs in the history of American thought and demands our attention.

The economic and social transformation of the United States which culminated in the Gilded Age was accompanied in

¹ Andrew Landale Drummond, Story of American Protestantism, 1949, p. 340. See also Dean Sperry, Religion in America; Winfield Burggraef, The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America.

the intellectual sphere by a new trend towards naturalism and materialism. The natural sciences played a major part in this transition. The American mind, however, was agitated not so much by the methods and procedures of the various sciences themselves as by certain postulates and broad principles assumed or implied by the sciences, and by the philosophies presumably derived from or justified by them. "Foremost among the ideas of greatest significance were the Newtonian system of classical mechanics and the more recent theories of evolution."¹

In New England the religious leaders regarded the Newtonian system as disclosing the greater glory and magnificence of God in His creation. The Deists claimed that the same system gave additional support for the argument from design. Even Lamarck's views on evolution were not regarded particularly disturbing.

When, in the midst of these controversies, Darwin's theory became known in America, it was made an issue between the "diversionists" and the "unitarians." Agassiz, for example, who supported the heterodox thesis of "original varieties" of mankind, attacked the Darwinian ideas, while Asa Gray, who upheld the orthodox thesis of "original unity

¹ Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 80.

of mankind," came out in their favor--and this despite his theistic position. Thus it seemed that the real import of Darwin's work was lost in the much more narrowly conceived question of "one or many original human races." A review of Darwin's book which appeared in 1860 in The North American Review,¹ however, showed that the real import of Darwin's work had not been entirely lost.

Professor Francis Bowen (Harvard University), author of this review, pointed out that--

. . . the theory [of evolution] if accepted at all, must be accepted as a whole. . . . Mr. Darwin is bound to account for the origin of the human species just as much as for that of the lowest insect. . . . He is bound . . . to find the means of bridging over by imperceptibly fine gradations, the immense gap which now separates man from the animals most nearly allied to him.²

These implications of Darwin's theory, however, were not generally understood until the publication of Darwin's own book, The Descent of Man (1871). "Then the storm broke."³

The reactions of American scientists to the new ideas were varied;⁴ but the reactions of theologians, as might have

¹ North American Review, (1860), pp. 474-506.

² Ibid., p. 501.

³ Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 81.

⁴ Cf. Bert J. Loewenberg, "The Reaction of American Scientists to Darwin," American Historical Review, XXXVIII (1932-1933), pp. 657-670; Sidney Ratner, "Evolution and the Rise of the Scientific Spirit in America," Philosophy of (Continued on the following page)

been expected, were sharply divided and violently partisan. Some of the theologians condemned the new theory as atheistic heresy, while others attempted to reconcile it with the doctrine of the church. The literature of the time reflects how completely the new theory dominated the American mind.¹

⁴ (Continued)

Science, III (1936), pp. 104-122; Francis Bowen, "The Latest Form of the Development Theory," North American Review, XC (1860), pp. 474-506; Asa Gray, "Darwin and His Reviewers," Atlantic Monthly, VI (1860), pp. 406-425; Louis Agassiz, "Prof. Agassiz on the Origin of Species," American Journal of Science and Arts, XXX (1860), pp. 142-154; Abbot Ellingwood, "Philosophical Biology," North American Review, CVII (1868); Louis Agassiz, "Evolution and the Permanence of Type," Atlantic Monthly, XXXIII (1874), pp. 92-101.

¹ Cf. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "A Critical Period in American Religion," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, LXIV (1932), pp. 525-727; Bert J. Loewenberg, "The Controversy over Evolution in New England," New England Quarterly, VIII (1935), pp. 232-257; Bert J. Loewenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America, 1859-1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVIII (1941), pp. 339-368; Frank Hugh Foster, The Modern Movement in American Theology, 1939, Ch. III, "The Reception of Evolution by Theologians"; Daniel Day Williams, The Andover Liberals; a Study in American Theology, 1941, Ch. II, "Evolutionary Philosophies," Ch. III, "Ethics and Evolution," Ch. V, "Evolution and Historical Criticism"; D. R. Goodwin, "Darwin on the Origin of Species," American Theological Review, II (1860), pp. 326-334; John A. Lowell, "Darwin on the Origin of the Species," Christian Examiner, LXVIII (1860), pp. 449-464; W. C. Wilson, "Darwin on the Origin of Species," Methodist Quarterly Review, XLIII (1860), pp. 605-625; John Bascom, "Darwin's Theory of the Origin of Species," American Presbyterian Review (3rd Ser.), III (1871), pp. 349-379; John Bascom, Science, Philosophy and Religion, New York, 1871; J. B. Tyler, "Evolution in Natural History as Related to Christianity," New Englander, XXX (1871), pp. 464-470; Frederick Gardner, "Darwinism," Bibliotheca Sara, XXIX (1872), pp. 240-289; S. R. Calthorp, "Religion and Evolution," Religious Magazine and Monthly Review, L (1873), pp. 193-213; Monot J. Savage, The Religion of Evolution, 1876; G. E. Wright, "Recent Works (Continued on the following page)

Prior to 1859 men had sought for the evidence of design in nature and had therein found proof not only of the existence of God but of His providential plans as well. This whole conception was now challenged. Darwin's theory seemed to show that blind nature was working out its destiny through the chance results of a relentless struggle for existence. Thus the very foundations of Christian faith seemed to be threatened.

At first the doctrine of evolution shocked not only the theologians but the scientists as well. It was denounced vigorously by Jean Louis Agassiz, the distinguished Harvard zoologist. He denounced the theory almost as vigorously as did Charles Hodge, who declared "that a more absolutely incredible theory was never propounded for acceptance among men."¹ Agassiz, whose Platonism undoubtedly colored his

¹ (Continued)

Bearing on the Relation of Science to Religion," Bibliotheca Sacra, XXXIII (1876), pp. 448-493; 656-694; John T. Duffield, "Evolution Respecting Man and the Bible," Princeton Review, LIV (1878), pp. 150-177; F. Gardner, "The Bearing of Recent Scientific Thought upon Theology," Bibliotheca Sacra, XXXVI (1880), pp. 46-76; Henry Ward Beecher, Evolution and Religion, New York, 1888; James McCosh, The Religious Aspects of Evolution, New York, 1888; Lyman Abbott, The Theology of an Evolutionist, Boston, 1897; James T. Bixby, The Ethics of Evolution, Boston, 1900; Windsor Hall Roberts, The Reaction of American Protestant Churches to the Darwinian Philosophy, 1860-1900, Chicago, 1938.

¹ Charles Hodge, What Is Darwinism? New York, 1874.

scientific work, denied that one species can change into another and asserted that all observable deviations from the true character of a species are but ephemeral aberrations possessing no particular significance. On the other hand, Asa Gray, the renowned botanist, accepted evolution as a well-established fact of nature; and Chauncey Wright,¹ Darwin's first enthusiastic disciple in America, "conceived a new type of science of the mind, a new teleology, which would evaluate consciousness, habits, manners, morals in terms of their utility for the survival of the race," and which would constitute "a synthesis of utilitarianism and Darwinism."² Wright's premature death prevented the completion of this project.

A number of American scientists accepted the theory of evolution and expanded it into a general philosophical doctrine. One of these men, Alexander Winchell,

. . . succeeded in telling the whole tale of evolution in terms of a Universal Intelligence and Will, so that the discovery of relentless law in nature came, not as a shock, but as evidence of God's Intelligence in choosing an orderly method of creation from among 'the infinite storehouse of

¹ Cf. Philip P. Wiener, Chauncey Wright, "Darwin, and Scientific Neutrality," The Journal of the History of Ideas, VI (1945); Chauncey Wright, Philosophical Discussions, New York, 1877; John Fiske, Darwinism and Other Essays, 1878, Ch. II, "Chauncey Wright."

² Herbert W. Schneider, A History of American Philosophy, pp. 348-351.

possible plans under which the Supreme Power might have proceeded.¹

Winchell was particularly impressed by those "facts which show the ideas of the far-off coming ages wandering in advance of their time among the creations of an existing world, like streaks of morning light."² It is, he says,

. . . as if the thoughts of the Creator were busied with the plans of the distant future, while his hands are occupied with the work of today. Thus were incorporated in the organisms of one age hints of the features which were to blossom and unfold in the dominant ideas of the following one. Thus grew into being those 'prophetic types' which show that One Intelligence has ordered creation--an intelligence,³ to which the past and the future are both present.

"Pointing out the improbability of many organisms varying together in such a manner as to make Darwinian natural selection operative," Winchell argued that "natural selection itself must have been designed"; and emphasizing the fact that "natural selection is merely 'residual effect,' not 'an innate impulse,'" and that it is "a truism to assert that 'the weakest go under,'" he maintained that "it is not the struggle itself but some other cause which makes animals fit

¹ Ibid., p. 353. See also Alexander Winchell, Sketches of Creation, New York, 1870; Alexander Winchell, The Doctrine of Evolution, New York, 1874; Alexander Winchell, Walks and Talks in the Geological Field, 1886.

² Winchell, Sketches of Creation, pp. 319-320.

³ Loc. cit.

to survive in the struggle."¹ The "other cause," says Winchell, is that "Being whose existence is before all," that "Supreme Intelligence," the "Author of Nature"--God.²

Winchell believes that this "Supreme Intelligence" permeates the whole of nature; for "Nature has not only anticipated the coming of man, but has contemplated the exercise of human intelligence. How few of the benefits which Nature affords have been reached without study and thought!"³ Matter was "endowed with all its capacities of benefit to the human race," but not without "design that those benefits should be secured and enjoyed." According to Winchell, "this is tantamount to saying that the provisions of Nature prophesy a reasoning mind." Thus, Winchell continues,

We may venture to go much farther than this and assert that the material of thought which Nature furnishes is correlated to the thinking principle of man. When the Creator adopted an intelligent method in the ordinations of the material world, it was equivalent to a declaration of purpose to introduce an intelligent being. And when the Creator had stocked the world with the materials of thought, and had planted in it a being capable of understanding Nature, it was the obvious purpose of the Deity that Nature should be investigated, and that, by such investigations, man should become not only wiser, but more reverent, religious and happy.⁴

¹ Schneider, op. cit., pp. 356-357.

² Winchell, Walks and Talks, p. 316.

³ Winchell, Sketches of Creation, p. 336.

⁴ Ibid., p. 337.

E. HITCHCOCK, MCCOSH, AND BASCOM

During 1872-1873 Tyndall was invited to lecture in America by the advocates of the doctrine of evolution. Thomas H. Huxley came over from England in 1876, and Herbert Spencer arrived in 1882. With increasing volume evolution became a topic that was discussed everywhere in America.

Two distinct points of view became increasingly discernible as the controversy advanced. On the one hand, interest in physics began to encroach upon the interest in biology;¹ and wherever this happened "the leadership in speculation based on scientific findings passed from Spencer to Ernst Haeckel." Purpose "disappeared from the grim face of the material universe," and "the benevolent evolutionism of Spencer" gave way to "the mechanistic materialism of Haeckel."² Disillusionment and pessimism followed.

In America, however, the overwhelming trend pointed in the opposite direction. James McCosh of Princeton saw in evolution God's continuous act of creation,³ and John Bascom rejoiced in the breadth of view and boundless hope with which

¹ Parrington, op. cit., II, p. 202.

² Loc. cit.

³ J. McCosh, Religious Aspects of Evolution, p. 54. "It makes God continue the work of creation, and if God's creation be a good work, why should He not continue it?"

the doctrine of evolution invests its believer.¹

The general point of view of these religious thinkers had been foreshadowed by Edward Hitchcock, professor of natural history and chemistry at Amherst College, who in 1857 published a book entitled Religious Truth, Illustrated from Science.²

In a chapter dealing with "The Relations and Mutual Duties between the Philosopher and the Theologian,"³ he said:

The grand distinction between the Bible and all other professed revelations is, not that has anticipated scientific discoveries, but that there is nothing in its statements which those discoveries contradict or invalidate.⁴

True there seemed to be irreconcilable conflicts between science and religion but,

Christianity stands on too firm and broad a base to be overturned by one or a hundred such blows as have hitherto been aimed against it. The true policy is to wait for a time, to see whether we fully understand the new views, and whether they conflict with the letter or the spirit of revelation.⁵

Suppose it should happen, continues Hitchcock, that the empirical evidence relied upon in the sciences leads to conclusions which, on the face of it, contradict statements in

¹ J. Bascom, Evolution and Religion, or Faith as a Part of a Complete Cosmic System, 1897.

² Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 85.

³ Written in 1852.

⁴ E. Hitchcock, Religious Truth, Illustrated from Science, p. 67.

⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

the Bible.

Is it quite certain that we must give up the Bible, or its more important doctrines? Would the discrepancy appear so great as it did when the Copernican system was first announced? Shame on us, that we feel so fearful in respect to God's Word, and those eternal truths that form the groundwork of the scheme of salvation!¹

In 1888 James McCosh published his Bedell Lectures under the title The Religious Aspects of Evolution. As McCosh sees it, the "problem" of evolution is ultimately not the alternative, God or not-God, but the alternative, "God working without means or by means, the means being created by God and working for him."² He finds that "there is nothing atheistic in the creed that God proceeds by instruments."³ Furthermore, McCosh at once transcends the biological theory of evolution and interprets the new doctrine in its cosmic sweep, accepting the Kant-Laplace "nebular hypothesis" concerning the origin of the earth and tracing in broad outline the development from primordial nebular mass to the appearance of man on a firm earth. He says: "In all this God is working, not by special interferences, but by the natural causes which develop into effects--in other words, by evolution."⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 93.

² McCosh, The Religious Aspects of Evolution, p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

In the process as a whole "there is what scientists call a system, what Platonists call an idea, what theologians call design or purpose."¹ "It is produced by God."²

McCosh urges emphatically that his readers "look on evolution simply as the method by which God works"³ because, says he:

God executes his purposes by agents, which, it should be observed, he has himself appointed, we are not therefore to argue that he does not continue to act, that he does not now act. . . . He is still in his works, which not only were created by him but have no power without his indwelling. Though an event may have been ordained from all eternity, God is as much concerned in it as if he only ordained it now. God acts in his works now quite as much as he did in their original creation. The effects follow, the product is evolved.⁴

McCosh points out that evolution is a method "not unworthy of God."⁵ He finds that it is "suited to man's nature," and that "it accomplishes some good ends."⁶ Moreover it secures order and adaption in nature and assures progression. He is confident that:

The theory of Evolution does not undermine or interfere in any way with the ordinary doctrine of

¹ Ibid., p. 38.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

⁶ Loc. cit.

Final Cause. The adaption of one object or agent to another and their cooperation to accomplish a good end, to give life and plan to the plant and comfort to the animal, are fondly believed by the great body of mankind to be a proof of design and of a designing mind. The force of the argument is not lessened by the circumstance that the skillful structures have been inherited.¹

McCosh is not prepared to "employ an argument from Evolution as furnishing the primary proof of the existence of God";² but he is certain that "those who believe in God on other grounds may trace in the development of Nature evidence of his wisdom and goodness."³ Therefore, evolution does not undermine the Christian's faith in God but is "in thorough harmony with all the other operations of Nature, showing the evidently designed adaptations of one thing to another in the past and in the present."⁴ We see in it "certain subordinate ends planned and executed, always under the highest end, the manifestation of the wisdom and goodness of God."⁵

How does man fit into this evolutionary scheme of nature? McCosh replies: "Man is undoubtedly an animal. . . . But he is higher than the animal, and is allied to

¹ Ibid., p. 69.

² Ibid., p. 70.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

⁵ Loc. cit.

God."¹ He continues:

If anyone ask me if I believe man's body to have come from a brute, I answer that I know not. I believe in revelation, I believe in science, but neither has revealed this to me; and I restrain the weak curiosity which would tempt me to inquire into what cannot be known. Meanwhile I am sure, and I assert, that man's soul is of a higher origin and of a nobler type.^{2, 3}

James McCosh's view was defended by other religious leaders of the time. Henry Ward Beecher, for example, argued in much the same vein as did McCosh that evolution is merely "the deciphering of God's thought as revealed in the structure of the world."⁴ These religious leaders, men like McCosh and Beecher, were satisfied that evolution as God's method of creation was perfectly reconcilable with religion, i.e., with traditional Christianity. But these men and others like them forgot only too readily the radical change in the conception of nature which the theory of evolution entailed. They were concerned only with the preservation and defense of orthodox tenets of faith in the face of new scientific discoveries, and thus did not fully comprehend the revolution in the point

¹ Ibid., p. 102.

² Ibid., pp. 103-104.

³ When McCosh wrote these lines, Darwin's book, The Descent of Man, published 1871, had been available for twenty years.

⁴ H. W. Beecher, Evolution and Religion, 1885, pp. 45-46.

of view forced by the doctrine of evolution.

This was not the case of John Bascom. He realized that "evolution greatly alters" the widely accepted view "of a physical world possessed of its own ultimate qualities, and subject, like material in the hands of a builder, to constructive processes foreign to it."¹ Fearlessly and in an impassioned manner he drew the consequences from this new understanding. "The world," he said, "is not so much a construction as a growth."² The realization that this is so, he claims, necessitates an adjustment in our thinking of such magnitude as was never before compelled by a scientific discovery.

This adjustment Bascom makes under the concept of "spiritual" evolution. Unlike McCosh, however, he does not merely attempt to show that the theory of evolution in the biological sciences does not contradict the basic tenets of the Christian faith, but goes on to make evolution the "touchstone of religion itself and uses the idea of evolution as the key to broad interpretations of the social and spiritual life of man."³ In summary he says:

The world moves on; this is the very substance, the underlying condition, of knowledge. But

¹ Bascom, Evolution and Religion, or Faith as a Part of a Complete System, 1897, pp. 1-2.

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 94.

whither does it so certainly and obviously move as toward a spiritual life ever renewed by invisible relations with God and with man? Here is a creation that compacts the world into one purpose and discloses the power of all that has been done, and all that remains to be done--a creation which is the embodied wisdom and love of God. When we discover evolution as the dynamic force of truth, the Spirit of Truth begins to disclose all things to us. The nidus of the world, physical and spiritual, lies before us.¹

F. THE COSMIC PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN FISKE

Prior to the War of Secession, heated controversies concerning the original unity or diversity of the human race were disturbing the intellectual life of the new republic. As previously mentioned, in the midst of these controversies Darwin's theory of evolution became known among scientists and theologians. The reaction among the latter was sharply divided and violently partisan. In the beginning of the controversies the voices condemning the new theory as an atheistic heresy predominated. But, as it became increasingly evident that no amount of high-sounding condemnation could destroy the empirical evidence which supports the scientific theory, "more and more theologians accepted evolution and tried to reconcile it with the tenets of traditional church doctrine."²

¹ Bascom, op. cit., p. 205.

² Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 95.

The problem became especially urgent, however, when in 1871, Darwin followed up his thesis On the Origin of Species by drawing out its logical implications with respect to man and by including The Descent of Man in the evolutionary scheme of things.

We have seen that the "problem of man" led McCosh to a cautiously restricted acceptance of evolution as God's "means of creating" all that exists below the level of man, but led Bascom to a radical and impassioned conception of a cosmic development which engulfs man, the realm of the spirit, and religion itself in its evolutionary sweep. We shall now consider briefly how the same problem is dealt with by John Fiske in his "Cosmic Philosophy." John Fiske,¹ America's most outstanding disciple of Herbert Spencer, was one of the most influential thinkers of the time.

Fiske's most influential work was his Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy Based on the Doctrine of Evolution.² It is this work which characterizes John Fiske, and makes him known to his contemporaries as the "cosmic" philosopher.³

¹ Cf. J. S. Clark, The Life and Letters of John Fiske, 2 vols., 1917; Ethel F. Fiske (editor), The Letters of John Fiske, 1940.

² The first edition of this book appeared in 1874. The influence it had will be shown that by 1890 it had gone into its eleventh edition.

³ Fiske received Bowne's critical attention. In an article, "The Cosmic Philosophy, by John Fiske, a Review," (Continued on the following page)

Unlike Bowne, Fiske closely followed Herbert Spencer. There is no doubt a great deal of truth in Schneider's contention that "Fiske was learned, but not inventive; he did little more than expound Spencer's philosophy from the point of view of enthusiasm for cosmic theism."¹ In the end, however, Fiske was compelled to go beyond Spencer's ideas in much the same way in which, earlier in his career, he had gone beyond Comte. Fiske's "fundamentally religious interests could not be satisfied within the framework of Spencer's own ideas."²

The outcome of Fiske's argument is that an investigation of the theory of evolution leaves us "not Atheism or Positivism, but a phase of Theism which is higher and purer, because relatively purer, than the anthropomorphic phase

³ (Continued)

Methodist Review, 58 (1876), pp. 655-678, Bowne commended Cosmic Philosophy for its freshness and vigor of style and for originality of treatment. But in spite of Fiske's excellencies as an expositor Bowne found his work vitiated by the Spencerian fallacies. While Bowne rejoiced in Fiske's theistic convictions he lamented that Fiske was illogically wedded to Herbert Spencer. Asked for an opinion of Fiske's Through Nature to God, Bowne replied that he had not read the book and that it was not worth reading. Bowne regarded Fiske's virtual abandonment of Philosophy for American History as a confession of failure in the philosophic field.

¹ Schneider, op. cit., p. 323.

² Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 96.

defended by theologians."¹ "The Deity, in so far as absolute and infinite, is inscrutable, and every hypothesis of ours concerning nature and attributes can serve only to illustrate our mental impotence."² On the other hand, "the Universe in itself is likewise inscrutable"; "the vast synthesis of forces without us . . . can never be known by us as it exists objectively."³ Since, says he, both Deity and Cosmos are "alike inscrutable."⁴ Fiske reaches the conclusion that

. . . there exists a POWER, to which no limit in time or space is conceivable, of which all phenomena, as presented in consciousness, are manifestations, but which can know only through these manifestations.⁵

And this Absolute Power may well be called God. Moreover

. . . the God of the scientific philosopher is still, and must ever be, the God of the Christian, though freed from the illegitimate formulas by the aid of which theology has sought to render Deity comprehensible.⁶

For Fiske in so far as it is a secret, it is God; but in so far as it is open, it is the World. "In thus regarding

¹ John Fiske, Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy Based on the Doctrine of Evolution, II, p. 412.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Ibid., II, p. 413.

⁵ Ibid., II, p. 415.

⁶ Ibid., II, pp. 421-423.

the ever-changing universe of phenomena as the multiform revelation of an Omnipresent Power, we can in nowise identify the Power with its manifestations. . . . While the universe is the manifestation of Deity, yet is Deity something more than the universe."¹

In using the phrase "Cosmic Theism" to denote the religious phase of a philosophy based upon the doctrine of evolution, Fiske does not mean to use it as descriptive of a new form of religion which is to supersede Christianity. Rather he uses it "as descriptive of that less-anthropomorphic phase of religious theory into which the present more-anthropomorphic phase is likely to be slowly metamorphosed."²

Fisk's "cosmic philosophy" was significant for his contemporaries and valuable in making the theory of evolution acceptable, but

. . . it has found no continuation in schools of thought prevalent in America. When the foundations of Spencer's comprehensive system were demolished in the course of critical analysis, Fiske's own system was deprived of its epistemological basis, and having lost its support in the doctrine of 'relativity of knowledge,' it had to be abandoned in its entirety.³

¹ Ibid., p. 424.

² Ibid., p. 505.

³ Werkmeister, op. cit., p. 102.

G. HERBERT SPENCER

But it is impossible to by-pass Herbert Spencer and have any fair understanding of the intellectual atmosphere in 1872. Men then sensed themselves as on the edge of momentous changes in thinking. Disturbing currents were running the world over. In Europe the revolutions of 1848 had left their mark in the social consciousness; the wars connected with Napoleon III had roused a vast questioning; the rise of Germany was a portent hailed and execrated by adverse camps alike astonished; and with the unsettling in national and racial and social realms in America, men were ready for a new philosophy. The steps toward the new statement were prepared by the publication of Darwin's work, but it is not too much to say that there is very little in Darwin's publications to warrant the agnostic and even atheistic doctrines which others based upon them.

With all the world-currents making for questioning, with the clue to an interpretation of an immense sum of physical processes supplied by Charles Darwin, the conditions were ripe for Herbert Spencer. Spencer is a veritable voice of his time, of huge volume, all in one tone, without exactness of articulation or delicacy of shading. He is the "outcome of vast social forces which lumber along awkwardly without any nice fitting of part to part, and often with one part

directly opposing another."¹ The "time" craved for relief from everything suggestive of subtlety and Spencer could not be called subtle. Downright common sense seemed to be in order, with emphasis on what men could see and hear. Spencer seemed to meet that demand. The philosophy of Kant and the great German idealists, powerful as it no doubt was in Germany, had not obtained wide acceptance in England, and the utterances of common-sense schools of the Sir William Hamilton type had always seemed cramped and uninteresting. Spencer would not allow himself to be tinctured with what he called the "insanities of idealism," and he was neither cramped nor uninteresting.

When the synthetic philosophy first began to make headway the orthodox theologians and orthodox philosophers met it with a "volley of shudders." They allowed themselves to be browbeaten into silence before the swaggering confidence of these first disciples of evolution. Of course they were amused at the attacks of the church-men who had nothing but *✓* imprecations in their arsenal.

The atmosphere of thought in that day was further disturbed by the penetrating eyes of historical criticism. Something of the spirit of the age is caught in a paragraph by Charles Bertram Pyle:

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 53.

Science advance with victorious feet in sweeping conquest of the world. It was discovered that the universe is not ruled by caprice but governed by law. Nature became a vast self-running mechanism operated by force. The more law the less of God was the cry! With the dawn of law God began to fade from the memory of men. New facts came asking for new interpretations. Old notions were dissolved in the crucible of swift and eager thought. Grass grew in the paths of the ancients because these paths were no longer traveled. New departures were made destined to direct the oncoming thought of man. Evolution, transformation of species, the reign of law, were so interpreted as to threaten the higher faith of men. Historical criticism adopting its method from the spirit of evolution turned its penetrating eyes upon the sacred literature of the world and reduced them to purely human records of spiritual aspirations and hopes. Beginnings were so dwelt upon that ends were lost. Savagery cast discredit upon civilization, and religion supposed to have begun in dream and fancy, diminished respect for its later and higher forms. An unsympathetic comparative study of religion disparaged Christianity while it failed to exalt other religions. Man was not the offspring of God but of 'condensed matter and evolving gas.'¹

H. BOSTON ENVIRONMENT

Leaving the problem of evolution and higher criticism, we proceed to discuss other factors in Bowne's environment. Bowne spent most of his life in the intellectual atmosphere of Boston. This atmosphere was characterized by two significant phases which conditioned religious thought. In one phase it

¹ Charles Bertram Pyle, The Philosophy of Borden Parker Bowne, pp. 16-17. In this same connection Bowne said: "The new wine of science and evolution went to the head and produced many woes and more babblings." Personalism, p. 25.

was a revolt from traditional Puritan theology with its highly anthropomorphic and "angry God," like that of Jonathan Edwards, and in the other phase it was an effort to provide a more liberal and tenable basis for Christian faith. The first phase was evident in the rise of New England Unitarianism, the second might be called "liberal Orthodox," or even Methodistic. Both were opposed to a rigid Calvinism. The Unitarian phase, theistic at first, tended more and more toward pantheism. It was a revolt from an inhuman God whose attitudes would be condemned in a human being. To save God, it was argued, he must be impersonal. On the other hand, the liberally orthodox could not brook the loss of the Fatherhood of God. Unitarianism was turned from the road of its founders by becoming the opposition party to orthodoxy and so of denial and negation.

"In spite of Emerson and his transcendentalists there was a strain of practicality in the New England character which could not make general the transition from the realistic fundamentalism of Calvin's definite pictures of Heaven, Hell, Judgment with its specific formulas of "escape," to a vague depersonalized God and a worship of the All in which personality and immortality were dissolved."¹

¹ Ralph Tyler Flewelling, "Studies in American Personalism," The Personalist, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, October, 1950, p. 341.

To practical Americans such a faith seemed little more than a fad or a cult.

Whatever William T. Harris had to offer was thrown into the New England scale. It was there that his heart was set, partly from his New England origin and education, partly from his admiration Alcott. Thus he was led to active participation in the Transcendental School at Concord.

As Alcott sought increasingly to emphasize the personalist position as an offset to pantheism, so also Harris attempted to solve the absolute paradox by positing a personality which was absolute in the sense of being self-transcendent and capable of infinite growth.¹

Both Harris and Alcott opposed the pantheistic tendencies of the Transcendentals in favor of what later became known as "personalism." Harris displayed his antipantheism in the phrase: "All positive forms, all forms of immediateness or being, all forms of identity are self-relations." In addressing the Concord School on July 30, 1885, he laid down the differences between transcendentalism, pantheism, and his personal theism:

To him who sees the necessity of unity, but finds it a mere essence or substance from which things in their multiplicity arise, and into which they return, there is pantheism. Finally the theist sees the necessity of unity, but, more

¹ Ibid., p. 342.

than this, sees too the necessity of the form of personality as the form of any ultimate unity or totality.¹

To Harris the Supreme Absolute finds its absoluteness, not in a limiting immanence, but rather in its capacity for infinite progress, through a transcendent self-realization by which through all change it preserves its self-identity.² "Self-modification is self-preservation."

Out of the earlier movements sprang the fuller recognition of personalism as a philosophy in New England. In this Boston environment it became the distinguishing characteristic of William James' psychology.³

I. ULRICI AND LOTZE

This brief survey of the world in which Bowne lived must suffice with the statement that his world included the world of Ulrici and Lotze with whom he studied for two years. Bowne's relation to these two men is treated in Chapter II.

¹ T. H. Harris, "Is Pantheism the Legitimate Outcome of Modern Science," Journal of Speculative Philosophy, Vol. XIX, pp. 407-408.

² Ibid., p. 193.

³ William James's influence on Bowne will be treated in the section: "Bowne's Religious Pragmatism."

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

A. HIS ANCESTRY AND EARLY HOME LIFE

Borden Parker Bowne was born in Leonardville, Monmouth County, New Jersey, January 14, 1847, and died in Boston, April 1, 1910. He was the son of Joseph Bowne and Margaret Parker Bowne.¹

Bowne's immigrant ancestors on his father's side can be traced back to William Bowne and wife Ann who came to Salem, Massachusetts in 1631. They were English Puritans who left England because of religious persecution. They were granted forty acres of land at Jeffries Creek in 1636. After living there for some years, William Bowne and his three sons moved to Monmouth County, New Jersey. His three sons were named John, James, and Andrew.

The three sons of William Bowne were prominent in the settlement of Monmouth County. John was a patentee in the famous Monmouth Patent issued by Governor Nichols, an agent for the Duke of York who had received from Charles II a grant of land comprising all New Jersey. John Bowne was also a

¹ Kate Bowne, "An Intimate Portrait of Bowne," The Personalist, Vol. II, No. 1, January 1921, pp. 5-15. The ancestral background of Borden Parker Bowne is taken from this article written by his wife.

deputy to the first assembly in 1668; again a deputy in 1675; was in the first legislature, and in 1683 speaker of the house. He was one of the founders of the Baptist Church of Middletown in 1668. This was the first church of that faith in New Jersey. He gave the lot of land on which the church was built and preached the first sermon when the church was dedicated. John's brother Andrew was a member of Governor Hamilton's Council in 1692, was appointed Deputy Governor of New Jersey by Governor Bass in 1699; in 1701 was made Governor of Eastern New Jersey, and in 1703 was commissioned by Queen Anne a member of Cornbury's Council. James Bowne, the other brother and direct ancestor of Borden Parker Bowne, was one of the interpreters at the first purchase of lands from the Indians.

He was later a Minister of Justice and held various offices of honor and trust both by appointment and election which he filled with ability, integrity, and to the complete satisfaction of the people.¹

In fact,

. . . he held some difficult positions from the time of being an interpreter until his death and was one of the most prominent men of Monmouth County in his time.²

The father of Borden Parker Bowne was a farmer living

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

² Loc. cit.

on inherited acres. He was not only a farmer but a local preacher and Justice of the Peace, a man widely respected who settled the disputes and made wills of the neighborhood. He was a man of unusual common sense, fond of books, public spirited, a strong abolitionist, and a devoted adherent to the cause of temperance. "And this at a time when nearly every home had a sideboard loaded with wines and spiritous liquors, especially in anticipation of the minister."¹ Bowne's father was a man of deep piety, stolid with a deep moral sense, and a man of few words. When he did speak he spoke forcefully and to the point. This he did on the question of temperance and slavery.

Borden Parker Bowne always spoke of his mother, Margaret, with the deepest respect. This, of course, was also true of his father Joseph Bowne. Nothing in the memory of his early days seems to becloud his admiration for them. His mother was no less solid in righteousness but seems to have possessed a strong vein of mysticism as well. This strain of mysticism was "probably due to her Quaker antecedents."² She reflected the stress on "entire sanctification" emphasized in Methodism of one hundred years ago. The Guide to Holiness, published monthly, was carefully read and cherished by Bowne's

¹ Ibid., p. 7.

² Ibid., p. 8.

mother. In this publication the reader was introduced to the writings of such mystics as Fenelon and Madam Guyon.¹

The home of Borden Parker Bowne was a Methodist home. He became acquainted early with the traveling Methodist preachers whose characters were far from ideal. The laziness, coarseness, and "dram" handling of the tobacco chewing frontier preachers did not escape the attention of the sensitive young Bowne. Bowne was reared in a home--

. . . where the solid virtues of the Methodist itinerants were not by any means overlooked, but there were some preachers whose virtues were not solid. The roughness which had its place on the frontier often degenerated into coarseness in communities which had left the frontier conditions behind.²

Too many scenes not complimentary to the clergy were burned into his memory for life. In his Methodist home Bowne felt the peculiar views the laymen had in those days. Plainness was a badge of Methodist loyalty. The people lived in simplicity as a protest against worldliness. All of this built up an artificial standard of Christian living. From his boyhood days Bowne revolted against this tendency to

¹ Francis John McConnell, Borden Parker Bowne, p. 13. Mrs. Bowne, holding exalted views of her husband, successfully forestalled the writing of Bowne's biography. F. J. McConnell was finally allowed to write. His candid admission of flaws in Bowne's life and thought received severe criticism from Mrs. Bowne.

² Ibid., p. 15.

artificiality in religious ethics.

Some of his later-day protests against professedly Christian standards came out of juvenile reaction against the exactness of the mechanized ethics which he saw working their customary moral havoc in the Jersey community.¹

In his youth, Borden Parker Bowne had a happy life with ample exercise for both brain and body. He read widely but no particular books stand out in the foreground as having been more helpful than others in shaping and influencing his life, except the Bible with which he was "saturated." He was never a passive reader nor was he ever unduly impressed by book authorities not supported by reason. He had all a healthy boy's love of play, running with the swiftest and shouting with the loudest; but in addition to this he was thoughtful beyond his years and very fond of conversing with older people.² He was shy and sensitive.

As a very little boy the reading of death-bed stories so keenly affected his imagination that he often left his play and ran home from school at recess time in order to make sure that his blessed mother was alive.³

The first seventeen years of Bowne's life were spent in a moderate farmhouse in which there were six children. The

¹ Ibid., p. 17.

² Kate Bowne, op. cit., p. 12.

³ Loc. cit.

close contact of the children with each other brought out into expression the strong characteristics of each. This boyhood home by the seaside was vividly engraved on Bowne's memory and furnished a storehouse of apt illustrations which were later drawn upon to clarify the profoundest teachings of philosophy. In his later years Bowne used to say that having passed his boyhood near the sea with his windows looking out upon salt water, he did not believe he could ever live happily far from the ocean; and if fate compelled him to return to the homestead of his boyhood, after he had reached the age of sixty, he could contentedly live out his remaining days among the early memories.¹ In one of the leading religious publications of his day we are given an example of how Bowne drew on boyhood memories to illustrate Philosophy:

The veriest crank has but to label himself a scientist to gain prestige with the untrained. This fact has made science, scientist, and scientific the great question-begging epithets of our time. The logical state of the case is well illustrated by the following legend out of the region of my childhood: There was in that region a family of wealth and social prestige by the name of Hartshorne. On one occasion there had been a draught of the seine, resulting in an apostolic draught of fishes. These were sent across the bay to the New York market in charge of a hired man, to whom, as often happens with the servants in wealthy families, the name of his employer was above every name. But the day was hot, and the fish spoiled; and when the clerk of the market,

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 10.

as the inspector was then called, came around, he ordered the man in charge of the fish to remove them. Now, to the hired man, this interference was something incredible, and, thinking to end the matter by a great stroke, he bawled out, "My name's Hartshorne." But the inspector was a person of much uncircumcision of heart and speech, and there was no fear of Hartshorne before his eyes. Accordingly, he made the unfeeling reply: "Hartshorne or the devil's horn, you can't sell that stuff here."

Which thing is an allegory. The man's name was not Hartshorne, and if it had been, the fish were spoiled nevertheless. In like manner we have many persons of slender gifts who are fond of giving themselves out as scientists and their crude imaginings as science; and when the critic complains of the product, their favorite device is to arrogate to themselves the prestige of science by assuming the name. But as in the case of the hired man of the legend, they have no right to the name; and in any case the stuff is bad. We need, then, to be on our guard against this indiscriminating faith, and try both the sciences and the scientists as well as the spirits.¹

Bowne's sensitive conscience was undoubtedly influenced in no small way by the strict moral climate in which he was reared as a boy. He persistently asked questions regarding the rightness and wrongness of certain things. At a tender age he so seriously took the duty of telling the truth that for a period he wondered if he could honestly reply when people asked him the time of day. For the instant the question is answered the hands of the clock have moved and the answer is no longer true. The youthful Bowne got

¹ The Christian Advocate, December 20, 1894.



past this overrefinement but interesting traces of his childish reasoning can be seen when he discusses Zeno's flying arrow.¹

There is little doubt that Bowne's life on the farm influenced his philosophical thinking. When he announced his doctrine of what he called "objective idealism" many critics said that such a doctrine could only be the fine-spun intellectual web of a mind that had never known close contact with actual things. Kicking stones and pounding on the ground has been the favorite answer of crude common sense to idealism since the days of Doctor Johnson. Such common sense overlooks the force of the word "objective" as describing idealism. Bowne never tired of saying that in any sound idealism we must recognize an order outside of ourselves which we do not make but find. The actual working with plants and weeds, the close observation of weathers and seasons, does not often make for idealistic philosophy. It is here altogether too manifest that we are dealing with a natural scheme of things which we do not make but find. For that objectivity Bowne had most thorough respect. Whatever the philosophy, he insisted, it must start from the actual world and never lose sight of that world.

1

Borden Parker Bowne, Metaphysics.

B. AMERICAN EDUCATION

Bowne's education began in the simple elementary school of his day. The school would not be judged as of a high order compared with the schools of a later day but they did succeed in introducing the students to solid books. Borden Parker Bowne read so much in Don Quixote and Gil Blas that he almost committed them to memory. Along with good books he was taught lessons of order which were important. The iron rigidity of law in the unnatural quiet of the schoolroom was brought out by the stiffness of the regulations which made whispering a deadly offence. This early classroom experience evidently impressed Bowne for one of his own students remarks that "there always was a trace of iron in the blood of Bowne as a pedagogical disciplinarian."¹

Bowne's determination to go to New York University necessitated a year of hard study at Pennington Seminary. He studied fourteen hours every day. In later years he said that he would have killed himself if he had not been blessed with immense vitality. But he was avidly interested in all of the necessary subjects and passed the entrance tests with distinction.

Bowne was matriculated at New York University as

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 20.

entering "privately tutored." The days were happy ones and passed quickly. He was graduated, June, 1871. His scholastic record is best told by a copy of his college transcript.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY¹

Name: Bowne, Borden Parker
 Date of Matriculation, September 17, 1867
 Course, Arts
 Preparatory work: Privately Tutored

College Record

| <u>Freshman Year, 1867-68</u> | | | <u>Sophomore Year, 1868-69</u> | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------------|-------|------|
| | 1st | 2nd | | 1st | 2nd |
| | Term | Term | | Term | Term |
| Mathematics..... | 93 | | Belle Lettres, 13.. | 100 | |
| Greek..... | 96 | | Political Econ..... | 100 | |
| Oratory..... | 100 | | Mathematics..... | 100 | 100 |
| | | | Greek..... | 99 | |
| | | | Oratory..... | 100 | |
| | | | German..... | ... | 100 |
| | | | Greek, 34..... | ... | 98 |
| | | | Latin..... | ... | 92 |
| | | | Oratory..... | ... | 100 |
| | 3rd | | | 3rd | |
| | Term | | | Term | |
| Mathematics..... | 87 | | Mathematics..... | 100 | |
| Annual Grades..... | 91.1% | | Latin..... | 90 | |
| | | | English Lit..... | 99 | |
| | | | Average, | 97.9% | |
| | | | | | |
| <u>Junior Year, 1869-70</u> | | | <u>Senior Year, 1870-71</u> | | |
| | 1st | 2nd | | 1st | 2nd |
| | Term | Term | | Term | Term |
| Natural Philosophy | 100 | 100 | Moral Philosophy... | 100 | ... |
| Int. Phil; Nat.Phil. | 100 | ... | Natural Law..... | 96 | ... |
| Modern Languages... | 100 | ... | Latin..... | 95 | ... |
| Oratory..... | Exc. | | Chemistry..... | 100 | 100 |
| Modern History..... | 99 | | Chap. Oratory..... | 100 | 100 |
| Latin..... | 87 | | Const. Law..... | ... | 95 |
| | | | Spanish..... | ... | 100 |
| | | | Greek..... | ... | 97 |

¹ Supplied by Registrar at New York University.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (Continued)

Name: Bowne, Borden Parker

| <u>Junior Year, 1869-70</u> | | <u>Senior Year, 1870-71</u> | |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 3rd Term | | 3rd Term | |
| Greek..... | 98 | Inter. Law..... | 93 |
| Logic..... | 100 | Physics..... | 99 |
| Oratory..... | 100 | Chemistry..... | 98 |
| Astronomy..... | 100 | Annual Grades..... | 97.9% |
| Annual Grades..... | 98.3% | | |

General Average for Whole Course, 96.3%

Degree Conferred--Bachelor of Arts, 1871
By vote of the faculty at its meeting on May 19, 1871,
Mr. Bowne was assigned the Valedictory.

While a student at New York University, Bowne received a number of honors for excellence in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. He received a special prize for the greatest improvement in the first two years of his college course and a prize for the greatest excellence in the entire period of study. In fact, Bowne had the "highest record of any man that ever graduated from New York University."¹ In 1876 he received the Master of Arts degree² and in 1906 the honorary degree, Doctor of Laws.

¹ Kate Bowne, op. cit., p. 11.

² Ibid., p. 12. "During his college course his interest in philosophical subjects showed itself in such essays as: Utility versus Intuition and The Reconciliation of Science and Religion in a Better Doctrine of Causality. These and others of similar character foreshadowed the books that followed. Professor Bowne had a deep understanding of physical science having been instructed by the elder Draper, a man noted for scientific research."

The city life of New York greatly impressed the young student from New Jersey. Especially was this true of the orations he heard in the old Cooper Union. The influence of these heated speeches on public issues left him very unfavorable to oratory and very much alive to public questions. It was Bowne's procedure to school himself against heated orators and channel his interest in public matters through philosophical writings. His Principles of Ethics¹ reveals the fruition of much pondering on ethical questions. The basis of this work on ethics was laid while he was a student at New York University. Francis J. McConnell, a student and friend of Bowne says:

He outlined the book which appeared in 1892 in a sketch written in a student's blank-book in 1869 and 1870. He once read to me that outline. The point of view was essentially that of the formal treatment in 1892.²

At the close of his New York University career Bowne entered the New York Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was made a local preacher in 1867 and ordained a local deacon by Bishop Simpson in 1872. His first charge was Witestone, Long Island, a village of three thousand inhabitants. The church of eighty were of one accord in saying that the young preacher's sermons were "over their heads." One of

¹ Published in 1892.

² Francis J. McConnell, op. cit., p. 30.

Bowne's brothers who heard Bowne often, agreed with the congregation.

C. EUROPEAN EDUCATION

Borden Parker Bowne did not complete the first year of his pastorate. Having received an opportunity to study abroad he left his church and sailed for Europe. He did not rejoin the New York East Conference until 1882.

A portion of a letter written to his mother from ship-board reveals something of the mind and spirit of the youthful Bowne. This letter is written from the steamer Pembroke and dated September 5, 1873.

The captain took to me, and I to the captain. We talked till midnight. We walked the deck by the hour. We walked arm in arm and grew confidential. He told me his history, and I told him my plans. He voted me the queerest and most sensible Methodist minister he ever saw, and I in turn put him at the head of the captains. It grew to be a joke with the passengers that we would suffer greatly at parting.

On Sunday I talked in the cabin. I said that religion does not aim to save us from the troubles and reverses of life, that these come alike to all; but that it aims to support us under them and to teach us the divine purpose in them. I dwelt upon the peace that flows like a river, and which passes all understanding. I said that this, not outward quiet, or prosperity, but this inward calm is the great legacy of the Christian. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Men wonder that God's true child can keep his heart in such amid the most distracting circumstances--the answer is--"Peace I leave with thee."

Bowne studied chiefly in Paris, Halle, and Göttingen,

but he was most reluctant to say anything about the incidental side of his life abroad. His one interest was philosophy and he assumed that that was all people would be interested in hearing about.¹ Occasionally, however, he shares experiences of those exciting days in the seventies. Another letter written to his mother, written from Halle, Prussia, reveals that he had no easy time.

[I] live as the Dutch do. If you can't do that, you will have to pay for all you get. But if one has been used to restaurants, and has a cosmopolitan stomach, he can come here and live cheaply. I came here to [study] and put up with the inevitable. [I buy] some rolls and put them in [my] coat-tail pocket, and eat them without butter, as I go along the street. Now, if one has not a stout heart, he will feel rather home-sick when he tries such a meal, but if he is crammed full of courage, he can enjoy it. A cold room and a dry roll is not a feast, but one can make it do. Still it requires some imagination to turn it into a meal. . . . Don't, however, get the idea that I live entirely on rolls. I have coffee in the morning and dinner at noon. For the rest I use the rolls. I am quite comfortable, and if my health does not fail, shall need nothing more than I have.

While in France the young Bowne grew in thriftiness, knowledge of French, and a complete disgust for the American way of teaching foreign languages. In six months he learned more about French than he had learned about Latin in six years of study in America. This experience made him a harsh critic of American language study methods.

The French habit of mind Bowne could never appreciate.

¹ McConnell, *ibid.*, p. 34.

He would say that the French systems of thought were like well-sheared lawns. They were completely finished and beautifully kept, but were so planned and so cultivated as to leave the onlooker without adequate discernment of what nature really is, the artificiality hiding the truth. He did, however, appreciate the logical thoroughness of the French mind.

Bowne studied in Germany with Professor Ulrich and Professor Lotze. In later years Bowne's indebtedness to Ulrich did not reveal itself as clearly as his indebtedness to Lotze. Ulrich, at one time desired to have Bowne translate his works into English. In particular he wanted him to translate Gott und die Natur. The plan was not carried out. Later, however, when Bowne published his Metaphysics, Ulrich wrote to Bowne stating that Bowne's position was substantially his. But Bowne never acknowledged any indebtedness to Ulrich except for a line or two in the Introduction of his Studies in Theism.¹ Lotze's influence he readily acknowledged in the Introduction of his volume, Metaphysics. Lotze himself

¹ Borden Parker Bowne seldom quoted or gave documentation in any of his writings. His failure to give sources has raised suspicions on the part of able men. Professor Carroll Dewitt Hildebrand of De Pauw University remarks that "Bowne's debt to Ulrich in particular is much greater than his published works indicate. The reticence which characterizes his acknowledgment of sources no doubt accounts in part for this." The Personalist, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (April, 1932).

always thought highly of Bowne and urged him to remain and study for the Doctorate under him, but Bowne, never awed by degrees, felt that he could spend neither the time nor the money that it would involve.

Bishop F. J. McConnell relates an incident revealing Lotze's admiration of Bowne:

One afternoon in student days Bowne called on Lotze. As Bowne left, he called attention to a heavy thunderstorm coming up the valley. "That is nothing," said Lotze, "to the storm of questions you have raised in my mind concerning my own philosophical system."¹

The Germany of Bowne's University days he discussed very little. Here as in France his major concern was philosophy. This silence regarding social conditions is remarkable considering Bowne's social consciousness and the momentous days of Germany in 1873-1875. Germany was entering on that career of material development made possible by the victory over France. This prosperity and wealth coming from the billion-dollar indemnity exacted from France was having its effect in that momentous decade. All this Bowne must have seen but of it he says nothing. It must be remembered, however, that material prosperity had significance for him only as an opportunity for the realization of the highest human ideals. To him the important days of Germany were the

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 37.

days of the greater philosophies beginning with Kant, and of the poets of whom Goethe was the leader. He delighted to quote from memory the passages from Faust in which he found perfect expression of some human moods. The lines having to do with advice as to choice of one's profession, and especially those voicing the gratification of the sense-bound intellect at the positiveness of the physician's task, seemed to him to set out with exquisite precision a recurring mood in a well-marked human type.

In Germany he learned to assess educational values apart from the "educational apparatus" with which the values might or might not be set forth. "No great profusion of the apparatus of Scholarship" was the phrase in which he once described the circumstances in which a German Scholar worked. The simplicity in which the German teachers worked made a lasting impression on Bowne and marked all his subsequent classroom work. He was accustomed to say that almost the only significant question that could be asked about an American University, which was making an effect on the public mind by constant harping on material equipment, was: "Seest thou what manner of stones and of buildings are here?"

Bowne brought back from Germany the authoritarian method of teaching. He took an interest in his students but he felt that the student should take the initial steps in getting acquainted. It was his conviction that those "who



had tendencies if not talents in the philosophical direction" would seek him out on their own accord.

The period of study in Europe did not seem to weaken the force of Bowne's inner convictions nor cool down his religious intensity. His logical temper did bring him some criticism. Many people thought him to be predominantly rationalistic. Even William James referred three little books¹ which Bowne had published as "rationalistic,"² and

¹ The Atonement, The Christian Revelation, The Christian Life.

² William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 502, footnote 2. "Original men like Saint Francis, Luther, Behmen, have usually been enemies of the intellect's pretensions to meddle with religious things. Yet the intellect, everywhere invasive, shows everywhere its shallowing effect. See how the ancient spirit of Methodism evaporates under those wonderfully able rationalistic booklets (which everyone should read) of a philosopher like Professor Bowne (The Christian Revelation, The Christian Life, The Atonement).

Ralph Tyler Flewelling replies to the comment of William James. He says: "James here assumes the common fallacy that the highest type of mysticism comports with the deepest ignorance and credulity. Thus he did an unintentional injustice, both to Bowne and to Methodism. James's "ancient Methodism" could not have been ancient enough to include that of "the Holy Club" of Oxford and that of John Wesley, Fellow in Philosophy, who managed, as did Bowne, to combine with intelligence the highest type of religious fervor." The Personalist.

To some extent, the words of William James were the basis for Bowne being tried for heresy. Bowne wrote to James in England expostulating him for his careless words. James replied: "Your letter finds me in my nineteenth day of immersement, with grippe, still weak as a 'cat,' both cerebrally and muscularly, but a better Methodist than you, I still believe, in spite of your efforts to persuade me to the contrary. If the ass and the blatherskite succeed in
(Continued on the following page)

twitted Bowne that he, himself, was a better Methodist. Yet inwardly Bowne was not rationalistic. This can be born out by the endorsement of Bowne's "presiding elder." This particular "presiding elder," Benjamin M. Adams, was a veritable saint, after the soundest and noblest Methodist traditions. "He had the temperament which lent itself to ecstasies, and yet had also the good sense which judged such uplifts by what happened after he returned to earth."¹ Presiding Elder Adams upon one occasion is said to have reported jubilantly that Bowne, "the great metaphysician on my district enjoys religion."² It would seem that the enjoyment had to be emphatically positive to win the praise of such a man as Adams. There is no evidence to show that Bowne's religious "enjoyment" was dampened by his stay abroad. It is certainly true that the European teachers opened up new fields of view, but he was ready for those new fields and no teacher found it necessary to request that he cast out prejudices or preconceptions. Yet no professor warped the mind of Bowne out of

² (Continued)

their attempt to weed you out of the body, I hope that they will have the wisdom to get me voted in to fill the vacuum. Seriously speaking, I regret that my use of the word "rationalistic" should in any way have added to your annoyance." Perry, Thought and Character of William James, p. 331.

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 40.

² Loc. cit.

its own orbit. He received nothing passively. He did not have that intellectual independence which fortifies itself against new views, or holds them off for a season, but, rather, of the type which seizes such views at once, to turn them over repeatedly for critical scrutiny. If accepted after scrutiny, they do not lose the marks of the handling to which they have been subjected.

These years in Germany were years of notable philosophic writing by the young American student.¹ It was during these years that he began a line of contributions to the Methodist Review which continued until his death in 1910. Almost every year he sent a carefully prepared philosophical discussion running in length up to ten thousand words each. All of these articles are worthy of permanent preservation

¹ The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer was written during his senior year at the university and afterward published in the New Englander, a magazine devoted to speculative subjects. At the time its contributions were unsigned. President Noah Porter of Yale University sought introduction to the youthful author and from that hour became his admiring, devoted friend. "In connection with this first published article there is told a pleasing little story. As President Porter's guest the young man was invited to a meeting of the New Haven clubs composed mainly of college graduates. During the evening a member who had read the article called out across the banquet table: 'Which of you old graybeards has been demolishing Herbert Spencer?' Great was the surprise and enthusiasm when the young author was presented to them. It was an evening devoted to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Henry Ward Beecher was present and took a lively part in the discussions that followed." Kate Bowne, "An Intimate Portrait of Bowne," The Personalist, Vol. II, No. I (January, 1921), p. 13.

both for matter and style. One of the articles which appeared in the Review for 1874 was a severe criticism of the views to which David Frederick Strauss came at the closing years of his life. The title of the article was "The Old Faith and the New." After his book on Jesus, Strauss published a philosophical formulation of which Bowne wrote a critical review. When Strauss stepped out of his field of Biblical research, he was an easy victim for the sharp philosophical mind of young Bowne. Bowne had very little trouble proving that the philosophy of Strauss was of the crudest sort. He was resentful of the fine tributes that Strauss paid to the older faith and quoted the dreadful sentence which describes the crime of Jesus: "Hail, Master! and he kissed him." This raises the question asked by many as to why Bowne was so harsh and severe in his writings. According to Bishop McConnell, Bowne's close friend and biographer, the answer is that--

Bowne found it almost impossible to believe that some of the arguments of the day were advanced in good faith. They seemed so utterly barren that he could not believe that the reasoners were urging them seriously, except with the seriousness of a desire to make a plausible showing to deceive the intellectually helpless.¹

Bowne could not understand how anyone could actually move

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 43.

into despair by such reasons assigned by Strauss. To him the reasons advanced by Strauss were threadbare and insincere.

In judgements of this sort it is doubtful if Bowne ever took account of anything except strictly philosophical considerations. His method was to appraise systems by the reasons assigned for them. No one could more clearly phrase what he called "the natural history of atheism." By this he meant the steps through which atheism ordinarily moves into the human mind. He did not consider such atheistic utterances as anything more than a psychological effect of causes working psychologically. Formal reasons assigned for atheism to him seemed incredibly shallow and made him wonder if they were sincerely given. This attitude made it difficult for Bowne to see in an utterance an expression of a belief which a person might be holding for quite other reasons than those given, and yet doing so without thought of insincerity. Actually Strauss' pessimism was so intense that anything atheistic which sounded reasonable would appeal to his mind as satisfactory. But Bowne was merciless in revealing the futility of the attitudes and measures proposed by Strauss for relief, or for peace of mind, in the face of oncoming annihilation. He charges Strauss, in the phrase of Butler, with maintaining that Christianity makes all the ills it seeks to relieve. When the utterances of Strauss were put forth in Bowne's condensation, their contradictions seemed

incredible. For example, Strauss pictures the universe without heart or soul--a cruel machine which grinds and tears. The wheels, and cogs, and stamps, and hammers, hiss and pound. Yet in the face of this pessimism, Strauss claims that the voicing of pessimism is impious and blasphemous. We must have reverence for these wheels and hammers. Naturally the description of the hammers does not come on the same page of Strauss' book as the exhortation to reverence, but Bowne is audacious enough in his review to place them side by side.

D. ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE INDEPENDENT

Before leaving Germany Bowne began to seek a teaching position in the United States. His anxiety amazed his German friends. Even Professor Ulrici expressed astonishment that a man of Bowne's dimension should have the slightest concern or uncertainty about being placed. But Bowne did not get a satisfactory teaching post when he returned to America in 1875. He was compelled to do journalistic work with the Independent in New York. At the same time he was afforded the opportunity of teaching modern languages in New York University.

While on the editorial staff of the Independent, it was Bowne's responsibility to review books on philosophy and religion. Some of the books he reviewed were: Draper's,

Religion and Science,¹ Martineau's, Religion as Affected by Modern Materialism,² Ulrici's, Gott und Die Natur,³ and Tyndall on Materialism.⁴ The excellence of these reviews stand out in contrast to everything else appearing in the same issue. Even one of the editorials is obviously from Bowne's pen. It contains in substance his whole argument against materialism.⁵ At this time he also wrote an article entitled: "The Religion of Childhood."⁶ This article is a remarkable statement when it is remembered very little attention was given to the religion of childhood.⁷ The following passage is a quotation:

Let the children come to Christ; but do not perplex and confuse them by the demand for an adult's experience, nor, indeed, by the demand for any kind of experience. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' must be the supreme test of affection. We have wrought mischief enough among older people by substituting for this simple test

¹ Independent, February 4, 1875.

² Independent, February 11, 1875.

³ Independent, December 2, 1875.

⁴ Independent, December 23, 1875. In dealing with Tyndall, Bowne remarked: "until he gets sufficient control of his moods to write a short article without changing his opinion several times during the process" his work would not have much philosophic value.

⁵ "Of Materialism," The Independent, May 6, 1875.

⁶ Independent, June 10, 1875.

⁷ Bowne does not mention any indebtedness to Bushnell.

of Christ some peculiar psychological affections. Owing to this demand, there are thousands and thousands of our evangelical churches this day whose religious life is a painful unreality, a land of shadows, or a feast of wind. But let not the children be thus perplexed. Let them take their vows with glad hearts and teach them that in this effort to love and obey they have the Divine favor and help. And when the years have come and the ideal of duty has gone up until it seems to transcend all effort, they will learn of themselves the blessedness of the fact that we are God's children not of our own merit but of his free grace. And if to the heart of childhood the earth seems fair and fit for an eternal home, let no attempt be made in the name of Deity to disturb that beautiful dream. The sharp necessities of life will do that soon enough. Let the children learn of a Father's love, and when life's trials come they will have whereon to lean. In short, let the child be a child even in his religion: and when he becomes a man, with the unfolding and opening of his experience, he will necessarily put away childish things. To hasten the work can only result in mischief. A too early acquaintance with the confessional will make him no better Christian; it will only make him false.

Strange as it may seem, Bowne also had charge of the joke column in the Independent. The jokes are of high merit and reveal Bowne's addiction to punning.

E. PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

In 1876 a door opened for Bowne to teach philosophy at Boston University. At that time the University was only seven years old but was making rapid educational strides under the able leadership of Dr. William Warren. Dr. Warren aimed at exacting scholarship and a distinctively Christian point of view. In selecting Bowne he had a man who stood for these

two ideals. As Bowne became known, Yale, Chicago, Northwestern, and other universities repeatedly attempted to acquire his services, but Bowne remained at Boston University until his death in 1910. When approached by these other educational institutions he would facetiously remark: "Ephraim is wedded to his idols. Let him alone." He taught at the University from 1876 until 1910--never less than eight hours a week. His regular courses were: Introduction to Psychological Theory, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, Metaphysics, Theism, Ethics, and also seminars for advanced students in Kant and Spencer.

Since it is as a teacher that Bowne is so influential it is necessary to pause and observe him in the classroom. For him teaching was not a task but a delight. President Marsh of Boston University writes of his student days under Bowne:

Any student with a swift sensitiveness to the purpose of the teacher's spirit felt that he loved to dissipate shadows of confused thinking. An hour in Bowne's classroom had upon us--at least some of us--an effect similar to that which a traveler experiences when he reaches the top of Jungfrau and, while standing there, sees the clouds that obscure the far vision pass away, enabling the traveler to get a marvelous view of beautiful valleys, and of mountains that shoulder up the sky. Bowne treated his students pretty much as a guide treats mature and independent travelers. His students were allowed to attend class or not, as they pleased; but they generally pleased to attend.

Bowne lectured. Not much time was spent in 'reciting.' Sometimes he quizzed the class, and

sometimes he invited the class to quiz him. No class was ever kept more awake, more alive, than his. No classroom was ever more a place of contagious intellectuality.

Often he talked with apparent extemporaneousness. Sometimes he talked with a textbook [written by himself] before him. Once in awhile he read from a manuscript, or from the galley proof of a new book he was writing. His manner was alert. His voice was good, and his enunciation always clear. He expected much of his students. He assumed that they were there for business. He checked up on their progress by giving frequent quizzes.¹

Bowne refused to simplify his courses in Theism. At one faculty meeting it was reported that some of the students felt that Doctor Bowne's course in Theism was a little "high-brow," and suggested that a more simple and popular course might enlist the interest of the students who were not so well prepared as graduate theological students were for philosophical thinking. Bowne sat silently attentive to the discussion. Finally a faculty member asked why the students could not be permitted to select a second and simpler course in Theism, Bowne replied in a tone of authority emphasized by a quiet finality of inflection: "Because the second course will not be given."²

Kindness and severity were wisely and warmly blended

¹ President Daniel Marsh, "Borden Parker Bowne," Bostonia, April, 1937, p. 3. This was a Founders' Day address given at Boston.

² Ibid., p. 8.

in Bowne's relation to his students. He recognized that "philosophy is not everybody's business."¹ But he also recognized mental laziness. He was kind to the honest and confused seeker after truth but merciless in his treatment of a bumptious ignoramus. He remarked that a certain orator "should be arrested for intellectual indecent exposure."² To a certain critic who had made uncomplimentary remarks about one of Bowne's books without reading it, Bowne replied: "He's bald on the inside of his head."³

Bowne was a master of sarcasm. With him "sarcasm was a rapier with which he punctured inflated egos and pierced swollen sophistries. He did it all with a gentle voice and with his ever-present inscrutable smile."⁴ In his discussion of the metaphysical attributes of the "World Ground" Bowne told a story of how some atheist, with Byronic bravado, scrawled on the face of a rock: "There is no God," and then, stepping back, the atheist said, "If God is omnipotent, let Him erase that !" The whip-crack comment with which Bowne

¹ Marsh, loc. cit.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ J. T. Carlyon, "Bowne in the Classroom," The Personalist, Summer, 1947, p. 271. This volume of The Personalist is the "Bowne Centenary Number" and has several chapters referring to Bowne: F. J. McConnell, "Bowne in Ethical Progress," A. C. Knudson, "Bowne in Theological Education," E. S. Brightman, "Bowne, Eternalist or Temporalist."

ended the story was that "God is capable of omnipotent contempt." The sting of his words burned his teaching into the minds of his students in an unforgettable way. For thirty-five years Bowne leveled his sarcasm at Herbert Spencer. J. T. Carlyon, another student of Bowne's, shares some of the experiences of his student days under Bowne.

The unclearness of Spencer was dismissed with such devastating remarks as one I find in quotation marks at the foot of a page in my notebook: 'Spencer made a desert and called it peace.' When Spencer defined both 'absolute' and 'infinite' in such a way as to make both terms unacceptable, Dr. Bowne made the comment that it is 'etymologizing rather than philosophizing.' When Spencer had reached the conclusion that consciousness cannot be a definite thing at all, Bowne replied, 'Of course I cannot be unconsciously conscious or consciously unconscious; I cannot conceive of being both dead and alive at the same time.' For Spencer's mixture of Physics and Metaphysics, Bowne had a fitting description in the phrase of Mrs. Carlyle; it was 'the great Bad.' In discussing the notion of world progress from 'indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent heterogeneity' the critic resorted to a quotation from Goldwin Smith: 'The Universe might well have given a sigh of relief at this eminent description of itself.' Patiently and one by one Bowne examined and refuted the basic concepts of the man who thought he had given the death-blow to the Christian faith in God. He concluded by saying, 'Spencer had the pathetic experience of finding his system of philosophy obsolete before he passed away.'¹

From the very first session the students of Bowne's classes knew they were intent on important business, rather than taking a course at the university. There was never any

¹ Carlyon, op. cit., p. 272.

suggestion that the teacher was entertaining a large class of college and seminary students; when humor appeared, it was part of the technique to bring home the lesson of the hour. When Dr. Bowne described "an imaginary person tumbling down an imaginary steep place and breaking his imaginary neck," it was delicious irony that would forever help the students to discriminate between two very different kinds of Idealism in philosophy. The students were given to believe that the future of the Church and of Christianity waited upon what they were thinking.

Bowne not only submitted his students to devastating criticism of Spencer, but he also gave them a careful and discriminating evaluation of Immanuel Kant. Here the student learned to think with precision and with judgement as he sought to understand the Master of Konigsberg by the aid of Boston's premier thinker. To those who were disposed to pick flaws in the teaching of Kant and thus fail to see the great contribution he had made to modern thinking, Bowne sagely remarked: "The quibbling intellect ever knows much."¹ While pointing out the weakness of the Kantian system, Bowne went on to say that it was the "greatest work since Plato and Aristotle."² He found in Kant the germs of both Pragmatism

¹ Ibid., p. 271.

² Ibid., p. 272.

and Ethical Idealism and for both he was grateful. Bowne summarizes his own species of Pragmatism by saying, "Where argument has no place, life can assume what it needs." His students were frequently reminded of Jesus' words, with Bowne's parenthetical interpretation, "By their fruits (and not their roots) shall ye know them." Bowne offered his students his own Personal Idealism over against Kant's stress on the laws of thought, insisting that objects themselves must be case in the moulds of thought. Carlyon quotes him as saying: "I hold that mind makes nature, in the same way that our mind makes another's thought understandable."¹

Carlyon gives us a picture of Professor Bowne as he saw him at Boston University:

I shall ever have in my memory the dignified and serious man who sat behind the teachers table, hair graying and closely cropped, a beard always well trimmed, eyes that looked into the depths of one's soul, without seeming to be prying but within and back of appearances a mind that was racing swiftly in pursuit of errors to be overthrown and of high truth to be caught and made plain to inquiring youth, whose powers of discernment and of understanding had been all too little developed. He moved with quietness even as he moved swiftly, and one could scarcely believe that a full hour had passed when the bell rang for the closing session. It was well that we had the long walk back to Number 72 Mount Vernon Street, for we needed to argue and to debate as we made the high thoughts our own.²

¹ Carlyon, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 267.

The opening years at Boston were given largely to studies in Theism. Being of a profoundly religious nature, Bowne approached philosophy from the religious point of view.¹ It was during these early years that Bowne wrote Studies in Theism.² This volume is an extraordinary piece of philosophical writing. The germs of all his later conceptions are there with an abundance of exposition and illustrative material. Some of the critics, in those more ponderous days, thought Bowne's style too vivacious, but it would not be considered so today.

Bowne had close friends of great influence in those beginning days at Boston University. Bishop Randolph S. Foster of the Methodist Episcopal Church was one of these friends.³ He was a man of imposing physical stature and a commanding power of mind. Throughout his life he was interested in the profounder phases of theology. Without much formal education he was, nevertheless, a man of deep insight and a master of discussion. His lofty pulpit oratory would have failed to

¹ George A. Coe, a student of Bowne's, says that Bowne's metaphysics was a sort of police force to defend his religious experience. Studies in Philosophy and Theology, p. 19.

² Published by the Methodist Book Concern, 1879. Bowne considered this work his best literary volume.

³ Bowne lived in Foster's home his first seven years at Boston University.

impress Bowne if it had been anyone else but Bishop Foster. Bowne admired Foster, oratory and all. He admired his power of sustained reflection, his genuine piety, and his personal courage. Bishop Foster was a determinative influence on the young philosophy professor. Many a long philosophical discussion was had by Bowne and Foster into the early hours of the morning. Foster's metaphysics never did satisfy Bowne since Foster remained in bondage to common-sense realism till his death. But Foster could intelligently discuss philosophy and was an excellent stimulus and foil to Bowne. There was much of the philosophical explorer in him and he lent encouragement to the young Bowne in his attempt to break new paths of thought. Under all there was in the Bishop a passion for the welfare of mankind, and this passion left its mark on Bowne.

The Boston University circle provided other influential friends. Along with Dr. Warren, president of the University, there was Dr. Henry C. Sheldon, Methodism's outstanding systematic theologian, Dr. Heinckley G. Mitchell and Dr. Huntington, who later became president of the University.

Here in this stimulating fellowship, and in love with his work, Bowne carried on a busy program of teaching, preaching, and writing until he left for his sabbatic year in 1882-1883. There is little known of this trip except for

several letters¹ written to Dr. Huntington, who was at that time a dean of the University. A glance at two of these letters reveals something of the lighter side of Bowne's personality.

"City of Berlin"
Sept. 3, 1882

My dear Huntington:

Just running down toward Queenstown I find this old blank and a worse pen and the result is being evolved. Nasty weather all the way--cold almost as winter. Several days very rough. . . . Sankey is on board, but he has been moody most of the time. Numerous libations poured out to Nep--; meat and drink offerings both freely made. Old Nep-- not pacified yet; but we hope soon to be out of his power. Have experienced sundry temptations to profanity on account of weather, etc., but have resisted.

Having my Lares and Penates with me, I am not half so anxious about letters from U.S.A. as on former occasion, but would be glad to hear 'allege samee' from you and yours. . . .

Yours Ever

(Signed) Bowne

¹ "Recovered Echoes from a Wanderjahr of Bowne," The Personalist, Vol. XXII, No. 4, October, 1941. Ralph T. Flewelling, Editor of the Personalist in a footnote to these published letters says: Francis J. McConnell, Life of Bowne, indicates at the time of writing that biography, only one letter was known to have survived from the sabbatic year spent in Europe in 1882-1883. The importance of the accompanying five letters from that period written to the late President Huntington of Boston University is therefore considerable. They indicate social and humorous interests in Bowne that will delight his admirers." The letters are given in full in the index.

Koniggratzer Str. 25
Berlin, Prussia
Dec. 26, 1882

My Dear Huntington:

. . . I was down to Halle a couple of weeks ago, and had a very pleasant visit with friends there. Ulrici is very feeble and since the death of his wife very lonely. His children are all married and live at a distance. He is also a little querulous and very forgetful. Erdmann too has grown old, but remains much fresher in spirit, Hym and Jacobi are active and optimistic. Both of the latter are optimistic and hope for better things; both of the former take a rather sombre view of the future.

. . .

Yours very cordially

(Signed) B. P. Bowne

In the year 1883, Bowne finished his sabbatic year abroad and returned to his responsibilities in Boston. His responsibilities were largely speculative, spending what he called "long brooding in silence."¹ It was during these years that Bowne developed his theism, realism, idealism, transcendental empiricism, ethics, and personalism.² From the year 1900 to 1910, the year of his death, Bowne devoted much more time to practical activity. The first thirty years he was so absorbed in speculation that he had little opportunity to indulge in many tasks that interested him. For

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 179.

² Bowne's thinking on these themes is fully discussed in chapters that follow.

example, he was profoundly interested in the popular presentation of the essential Christian principles from the pulpit, but during his studious life, although living in the same city, he had almost no chance to watch the famous Trinity Church under the ministry of Phillips Brooks. By the time Bowne had finished with Spencer, Tyndall, and "all that ilk, Brooks had passed away." As Bowne read, with thorough satisfaction, Allen's biography of Brooks,

. . . he expressed regret that his time had been so taken up with the battles on the frontiers of religion that he had not had opportunity to enjoy work of those who, like Brooks, were nobly expounding the truth to believers.¹

F. BOWNE'S HERESY TRIAL

About 1895, a very heated controversy over the so-called higher criticism of the Old Testament broke on the Methodist Episcopal Church through attacks on Professor Hinckley G. Mitchell, of the department of Old Testament in Boston University School of Theology. This controversy simmered until 1900 when the attacks against Mitchell became hot. Bowne went to Mitchell's defense and as a result involved himself. In 1904, in spite of his attempts to make himself understood, he was charged with heresy and brought to trial. Following the counsel of Dr. Charles S. Wing, Bowne consented

¹ McConnell, loc. cit.

to the trial and was completely vindicated. It is the feeling of Bishop McConnell that

. . . under the circumstances the trial was an indignity, in the opinion of hosts of Bowne's friends. Indignity is not too strong a word even though Bowne consented to all that was done. The charges were so absurd on their face that they should have been summarily thrown out.¹

But Bowne thought differently about the matter and at the end of the trial he said, "The decisive and unanimous declaration of my doctrinal soundness is a great gain."²

A few paragraphs from the record of the trial gives a picture of Bowne's trying experience:

In the spring of 1904 at the session of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which Doctor Bowne was a member, charges of heretical teachings were brought against him by a member of another Annual Conference. These charges were wholly based on passages taken from several of his published works. He was charged with teaching:

1. Doctrines which are contrary to the articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

2. Doctrines which are contrary to the established standards of doctrine of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

First Specification. He denies the Trinitarian conception of the Deity and also the moral attributes of the Deity as set forth in the first and

¹ Ibid., p. 189.

² Borden Parker Bowne, in a letter to Dr. F. M. Larkin, April 23, 1904.

fourth Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church. (followed by extended quotations from Bowne's Metaphysics, and Philosophy of Theism).

Second Specification. His teaching on miracles is such as to weaken if not destroy faith in large portions of the Old and New Testaments. His views on the inspiration of the Scripture are contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures themselves, contrary to article five of the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and tend to destroy faith in the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice. (Quotations from Bowne's booklet, The Christian Revelation).

Third Specification. He denies the Doctrine of the Atonement as set forth in the second and twentieth Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church and as taught by our established standards of doctrine. (Quotations from The Atonement and Metaphysics).

Fourth Specification. He teaches such views of the divine government and of the future of souls as to destroy the force of Christ's teaching about future punishment of the wicked and the future reward of the righteous. (Quotations from The Atonement and Metaphysics).

Fifth Specification. He teaches views on the subject of Sin and Salvation, on Repentance, Justification, Regeneration, and Assurance of Salvation through witness of the Spirit that do not represent the views of the Methodist Episcopal Church as expressed in our standard works of Theology. (Quotations from The Christian Life and the Philosophy of Theism).¹

The rest of the account of the trial goes on to deal with each of these forementioned specifications and the answers of Bowne to them. Then comes the verdict.

¹ George Elliot, Methodist Review, May-June, 1922.

After two hours of argument by the persecution and the defense, the full Select Number of Fifteen being present, votes by ballot were taken on each of the Five Specifications. The result in each case was the same: Sustained, none; not sustained, fifteen.

The verdict of the Committee was expressed as follows: . . .

That all the evidence and testimony offered by the complainant and defendant in this case have been received and carefully considered, and that counsel for each has had ample opportunity for the presentation of arguments.

That the Select Number, by unanimous vote taken by ballot, find and decide that of the five specifications none are sustained, and that the charges are not sustained.

(Signed) FRANK MASON NORTH, Chairman
WM. H. BURGWIN, Asst. Sec.

There were some good results from the trial. It gave Bowne an opportunity to say in fresh form many worth-while things. It also gave opportunity for closer fellowship with one who had been at odds with him, Dr. James M. Buckley of The Christian Advocate. The estrangement between Bowne and Buckley began in 1895 when Bowne read a paper on ethical legislation to a young men's congress in Pittsburgh. This paper irritated Buckley and he continually advanced reasons against Bowne's advocacy of the repeal of Methodism's famous amusement clause. It was with Buckley in mind that Bowne wrote:

A plausible argument may be made for anything. The argument for religious persecution is perfect. The argument for a state church is irrefragable; that is, in both cases, from an abstract standpoint. Descending from these high themes, a very

good argument might be made for adding to the form for the admission of members to our church the following:

Question. 'Will you be a diligent reader of at least one of our official church papers?'

Answer. 'I will, the Lord being my helper.'

When one considers the necessity of supplying the people with sound, wholesome and edifying religious literature, the needs of the worn-out preachers, and the demands of denominational loyalty withal, the argument is seen to be very strong. Excellent reasons can be given for each detail of both question and answer.¹

The contact of Buckley and Bowne was mutually helpful in other ways. Buckley was much enlightened on the newer approach to the Bible and Bowne was much enlightened on the restrictions under which an ecclesiastical leader is forced to work. Furthermore, Bowne had a new appreciation of Buckley as a steadying power for keeping Bishops in their place. Bowne, however, never had much use for bishops and the heresy trial did not in any way encourage a change of attitude.

For the most part, the verdict of the trial brought a favorable response throughout the country and Bowne returned to his work.² Once started on the definitely practical

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Methodist Review, May 1898, p. 379.

² Dr. John Godfrey Hill, a student of Bowne's, gives an account of Bowne's return to the classroom after the heresy trial. "We, the sixty-odd students clamored for an (Continued on the following page)

aspects of Christian leadership Bowne was more and more asked about spiritual questions. He began to be asked about intimate phases of Christian experience. His answers to these questions began to come out in personal interviews, articles in the religious press, and finally, in a book entitled Studies in Christianity.¹ From the turn of the century until his death Bowne gave himself to this practical task as religious guide.

As previously mentioned, Bowne had no use for bishops. He was an outspoken foe of officialism in the Methodist Church. He strongly resented the ecclesiastical pressure brought to bear on those who dared to think for themselves. The bishop's refusal to confirm Professor Mitchell cost this unfortunate man his chair in Boston University. This particular case as well as his own trial set the pattern of Bowne's antagonism to centralized authority for the rest of his life. Believing in freedom as he did it is easy to see how he would

² (Continued)

explanation. He only shook his head and beckoned with his hand for silence and started to lecture where he had left off a week before. The clamor increased so that he was compelled to give heed. With that characteristic flash of eye which no words can convey to those who have not seen it, he playfully and laconically remarked, 'Well, there isn't much to be said; I came, I saw, and the rest concurred.' The Personalist, Vol. III, No. 3, pp. 192-194.

¹ Published in 1919. It included Bowne's three booklets, The Christian Revelation, The Atonement, and The Christian Life.

resent authoritarian ecclesiasticism of any kind.

He was for the elimination of the episcopacy root and branch, until the action of the General Conference of 1908 in taking doctrinal decisions out of the hands of the bishops somewhat mollified him.¹

Yet for all his criticism Bowne was a staunch Methodist.

Excerpts from two letters to an eminent Methodist minister will reveal his attitude toward Methodism and Methodist authorities.

With regard to your ecclesiastical relations, I hope you will not be hasty in reaching a decision. I gather from your letter that financially you are fairly well treated, as such matters go in our church, and I infer that your difficulty is rather one of lack of sympathy with some of the authorities and some of the men and methods in the church. I have no doubt that your feeling in this matter is quite correct, but this thing seems to be a part of the present situation and has to be endured as one of the things that go to make up the life of today. I feel the same myself, and on a great many accounts would find it more congenial in other communions, but I do not feel free to go on my own accord without some better reason than I have. Our Church has in it a large body of ignorant people, and there is somewhat of ignorance in high places, but, after all, it is a great body of much real efficiency and more potential efficiency, and I have never felt justified in leaving it to flounder in ignorance in order to be more comfortably or congenially located myself. The leaven that is to leaven the lump must be in the lump. If it be removed from contact with the lump, it will have no leavening power, and it seems to me that the lump is big enough and important enough to give every bit of leaven a worthy task in the way of leavening; and I have no doubt that when you come

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 231.

to be mustered out you will be better satisfied if you can look back upon such leavening work, even in uncongenial circumstances, than to look back upon a life of more peace and quiet under pleasanter conditions but with less real effectiveness. Not to go through life quietly and comfortably, but to execute a high commission is our real task.

With respect to the General Conference, I am not discouraged. I hardly think the ultraconservative elements will accomplish much in their own line. It appears to me that the light is breaking in.

One good sign is that they [the bishops] put the better sort of bishops on the Committee to revise the Conference Course of Study, and I think many of them are really anxious to please and even to propitiate the more progressive element. In any case we are much better off than we were not many years ago. Then most of our leaders 'had not so much heard' of many of the newer views, whereas now all of them have heard of them and some of them are in main well meaning, but weak and timid. Had they been men who commanded respect by their scholarship and character, they could have guided the church by simply saying that these questions are subordinate in any case and do not concern the standing or falling of the faith, and by inciting the church to greater activity along the fundamental lines of faith in God the Father Almighty and in his Son and in the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins and building up the kingdom of God. These things constitute the real faith of the church and work for these things is a great source of faith. No church working on these lines will ever go far into unfaith, and a church that does not work on these lines is of little value anyhow, but the good men did not know the day of their visitation, and they had not the authority that comes from scholarship and character. They could not read the signs of the times [in the Mitchell case], and by consequence they became blind leaders of the blind with the usual result of that condition of things.

Hughes has the real stuff in him. To look at him one would not take him for anything like

his real worth. . . . I heard recently a little story about him which is at once to his credit and to another's discredit. It was at the time of one of the bishop's meetings when one of the bishops proceeded to denounce Professor Sheldon's Systematic Theology and declared that it was a crying shame that such a heretical book should be published by a Methodist House. Here Hughes interrupted to ask if he had ever read the book, and the poor creature said, 'Not all of it.' Hughes continued, 'Have you read any of it?' and he had to admit that he had not. Then the other said 'Have you read the book?' 'Yes,' Hughes replied, 'I have read it all three times and I accept every word of it.' And there was a great calm.¹

To some it seemed that Bowne's attacks on officialism came of an excessively critical spirit and of a natural liking for criticism itself. Bishop McConnell does not agree. In reply to this criticism he says:

I do not think this is just. It is quite possible that Bowne, with his interests in the intellectual, was not qualified to take due account of the difficulties of officialism; but, even so, the soundness of his essential contentions must not be forgotten.²

Bowne had very little interest in General Conference elections. In his volume, the Immanence of God, he refers to General Assemblies and Church Conventions along with others as "all such unprofitable works of darkness."³ Furthermore, he says, "facts will have way regardless of Popes, Bishops,

¹ Quoted by McConnell, ibid., pp. 231-232.

² Ibid., p. 235.

³ Borden Parker Bowne, The Immanence of God, p. 102.

Councils, General Assemblies, and General Conferences to the contrary notwithstanding."¹ In another place he remarks:

A person of devout habit of thought and speech might convince himself that ministerial appointments are made by the Lord, or the General Conference elections are divinely guided; but if he should be present at the Conference sessions, he would find that this divine causality is for faith rather than sight, and that in the phenomenal manifestation the continuity and uniformity of experience are abundantly illustrated and verified.²

In 1902, when the presidency of Boston University became open, many of Bowne's students thought that their philosophic leader should fill the post. This move, however, was blocked by just as many of Bowne's friends who successfully argued that it was necessary for Bowne to remain at his teaching post.

Bowne was always interested in preaching. When the chair of Homilectics became open in 1894, to the astonishment of all, he recommended E. H. Hughes, a twenty-seven year old minister from Newton Center. The committee had the names of some men who were regarded as the best masters of preaching in the United States. But Bowne was not moulded by the usual

¹ Ibid., p. 103.

² Ibid., p. 78. In 1895, Bowne went with Bishop John H. Vincent to a series of Ohio Annual Conferences--A General Conference election year--and found delegates so taken up with lobbying that they could not find time to listen to addresses on the essentials of Christian thought and experience. This opened his criticism to more than just the bishops alone.

way of doing things. In another instance, when an important educational position opened, a good man of financial importance urged upon Bowne the desirability of supporting a certain candidate. In supporting his candidate, this particular layman argued: "I favor this man because he is an excellent judge of men. He has moved around the world a good deal, and is socially-attractive--especially a wonderful story-teller." To this Bowne instantly replied:

All these recommendations could be put forth in favor of the devil. He is a good judge of men. He could not do what he does if he were not. We have it on high authority that he has moved around in the world a great deal; and, no doubt, if he were put to it, he could tell a number of capital stories.¹

The records do not tell whether Bowne's candidate for the preaching professorship succeeded or not, but they do make it clear that his interest in preaching was not dimmed. In 1905, he wrote a letter revealing his interest in the presentation of Christian truth.²

It appears to me there should be a way of studying sermonic literature and the sources of sermon material which should be fruitful beyond anything yet attempted. Comparative studies of preachers, studies of biography, studies of living men at work. All these might be used so as to make the dry bones of homiletics live and move and have their effective being. I sometimes wish I had a

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 237.

² Letter to Francis J. McConnell, January 28, 1905.

relay of heads, a set of about four, so that I could work continually by screwing on a fresh one at will. In that case I would like to try the chair of practical theology to see if something could not be made of it.

Bowne never became President of Boston University, but he still held definite convictions on the educational policy. Although a foe of officialism, he seldom tried to press his educational philosophy on the trustees of the University. Some of his convictions on educational policy are revealed in an extract from his address entitled: "The Passing of Educational Fiatism."

Questions of educational policy are not to be settled by popular clamor nor by the wishes of the students themselves. Scholars must decide them in the light of social needs and obligations, and they as little need to concern themselves respecting the opinions of the ignorant as physicians and legislators need concern themselves respecting the vote of dwellers of the slums against sanitary laws. It is the duty of the university to counteract popular errors and to set up a standard against them and not to yield to them. It is the duty of the college to lead, not to follow. It should express the opinions of the educated world as to what constitutes a liberal education, and for the sake of guidance it is desirable that there should be some standard degree which should have a fairly definite meaning other than a quantitative one. Let the persons who do the work leading to this degree receive and let others be free to do what they please, on condition that they shall show proper industry in the work they choose. Such a rule would tend to clearness and would do no one any injustice. If this be thought a counsel of perfection, then another course is possible. Let every diploma state the work for which the degree is given. If it were given chiefly for a course in Italian novels or something else of the same sort let it appear in the diploma. There certainly would be no hardship in having the diploma state precisely what the student has done. In this way we might unite the extremest freedom of choice

and get all the benefit of the youthful student's self-knowledge together with the little wisdom which might be added by the wise counsel of friends, and we should also not be doing business under false pretenses.¹

Bowne was a guiding force in the Methodist Episcopal Church. While a philosopher in his own right, he was in reality a religious guide for many years. There were many in his day who refused to accept his guidance, but there were a great many more who received it gladly. As a leader in the Methodist Church he was criticized for his supposed lack of interest in evangelism. His critics claimed that Bowne's attitude had a chilling influence on the evangelical temper of Methodism. He claimed that the "faithful editorial watchdogs of Methodism would bark through column after column" at him. It must be admitted that for the evangelistic methods ordinarily practiced in his day he had very little sympathy. On the other hand, it also must be admitted that for the bringing in the Kingdom by persuading men to yield their wills to the divine will he had every regard. For the professional evangelist he had nothing but criticism. To him they had a

¹ The Personalist, Vol. IV, No. 2, January 28, 1905. In publishing the address, R. T. Flewelling, the editor says: "When a great soul speaks profoundly and simply he speaks for many years. Our readers will, we think, realize this truth as they apply the words of Bowne written more than a decade ago to the problems of present-day education. The words were scarcely more needed when they were first written than they are now. As the years pass these unpublished literary remains of Bowne gain a new importance to the minds of his former students."

shoddy claptrap theology, artificial tests, overworked emotionalism, and many other things that were an abomination. For winning persons outside the church he held that reliance should be placed on personal work. It was his opinion that no better means of spiritual guidance had been contrived than the class meeting as conceived by John Wesley and that it still had possibilities regardless of the changes since Wesley's day.

Bowne put his main stress on religious education. He insisted that religious education was the only way, provided the nature of the child's mind be kept continually in view. Bowne had quite an exalted idea of the ordinary child mind as we find it, and protested against its being abused. In moral equipment and capacity for insight he thought the child "further along" than is ordinarily understood.

Borden Parker Bowne was a man of intense religious feelings and convictions. This is best revealed in the prayer that he uttered at the funeral of his long-time friend and counselor, Bishop Randolph S. Foster.¹

O God, thou art the Lord of life and death!
 Life and death are alike thy ministers, and in
 both life and death thy children are safe and
 secure in the Everlasting Arms.

Our Father, we gather here in the sorrow of

¹ The prayer is quoted at length because it gives an insight into Bowne's religious beliefs.

our human bereavement. Our hearts ache and the tears start before the awful void and silence left by this vanished life.

But we gather, also, in the solemn joy and triumph of our Christian faith. For thou hast brought life and immortality to light, and we sorrow not as those who have no hope. We are not left to the sad and sinister suggestions of the visible senses. We are not left to stand by these precious relics, soon to be hidden forever from our sight, and think that this is all and this the end. To sense, indeed, this is the end, but to faith it is the beginning. The mortal life has ended, and the life immortal begun. By faith we see our father, our brother, our friend, freed from the weakness and frailty of the earthly life and putting on the strength of the eternal years. We follow him into the glad reunions and divine revealings of the better land. We see him join 'the great intelligences fair, who range above our mortal state,' to whom he always belonged in aim and sympathy, and to whom he was bound by every spiritual affinity. We see him 'where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light, all rapture through and through in God's most holy light.' But, above all, we see him face to face with his Lord, whose he was and whom he served, and whose love was his supreme delight. He knows no longer in part, but knows even as he is known. Earth's sorrows have vanished, the mysteries are made clear, and now the eternal living, and the eternal loving, and the tireless activities, and the divine fellowships of the skies, are his. We bless thee, our Father, for the exceeding grace and wonder and comfort of the hope of the gospel. By a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from the upper sky, thou dost transform the gates of death and darkness into the gates of life and light. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

We thank thee, our Father, for the holy dead, for the great multitude which no man can number who have been gathering home out of every age and kindred and tongue and clime. They served thee in their day and generation, and passed into the heavens, where they are forever with thee, faithful over a few things and now made rulers

over many. For all these holy souls we give thee thanks, and especially we thank thee for those that we have known who have faithfully lived and peacefully and bravely died. They vanished from our side and from our arms, but they are ours forevermore. Death has separated but for a little while, and we are one family still. In Christ we and the holy dead are united. They belong to us and we to them, one in the service of our common Lord, and one in his eternal plan. . . .

And now we pray that thou wilt bless to all of us this solemn scene and hour. Bring home to every heart the sense of our mortality. Help us to realize the things that are seen are temporal, and that only the things unseen are eternal. Free us from undue bondage to temporal things. Make us mindful of the end, and help us to estimate life's values aright. And seeing that the night cometh and life hastens so swiftly to be done, whatsoever our hands findeth to do may we do it with our might. May we pattern after thy servant, and in our place and measure imitate him in the unselfishness of his life and the greatness of his devotion, so that his life, which was the life of Christ may reappear in us.

And now, our Father, we especially pray for the hearts that are especially sore and smitten. Thou only canst help. Thou only canst bind up the broken heart. O God, who knowest our frame, who rememberest that we are dust, have mercy upon us! O Christ, who hast borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, have mercy upon us! O Holy Spirit, who art the Comforter, have mercy upon us! Help us to see that thou wast never nearer, Help us to cast ourselves upon thy love, and wait for thy peace and thy salvation.

And in thy mercy grant us thy grace for the life that now is, and bring us all to the inheritance of the saints in light; there to take up again the interrupted friendship, and go on forevermore in unbroken communion in thy presence! Amen, and Amen!

Borden Parker Bowne was faithful in attending church.

Dr. Jucius H. Bugbee, Bowne's pastor two years prior to

Bowne's death, writes of Bowne's church relationship.

He was always at prayer-meeting, and seldom failed to express some very pertinent and helpful thought. A favorite quotation of his, given with the utmost sympathy and understanding, was two or three stanzas from Richard Baxter's hymn. . . .

'Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve thee is my share,
And this thy grace must give,'

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than he went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.

My attention had never been called before to that hymn, and his use of it made a deep impression on my mind. It stands out in my memory as a most striking expression of his own religious experience.¹

G. WORLD TOUR AND ITS INFLUENCE

About the year 1900 Bowne expressed a desire to go "around the world." The plans were worked out and in the year 1905 he began on a tour that included Japan, China, India, and Europe.

This trip around the world was among the important experiences of Bowne's life. Out of it grew a spiritual pilgrimage of profound significance. It widened his view and deepened his appreciation of those human values which always stood at the heart of his philosophy. It gave a final touch

¹ A letter to Francis J. McConnell, June 20, 1927.

to all he had been thinking.

This trip changed his attitude toward non-Christian systems. Prior to the trip Bowne was rather severe toward the non-Christian systems. He had very little patience toward the "heathen" peoples. While being genuinely interested in the missionary cause, he was not oversympathetic toward non-Christian peoples. In his work on ethics he wrote that the non-Christian heathen must either be transformed or perish.¹ When the United States conquered the Philippines in 1899, Bowne wrote an article saying that it was necessary for people to be ruled if they were unable to rule themselves.² And this he claimed was necessary in the name of humanity's own best good. Bowne justified himself by saying that to take away a people's sovereignty does not necessarily mean that you are reducing them to slavery. Men are deprived of freedom in some directions, only to be given a chance to realize more freedom in others. He contended that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would be worth more if people were relieved of tasks for which they had shown themselves incapable. The trip around the world, however, brought Bowne in close contact with the people of the Orient and he returned home with a much more considerate spirit towards non-Christian groups.

¹ "Humanity's Eminent Domain," The Independent, New York, 1899.

² Borden Parker Bowne, Ethics, p. 87.

Bowne was enthusiastically received in Japan. His book Personalism, had already been translated into Japanese and had been widely read. Bowne was a little suspicious of the Japanese politeness because he continually remembered the experience of another American lecturing in Japan. This particular lecturer noticed that the interpreter took much less time with the interpretation than the original delivery required, and that the interpretation always ended in the same phrase. A Japanese, pushed for an explanation, reluctantly revealed that the constantly recurring formula was: "I have given you the substance of what this man is saying. The rest of it is nothing but words."¹ This was not Bowne's experience. He was well received. The Japanese appreciated his metaphysics, but they could not quite understand his wit.

Bowne was impressed by the Japanese. This was not because of the public welcome nor because of the private hospitality, but the result of seeing the vast possibilities of the masses. A friend in whose home he stopped in Japan found him sitting one morning with bowed head lost in meditation from which he slowly roused himself. His host said to him, "What vision?" Bowne replied, "Just the vision of these masses of mankind, their possibilities in themselves and in their possible relation to the welfare of the whole world."²

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 256.

² Loc. cit.

He had a similar experience in China when he saw the evident genuineness of religious devotion in those under stress. He was especially touched when he saw a poor Chinese mother come to a shrine with a sick baby and make an offering there in hope of the child's recovery. This incident he afterward used before a group of Christians in China as indicating the spontaneous turning of souls in trouble to religion the world over.¹

Actual contact with China, with the worthiness of the people, and with their resentment at the grievances they had suffered at the hands of other nations, seemed to modify the tone with which he declared himself in his work Ethics. He wrote home saying that the recollection that the Englishman who negotiated the treaty which fastened opium on China was the author of "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" actually caused him to shiver.² In the same correspondence he wrote:

The dealing of foreign nations with China has been one sad, dreadful, atrocious, abominable history. The things the Chinese have done will not compare in inhumanity and diabolism with the things that the Western nations have done to them.³

¹ When the address was afterward published, without Bowne's knowledge, a reference to the Christian God as One who could not fail to note the human appeal even in the heathen rites, was cut out.

² Zion's Herald, November 21, 1906.

³ Loc. cit.

When he returned home he did not boast of Anglo-Saxonism and startled his friends with the remark that if he were beginning his professional career in 1906, he felt confident he could accomplish most by teaching in China.

One of the cherished memories which Bowne carried with him from China was the memory of a visit with Bishop Samuel I. J. Schereschewsky of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Bowne penned an article about this man's heroic life. In writing the touching account of the Bishop's life Bowne told of the eight years which the saintly missionary gave to translating the Scriptures into the Mandarin dialect. A large part of the translation was done after Bishop Schereschewsky had something resembling paralysis following sunstroke. The translator used the Roman alphabet to spell out Chinese sounds. Because of his physical infirmity, he was compelled to tie a stick to his middle finger, and with his finger thus stiffened, "poked out" twenty-five thousand pages of manuscript. One can agree with Bowne in his article when he says that the bishop "by his courage and energy did humanity imperishable honor."¹

Bowne was not so favorably impressed with India. He felt that the Indian audiences did not possess much power of

¹ "One of the World's Heroes," Youth's Companion, January 3, 1907. Bowne did not sign his name to the article.

sustained attention. While he was speaking one after another the Bengalese would get up and leave. Furthermore, the connection between a thoroughly heathen belief and a wretched social condition became more evident to him in India than anywhere else. Attending a religious festival at Kaligat he was literally made ill by the reek of goat's blood and the stench of sweating crowds. After the experience he remarked that he could well understand the mood of the Old Testament writer who spoke as if it had repented God that he had made man, and that God had felt an impulse to wipe the race off the earth.¹ The mood passed and he began to preach that Christianity rightly presented was the only avenue through which the vast possibilities of India could be realized.

When Bowne's reasoned discourses were not well received, he expressed his dissatisfaction to Doctor MacKichan, Chancellor of Bombay University. He was surprised to hear Doctor MacKichan reply,

I don't wonder that you were disappointed in dealing with these subjects in a learned, philosophical way with the students of Calcutta. Of course, some may have followed you, but I am not surprised that many did not. I would not want you to come and deliver a learned, philosophical lecture on one of those subjects, but come and give us an address on religion in simple discourse.²

¹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 258.

² Written in a letter from Rev. Mell of San Francisco. Rev. Mell introduced Bowne to MacKichan in Bombay and heard Bowne's address.

This Bowne consented to do.

Elaborate arrangements were made for Bowne to speak at Bombay University. Classes were dismissed and a great company of Parsees, Mohammedans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, Eurasians and Hindus of all castes, gathered to hear the message. Bowne followed the suggestion of Dr. MacKichan and was amazed at the result.

The students cheered heartily its main points, and at the close the cheering developed into a great ovation. For five minutes Doctor Bowne had to stand and receive the applause of the great crowd. Students and professors thronged to the front to greet this prophet of the future.¹

Bowne called his message "The Religion of the Future."

Rev. A. W. Mell, gives a condensation of the address.

The religion of the future will have:

1. ONE GOD--Modern thought in all science and in all philosophy is recognizing the unity of all force; physical, mental and moral. 'In him we live, move and have our being.' The many gods must go.
2. AN INTELLIGENT GOD--The illiterate, dumb and unintelligent gods must go. The modern mind can worship only a God that can be worshipped with all the mind.
3. A HOLY GOD--The immoral, thieving, lying and licentious gods must go. Only a moral God--a holy God--can appeal to the soul of modern man.
4. A BENEFICENT GOD--The cruel, jealous, revengeful gods must go. The God for the modern mind must be a giving God--a benevolent God, one who seeks to

¹ Mell, loc. cit.

give for the good of all.

5. A GOD OF LOVE--The gods of hate are doomed. Love is the end--the goal--of man's aspirations and worship.

6. A UNIVERSAL GOD--The gods of classes, races, and nations must go. As there can be but one God, the modern mind must think of him as the God of all nations and peoples--the God of the universe.

7. A GOD OF BROTHERHOOD--One who will seek the unity and the peace of all men.

CONCLUSION--For me, gentlemen, the God that I have described to you as the God of the religion of the future--though I do not ask you to accept my judgement, for it is only a statement of my belief--I repeat again, as for me, I find such a God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, in his character, his life of good deeds, and in his teachings. It satisfies my mind and heart, and I believe that this God as revealed in Jesus Christ will ultimately receive the homage of all nations. In his life the nations will find their life, and life more abundant.¹

Bowne was fairly overwhelmed by the reception of his message and thanked Doctor MacKichan for his suggestion that he deal with the subject of religion rather than the subject of philosophy. When he returned to America he wrote back to A. W. Mell indicating how this Bombay experience changed his whole approach to India. From that time on Bowne was convinced that India could never be reached by the way of philosophy. In substance he declared, "India will not be saved by the mere intellectual approach to Christ, but by faith in Christ and in the following of his teachings."²

¹ Mell, loc. cit.

² Loc. cit.

In the late summer of 1906, Bowne returned from his world tour and resumed his work at Boston University.

H. LAST DAYS

The closing years of Bowne's life were happy. He looked forward to the day when he could retire and be able to take a long look at nature. When asked what he wanted most to see in these desired hours of leisure he replied: "Oh, just the coming and going of the seasons, dawn and the sunset, night and the stars. I shall be disappointed if I have to leave this world without a chance for a good long look at all these."¹ He also desired a wider recognition of his philosophic achievements. But he did feel that the main principles for which he had fought were accepted even by those who had approached philosophy along other paths. He was optimistic enough to believe that the general theistic position was finally established, and that the task of the future would be merely to carry theism out in its implications.² He loved gardening and in a letter to Albert Coe he wrote: "Of all the odors, according to my nose, there is none other so gracious and refined as the violet. What manner of man ought I to be with 20 x 20 violets in the house."³

¹McConnell, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

²*Ibid.*, p. 265.

³A personal letter to Albert Coe.

The early days of 1910 slipped by, no one suspecting that the last summons was at hand. Bowne was full of labors, contemplating a sketch of the history of philosophy to show the trend toward personalism, preparing to discuss Berkeley in an important English lectureship, getting ready for a visit to Constantinople to inspect the American School for Girls of which he was a trustee. He was not a man of great muscular strength, never weighing more than one hundred and sixty pounds. All his life he ruled his body like a Spartan until it was completely flexible to his will; never ill, never unresponsive to the exacting demands for endurance that he laid upon it. The end came suddenly on Friday, April 1, 1910.

He was seized with a heart attack as he met his class, was able to reach home, but passed away in the afternoon of the same day. Except that the end had come prematurely, he could have desired no better lot than to fall thus at his post in the midst of the daily task.¹

That task for thirty-four years had been to be a teacher of men. Of the teachers' task, Bowne had a high estimate. In a letter he wrote:

The teacher's life is rarely a show one, and to many it is a root out of dry ground, but for real permanent influence no one has more of it than the effective teacher. 'Our echoes roll from soul to soul and grow forever and ever.'²

¹ McConnell, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

² From a letter to Dr. William S. Bovard, October 14, 1909.

President Daniel L. Marsh of Boston University in his founders' day address summarizes Bowne's work as a teacher.¹

For thirty-four years (1876-1910) as Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the Graduate School of Boston University, Bowne devoted himself to the intellectual propagation of what he well termed a life philosophy, a philosophy of life and for life. He believed that philosophy had a mission for everyday living. Rigorous logician though he was, yet he made 'the field of life and action' his supreme court of appeal as against the 'arid wastes of formal logic.' He turned the minds of his followers away from religious, theological and metaphysical conventionalities toward certain of the living, dynamic realities of experience, and then insisted upon the ethical evaluation of all experience.

Dr. Albert Cornelious Knudson, one of Bowne's most brilliant students, was in Europe when the sad news of Bowne's death reached him. It filled him with a sense of irrevocable loss. At once he sent to Zions Herald his brief tribute:

Professor Bowne is gone! Not until April 14 did this sad news reach us. We were then in Paris. It was a dark and dreary day. And since then the clouds for us have not lifted. Boston will not be the same place without him, and Boston University--how she is bereft! Her chief light is gone out. . . . I cannot adequately express my sense of personal loss. While a student in college twenty years ago, his books fascinated me, and called forth an admiration which the years has deepened into a love and reverence such as one seldom comes to feel towards another of one's kind. . . . No teacher of philosophy, so far as I know, so completely met the deepest needs of his time as Professor Bowne. And

¹ "Borden Parker Bowne," Bostonia, April 1937, p. 8.

because those needs in their essential nature are not ephemeral, but permanent and to some degree universal, his light is, to my mind, destined to be as that which shineth more and more.¹

¹ Quoted by Elmer A. Leslie in Personalism in Theology. A Symposium in honor of Albert Cornelius Knudson, by associates and former students, edited by, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

BOWNE'S PHILOSOPHY OF PERSONALISM

Bowne is a man with a warm Methodist religious experience. His philosophy of personalism is an attempt to preserve that experience from the destructive and disturbing factors of his day.¹ Bowne, like Fiske, wrote at a time when the impact of science and higher criticism upon the religious thought was keenly felt. Again, like Fiske, he tried to "mediate" between science and religion by incorporating both

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism, p. 8. "We need a sound philosophy at least as a kind of intellectual health officer whose business it is to keep down disease-breeding miasms and pestiferous growths, or as a moral police whose duty it is to arrest those dangerous and disturbing intellectual vagrants which have no visible means of support, and which corrupt the people." Frank Wilbur Collier points out that the distinguished and generally accurate scholar, James Hastings was mistaken when he said: "Bowne came by way of philosophy to believe in the God of the Bible." Collier replies to this statement saying that "those who know the personal history of Bowne know it is not true." In the same article he quotes Charles Parkhurst, Editor of Zions Herald, as saying "Doctor Bowne's interest in religion is even deeper than his interest in philosophy." The Personalist, Vol. I, No. 1, April, 1920, p. 34. George A. Coe, a former student of Bowne's remarks that "The part of Bowne's thinking that seems to live on in the greatest vigor in our minds today is the empirical rather than the dialectic or speculative factor. And the particular empirical content that looms most significantly in the retrospect is the observable facts of religious and moral life to which he insisently called attention. . . . This may not be evident to one who approaches Bowne's mind through his metaphysics, but then metaphysics was to him not the main thing, but, rather, a sort of police force with which to defend the life and liberties which he prized. "The Empirical Factor in Bowne," Studies in Philosophy, edited by E. C. Wilm.

in an all-comprehensive metaphysical system. But unlike Fiske, Bowne was saturated with the philosophical views abroad and these views gave new directions to cosmic philosophy. Bowne knew of the work of W. T. Harris and he was acquainted with Hegel, but as mentioned previously, his inspiration did not come from these two men. Speaking of the origin and nature of his philosophy, Bowne tells us that "Leibnitz furnishes the starting point," "Herbart supplies the method," and "the conclusions reached are essentially those of Lotze," but he adds, "the conclusions have been reached by strictly independent reflections."¹ From his German teachers Bowne obtained a perspective in philosophy that was new in America and was of special importance because of its fundamental affinity with religious speculation in the New World. Before giving an exposition of his philosophy of personalism let us glance at the history of the word "personalism."

A. HISTORY OF THE WORD "PERSONALISM"

Personalism, like pragmatism, is a new name for some old ways of thinking. "But it is not merely a new name. The new name, as in the case of pragmatism, represents a new emphasis and a new approach to some of the oldest problems of

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 3.

philosophy and theology."¹

E. S. Brightman, representing personalism before the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy says that

Personalism is a recent name for what, in various forms, has in the past been called monadology, spiritualism, neo-criticism, and personal or teleological idealism. It is the theory that to be is to be a self or a member of a self.²

The origin of the word "personalism" as a philosophical term takes us back into history over one hundred years.³ Schleiermacher used the word in his famous Discourses published in 1799⁴ as a general term distinguishing theism from pantheism. The English translator, John Oman, did not translate the German word "Personalismus" by its English equivalent, personalism, apparently not regarding the word warranted by English usage. Even as late as 1922, the word "personalism" did not appear in any of the standard English Dictionaries

¹ Albert C. Knudson, Philosophy of Personalism, p. 17.

² E. S. Brightman, "Personalism and The Influence of Bowne," Proceedings Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, 1926, p. 161.

³ Loc. cit. "But the word personalism is recent. Its earliest use as a terminus technicus appears to have been by Schleiermacher while John Grote introduced the word in English, in his Exporatio Philosophica. It is found in many recent writers, such as Caldecott (1908), William James (1902), C. Renouvier (1903), Hans Dreyer (1905), L. William Stern (1906), M. W. Calkins (1907), Bowne (1908), and many others. The term is not incorporated into general philosophical usage."

⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, Discourses, pp. 256-257.

except the Oxford English Dictionary.

The word "personalism," used not as a general philosophical term, but as designating a definite system of philosophy is not used until we reach the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1902, the French philosopher, Charles Renouvier, wrote a book entitled Le Personnalisme. Although his philosophy had been previously known as "Neo-Criticism," he came to the conclusion that the word "personalism" more fitly represented his system. To use his own words, "Le Personnalisme est le vrai nom qui convient à la doctrine désignée jus qu'ici sans le titre de neocriticisme."¹

Four years later in Germany, a young philosopher, William Stern, published the first volume of Person und Sache. In the sub-title he describes his system as "Critical Personalism." After thirty years of expounding his philosophic system, Borden Parker Bowne, in 1908, gave it a fresh and compact form in his volume, Personalism. This is probably the first time the name "personalism" had ever appeared on the title page of an English volume.²

Two years prior to the publication of Renouvier's book, Le Personnalisme, G. H. Howison of the University of California, published a book entitled The Limits of Evolution.

¹ Charles Renouvier, Le Personnalisme, p. iv.

² Albert C. Knudson, Philosophy of Personalism, p. 18.

In this volume Howison uses the term "personal idealism" to designate the metaphysical system he expounds. This term, "personal idealism" in the following year became the title of a collection of essays published by eight members of Oxford University. From a philosophical standpoint, the most important of these essays was Personality, Human and Divine by H. Rashdall.

The term 'personal idealism,' as used by Howison and Rashdall, is synonymous with 'personalism,' but the latter is the shorter and more distinctive term, and hence has in recent years been coming into more common use.¹

It cannot, however, be said to be a popular term. Many thinkers who might certainly be classed as personalistic still shun the term as far as they themselves are concerned.² But let us now attempt a definition of Bowne's personalism.

B. BOWNE'S PERSONALISM DEFINED

If one were to ask Bowne to classify himself he would probably receive something like the following as an answer:

It is hard to classify me with accuracy. I am a theistic idealist, a personalist, a transcendental empiricist, and idealistic realist, and a realistic

¹ Ibid., p. 20.

² Professor Brightman discusses the unpopularity of the term in two articles, "The Unpopularity of Personalism," and "Why Is Personalism Unpopular?" Methodist Review, pp. 9-28. F. J. McConnell, also discusses the unpopularity of personalism in his book on Borden Parker Bowne.

idealist; but all of these phrases need to be interpreted. They cannot well be made out of the dictionary. Neither can I well be called a disciple of anyone. I largely agree with Lotze, but I transcend him. I hold half of Kant's system, but sharply dissent from the rest. There is a strong smack of Berkeley's philosophy, with a complete rejection of his theory of knowledge. I am a Personalist, the¹ first of the clan in any thoroughgoing sense.

While we may derive considerable insight into Bowne's vital personality from this passage, we are hard put to discover any definition of his system. Furthermore, we do not find any clear cut definition of "personalism" in his books. Thus we must turn to those who sat at his feet.

Albert C. Knudson, professor of Theology at Boston University, after spending eighty-six preliminary pages gives the following summary and definition:

As we now look back over this chapter we see that our study has given us a general survey of the different types of personalism. The less distinctive is the pantheistic personalism of William Stern, which makes personalism equivalent to a universal teleology. Another type is pluralistic or finitistic. It is represented in different ways by the atheistic personalism of McTaggart, the relativistic personalism of Renouvier, and the purely finalistic personalism of Howison. Opposed to this type of personalism is absolutistic personalism, or personalism in the form of absolute idealism. This is represented by a number of distinguished thinkers of the neo-Hegelian school. What I have called typical personalism is neither pluralistic nor absolutistic, or rather, it is both. It recognizes a permanent truth in both pluralism and absolutism, and so seeks to keep the scales evenly balanced between them. But

¹ B. P. Bowne, The Personalist, 1921, p. 10.

the most distinctive form of personalism is not reached until personalism becomes a philosophical method as well as a body of conclusions. It is this that Bowne has given us, systematic philosophical methodological personalism, in which the whole metaphysics is organized around one central and all-illuminating principle--that of self-sufficiency of personality.

In the light of these facts we may define personalism as that form of idealism which gives equal recognition to both the pluralistic and monistic aspects of experience and which finds in the conscious unity, identity, and free activity of personality the key to the nature of reality and the solution of the ultimate problems of philosophy.¹

Ralph Tyler Flewelling,² a former student of Bowne's and Director of the School of Philosophy, The University of Southern California, gives the following definition of personalism.

Personalism, in the proper sense of the term, asserts a system of selves related through a supreme personality. It conceives of the supreme as existing in and through the concrete continuous exercise of his personality, thinking, willing, and sustaining all things. This personality, far from being subject to analysis, is the ultimate fact which alone makes the world as a whole intelligible. Lotze affirmed personality of the divine being, but neglected to carry out the implications to its deeper theistic conclusions. Renouvier, who first employed the term 'personalism,' thought it necessary to escape pantheism by assigning the world of things to a single primary creative act. Bowne, however, insisted upon a supreme personality creatively present in the on-going of the world.

¹ Knudson, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

² R. T. Flewelling is also editor of the Personalist magazine which carries on the Bowne tradition.

Personalism in this stricter sense is closely allied with the thought of Augustine, and accords with the Christian demand for a personal relationship of man to the infinite world-ground which is a person.

Personalism may then be defined as that system of philosophy which views personality as the active ground of the world, and as containing in the mystery of its own unique being the key to all the antinomies of metaphysics. It is the latest form of theism and has been most completely worked out in the writings of the American philosopher, Borden Parker Bowne. It occupies a mediating position between pure empiricism and pure idealism, and is to be judged by its definition of reality, its doctrine of knowledge, and its conception of space and time.¹

Allowing these two definitions of personalism to stand as valid representations of Bowne's thought, we proceed to give a brief exposition emphasizing his epistemology and metaphysics.

Such a procedure is very much in line with the mind of Bowne. In the preface to his work on Personalism, he claims that it is our Epistemology and Metaphysics that decide the day in intellectual campaigns. These subjects which seem to have little or no practical bearing, are the subjects out of which come the issues of intellectual life or death. Our conceptions of reality and causality, our thoughts regarding time and space, "these are the things that decide our general way of thinking and give direction to our

¹ Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IX, pp. 771-772.

thought even in morals and religion."¹ A harmless looking doctrine is set forth in epistemology and before long there is "agnostic chill in the air that is fatal to the highest faiths of the soul, or some sensual blight and mildew spread over the fairer growths of our nature."² If space and time are made supreme laws of existence "determinism and materialism and atheism are at the door."³

C. SELF, THE BASIS OF KNOWLEDGE

For Bowne, Philosophy is an attempt to answer two main questions: (1) How is knowledge possible? and (2) What is the true nature of reality? To Bowne, these two questions are interrelated and an answer to one of them has an unmistakable bearing upon the answer to the other.⁴

Bowne maintains that knowing consists in forming concepts of things known and knowledge consists of the conceptions thus formed. But, he says, the mind cannot transcend its conceptions, and for this reason the object exists for the mind only as it is conceived, not as it is in itself. In other words, a thing can never be more for the mind than a

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism, p. viii.

² Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

³ Ibid., p. ix.

⁴ Borden Parker Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 1.

realized conception, and the mind can grasp the world only through the conception it forms of it. Thus it follows, that the demand to know "things in themselves" is absurd, if by "things in themselves" be meant things out of all relation to thought.¹ Knowledge of things in themselves, if this term be used, can mean only a knowledge which shall be universally valid; and the question, What is reality? reduces therefore to this other pertinent question: How must we think about reality?² The answer to this question, says Bowne, presupposes an understanding of the nature of thought and of how thought functions in the knowledge relation.

Thought is mental life, considered as apprehending truths. "Thought, then, is that form of mental activity whose aim is truth or knowledge."³ As psychological fact, thought is special to me; but it affirms and apprehends something valid for all. Bowne does not doubt that this is a great mystery, "but," he says, "the fact is so involved in the nature of thought that thought vanishes altogether with its denial."⁴ Furthermore he says:

It is this fact which constitutes the universality and objectivity of thought, and distinguishes the judgement--at least, in its intention--

¹ Ibid., p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ B. P. Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 9.

⁴ B. P. Bowne, ibid., p. 14.

from a subjective union of ideas.

Of course, this does not hinder that thought may often be mistaken. Chance conjunctions are put forward as fixed connections. Accidents of the individual are assumed to have universal validity. The special to me is mistaken for the common to all. But this very fact only illustrates once more that universality, or objective validity, is the essential of thought.¹

Werkmeister, commenting on this point of Bowne's thought says:

. . . how the purely subjective can comprehend something valid for all--is, for Bowne, a great mystery. But he is sure that thought and all possibilities of knowledge vanish if this transcending nature of thought is denied; for it is this fact of transcendence which constitutes the universality and objectivity of thought, and which distinguishes the judgement--at least in its intention--from a subjective union or association of ideas. Only by virtue of this transcendence can the apprehending thought reproduce an order which is independent of that thought itself.²

For Bowne, the mere presence of ideas in consciousness, or their passage through it, is but a mental event and has no truth significance. Truth or error emerges only at the level of judgment. "The fundamental conditions of the judgment, therefore, must be fundamental conditions of thought itself."³ These are three: "the unity and identity of the thinking self,

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, loc. cit.

² W. H. Werkmeister, A History of Philosophical Ideas in America, p. 104.

³ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 20.

the law of identity and contradiction, and the fact of connection among the objects of thought."¹ The first, he explains more fully, is the condition of any rational consciousness whatever. The second is the condition of our thought having any constant and consistent meaning. And the third refers to that objective connection without which thought loses all reference to truth.²

Logically, a judgment involves the distinction between subject term and predicate term no less than the union of these terms. And for this logical distinction and union alike, says Bowne, we need something which is neither (a) nor (b), but which comprehends and acts upon both. This something Bowne calls the self.³ And by this, he means not anything sensuously or imaginatively presentable, but only that abiding principle revealed in thought, and without which thought is impossible.⁴ The self, therefore, is the real basis and presupposition of all judgments.

If we ask Bowne: "What is the self?", he replies, "Over against the plurality of successive particular states the self must be both one and abiding."⁵ Because says he,

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 20.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Loc. cit.

. . . the latter necessity is as manifest as the former. For if we suppose the particular states to be in time, they vanish as fast as they are born; and if there be nothing which abides across this flow and unites the past and the present in the unity of its continuous and identical existence, once more the judgment becomes impossible.¹

Such an answer may not satisfy the metaphysician; indeed it may raise still further questions concerning the nature of self-permanence. But Bowne is convinced that all these questions do not touch or alter the fact of permanence itself. "The fact is revealed in thought itself; and no one has ever succeeded in more than a verbal denial of it."

Moreover, he says:

The metaphysical questions apply equally to all reality, and are no special difficulties of psychology. On the plane of ordinary thinking, where for action we demand an agent, and for changing states an abiding subject, there is nothing which can show a better title to be called real and abiding than the thinking self. And if we raise the deeper metaphysical questions we find the apparent realities of sense perception vanishing into phenomena, while selfhood seems to be the only thing that can show any claim to abiding existence. . . . Whatever mystery the reality and permanence of self may involve, they cannot be denied without wrecking thought altogether. . . . The claim is simply that I am not thoughts, but I think, and that I who now think am the same who thought yesterday.³

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 22.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Loc. cit.

Thus, Bowne maintains that the reality and permanence of the self cannot be denied without wrecking thought altogether.

D. HOW THE SELF ATTAINS KNOWLEDGE

If we admit that the existence of a self is an indispensable presupposition of knowledge, then the question arises, How does the self come to know objects or things? Naive realism maintains that the mind receives the imprints of objects through the senses, and that it thus passively obtains at least the elements of knowledge. Bowne, on the other hand, argues that if there are states of "passive sensibility," they "become something for thought only through the constitutive activity of intelligence." For those who think otherwise, Bowne proposes the problem:

Given a flow of states, each of which perishes as fast as it is born, to deduce, or in any way reach, any articulate conception whatever. It is respectfully suggested that all who undertake the problem should carefully refrain from falsifying the question by importing their own knowledge of what is to be deduced into the data of the problem. If this care be exercised it will appear that the temporal, as such eludes all knowledge until it is brought under the control of a timeless idea.¹

Hence, he continues, by the time sense data are "anything for intelligence," there is an implicit logical

¹ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

activity even in the simplest sensation.¹ This activity of thought is certainly involved in the fact of "recurrent experience"; for regardless of what the association in psychology say about it, such recurrence--or rather the experience of recurrence--"is possible only for an intelligence which has transformed its particular experiences into general concepts of abiding significance."²

The immanent activity of thought in sense experience is further illustrated in the interpretation of the impressions.

For thought does not rest in the apprehension of sensations as having simple and identical qualitative contents; it proceeds to relate them variously and interpret them. Only thus does thought reach a world of reality and of rational system.³

The activity of mind, then, is basic to all knowledge, and

. . . worthless are the theories which describe the object as impressing, or stamping, or photographing itself upon the mind.⁴

Such theories of passive receptivity of the part of the mind are at best but figurative descriptions and

. . . lose all credit, except as rhetorical devices, as soon as we reflect upon the logical

¹ Ibid., p. 41.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

conditions of perception and upon the fact that knowledge can never be passed along ready-made but arises and¹ exists only in and through the cognitive act.

Furthermore, he says:

As the spoken word or the printed page contains no thought, but is on the occasion upon which a living mind thinks out of itself, so the nervous changes contain no thought, but are on the occasion upon which a living mind thinks out of itself.²

Bowne remarks that one who does not know how to read would look in vain for meaning in a printed page. Nor would his failure be helped by using strong spectacles.

Language, [he says], has no meaning except for one who furnishes the meaning out of himself. Where the mental insight is lacking, eye-glasses and ear trumpets are of no avail.³

On the basis of these considerations Bowne argues that neither the realists nor the Berkeleyan idealists can overcome the dualism of subject and object which their respective systems suppose or imply and which is inherent in human knowledge. According to the realistic view, a "world of things" stands over against our thought in supreme indifference and independence, while according to the idealistic view "we have an objective divine thought over against our thought,"

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 52.

³ Loc. cit.

which so far transcends our power of comprehension that the gap between them cannot be bridged.¹ This raises the question, how is it possible for the human mind to know anything.

To this question Bowne replies that the world of things can exist for us "only as the mind reconstructs it as a world of thought."² If we prefer to say that the real world is already a world of thought, then the conclusion is that the world of objective thought becomes anything for us "only as we rethink it and thus constitute it our object."³ However real or ideal the world may be, "it becomes an object for us only as the mind builds up in consciousness a system of conceptions, and relates their contents under the various forms of intelligence."⁴ That is to say, the world becomes an object only as the mind proceeds to interpret systematically and under the guidance of basic categories whatever contents of experience are disclosed in the consciousness of existing selves.

The guidance of the basic categories is an important factor in Bowne's system. It is impossible to fully understand his thought without an understanding of his interpretation of the categories. It will be noted that Bowne has drawn

¹ Ibid., p. 54.

² Ibid., p. 56.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Loc. cit.

heavily from Kant but that he has also made some unique contributions of his own. The following is a distilled exposition of his views on the categories of Knowledge.

E. CATEGORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The categories are for Bowne what they were for Kant: "immanent mental principles which underlie articulate experience and make it possible."¹ They are the norms by which the mind proceeds, implicitly or explicitly, in fixing, defining, and relating its objects. "They constitute the framework of thought, and form the contents of the pure reason."² The most fundamental of these categories is time or the "form under which we relate events."³

1. Time. Discussing the nature of time, Bowne argues, in Kantian fashion,⁴ that whatever time may be, it is no independent reality apart from Being;⁵ it cannot exist in or by

¹ Ibid., p. 59.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴ B. P. Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 164. Bowne says that "Kant made the same argument do for both but there are many difficulties in the case of time which do not exist in that of space, and which compel a separate discussion. The subjectivity of time is by no means involved in that of space."

⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

itself. If time is assumed to be "real," ambiguities and contradictions are unavoidable; for if time were "real," then it must comprehend in its unity past, present, and future alike and must yet be identical in its totality with eternity or timelessness; or it must "flow on" and yet be also the "standing condition of all flow."¹ In view of this "conger of contradictions" in the notion, time as an entity or "container" cannot exist, and "reality is not in time any more than it is in space."²

What is essential in time is the relation of antecedence and sequence, and this relation, according to Bowne, is established by the mind. "The necessity of the relation does not lie primarily in the events, but in the mind; and the properties of time are to be understood from the side of the relating act."³ Time, in other words, is but a form which mind imposes upon experience, a law of relating events. In so far as all events are related by the same law in a common scheme, time is said to be one; and "the unity and infinity of time are only consequences of the fact that the law of synthesis is one and extends to all events."⁴

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 224.

³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴ Loc. cit.

Again in Kantian fashion Bowne maintains that "the succession of moments and events gives us the basis of number."¹ Supposing units established, they do not count themselves. Eyes cannot see number. To simply stare at a group of objects will never report their number. "Number is grasped only through a process of counting, and number exists only as things are united by the mind of numerical relations."²

Bowne gives a summary of his views of time:

1. Time is primarily an order of relations in our experience. This order admits of no question or denial.
2. There is no ontological time separate from things and events, in which they exist or occur.
3. There is no order of ontological change of which time is the form and to which time may be referred, without reference to intelligence.
4. Both time and change must be referred to intelligence as their source.
5. Neither time nor change can be carried into intelligence as such without making thought impossible.
6. Neither time nor change can be construed with reference to any extra-mental fact, but only from the standpoint of self-conscious intelligence.
7. Hence the temporal judgment becomes relative to the range and contents of self-consciousness.
8. Non-temporality is not to be conceived as a

¹ Ibid., p. 71.

² Loc. cit.

temporal coexistence, as if one should say that the earth is on all sides of the sun at the same time, but rather as the immediate possession of the objects by the conscious mind. This relation cannot be construed in temporal terms, but must be experienced.

9. What this may mean may be gathered from reflection on what we call present experience. This is not temporal in the sense of having a real before and after in it. It is temporal in the sense of having the temporal form. It is non-temporal in the sense that the conscious self grasps all its elements in an indivisible act, and thus makes consciousness possible.

10. But still experience has the temporal form; and we may resume our temporal language with all confidence, only guarding ourselves against mistaking this form for an ontological fact, and also against overlooking the relativity in the temporal judgment due to our limitation.¹

2. Space. The next category in order of importance is space. On the negative side Bowne argues that any attempt to make space real and yet distinct both from things and from nothing must fail; for "either we must make [space] a pure nothing in reality, or we must make it a thing in interaction with itself and with other things."² "Both of these views," says Bowne, "are untenable, and the former is absurd."³

¹ B. P. Bowne, Metaphysics, pp. 193-194. Bowne's conception of time has been criticized by some of his former students as being inconsistent with his Christian philosophy. Bowne Brightman, "Temporalist or Eternalist," Personalist, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 (July 1947).

² Ibid., p. 185.

³ Loc. cit.

The situation is not improved even when we assume-- with Leibnitz--that "space is a certain order of relations among realities." According to this view, Bowne claims, "if things were away there would be strictly nothing remaining. But things, when they exist, exist in certain relations, and the sum, or system, of these relations constitutes space."¹ Bowne's criticism of this view is twofold. He points out (1) that when space is defined as the mutual externality of things, we have to call up the general form of space to understand what is meant.² He says that this position rests upon a logical circle. He shows (2) that relations as such are incapable of objective existence. Hence if space be only a system of relations, it is necessarily subjective.³

The positive solution of the problem of space Bowne finds once more in the position of Kant, according to which space, like time, is primarily a law of mental synthesis whereby the mind relates its coexistent objects under the form of mutual externality.⁴ The unity of space is simply the unity of the law of mutual exclusion. The all-embracing character of space means the applicability of this law to all

¹ Ibid., p. 189.

² Ibid., p. 190.

³ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴ B. P. Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 74.

mutually external objects, while the infinity of space is "the inexhaustibility of the spatial synthesis".¹ The phrases "in space" and "in space relation," mean essentially the same thing.²

3. Motion, quality, and quantity. Bowne next discusses motion, quality, and quantity as additional categories, and points out that--

. . . space, time, motion, and quantity, with number for their measure, are the great elementary categories of mechanical science. They contain the basis of pure mathematics and kinematics, and thus furnish the groundwork of physical science.³

The "Phenomenality of space,"⁴ furthermore, implies the

¹ Ibid., p. 76.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴ Bowne discusses this point at length under the heading of "The Phenomenality of The Physical World," in Personalism, pp. 110-158.

Ralph Tyler Flewelling, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IX, pp. 771-773, says: "Personalism agrees with Kant in his view of the subjective nature of space and time, but goes on to assert an objective validity as well. I may say that time and space are only the forms under which I think, but are they peculiar to me. If purely subjective, as Kant taught, there is no way of granting them general validity and no assurance that our calendars or geographies will agree. Both time and space must be given objective validity to free from the disjunctive caprice of the individual and make possible a world united in space and time relations. The forms of time and space gain validity universal for intelligent beings through a supreme personal intelligence who creates and upholds all."

"phenomenality of Motion."¹ Therefore, says Bowne, it follows from this that the mechanical sciences can never give us a true picture of the essence of things or of reality as such.²

4. Being. This brings Bowne to his discussion of being. Science, he says, is to be supplemented by metaphysics. Bowne regards being as the first metaphysical category. "In the broadest sense, then, being includes everything, thought and its objects alike; for all of these do in some fashion exist."³ But in this broad sense, being does not necessarily imply substantiality. We must therefore demand

. . . another and more metaphysical use of the term in which the mind distinguishes between being as substantive existence and being as applied to events, between being as the abiding reality and being as objective appearance which exists only in its perception.⁴

This metaphysical and "substantial" conception of being "is the fundamental category with spontaneous thought"⁵ i.e., with uncritical minds. Even causation is secondary to this category of being; for our experience is absolutely inarticulate and nothing for intelligence until it is fixed and defined with

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 242.

² Loc. cit.

³ B. P. Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 82.

⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵ Loc. cit.

reference to an abiding and independent meaning. Qualities are qualities of something, and this "something" must have "substantial" existence or it is nothing. For if we deny the category of "substantial being" outright, then not even solipsism is left as a possible view of reality.¹ Furthermore, he says,

. . . if we should allow the solipsistic subject and his phenomena, those phenomena would reveal nothing, would have no ground or bond or inner connection whatever, and would thus elude all rational apprehension.²

Bowne's category of being³ requires special interpretation. As Bowne views it, the category of being appears in three leading forms--thing, soul, and God; but in all three it stands for "the real ground and principle of unity in the manifestations of the respective realms."⁴ Pure being, of course, or being without attributes, is objectively nothing. "Subjectively," says Bowne, "it is bare category of objective position."⁵ Its significance lies in the fact that it provides us with the means in and through which we transform the chaotic manifoldness of sense perceptions into the relative

¹ Ibid., p. 84.

² Loc. cit.

³ R. T. Flewelling, Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IV, pp. 721-723.

⁴ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

orderliness of a world of "things."

The senses can give us "only qualities" which are in themselves unrelated so that "there is nothing in any one that implies an other."¹ Nevertheless these qualities "form groups by association and all that we mean by a thing is simply such a group"² viewed under the category of being. The "notion of being" adds nothing to the "sense contents" that can be sensuously presented, but it contributes "independent objectivity"; i.e., it provides the "objective principle of ground and unity"³ which transforms the sense content into an abiding object of experience.

5. Identity.⁴ The category of identity Bowne admits in two forms: first, in the logical realm, as "sameness of meaning"; and second, in the field of metaphysics, as "continuity of existence"; and he contends that without this category in the metaphysical sense, "experience would vanish into a groundless flux of perishing events. There would be no

¹ Ibid., p. 86.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴ Perhaps the most thorough discussion of Bowne's treatment of change and identity is J. A. F. Ventura's work; Borden Parker Bowne's Treatment of the Problem of Change and Identity, 1942.

connection between the past and future of a thing."¹ In fact, he says, "there would be no thing. Thus the thought of being itself would vanish."²

6. Causality. Supplementary to being and identity is the category of causality. Without it

. . . events would be groundless and experience would fall asunder into chaos. Perception, if it were otherwise possible, would become solipsism; for our perceptions, having no cause, could never be related to a real world. Indeed, even the idea of being itself, as anything beyond the individual and momentary presentation, would vanish, and thus nihilism would be the outcome.³

For Bowne the essential meaning of causation is "dynamic determination."⁴ He finds it necessary to distinguish three forms of it: (1) the self-determination of a free agent; (2) the determination of the consequent by antecedent; and (3) the mutual determination of different things, or interaction. He says: "in the first form we have freedom; in the second we have the causal connection of sequences; and in the third we have the causal connection of coexistences, or the interaction of things."⁵

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 88.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 90.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Loc. cit.

But this is not the complete story of the categories. There is another and much more important category--the category of the self-acting person. In this category we find the central thesis of Bowne's "personalism."

F. SELF-ACTIVE PERSON AS CATEGORY

The categories of being, space, time, and causation, Bowne maintains, are necessary in order to have any articulate experience whatever. For it is through them that we reach intelligible objects. But, says he, these categories alone would "keep us among isolated things and events."¹ Furthermore, "space and time separate rather than unite; and causality, at least in its mechanical form, provides no system."² For the further systematization and unification of our objects a higher category is needed; and this Bowne finds in purpose, or, rather in the elevation of causality to intelligent and volitional causality, with its implication of plan and purpose.³ We can understand experience completely only when it is integrated into one all-inclusive system of meaning. But the unity and system demanded must be internal to experience itself and must not be an external imposition, and this

¹ Ibid., p. 104.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

"internality" the category of mechanical causation does not give to us.

Therefore, argues Bowne, the

. . . true inwardness can be found only in self-determining, self-conscious causality, guiding itself according to plan and purpose. Thus only do the unity and totality of the system become possible. Until we advance to this conception we either contradict ourselves or wander among verbal solutions.¹

The recourse to such a category is therefore the ultimate basis of all understanding and of all explanation.² Thus we have found the central thesis of Bowne's "Personalism."

There is still one more problem that arises, however, because from the human standpoint "there is an ineradicable dualism of thought and thing";³ and yet, "without assuming,

¹ Ibid., p. 105.

² "The real meaning of the categories is to be found not in their conceptual or formal role, as modes of connection among phenomenal, but 'through our living experience of intelligence itself.' In this 'active self-experience' is to be found a revelation of causality, of substance, of unity-in-manyness, and of identity in change. The categories so construed in terms of the real mind which creates phenomena, may then be assigned to the reality beyond phenomena,--a step which all philosophers have virtually taken in the acknowledging the reality of other selves. This doctrine Bowne called his 'transcendental empiricism.' It leads to a spiritualistic metaphysics, which defines 'a world of persons with a Supreme Person at the head,' of which nature is the expression and means of communication, and which, despite their ultimate substantial and causal unity, nevertheless as persons preserve a 'mutual otherness' and 'relative independence.'" Alfred Weber and Ralph Barton Perry, History of Philosophy, 1925, p. 552.

³ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 296.

at least implicitly, that the laws of thought are valid for reality, knowledge is impossible."¹ This problem of the validity of thought and of its meaningfulness in the face of reality, Bowne claims, can be solved neither by a mechanistic materialism nor by absolute idealism. The mechanist and materialist who explain everything in terms of "natural causation," even the ideal distinctions of truth and error, of rationality and irrationality, are meaningless. Thus, in a purely mechanical system, says Bowne, "one notion is as necessary as any other and as good as any other while it lasts."² On the other hand, "the metaphysical monism of thought and being for the absolute leaves the epistemological dualism of human thought and cosmic being as undeniable as ever."³

Leibnitz asserted a general parallelism of the laws of thought with those of things. But this is far from being a solution to the epistemological problem; for "the conception of two entities mutually independent yet groundlessly parallel, is impossible."⁴ Therefore, metaphysical considerations compel us to admit one fundamental existence upon which all else

¹ Ibid., p. 297.

² Ibid., p. 300.

³ Ibid., pp. 306, 309.

⁴ Ibid., p. 310.

depends. What is this basic reality? Bowne answers,

. . . if we assume that the world expresses thought and that our thought has something universal in it, the ground of the parallelism between our thought and the system becomes apparent, and there is no longer any speculative reason why finite minds should not grasp the cosmic fact.¹

Further he says,

Things, as products of the creative thought, are commensurable with our intelligence and are essentially knowable. Both human minds and cosmic things must be traced to a common source in the creative thought and will. Only thus can the antithesis of thought and thing be transcended and mediated. The universe, though not founded in our thought, is yet founded in thought; though independent of our will it is still dependent on will.²

Bowne further contends that both traditional realism and traditional idealism have been hasty and superficial,³ and that "no tenable idealism can be founded on a theory of the knowing process alone."⁴ "Such idealism," he claims,

¹ Ibid., p. 314.

² Loc. cit.

³ R. T. Flewelling shows the mediating position of personalism between realism and idealism. Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IX, pp. 771-773.

⁴ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 326. It was these epistemological considerations which led Bowne directly into the problems of metaphysics and "it is as a metaphysician that Bowne dealt most directly with the problems of his time and that he exerted his greatest influence upon American thinking." Werkmeister, Philosophical Ideas in America, p. 111.

"must either lapse into solipsism, or it must be arbitrary and inconsistent."¹ Thus if any idealism is to be held, it must be based upon an analysis of the object known rather than of the knowing process.

It is clear that Bowne wishes to distinguish his position from that of Hegel as well as from that of Berkeley. His own view he regards as realistic "in affirming an objective cosmic system independent of finite thinking."² But it is idealistic "in maintaining that this system is essentially phenomenal, and exists only in and for, as well as through, intelligence."³

G. BOWNE'S METAPHYSICS--PERSONALISM

Bowne defines metaphysics as an "interpretation of being."⁴ Being, "in its widest sense," may, of course, be affirmed of every object of thought; but in its metaphysical sense, Bowne says, the term "applies only to substantive things."⁵ Laws, relations, and events are also real, but not in the same sense as things.

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, pp. 326-327.

² Ibid., p. 343.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 27.

⁵ Loc. cit.

He says further: "The reality of a feeling is in being felt; that of a thought is in being thought; that of a law is in its ruling; that of a truth is in its validity."¹ The question is, "in what does the reality or being of things consist?" It is the task of metaphysics, claims Bowne, to find an answer to this question and to discover "what conditions a thing must satisfy in order to fill out our notion of being."²

In the metaphysical sense of Bowne's doctrine, Being, cannot be a matter of logical concepts; for such concepts are contradictory when viewed as real existences. The universal man, who is neither white nor black, neither tall nor short, neither young nor old, does not, and cannot exist; and "motion in general," to use another example, is impossible.³ Therefore, it follows that "whatever exists in reality must always be something specific, and not logically universal."⁴ But if that be the case, then, says Bowne, the notion of "pure being" must also be rejected as incapable of real existence. Furthermore, if it could exist, it must be rejected as useless. Being, too, must always be something specific.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 28.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

To Bowne, the distinctive mark of being consists in some power of action. "Things are distinguished from non-existence by this power of action and mutual determination."¹ Causality is therefore essential to the nature of being; in fact, "being" actually means being a "cause."² He says further: "Whatever is to be considered as existing must be capable of action in some form."³ "Being and action are inseparable. To be is to act; the inactive is the non-existent."⁴ Again, "Being is only a class-notion, under which things fall, not because of a piece of existence in themselves, but by virtue of their activity."⁵

When we see the emphasis that Bowne places on activity, it is not at all surprising to note that he also insists that

. . . the rule of law, which determines the form and sequences of a thing's activities, represents to our thought the nature of the thing, or expresses its true essence. It is in this law ⁶ that the definiteness of a thing is to be found.

Therefore we must abandon as impossible of accomplishment all attempts "to grasp the nature of reality by asking how it

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

² Ibid., p. 41.

³ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

looks."¹ The nature of reality, being action, "can never be expressed by a quality, but only by a rule or law according to which the thing acts and changes."² Any theory which finds the essence of a thing in some simple quality is thus utterly inadequate. It makes no provision for activity and change; or, if it provides for change, it makes no provision for identity. Thus such a theory is unacceptable as a metaphysical doctrine.³

Bowne as we have seen, thinks of a thing as active; but he also insists that the thing be and remain "identical with itself" in the midst of all changes.⁴ Now change is neither a lawless nor a groundless sequence.⁵ There exists a causal continuity between the successive states of reality whereby each is founded in its predecessor, and, in turn, founds its successor. "It is not a change of anything into everything, but the direction of a change for everything is fixed."⁶ This, for Bowne, means that change implies causal

¹ Ibid., p. 69.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

continuity of being, and is identical with becoming.¹

"Everywhere there are ground and law."²

Now if this be granted, the question arises, where do we find an adequate conception of a reality which so obviously involves both identity and diversity, permanence and change? Bowne replies that we find it only in the conception of personality, in "self-conscious spirit."

Only personality is able to give concrete meaning to those ontological categories by which we seek to interpret being. Only personality is able to reconcile the Eleatic and Heraclitic philosophies for only the personality can combine change and identity, or flow and permanence.³

For, says Bowne, as a person, each "one of us knows himself as one and as enduring," and he distinguishes himself from his changing states and experiences as their permanent subject. This permanence, however, does not consist in any rigid sameness of being, but in memory and self-consciousness, whereby alone we constitute ourselves abiding persons.⁴ As persons we are "one in many," "abiding in the midst of change," and we are pre-eminently active. The idea of person or personality, therefore, provides us with the only adequate

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 100.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Ibid., p. 97.

conception of reality.

H. ARGUMENTS FOR BOWNE'S POSITION

Bowne supports and defends this general thesis with a number of specific arguments. In the first place, he points out that things cannot be "individual and independent," for "such things cannot form a universe."¹ If each thing were one and independent, it would necessarily be indifferent to all the rest. Many such things put together would result in a sum, not a system; an aggregate, not a whole; and even the sum or aggregate would not really be inherent in the things but would exist only for observing minds.² A system or whole presupposes at least an interaction of its constituent parts, and such interaction supersedes the mutual indifference of the things. For in a system of interacting things, where every thing determines every other thing and is determined by every other thing, every thing is what it is, and does what it does, only as a member of the system.³ And that it does, only in relation to others.⁴

But, reasons Bowne, if many things interact, they do

¹ Ibid., p. 101.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 105.

⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

so only because of "a co-ordinating one." The interactions of the universe are possible only through the unity of a basal reality which brings them together in its one immanent omnipresence.¹ "The ultimate pluralism of spontaneous thought," that is, the pluralism implied in a superficial and nonreflective view of the things about us, must therefore be exchanged for a "basal monism." The unity thus reached is not the unity of a logical universal, nor of a class-concept, but the "essential substantial unity of being which alone is self-existent, and in which all things have their being."²

This ultimate One, which Bowne regards as fundamental to all existing things, he calls "the infinite, the absolute, and the independent."³ It is the "self-sufficient source" of the finite. Everything else has its cause and reason in this being. The infinite must be viewed, says Bowne, as the sole and determining ground of the system of all things. "It is the source of all law, of all manifestations, and of all movement in the system."⁴

But if Bowne's infinite is so all-important, then there

¹ Ibid., pp. 126-128.

² Ibid., p. 130.

³ Ibid., p. 131.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 131; 132-133.

is grave danger that it completely absorbs all finite things and that the latter lose all individuality and all significance. This danger is not unseen to Bowne. He admits that inanimate nature, and to a lesser degree animate nature also, fail to achieve independent existence. He asserts that only selfhood suffices to mark off the finite from the infinite, and "only the finite spirit attains to substantial otherness to the infinite."¹ Apart from finite spirits there is nothing but the infinite and its manifold activities. "The impersonal finite attains only to such otherness as an act or thought has to its subject."²

Bowne conceives the infinite as an agent rather than a substance. The infinite is "causality" rather than "substantiality"; it is the "one basal being in action," the source of the system and of all its laws, principles, and realities.³ It is "personality," for, Bowne claims, "no other conception is consistent with thought itself."⁴

Before substantiating further this basic assertion, Bowne states a rule of procedure which is indispensable to any proper evaluation of his philosophical system and which

¹ Ibid., p. 137.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 144.

⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

we must continually keep before us as we study his arguments. The rule is this: "Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real in default of positive disproof."¹ That is to say, unless there be positive proof to the contrary, we may assume the universe to be such that mind, as we know it in ourselves, is perfectly at home in the universe and, indeed, finds its complete satisfaction therein.

Bowne claims that the mind is not a disinterested logic machine, but is a living organism with manifold interests and tendencies. He says that philosophy must recognize all these interests and must "make room for them."² In other words, our moral interests must be recognized, and "the universe must be not only rational, but righteous at its roots."³ Furthermore, we are also religious. In fact, says Bowne, "our entire nature works together to construct the religious ideal."⁴ This ideal, must therefore, be grounded in ultimate reality. The "one Perfect Being" "to whom heart, will, conscience, and intellect alike may come and say, 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done'"⁵ must exist; for only thus will the

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 21-25.

whole of our nature be satisfied.

Thus we have seen that to B. P. Bowne, the "world-ground," the source of the finite and of all its determinations, is an "agent" and not "stuff or raw material," causality and not substantiality. If we concede this, Bowne argues, then we shall find that we have at our disposal only two principles of causal explanation: "(1) necessary or mechanical agency, which is driven from behind, and (2) self-directing intelligent agency, which is led from before."¹ Of these two principles, Bowne finds the former to be inadequate and self-defeating. Only the latter principle is to be accepted as an ultimate explanation of reality.

The mechanistic explanation is inadequate because, for one thing, mechanism can never explain itself. It must assume the interconnection of phenomena within the system² without being able to show how such interconnection could ever get established or how the system could come into existence. Furthermore, mechanism and systems of necessity in general, can never explain teleological problems. Such problems "can find a final explanation only in a self-directing intelligence."³ And all other explanations, says Bowne, "are either

¹ Ibid., p. 63.

² B. P. Bowne, Metaphysics, p. 314.

³ Ibid., p. 91.

tautologies, or they implicitly abandon the problem."¹ In the world in which we live, however, teleological problems abound; for we do find "design" in nature.² Mechanism must therefore be abandoned as a metaphysical doctrine.

Against the mechanistic view, Bowne further argues that "no system of necessity has any standard of distinction between truth and error."³ For, says he, if truth and error be alike necessary, there is no standard of truth left.⁴ Therefore, it follows that there can be no rationality, and hence no knowledge, upon any system of necessity, and mechanism as a doctrine which claims to be true thus cuts the ground from under itself.

If, on the other hand, says Bowne, we assume that the universe is "founded in intelligence," then the facts will confirm our assumption. Although our knowledge is fragmentary, we shall now encounter no contradictions.⁵ We find that everything fall into place naturally and reveals a perfect pattern. But, if we deny that the world-ground is intelligence and affirm that the universe is "founded in

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 109.

³ Ibid., p. 114.

⁴ Ibid., p. 115.

⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

non-intelligence," then we find an irrational power doing rational work, an unconscious power producing consciousness, nonintelligence producing intelligence, necessity producing freedom, and the nonpurposive working apparently for purpose.¹ "The facts appear in irreconcilable and growing hostility to the hypothesis."² They reduce that hypothesis to an absurdity.

It is only the assumption that self-active intelligence is the ultimate nature of reality that will, according to Bowne, "save the phenomena" and provide an adequate explanation of all the facts of experience. This "self-active intelligence" says Bowne, is to be conceived as a person, a self; for "the free and conscious self is the only real unity of which we have any knowledge, and reflection shows that it is the only thing which can be a true unity. All other unities are formal, and have only mental existence."³ It is only free intelligence, by its originating activity, that can posit plurality distinct from its own unity, and by its self-consciousness maintain its unity and identity over against the changing plurality. The "abiding and identical principle superior to change and constant in change" can be found only in personality.⁴ Here the one is manifold without being

¹ Ibid., pp. 119-120.

² Ibid., p. 120.

³ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴ Ibid., p. 147.

many.¹

I. SUMMARY OF BOWNE'S PERSONALISM

In sketching Bowne's personalism we have traveled a long distance and have considered many arguments. These arguments have been based exclusively upon Bowne's earlier writings. In order to round out our discussion we present a summary statement of Bowne's thinking as reflected in his last great systematic work.²

Common sense, Bowne tells us, has always claimed that we are not living in a world of illusions, but in a real world, and "this we not only admit but affirm."³ It is "with this living, aspiring, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, human world, with its life and history and hopes and fears and struggles and aspirations, philosophy must begin."⁴ This world of experience, he says, is real in the sense of "being trustworthy, or something which can be practically depended upon."⁵ It is not modified by what we call it.⁶ It is what

¹ Ibid., p. 143.

² Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism: Common Sense and Philosophy, 1908.

³ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 27, 29.

⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

it is.¹ Experience, however, is such that when we reflect upon it we find ourselves unable to rest in it, not for its reality or trustworthiness, nor for its truth, but for its explanation and understanding.² Only a system of thought which transcends experience can give an adequate account of experience and can integrate it in one comprehensive whole.

When we examine our experience, we find that "things hang together in certain ways," and that "events come along together according to certain rules." These uniformities may be studied by observation and experiment, and knowledge of them is "of the utmost practical value for the guidance of our lives."³ Bowne claims that it is the task of science and the "inalienable right" of science to make the necessary observations and to plan and execute the required experiments. No philosopher or theologian, says Bowne, "may molest" science or "make it afraid."⁴ Furthermore, Bowne tells us, "it is in this work, too, that science does invaluable service, for it is just this knowledge of the way things hang together in an order of law that gives us our control of nature and makes civilization possible. We cannot overestimate the importance

¹ Ibid., p. 25.

² Ibid., p. 32.

³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

of science in its own field."¹

Yet, our author tells us, the field of science is strictly limited. "After we have found that things exist and hang together in certain ways in space and time, we next need to know what they mean; and what the cause is that underlies the cosmic process."² Philosophy, therefore, as "the higher interpretation" of experience, is indispensable to a complete understanding of the meaning and significance of experience.³

When we reflect philosophically upon experience, we discover that the "flitting and discontinuous impression" of immediate experience is "interpreted into a continuous and abiding world only by a permanent self with its outfit of rational principles" or categories; and we discover also that if the self were taken away there would be only "an inarticulate flux of impressions without rational contents."⁴ The self, insists Bowne, is a necessary presupposition of all knowledge and all interpretation.

The categories which the self employs in its task of interpreting experience are, "in themselves, simply forms of mental arrangement and merely prescribe the form in which

¹ Bowne, Personalism: Common Sense and Philosophy, loc. cit.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

experience is to be ordered when it is given."¹ The categories do not create the content of experience, but "are like rules of grammar, which prescribe how we shall speak if we speak at all, but which in themselves have no concrete contents."² Therefore, continues Bowne,

. . . it is only as we find these categories realized in living self-experience that they acquire other than a formal meaning, or pass for anything more than purely verbal counters. They are like grammar when there is no speech, or rules for saying something when there is nothing to be said.³

It is upon such an epistemology that Bowne builds his metaphysics, and from such a point of view with respect to the nature and possibility of knowledge, that he approaches the facts of experience which supports his personalistic thesis.

In the first place, he finds that the world we live in is a "personal and social world." "We and the neighbors are facts which cannot be questioned."⁴ Here, in the world which is our "common experience," we meet in mutual understanding; here "the great business of life goes on."⁵ It is a world

¹ Ibid., p. 100.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

which has brought forth human beings, persons.

In the second place, Bowne finds that the world of experience exists for us only through a rational spiritual principle by which we reproduce it for our thought, and that it has its existence apart from us only through a rational spiritual principle on which it depends, and the rational nature of which it expresses.¹

This second point in the exposition of Bowne's metaphysics is especially important because it constitutes the very essence of his personalism. To establish this point, our author maintains, first, that for an understanding of reality only two basic ideas are at our disposal. Reality is either a "space and time existence" or it is "self-conscious existence." He claims that "any other conception is purely verbal and without any corresponding thought."² Following Kant, Bowne then argues that space and time in themselves are not real and that therefore a "space and time existence is phenomenal only, existing only for and through intelligence."³ Thus, says Bowne, "the claim of personalism is being established."⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 110.

² Ibid., p. 158.

³ Ibid., p. 158.

⁴ Loc. cit.

Bowne follows another line of argument which proceeds from the contention that the universe is one and self-identical. The "identities" we find in the "thing world" our author shows to be nothing but "formal identities of logical meaning." When we attempt to find anything more in the way of concrete identity in the thing world we look for it in vain.¹ They possess no existential reality. The only concrete identity we can find anywhere turns out to be the unity of the conscious subject. But this identity, says Bowne, is not to be viewed as any rigid core of being, but rather as "the self-equality of intelligence through experience."² This conception of identity alone fulfills all the requirements of an ultimate category of being. On the impersonal plane the problem of change and identity, according to Bowne, admits of no solution.³ But if ultimate reality is interpreted in terms of selfhood and personality, the difficulties vanish.

Even though the problem of causality have proven

¹ Ibid., p. 123.

² Loc. cit.

³ "On the impersonal plane this problem of change and identity admits of no solution. We cannot find the abstract changes when we look for them. We have simply a world of experience in which the same ideas and forms remain valid, and through which the conscious subject remains as the only fixed point to which everything, both permanence and change, has to be referred." B. P. Bowne, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

difficult in the history of reflection, Bowne tells us that we must face the problems nevertheless. Thus we note the particular part which causality plays in his philosophy. Causality, Bowne says, is "the ground of cosmic changes"¹ but, he adds, we must distinguish between "causality in the inductive (or scientific) sense," which is concerned only with the interdependence of phenomena, and "causality as dynamic or productive efficiency,"² which is the source and origin of all phenomena. In scientific or mechanical causality, "what was" determines "what is"; in volitional causality "free intelligence chooses things which are to be and works for their realization."³ It is between these conceptions, Bowne tells us, that we have to decide.

Bowne does not believe that the decision between these two conceptions is difficult. He claims that the causal idea, if it is to be of ultimate significance, demands completeness in the series of conditions, and it never can be completed on the mechanical plane.⁴ There is never a true first in mechanical causation; the sequence of cause and effect is unending in retrospect as well as in prospect. In volitional

¹ Ibid., p. 165.

² Ibid., p. 116.

³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 185-191.

causality, however, we trace the act to the personal purpose and volitions, and "there the regress ceases."¹ Volitional causality is therefore the only causality that provides a true beginning for any sequence of events.

Bowne says that volitional causality is the only causality of which we have experience and of which we can therefore form a concrete and intelligible idea.²

Here is a unity which in the oneness of consciousness can posit plurality and remain unity still. Here is an abiding power which can form plans, foresee ends, and direct itself for their realization. Here is a cause which in the self-equality of intelligence remains identical across the changes which it originates and directs. And this is the only conception that meets the demands of the causal idea.³

Furthermore, this is the only conception that provides an adequate explanation of the whole universe, the only conception that allows freedom and self-determination; and "freedom is the only solution which does not wreck reason itself."⁴ Even error is possible only on the basis of freedom, and without the possibility of error, truth itself loses its meaning.

¹ Ibid., p. 191.

² Ibid., p. 196.

³ Ibid., p. 197.

⁴ Ibid., p. 200.

The self, which for Bowne, gives to us the key to our understanding of the universe is "not to be abstractly taken."

It is the living self in the midst of its experiences, possessing, directing, controlling both itself and them; and this self is not open to the objection of barrenness and worthlessness, being simply what we all experience when we say me or mine. This self can never be more than verbally denied, and even its verbal deniers have always retained the fact. The language of the personal life would be impossible otherwise.¹

It implies "selfhood, self-consciousness, self-control, and the power to know." In brief, it is "personality."²

Man, however, cannot regard himself as self-sufficient and independent in any absolute sense.³ For "complete and perfect personality can be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being" which is God. And this God, says Bowne, is the creator and sustainer of the Universe, the ultimate explanation of all that is.⁴

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For the universe as a whole the principle of self-active intelligence is God--the personal, self-active, perfect being.⁵

¹ Ibid., pp. 262-263.

² Ibid., p. 266.

³ Ibid., p. 281.

⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

⁵ B. P. Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, pp. 152-153.

But to Bowne, God is not merely the absolute person without a past or a future; he is also

. . . the founder and conductor of the world process. This fact brings God into a new relation to time. This process is a developing, changing one, and hence is essentially in time. Hence the divine activity therein is essentially temporal.¹

"Unchangeability and non-temporality apply to God only in his relation to himself."² Or we might say that they apply only to God's inherent nature, not to His manifest activity. As active, He is in the world; but His essence transcends every particular stage in the world-process and also the process as a whole. He is never less than the world.

We come now to the "world-ground" as ethical. In the world in which we live we find truth, beauty, goodness, love, righteousness, and other values.

The thought, therefore, of a perfect being in whom these qualities should be lacking, or should be present in only an imperfect degree, would be an intellectual, aesthetic, and moral absurdity of the first magnitude.³

Conversely, if the "world-ground" is to provide an adequate explanation of our experience, it must be essentially moral and aesthetic as well as intellectual.

¹ Ibid., p. 153.

² Ibid., p. 154.

³ Ibid., p. 212.

The "empirical argument" for the moral character of the world-ground Bowne finds in "our moral nature," in "the structure of society," and in "the course of history." The first two are held to point to a moral author, and the last reveals a power not ourselves, making for righteousness, and hence moral.¹ Bowne argues that even

. . . life itself is so constructed as to furnish a constant stimulus in moral direction. Nature itself inculcates with the utmost strenuousness the virtues of industry, prudence, foresight, self-control, honesty, truth, and helpfulness.²

Such is Bowne's interpretation of evolution.

Bowne believes that history is an unfolding and realization of the divine purpose.³ He says:

The slow moralization of life and society, the enlightenment of conscience and its growing empire, the deepening sense of responsibility for the good order of the world and the well-being of men, the gradual putting away of old wrongs and foul disease and blinding superstition--these are the great proofs of God in history.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 214.

² Ibid., p. 219.

³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴ Borden Parker Bowne, The Immanence of God, p. 45.

One wonders if Bowne's optimism might not have been somewhat mitigated by the realism of two world wars and the current omnipresent shadow of atomic destruction.

Theistic faith accepts them as such. But at the same time, warns Bowne, we must be on our guard against dogmatic and confident interpretations of purpose in events.¹ He feels that we must not judge individual events too hastily; for God's plan, "needs eternity for its full vindication."² Nor does Bowne admit that, since history is the gradual manifestation of God's plan, we human beings may relax in our striving after perfection. For, says he, "It is indeed God who worketh in us, but he works according to law, and in such a way as to call for all our effort."³ Therefore, Bowne admonishes us to, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."⁴

God, then, is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity, and the world is ever upheld by the ever-lasting, ever-present, ever-working God.⁵ Nature, in the sense of an ontological reality, is, for Bowne, "only an idol of the dogmatic den." "There is no substantial or

¹ Bowne, The Immanence of God, p. 62.

² Ibid., p. 63.

³ Ibid., p. 123.

⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

ontological nature, but only natural events."¹ Even the commonest event like the falling of a leaf, is as supernatural in its causation as any miracles would be: for in both alike God would be equally implicated.² Furthermore he says:

The presence of God in nature does not mean that God is here and there in the world performing miracles, but that the whole cosmic movement depends constantly upon the divine will and is an expression of the divine purpose. In like manner the presence of God in history does not mean exclusively, or mainly, that God is working signs and wonders upon occasion, but rather that God is carrying on the great historical movement and working his will therein.³

God is omnipresent and all-pervasive. "In him we live and move and have our being."⁴

We give the closing paragraphs of Bowne's work, Personalism, Common Sense and Philosophy to catch the flavor of his confident summation.

Laying aside, then, all thought of corporeal form, and limitations as being no factor of personality, we must really say that complete and perfect personality can be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being, as only in Him can we find that complete and perfect selfhood and self-possession which are necessary to the

¹ Ibid., p. 16.

² Ibid., p. 18.

³ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

fullness of personality. In thinking, then of the Supreme Person we must beware of transferring to him the limitations and accidents of our human personality, which are no necessary part of the notion of personality, and think only of the fullness of power, knowledge, and selfhood which alone are the essential factors of the conception.¹

If we are in a personal world, the final cause of nature must be sought in the personal and moral realm. Criticism frees us from all the naturalistic nightmares of necessity and a self-running material world, and allows us to trust our higher human instincts once more. Philosophy replaces the infinitely far God by the God who is infinitely near, and in whom we live and move and have our being. But for the practical realization of this divine presence, logic and speculation can do little for us. This belief must be lived to acquire any real substance or controlling character. This is the case with all practical and concrete beliefs. If we ignore them practically we soon accost them skeptically; and they vanish like a fading gleam. Or we may build them into life and organize our lives around them, and they become 'truths that wake to perish never.' 'To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God!'²

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Personalism: Common Sense and Philosophy, pp. 266-267.

² Bowne, Personalism, pp. 325-326.

CHAPTER IV

BOWNE'S RELIGIOUS PRAGMATISM

This chapter attempts to deal with Bowne's Religious Pragmatism. A problem is presented by the parallel occurrence in his work of both rationalistic and pragmatic types of method. This has resulted in Bowne being variously claimed as both rationalist and pragmatist. Research has made it quite clear, however, that conservative students of his philosophy have, in general, underestimated the importance of the pragmatic elements by subsuming them under his rationalism, and that more radical students, though recognizing the importance of the pragmatism, have failed to show its relation to his rationalism.

By rationalism we shall here understand any method or methods that make reason, as the logical understanding, the final standard and arbiter of all philosophical questions. Rationalism may proceed deductively, after the manner of Descartes and Herbart, or it may proceed empirically, gathering the facts of experience and attempting their ultimate theoretical explanation under the standards of consistency and coherence. The distinguishing mark of rationalism is its ultimate appeal to reason for its criteria of truth. By pragmatism, on the other hand, we mean those methods which make various extra-rational factors the final standards of

philosophy, such as fruitfulness or favorable results, or the satisfaction of our human interests and feelings. This type of pragmatism is of the humanistic type rather than the scientific, but it is the pragmatism with which we are concerned in Bowne's works.

A. THE FACT OF BOWNE'S PRAGMATISM

The pragmatism of Bowne sprang almost exclusively from his interest in religion. The metaphysical groundwork of religion could indeed be established by rationalistic method, but the distinctively religious concepts, on his view, could not be thus established. Rationalism provides a sufficient basis, therefore, for the unity, intelligence and free causality of the world ground. But the concepts of the love and goodness of God, prayer and immortality require some other ground for their affirmation. Only because of our faith in the ideal can we hold to them. Our faith in the reality of the ideal is established alone by practical considerations, by the energy of life itself. In his book Theism, Bowne explains.

God is seen to be that without which our ideals collapse or are made unattainable, and the springs of action are broken. Hence the existence of God is affirmed not on speculative or theoretical grounds, but because of the needs of the practical life. This has often been called the moral argument for

the divine existence; a better name would be the practical argument.¹

Religious belief, therefore, is to be justified primarily on pragmatic grounds. We have here, then, the line of division through the system of Bowne's thought. Edward T. Ramsdell is correct in saying that Bowne's viewpoint "combines at once that of the metaphysical rationalist and that of the religious pragmatist."²

To distinguish the pragmatic elements in Bowne's epistemological theory and method, we begin with his view of the nature of the mind. From the publication of the Studies in Theism in 1879 to the end of his life work, he described the mind as an organic whole of vital interests and feelings which outline and control our mental development and determine our fundamental beliefs. Under the compulsion of his own religious interests, Bowne joined in the revolt against an over-intellectualism. The mind is not only to be thought of as primarily intellect, but the logical intellect is not even to be credited with a controlling place in the mind. It is not logic, but our interests and feelings that determine our fundamental beliefs. Note his pragmatic, anti-intellectualist descriptions of the mind:

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, Theism, p. 291.

² Edward T. Ramsdell, "The Religious Pragmatism of Borden Parker Bowne," The Personalist, Vol. XV, No. 4 (October 1934).

"Mental activity runs in lines determined by our fundamental interests, and all our theories are adjusted to them."¹

The mind is not a disinterested logic-machine, but a living organism, with manifold interests and tendencies. These outline its development, and furnish the driving power.²

The driving and directing force of the mind lies in its living interests, and not in the discursive faculty. The principles of mental movement are to be sought, not in logic, but in life. . . . There is no department of belief into which subjective interests do not enter as controlling.³

Such descriptions as these are not casual or incidental in Bowne, but occur throughout the course of his religious writings.

A second pragmatic element is found in Bowne's use of the criterion of interest-satisfaction. Anything which satisfies the fundamental interests or subjective needs of the mind may be regarded as true. As we have now seen, Bowne thought of the mind as an organic whole of manifold interests and tendencies. These interests and tendencies include the intellectual, the moral, the aesthetic, and the religious. Each represents a basic "subjective" need of the mind. These

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, "Concerning the Christian Consciousness," The Independent, 37, January 8, 1885.

² Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, p. 19.

³ Bowne, "The Logic of Religious Belief," Methodist Review, 66, 1884, p. 660.

needs are satisfied through certain postulates which rise out of them. The intellectual need requires our belief in the intelligibility and rationality of the universe; the aesthetic need requires our belief in the moral government of the world; and the religious need requires our belief in the reality of God as the inclusive ideal. It is impossible to prove these beliefs or postulates and Bowne saw no adequate rationalistic justification for them. We can accept them as valid, therefore, only on the pragmatic grounds that they satisfy the fundamental needs of the mind out of which they grow.

In its practical unfolding the mind makes a great variety of practical postulates and assumptions which are not logical deductions or speculative necessities, but a kind of *modus vivendi* with the universe. They represent the conditions of our fullest life; and are at bottom expressions of our practical and ideal interests or necessities.¹

Primarily, all of these assumptions are but the projection upon the universe of the demands and interests of our total nature.²

Bowne reaches beyond a strictly religious pragmatism in his defense of the religious postulate. If the postulates of morality and religion are subjective, he argues, at least they are not more subjective than the postulates of science. All fundamental postulates rest, in the final analysis, simply upon their satisfaction of human interest. The scientist

¹ Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, pp. 13-14.

² Bowne, The Independent, 37 (January 8, 1885), p. 35.

assumes the intelligibility and uniformity of the natural world, but "this is a tremendous assumption, based only on his subjective needs."¹

If the instinctive affirmations of the mind are accepted in default of proof in the field of sense-perception, there seems to be no good reason why similar affirmations should be² rejected in the field of morals and religion.

While not attempting a critique of Bowne's religious pragmatism, it may be pointed out that Bowne, in his treatment of the scientific postulates, (he) is invading the field which, according to his own definition, should be left to rationalistic method. The rationalist contends that the cognitive need of the mind may indeed account for the origin of the postulate that the world is intelligible, but only reason can establish the rational justification of the assumption on the ground that it yields the most reasonable, that is, the most consistent and coherent, view of experience. To the thoroughgoing rationalist, of course, "the moral and religious postulates find their warrant in the same way and not in any fact of basic interest-satisfactions."³

From the criterion of interest-satisfaction Bowne formulated the fundamental method of his religious writings.

¹ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 70.

² Bowne, Methodist Quarterly Review, 66 (1884), pp. 665-666.

³ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 309.

This method is essentially the method which James later called that of the "will to believe." As early as 1887 Bowne wrote:

There is an element of faith and volition latent in all our theorizing. Where we cannot prove, we believe. Where we cannot demonstrate, we choose sides.¹

It was Bowne's belief that he found authority for this method in Kant. He says that Kant

. . . claimed to have shown that, by way of speculation, neither proof nor disproof is possible; and in this balance of speculative reason practical interests may be allowed to turn the scale.²

Bowne's formal statement of the method appeared for the first time in 1884. He states it as follows: "Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real, in default of positive disproof."³ Since Bowne held that rational proof or disproof of ultimate religious beliefs is impossible, this statement of method remains entirely pragmatic.

A third pragmatic element in Bowne's thought is his use of the criterion of workability or results. This criterion

¹ Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, p. iii.

² Ibid., p. 242.

³ Methodist Quarterly Review, op. cit., 66, (1884), p. 652.

used as early as 1879 in his Studies in Theism. For example, "We conclude . . . that it is no objection to a belief that its grounds do not admit of satisfactory formal statement, provided always that it works well."¹ And again in the same work he says: "In addition, then, to beliefs deduced from formal data, there are other beliefs which are based on results."² Shortly before his death in 1910, in one of his last published articles, he speaks of what he calls the "essential beliefs" of the mind:

They are the principles by which men live, and without which they cannot live their best life. And the proof of such beliefs rests entirely on the energy of the life they express, and on their power to further that life in practice. They meet our mental needs and they work well in life. This is the pragmatic test of truth, and for concrete truth there is no deeper or surer test than this.³

There are other indications that Bowne employed the results-criterion in full consciousness of it as a pragmatic instrument. In his volume, Kant and Spencer, published posthumously, he writes:

Thought has become pragmatic, especially in ethical and religious fields, and we are very little concerned at speculative inadequacy, provided a doctrine works well in practice and enriches and furthers life.⁴

¹ Bowne, Studies in Theism, pp. 64-65.

² Ibid., p. 75.

³ Bowne, "Gains for Religious Thought in the Last Generation," Hibbert Journal, 8 (1909-10), p. 892.

⁴ Bowne, Kant and Spencer, p. 209.

Another form in which the results-criterion appears is found in the phrase "practical absurdity," as, for example: "The test of concrete truth and error is practical absurdity."¹ In this particular instance the criterion is given in negative form.

A fourth pragmatic element in Bowne's thought is the criterion of survival. He uses this criterion a number of times but in a more incidental way than the other elements previously mentioned. Characteristic of this use is the statement, referring to conflict-beliefs: "More and more history itself becomes the argument, and the survival of the fittest judge."² And in another article, "If there be others with a different set of fundamental sympathies and interests, and no mediation is possible, history and the survival of the fittest must decide between them."³ Furthermore, speaking of the anti-religious views of the world, Bowne affirms:

These views have not been great enough to command the faith or stir the hearts of men. In this fact the survival of the fittest, as the supreme court for considering the matter, hands down a final decision.⁴

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 25.

² Methodist Quarterly Review, op. cit., 66 (1884), p. 665.

³ Bowne, "Cardinal Newman and Science," The Independent, 42 (1890), p. 1401.

⁴ Bowne, The Essence of Religion, p. 298.

Bowne's view of reason as instrumental with respect to the fundamental interests of the mind constitutes a fifth pragmatic element in his thought. The following is a characteristic statement of the view:

Our feelings and interests are the deepest thing in us. They furnish the great impulses to action, and they also outline its direction. . . . Man can interest himself in truth, in righteousness, in beauty, in a great variety of ideal aims, which thus become the norms and guides of his action. For these basal interests, the intellect is simply instrumental.¹

Speaking of the postulates or assumptions which grow out of the basic interests of the mind, Bowne writes:

What, now, is the function of logic with regard to these postulates? Plainly not to prove them, but to bring them and their implications out into clear consciousness, and to keep them from losing their way.²

It is obvious that in Bowne's mind these fundamental interests of the mind stand in their own right, independent of any possible justification by reason. In point of fact, reason is to be regarded as instrumental to these interests, helping to articulate and clarify them and to bring them into harmony with one another. By this Bowne does not intend to say that the intellect has not "full rights"³ of its own, but rather to

¹ Bowne, Introduction to Psychological Theory, pp. 217-218.

² Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, pp. 25-26.

³ See Hibbert Journal, 8 (1909-1910), p. 892.

affirm that these rights are restricted to the fields of logic and metaphysics.

There is one further pragmatic element in Bowne's thought that is to be distinguished--his view of truth. Bowne sometimes uses the term truth in the restricted sense of meaning simply the a priori principles of reason. So defined, truth is, on his view, absolute.¹ Concrete truth, or truth regarding the external world, on the other hand, means the validity of our thought for the external thing.² At this point the conception has a strong pragmatic tone. In other words, the truth of any theory may be rationally presumed if its results are favorable to human life. Referring to the criterion of results as used by certain "materialists," Bowne says:

This standard is simply results. Those thoughts and views are true which work well; and those are false which work ill. In a rational system³ such a test would be valid; but the materialist has no such system.⁴

Bowne's conception of truth was thoroughly teleological.

¹ Bowne, Metaphysics--A Study in First Principles, p. 448.

² Ibid., p. 8.

³ Bowne, of course, thought of his own philosophy as a "rational system."

⁴ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 115.

All truth is in some measure purposive. There is no truth that is not in some measure purposive. With this view it was natural to assume that truth will show itself in fruitful results. In an article written in 1884, after affirming the pernicious influence of atheistic beliefs and the beneficial influence of theistic beliefs, he wrote:

If, now, this is no ground for believing them (i.e., the theistic beliefs), we are under the disagreeable necessity of admitting that a true belief may be paralyzing and pernicious, while a false belief may be necessary to our best development.¹

Perhaps the clearest statement of this conception of truth is to be found in one of Bowne's last articles. Referring to the basic beliefs of life, he explains:

They meet our mental needs and they work well in life. This is the pragmatic test of truth, and for concrete truth there is no deeper or surer test than this. Indeed theory of knowledge implicitly assumes this test. If we are theists, we can hardly believe that the truth will work mischief. If we are evolutionists and believers in natural selection, we must equally believe that these evolved beliefs are the best adjusted to reality, as being the outcome of that evolving and selecting process whose function it is to eliminate the false and preserve the true.²

This view of truth certainly gives evidence for those who would have William James and Bowne stride together. In

¹ Methodist Quarterly Review, op. cit., 66 (1884), p. 654.

² Hibbert Journal, op. cit., 8 (1909-1910), pp. 892-893.

his work The Meaning of Truth he says: "All that the pragmatic method implies, then, is that truths should have practical consequences."¹

The pragmatic elements in Bowne's thought are confined largely to his writings on religion. Within that field, however, they are widely used. They are not causal or incidental. They appear first in the Studies in Theism, published in 1877, and in the article "The Logic of Religious Belief," published in the Methodist Quarterly Review in 1884, and thereafter are consistently employed to the close of Bowne's work.

B. THE RELATIONSHIP OF BOWNE'S PRAGMATISM TO HIS RATIONALISM

Having presented the evidence for Bowne's religious pragmatism, we now proceed to discuss this religious pragmatism in relation to his rationalism. As a systematic metaphysician Borden Parker Bowne was a rationalist. His method, he admits, was that of Herbart, "who defined it as 'the working-over of the notions.'"² This critical re-working and harmonizing of basic concepts was not a passing method with Bowne. He uses it without change in the two editions of the

¹ William James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 52.

² Bowne, Metaphysics--A Study in First Principles, p. 23.

Metaphysics, published in 1882 and 1898 respectively. Characteristic of this rationalism is his own statement of principle: "that a contradiction in a notion proves its untenability."¹ And a fuller expression of this view in the following:

Our interpreting activity presupposes the intelligibility and hence the rationality of all existence. It presupposes that the objective reality is cast in the molds of thought, so that the irrational is the impossible.²

As a philosopher of religion Bowne early developed and regularly employed a pragmatic methodology. This we have discussed in the first section of this chapter. The question we now ask is how did Bowne relate his religious pragmatism to his metaphysical rationalism. How are consistency and "adequacy to the facts" to be equated or harmonized with results, interest-satisfactions and survival as criteria of truth? Will an idea tested by one set of criteria meet the truth-requirements of the other set? If they will, the use of the two sets is superfluous; if they will not, we are confronted with an inescapable contradiction. Or as Ramsdell puts the question to Bowne, "When the pragmatic and the rationalistic conflict, by what criterion shall we decide between them?"³

¹ Ibid., p. 77.

² "What Is Rationalism?", The Independent, 40 (January 26, 1888), p. 99.

³ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 24.

Let us first look at Bowne's own attitude toward this parallel use of method. From that point we shall consider whether Bowne actually achieved unity and harmony in the two-fold approach.

At the outset we may say that Bowne probably had no thought of a fundamental contradiction in his use of the two types of method. Indeed he regarded the exclusive use of any particular method of truth as impossible in actual experience. "The test of fundamental beliefs can never be any simple rule, but will rather be as complex as our nature itself."¹ Furthermore, writes Bowne:

Academic discussion of the standard of certainty or of the criterion of truth are barren of any valuable result. There is no general standard which the mind can mechanically apply. The standard is the mind itself, dealing with particular and concrete cases; and any given item of knowledge must stand or fall, not because it agrees or disagrees with some assumed standard, but because of the evidence with which it presents itself to the living mind in contact with the facts.²

This notion of the superiority of the mind to any "simple and compendious" standard of truth only reflects Bowne's belief that the method of the theoretical reason must differ from that of the practical reason. We have previously considered Bowne's description of the mind as an organic

¹ Bowne, "The Logic of Religious Belief," Methodist Quarterly Review, 66 (1884), p. 665.

² Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 293.

whole of vital interests and tendencies. On his view the intellectual interest was to be identified with the Kantian practical reason, and the practical, aesthetic, moral and religious interests were to be identified with the Kantian practical reason.¹ Each function of reason has its own method, and no standard of truth is sufficient for both functions. For the most part the two methods are harmonized even as are the two functions of reason to which they are peculiar.

This distinction between the theoretical and the practical reason corresponds to Bowne's classification of knowledge and belief. It is only the immediate data of experience and the rational truths of logic and mathematics which are knowledge in the strict sense. The remainder, and the largest portion, of the cognitive field is comprised of rational belief or probable knowledge, that is, knowledge characterized by probability under the evidence rather than by absolute certainty. Bowne contends that there are two types of belief: those beliefs which rest upon "objective facts" that is, perceptual experience, and those beliefs which are grounded in what he calls "subjective tendencies," that is, the vital feelings and interests of the mind.² The first mentioned

¹ Cf. "Present Status of the Conflict of Faith," Methodist Quarterly Review, 105 (1922), pp. 363-364.

² Cf. Studies in Theism, pp. 62-63.

beliefs constitute the fields of science and metaphysics, which, together with logic and mathematics, are rationalistic in method. The second mentioned beliefs belong to morals and religion and depend upon the pragmatic method.

There is a reason why Bowne distinguished so sharply between the two types of belief and between the two functions of reason and the methods peculiar to them. This reason is to be found in his understanding of the nature of religious belief. Bowne was greatly impressed with the psychology of religious belief. This particular field of investigation was beginning to come into prominence during the early period of Bowne's work. He increasingly came to feel that our personal beliefs spring out of and are determined by the particular feelings and interests of the mind. Bowne felt that such beliefs, because of their "subjective" origin, could not be treated objectively. In other words, he "failed in practice to distinguish the question of origin from the question of validity, although in theory he protested against such confusion."¹

Bowne's failure to treat the validity of moral and religious beliefs objectively, whatever their origin, and the consequent assignment of rationalistic method to the field of the theoretical reason and of pragmatic method to the field

¹ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 26.

of practical reason, was due in no small measure to this influence of the psychology of religious belief. That is to say, religious belief must be treated differently from other rational belief because it has its "ground" in "subjective" feelings and interests. Undoubtedly it was this influence, more than anything else, that kept Bowne from treating moral and religious beliefs axiologically, although at several points he anticipated such objective treatment of the facts of value-experience. These anticipations are sufficiently striking to deserve attention.

It is often objected that feeling cannot be a basis for ethics, because feeling is particular while ethical law must be universal, and hence must be founded in reason. This is merely a war of words. . . . The fact is not made universal by calling it an utterance of the reason; nor is it made less than universal by calling it feeling. Its universality depends upon its content, and not upon its psychological classification.¹

It is in this sense of having many implications which can be unfolded in systematic statement that the ethical and religious consciousness may be spoken of as independent source of truth.²

And in the same article, in referring to basic beliefs, Bowne suggests: "In the last analysis these axiomata have an ethical root. They rest upon the idea, not of what must be, but of what ought to be."³

¹ Bowne, Introduction to Psychological Theory, pp. 206-207.

² Bowne, Methodist Quarterly Review, op. cit., 66 (1884), p. 662.

³ Ibid., p. 661.

In these three quotations the ground-work for a thoroughly objective and rationalistic treatment of religious belief is clearly present. But these anticipations remained as casual and unexplored suggestions in Bowne's writings. They are never systematically developed. He continued to defend moral and religious beliefs pragmatically to the end of his work while remaining rationalistic in his metaphysics. This would indicate that he never quite threw aside the notion that such beliefs have their "ground" in "subjective" tendencies.

The acceptance of subjective grounds of belief as valid seemed, to Bowne, to fit into his teleological conception of truth, and knowledge without contradiction. Truth is in nature rational, yet it must also be considered as purposive and fruitful. It would be inconceivable to believe that metaphysical truth could have results that would be harmful to human life. Ultimate truth must be conceived teleologically. "The mind demands the thought of a goal, an end toward which things are working. When this thought is given, our explanation is formally complete."¹ Or, as he puts it in another place, in answer to the question, "What is rational?"

First, that is rational which accords with the fundamental laws of thought. Second, that

¹ Bowne, "Explanation--A Logical Study," Methodist Review, 70 (1888), p. 662.

is rational which is viewed as fitting into an intelligible system. Third, that is rational which has in it evidence of purpose, outcome, final cause.

In other words, knowledge in any ultimate sense is possible, for Bowne, only within the framework of purpose. "Thought must become teleological before it can complete itself."²

Purpose is a category of reflective thought.

In accepting subjective grounds of belief and in attempting to justify pragmatic method under the category of purpose Bowne was only revealing the strength of his personalistic premise. Personality is the first value and the first reality of our experience. It is impossible to get beyond it. Its integrity is a presupposition of truth itself. It is inconceivable that anything harmful to personality can be ultimately true. It is now clear that personalism is not the outcome of Bowne's philosophical activity; it was the starting point. Frank Wilbur Collier, a student of Bowne's, comes to the same conclusion. He says:

It is now evident that Bowne was a personalist from the beginning. By Personalism he meant that the Ultimate Reality, and indeed all reality, as distinguished from appearance, is Personal Intelligence. Having been born and brought up in a Christian home and a Christian community he

¹ Bowne, "Theology and Reason," Zion's Herald, 66 (1888), p. 401.

² Bowne, "Spencer's Nescience," The Independent, 56 (1904), p. 67.

inherited the belief in a personal God, which is not only the God of the Bible, but which has always been the God of religion. This great catholic belief is what he began with, and as he progressed in his philosophical study, he not only never found any reason that suggested positive disproof, but on the contrary everything led back to personal intelligence as the source of all things. The impressiveness of this grew until he reached a point where he was not satisfied with any one of a number of terms which he suggested . . . and finally adopted the term Personalism which he gave his last philosophical work.¹

Bowne allowed personalism to determine the method. It is clearly this fact that lifts his pragmatism to a dominant position in his religious thought. Morals and religion are indispensable to personality. Where rationalistic method fails to establish morals and religion upon a sound philosophical basis, there we must resort to pragmatism. If consistency and "adequacy to the facts" are not sufficient, then results, interest-satisfaction and survival must be appealed to. In the sphere of moral and religious thought, therefore, any conflict between rationalistic and pragmatic method must be resolved by giving the pragmatic the position of control. To Bowne, this meant only the primacy of the practical reason. It meant "the primacy of life over speculation,"² as Kant, it seemed to him, had permanently established it.

To Bowne there appeared to be no fundamental contradiction in the parallel use of the two types of method. Whenever,

¹ The Personalist, Vol. I, No. 1 (April, 1920), pp. 38-39.

² "Spencer's Nescience," Independent, 56 (1904), p. 67.

in the field of moral and religious belief (and this was the only point of danger), a conflict threatened, the primacy of the practical reason was invoked. And to this extent this meant for Bowne the dominance of the pragmatic method.

This brings up other questions that demand an answer. Was Bowne correct in identifying the vital interests of the mind, as he described them, with the practical reason of Kant? Did the primacy of the practical reason mean for him what it meant for Kant?

It would seem that the evidence demands a negative answer to the first of these questions. Bowne was not correct in identifying the interests of the mind, as he described them, with the practical reason. For Kant the practical reason was strictly autonomous. It is true that it has its interests, but its judgements are made in the light of a priori principles, and not because of any interests or feelings. Kant specified of the moral law:

. . . that its validity for us does not lie in the fact that it is interesting--for that is heteronomy and the dependence of practical reason upon sensibility (Sinnlichkeit), namely, a basic feeling whereby it could never be ethically law-giving--but, on the contrary, it is interesting because it is valid for us as men, since it has sprung from our will as intelligence, that is,¹ from our real self (eigentlichen Selbst).

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Saemtliche Werke*, ed., by Karl Vorlaender (Leipzig: Meiner, 1920-1922), Vol. III *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, p. 91.

On the other hand, Bowne's doctrine makes moral and religious beliefs, in so far as they are determined by the interests and feelings of the mind, heteronomous expressions of reason, rather than autonomous. For Bowne moral and religious beliefs were products, not conclusions:

The fundamental outlines of human belief are determined by various circumstances, chief of which are the essential interests of the mind. Mental activity runs in lines determined by our fundamental interests, and all our theories are adjusted to them. Accordingly, we find a variety of postulates underlying our mental procedure, which are at bottom only expressions of those interests; and we also find that any theory which cannot be adjusted to them is sure, sooner or later, to be set aside.¹

According to Kant, the validity of the principles of the practical reason rests in their a priori nature; they are seen by reason to be a priori universal and necessary without respect to experience. As Ramsdell says,

The primacy of the practical reason meant the validity of the a priori principles of the practical reason, independent of the possibility of their being established by the speculative reason, so long as they do not contradict the speculative reason.²

But Bowne makes no use whatever of the a priori argument for the universality of the principles of the practical reason.

¹ Bowne, "Concerning the 'Christian Consciousness,'" Independent, 37 (January 8, 1885), p. 35.

² Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 30.

Instead, he concludes that the moral and religious belief must be assumed to be valid because feelings and interests which determine them occur universally in human experience. Their universality, therefore, is not affirmed as a priori but as inductive. Bowne writes:

Historically, there has been a good deal to justify suspicion of and impatience with appeals to feeling in any form as reasons for belief. . . . But this impatience is itself short-sighted. First, it overlooks the fact that there are feelings and feelings. There are particular fancies, and there are the great catholic sentiments of the race. There are individual desires, and there are the great fundamental human interests in which life itself roots.¹

Without doubting the validity of this argument, we may still see that Bowne's doctrine and method have been separated from those of Kant. For Kant the primacy of the practical reason meant the rational universality and necessity of the moral law, but for Borden Parker Bowne, it meant the setting of the vital over against the intellectual. "Life is richer and deeper than speculation."² In an article published a short time before his death he said: "We have come to a point at last where we are trusting our instincts again, our higher instincts as well as the lower ones."³

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 370.

² Bowne, Philosophy of Theism, p. 14.

³ Bowne, "Present Status of the Argument for Life after Death," North American Review, 191 (1910), p. 103.

Not only did Bowne depart from the Kantian doctrine, but he also failed to achieve real unity and harmony in his twofold use of method. He did not establish the rational character of the interests and feelings of the mind as he described them. While he called them the practical reason, he did not justify that identification. There are places where he did approach and anticipate in terms of values and content, but these anticipations did not constitute his systematic treatment. To the end of his life he defended the "subjective grounds" of moral and religious belief pragmatically.

Bowne's identification, however, will bear a closer study. If the interests and feelings of life are to be subsumed under the concept of the practical reason, then either all of them must be so subsumed or only a part of them. If we say that all of them must be so subsumed, then there is no distinction left between the rational and irrational life. It is interesting to note in Bowne's writings that he specifically recognizes that some of our interests and feelings are "individual" and "particular," and therefore not rational grounds for belief. This would lead us to say that if only a part of the interests and feelings of life are to be identified with the practical reason, how may we know which ones are to be identified? How are those which are designated rational to be distinguished from those which are not?

Bowne's reply to this question is that those interests are rational which are essential to the mind. He says:

We cannot intend to base any conclusion on individual and non-essential feelings and interests, but on the essential needs of the mind; and these, we hold, render an objective correspondence highly probable.¹

And these essential needs of the mind are revealed by "the great catholic sentiments of the race."² But it is obvious that the truth of a belief is not to be established by its generality, and furthermore, the religious beliefs which Bowne speaks of as general are not general. Bowne himself recognized this fact in providing the criterion of "survival of the fittest" as between theistic and atheistic beliefs.³ Then again, as Ramsdell points out,

. . . even if religious belief were general in its distribution, no point of truth would be established thereby, for clearly the most erroneous beliefs may be the most widespread. This is nothing but the consensus gentium argument.⁴

Bowne uses another argument for the trustworthiness of "the great catholic beliefs" of mankind and of the "essential needs" from which they spring. They are products of the

¹ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 76.

² Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 370.

³ Methodist Quarterly Review, op. cit., 66 (1884), p. 665.

⁴ Ramsdell, "Pragmatism and Rationalism in Bowne," Personalist, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (January, 1935).

universe of mind:

When it is seen that belief is made for us rather than by us, that the great outlines of belief are drawn in life and by life, then the great catholic beliefs of humanity begin to acquire the significance of any other great natural product. They show the direction of the evolving moment, the trend of the universe of mind. They are no longer accidents of the individual, but are as much entitled to be viewed as belonging to the nature of things as the stars in their courses, or the law of gravitation. They are no adventitious and fictitious addition to reality; and no doubt can be cast upon them without discrediting the whole system of knowledge.¹

This account describes the truth that everything in the universe is a product of the universe in the largest sense, but as a logical case for the rational character of beliefs which are thus designated as natural products of the universe, the argument is clearly a *petitio principii*. It assumes the theistic position to validate theistic beliefs. Even if we grant the theistic assumption, the argument affords no distinguishing criteria, for all beliefs, true and false alike, are similarly products of the universe.

By such means Bowne could hardly be said to establish the rationality of the interests and feelings of the mind as he described them. This would seem to be beyond debate. Bowne's defense of moral and religious belief is no more convincing. It would seem that his attempt to argue for the

¹ Bowne, "Faith in Our Immortality," Independent, 48 (1896), p. 439. Cf. Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 377.

validity of such beliefs on the grounds that they satisfy essential interests of the mind begs the whole question when the rational character of these "essential" interests has not been established. Likewise to argue on the basis of results is to establish nothing in any final way.

The criterion of favorable results can readily be used for beliefs that are actually contradictory. Nor does the criterion of survival help us any more effectively in getting at the real truth of a belief. It too can be used quite easily for atheism as for theism.¹

The main point of fundamental contradiction in Bowne's thought, however, is in his failure to harmonize his doctrine of belief with his doctrine of the speculative significance of freedom. Bowne holds that the trustworthiness of the mind presupposes its freedom. Error can be accounted for only if the mind is free. "If the movements of the mind are mechanically determined then true and false ideas alike are products, not conclusions."² All rational activity, in so far as it is truly objective, is essentially free activity. The mind distinguishes without any sort of compulsion, except that of reason itself, the true from the false. Only with such freedom from mechanical or impulsive determination is the search for knowledge possible. Bowne says "that the question

¹ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 33.

² Ibid., p. 34.

of freedom enters intimately into the structure of reason itself. . . . The only escape from the overthrow of reason involved in the fact of error lies in the assumption of freedom."¹ But how can we reconcile this theory of the speculative significance of freedom with the doctrine of the determinative character of the essential feelings. This latter doctrine presented. This doctrine says that

. . . the fundamental outlines of human belief are determined by various circumstances, chief of which are the essential interests of the mind. Mental activity runs in lines determined by our fundamental interests, and all our theories are adjusted to them.²

If Bowne were here describing simply the origin of such beliefs, no contradiction would need to be involved, for rational activity could still be considered as free in its critical evaluation of the beliefs which had thus arisen. Bowne, however, accepts the inevitable determination of certain beliefs as their validation, in spite of an occasional protest to the contrary.

All this makes the issue quite clear. In his metaphysics Bowne treats the mind as free in its rational activity, but in his philosophy of religious belief, he treats it as determined in its fundamental beliefs by its basic feelings

¹ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 243.

² Independent, op. cit., 37 (January 8, 1885), p. 35.

and interests. This left Bowne with a problem which he never acknowledged nor solved. That problem is how to relate the mind as a free-knowing subject to the mind as determined in its primary beliefs.

Our study would reveal that Bowne's twofold interest in metaphysics and religion was never closely harmonized. He himself assumed that there was no fundamental contradiction finding the ground of harmony in the unity of personality. But the problems of inconsistency still remain. The identity of his doctrine with that of Kant could not be demonstrated; the determining interests and feelings of the mind are not established as rational; pragmatic method is not assimilated to his otherwise rigid rationalism; determinism is not reconciled with freedom.

While these failures in consistency and the lack of fundamental unity do not affect Bowne's contribution to the metaphysics of personalism, they do indicate portions of his work that are of unequal value with the rest. In his empirical rationalism, Bowne was on substantial ground, but when he ventured into pragmatism he was "confused, inconsistent, and unconvincing."¹

¹ Ramsdell, op. cit., Personalist, p. 35.

C. THE SOURCES OF BOWNE'S PRAGMATISM

We come now to the sources of Bowne's Religious Pragmatism. In the thought life of Borden Parker Bowne two streams of influence appear in juxtaposition--German rationalism and American pragmatism. The former was his inheritance and the latter he acquired. Bowne's early training was largely in the Kantian tradition, and his work in systematic metaphysics rested consistently upon the rationalistic method. Early in life Bowne was attracted to the pragmatic point of view and quickly adopted its humanistic method in the field of moral and religious philosophy. Bowne used, as we have mentioned, both rationalistic and pragmatic methods without attempting to reconcile them. He simply moved from one point to the other as the subject at hand required. In doing this he was reflecting the two major interests of his life: speculation and religion. Wherever the two points of view seemed to conflict, Bowne always gave the primacy to the religious and pragmatic. For example, he says:

We do not ignore the facts which make against the view (the religious view of the world); but we set them aside as things to be explained, yet which must not in any way be allowed to weaken our faith.¹

The main sources of Bowne's rationalism, as has been

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 23.

fairly well understood, were his immediate teachers, Martin, Lotze and Ulrici, and his study of Kant and Herbart.

While Borden Parker Bowne and William James have been seen to approximate each other in their pragmatic method, little has been done to show their relationship. William James admits that he and Bowne are close together in their pragmatic method. In a letter to Bowne from Haarlem, August 17, 1908, he gives his reactions to Bowne's volume, Personalism.

It seems to me that you and I are now aiming at exactly the same end, though, owing to our different past, from which each retains special verbal habits, we often express ourselves so differently. It seemed to me over and over again that you were planting your feet identically in footprints which my feet were accustomed to--quite independently, of course, of my example, which was what made the coincidences so gratifying. The common foe of both of us is the dogmatic-rationalist-abstractionist. Our common desire is to redeem the concrete personal life which wells up in us from moment to moment, from fastidious (and really preposterous) dialectic contradictions, impossibilities, and vetoes. But whereas your 'transcendental empiricism' assumes that the essential discontinuity of the sensible flux has to be overcome by high intellectual operations on it, quite a la Kant, Green, Caird, etc.; my 'radical' empiricism denies the flux's discontinuity, making conjunctive relations essential members of it as given, and charging the conceptual function with being the creator of factitious incoherencies. . . . But the essential thing is not these differences, it is that our emphatic footsteps fall on the same spot. You, starting near the rationalist pole, and boxing the compass, and I traversing the diameter from the empiricist pole, reach practically very similar positions and

attitudes.¹

James made two mistakes in this letter. Bowne did not start from the rationalist pole and he did not get his pragmatic method independent of James. In point of fact the most decisive pragmatic influence upon the thought of Bowne came from William James. This is to recognize fully the importance of the general Kantian background of Bowne and of other contributory influences, but it is especially to affirm that the contact with the work of James was pre-eminently the one that awakened his interest in the pragmatic point of view. Research has revealed the fact that Bowne's first full-fledged use of the pragmatic method in the field of moral and religious belief coincided with an admitted reading of James's first important, though somewhat nebulous, formulation of pragmatic doctrine. Furthermore, there appears to be specific indebtedness in that formulation.

The first of Bowne's writings to give evidence of contact with the pragmatic slant was an article published in April, 1873, entitled "Moral Intuitionism vs. Utilitarianism."² Although Bowne accepted consequences as the test of conformity

¹ Francis J. McConnell, Borden Parker Bowne, pp. 277-278. The letter is given in full along with others in the last chapter of the McConnell volume.

² "Moral Intuitionism vs. Utilitarianism," The New Englander, Vol. XXXII (April 1873), pp. 217-242.

to moral principles, he held to those principles as the a priori product of the moral consciousness. In this early article, therefore, consequences do not make an act right or wrong; they only show whether there has been conformity or lack of conformity to the principle involved. This contact with Mill and the Utilitarian School, while clarifying Bowne's conception of the importance of consequences in moral theory, did not itself lead to the use of pragmatic method. It must, however, be counted as a background influence.

Aside from this article of Bowne's published in 1873, there is no other suggestion of the pragmatic method in Bowne's writing until 1879. It is interesting to note, however, that in Studies in Theism, published in 1879, he should suddenly adopt an out and out pragmatic methodology in the field of moral and religious belief. Bowne's pragmatic methodology in Studies in Theism was not incidental to his first treatment of religious belief. He had been writing on religious questions since 1872. In that particular year his article "Aspects of Theism" appeared in The New Englander. Also it is clear that much of his criticism of Spencer was done in the interests of religion. The sudden appearance of Bowne's pragmatic method in 1879 demands a more probable source.

The most probable explanation for the sudden resort to pragmatic method is to be found in an article by William James. This particular article--"Remarks on Spencer's Definition of

Mind as Correspondence"--appeared in The Journal of Speculative Philosophy in January, 1878.¹ This publication preceded Bowne's Studies in Theism, by almost a year and a half.² The subject of the article was sufficient to attract the attention of Bowne, because Spencer had already received the attention of Bowne's critical pen. This article by James proved to be James's first important, though not yet fully articulate, formulation of pragmatic doctrine. Professor R. B. Perry, in his Collected Essays and Reviews of James, speaks of this article as "of unique historical importance as perhaps the key to all of James's later thought."³ We know that Bowne was familiar with this particular article from his own reference. The reference occurs as a footnote in the discussion of the determinative character of interests and feelings in the life of the mind, and reads: "This point has been very happily put by Dr. James in the 'Journal of Speculative Philosophy,' for January and July, 1878."⁴

Two facts are now clear. First, Bowne read James's article, and, second, the book in which he refers to it

¹ Reprinted in: William James, Collected Essays and Reviews, edited by Ralph Barton Perry, 1920.

² The preface is dated May 5, 1879.

³ Perry, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.

⁴ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 66.

contains his first use of pragmatic method. Furthermore, certain parallels between Bowne's treatment (in the Chapter on "Knowledge and Belief") and the article by James would seem to indicate specific indebtedness. Bowne's description of the mind as a unity of vital interests and his doctrine of the determinative character of these interests in mental development have their parallel in James's treatment. For example, in the article by James we read:

"Mind," as we actually find it, contains all sorts of laws--those of logic, of fancy, of wit, of taste, of decorum, beauty, morals, and so forth, as well as of perception of fact. Common sense estimates mental excellence by a combination of all these standards, and yet how few of them correspond to anything that actually is--they are laws of the Ideal, dictated by subjective interests pure and simple.¹

We are all fated to be a priori teleologists whether we will or not. Interests which we bring with us, and simply posit or take our stand upon, are the very flour of which our mental dough is kneaded.²

Bowne, dealing for the first time with the same subject, writes:

When the human mind comes to self-consciousness, it becomes aware of many interests. There are practical, speculative, aesthetic, and moral interests. These are the motive powers of the mind, and outline its development.³

¹ Collected Essays and Reviews, op. cit., p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 61.

³ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 69.

The whole mental life . . . springs out of feeling. It is extremely doubtful if a purely perceptive being, without any subjective interests, could attain to rationality, even if its physical existence were secured. Indeed, it is demonstrable that our sentiments outline and control all mental development.¹

Bowne's use of the "it works" criterion similarly has its parallel. James wrote:

How shall I say that knowing fact with Messr. Huxley and Clifford is a better use to put my mind to than feeling good with Messrs. Moody and Sankey, unless by slowly and painfully finding out that in long run it works best?²

Bowne, using this criterion for the first time, states:

We conclude, then, that it is no objection to a belief that its grounds do not admit of satisfactory formal statement, provided always that it works well.³

Those views, therefore, of man and his relations which must develop and dignify human nature, and which work best, in practice, are at least presumptively true.⁴

Another close similarity between Bowne's treatment and that of James is to be found in the notion of coerciveness as a criterion of reality. Although not subsequently elaborated by Bowne, the idea is worth noting here as one further indication of the closeness with which he followed James's article.

¹ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

² Collected Essays and Reviews, op. cit., p. 66.

³ Studies in Theism, pp. 64-65.

⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

The only objective criterion of reality is coerciveness, in the long run, over thought. Objective facts . . . are real only because they coerce sensation. Any interest which should be coercive on the same massive scale would be eodem jure real.¹

Bowne, handling the same idea, remarks:

The final test of reality in perception is, that it compels and coerces our sensations. . . . If, then, there is any other element in the totality of our experience which equally coerces our belief, and which, when denied, invariably comes back, then there is the best ground for saying that in such experience, as well as in sense-perception, we come in contact with something not ourselves.²

We cannot eliminate the possibility that these parallels might have come from a common source for the two writers rather than indebtedness on the part of Bowne. The evidence, however, does not substantiate that possibility.

There seems to be no work that could have been a common source to the two writers for all of the elements that are common to both. Thomas Brown, in his Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind,³ and Shadworth Hodgson, in his Time and Space,⁴ and Wilhelm Windelbrand, in his essay 'Ueber Denken un Nachdenken,'⁵ had all been

¹ Collected Essays and Reviews, p. 67.

² Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 78.

³ Thomas Brown, Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Vol. II, Chap. 35.

⁴ Shadworth Hodgson, Time and Space, 1865, Chap. 5.

⁵ Wilhelm Windelbrand, Viertel jahresschrift fuer wissenschaftliche Philosophie und Soziologie, 2 (1878), pp. 265-297.

investigating the influence of feelings and interests in the mental life, but none of these, even had they been known to both Bowne and James, could account for all the elements common to both.¹

In addition, James specifically acknowledged Charles S. Peirce as the one to whom he was indebted for the pragmatic viewpoint.² There is no indication that Bowne had any contacts or acquaintance with the work of Peirce.

It is difficult to avoid the inference that James was responsible for stimulating Bowne's interest in pragmatic method, "if not actually furnishing the substance of the method."³ Bowne's students in later years report that Bowne was conscious of no indebtedness to William James, but such a judgement on Bowne's part is probably explained by the fact that he came to regard James' pragmatism as simply a restatement of Kant's doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason.⁴

When we consider other factors of influence we find that Bowne thought of his pragmatism as continuous with the

¹ Ramsdell, "Sources of Bowne's Personalism," The Personalist, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (April, 1935).

² Cf. "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," 1898, in Collected Essays and Reviews, p. 410.

³ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 138.

⁴ This was an inaccurate judgement as we have shown on preceding pages.

doctrine of Kant. In the Studies in Theism, in which we found the parallels with James, he clearly implies the identity of his doctrine of interests and feelings as determinants of belief with the teaching of Kant. In the course of his treatment he writes: "It is not without ground, therefore, that Kant insisted upon the primacy of the practical reason, and the subordinate character of the speculative."¹ As we have said in preceding pages, Bowne was not correct in assuming the identity of his doctrine with that of Kant, but once stimulated to pragmatic lines of thought, it is of course clear that he may have found the phrase "primacy of the practical reason" very suggestive. He was also probably impressed with Kant's use of the term interests, but if he was he neglected the rationalistic qualifications imposed by Kant. Bowne's doctrine of interests is more in line with the thought of William James.

There is a point at which Bowne most clearly found pragmatic inspiration in Kant. This is in Kant's treatment of the primacy of the practical reason. It is evident that that treatment suggests Bowne's statement of method in religious thought. But the important fact is that this particular influence of Kant did not show itself in any writing of Bowne's until six years after reading the article

¹ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 74.

of James to which we have referred.¹ In this particular case Kant was defending the independent validity of the moral law as an a priori principle of pure practical reason. Any propositions inseparably connected with the moral law (as such an a priori principle), as Kant believed the postulates of God, freedom, and immortality to be, though not capable of being established by theoretical reason, may be regarded as sufficiently authenticated, provided they do not contradict theoretical reason ("indessen dass sie ihr auch eben nicht widersprechen").² The similarity of Bowne's formulation, while it neglects the a priori requirement emphasized by Kant, is sufficiently striking to suggest its source: "Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real, in default of positive disproof."³

Lotze's influence would never of itself have directed Bowne to pragmatic method, although certain practical emphases of Lotze are reflected in his thought. Lotze's insistence that philosophy keep close to life and experience left its

¹ "The Logic of Religious Belief," Methodist Quarterly Review, 66 (1884), pp. 642-665.

² Immanuel Kant, *Saemtliche Werke*, edited by Karl Vorlaender (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1920-22), Vol. II, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, p. 155.

³ Methodist Quarterly Review, *op. cit.*, 66 (1884), p. 652. See also Theism, p. 18.

mark on Bowne and strengthened the empirical element in his rationalism. Lotze's dictum "reality is infinitely richer than thought," though spoken against a distinctly rationalistic frame of reference, very evidently provided the source for Bowne's remark that "Life is richer and deeper than speculation."¹

The influence of Herbert Spencer would not alone have led Bowne to pragmatism. No doubt the study of Herbert Spencer gave him one of his first contacts with the evolutionary doctrine. "The influence of this contact, once Bowne had been stimulated to an interest in pragmatic method, soon reflected itself in his religious writings."² One particularly striking indebtedness is to be found in the conception of belief as a cosmic product. Spencer's view is stated in the First Principles, (which Bowne reviewed in The New Englander, January, 1872 as follows:

He [man] with all his capacities, and aspirations, and beliefs, is not an accident, but a product of time. . . . He, like every other man, may properly consider himself as one of the myriad agencies through whom works the Unknown Cause; and when the Unknown Cause produces in him a certain belief, he is thereby authorized to profess and act out that belief.³

¹ Hermann Lotze, Metaphysics, English translation edited by B. Bosanquet, 1887, Vol. I, p. 178.

² Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 140.

³ Herbert Spencer, First Principles of a New System of Philosophy, 1864, p. 123.

Bowne's later statement is much similar:

We do hold that a general belief renders a corresponding reality highly probable, even when no sufficient formal defense is possible. Such a belief represents the total outcome of a race-experience, the impression which the universe has made upon us. . . . It is the way in which reality manifests itself in us. Our feelings are the subjective side of the universe. Upon this point we are in full accord with the evolutionist.¹

There were other influences which played their part in the full development of Bowne's religious pragmatism, but the main lines of that development came from the sources which we have indicated. William James was the influence that awakened Bowne to interest in the pragmatic method.

Before closing this section, since we have made Bowne a debtor to James, it is appropriate to say a further word regarding the relationship of James and Bowne.

They were unceasing in their fight against the 'superstition of intellectualism'; both insisted upon the volitional and practical character of belief; both insisted that philosophy is more a formulation of life than mere impersonal logic.²

Each insisted that the "comprehensible universe is as pure an assumption as the religious and moral universe"; and both believed that Theism is "the implication of all our faculties,"

¹ Studies in Theism, pp. 76-77. Cf. Theory of Thought and Knowledge, 1897, p. 377.

² Wilbur Harry Long, "The Religious Philosophy of Bowne and James," The Personalist, Vol. V, No. 4 (October, 1924).

and has "the warrant of the entire soul."¹

James maintained that the differences between them were mainly matters of terminology and Frank Wilbur Collier of American University says that Bowne told him that this was true,² but in actual fact there are vital differences. This is especially true in their religious faith and life. There are vital differences in the positive and permanent value of the respective doctrines and methods of Pragmatism and Personalism which should be clearly understood. You cannot equate Pragmatism and Personalism. They are as wide apart as the religious life of James and Bowne and that is a considerable distance.

The genius of Borden Parker Bowne, as we have frequently indicated, was that he combined an uncommon speculative and critical excellence with a vital religious life and faith. A product of the Christian, his approach to philosophy was essentially religious, and this remained the cornerstone both of life and thought. The influence of the Christian community is significant, because it not only occasioned in him a personal sense of religious consciousness, but it gave him the idea of the solidarity of historic revelation, social

¹ Bowne, Theism, pp. 13-20.

² Frank Wilbur Collier, "Personalism: A Vital Philosophy," Personalist, Vol. I, No. 1 (April 1920), pp. 35-43.

institutions, and truth. The social and historic approach rooted Bowne in a living faith which James, lacking, never achieved. The great catholic interests and tendencies of the race became significant for him. They "may well be a good ground for belief"; he insisted; "for these reveal the essential structure and needs of the mind, and have all the logical significance of any great cosmic product."¹ Bowne was a product of the Christian Church, and he remained loyal to it throughout his life. The key thought of his whole religious philosophy is the inherent reasonableness and rational superiority of theism over any competing system. Theism "more and more appears as the supreme condition of both thought and life."² It "is the fundamental postulate of our total life. It cannot, indeed, be demonstrated without assumption, but it cannot be denied without wrecking all our interests." Not only our moral and religious interests, but also "our cognitive and speculative interests . . . are so bound up with theism as to stand or fall with it."³ Theism gives the most rational account of historic instructions, of religious experience, of the higher reality of values, and even of theoretical speculation itself. "Religious philosophy

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 26.

² Ibid., p. vii.

³ Ibid., pp. iv-v.

does not need to ground in an arbitrary will-to-believe. It stands justified before the bar of both theoretical and practical reason."¹ Theism is the quintessence of the reflective life; it is historical, social, humanistic, and at the same time reasonable.²

In the sense that he recognized the validity of fundamental human and social claims upon reality and truth, Bowne's philosophy may be called pragmatic, but his thought runs much deeper than that of James's pragmatism. Personalism does not minimize history, institutions, or intellect, and thus grounded is able to give belief and faith in place of mere hypothesis and volitional assent for action.

This fact is revealed in the personal life of Bowne, "which manifested that solidity, sense of finality, and certitude which comes from thought well-grounded in life and reason. His life radiated with religious insight and power."³ Bowne was a man of action and prayer, he knew at first hand the intimacies of religious experience and faith. Hence his

¹ Long, op. cit., Personalist, Vol. V, No. 4 (October 1924).

² Theism, p. 9. "The needs of the intellect, the demands and forebodings of conscience, the cravings of the affections, the impulses of the aesthetic nature, and the ideals of the will--all enter into the problem, apart from the words of revelation, or any direct influence of God on the soul."

³ Long, loc. cit.

religious thought and metaphysics do not hang in the air, are not mere formal hypotheses. They involve a pungent finality because they come from a deep experience and a penetrating and critical reason. Bowne's fundamental interest lay in the defense of a religious philosophy of the world, and in the discovery of a substantial metaphysics upon which to build it.

While he was a friend of theism and the religious consciousness James himself was not gripped by religious faith. Although his father was a religious man, his father's convictions did not transplant in James. At the age of twenty-five he wrote from Berlin to his father telling of his skepticism.¹ James, unlike Bowne, did not come under the influence of the religious community. His father, while a religious man, was not connected with the Christian Church. James's basic training was exclusively in scientific institutions and naturally prized only the opinions and styles of belief favored by his instructors. He became hopelessly engulfed by the iron-clad rigidity of scientism, but was brought out of it by a great emotional experience in Germany and by reading Renouvier's *Essais de critique générale*. But one searches in vain through the published letters of James for an evidence of a genuine religious spirit, of piety, or mystical *Erlebnis*, or of any sense of the Transcendent, such

¹ The Letters of William James, Vol. I, p. 96.

as that exemplified in the life of Bowne. The sense of the presence of God, the sense of divine commission, of personal relationship, of prayer, are conspicuously absent. "I doubt whether you will find any great harm in the God I patronize," he wrote to C. A. Strong in 1907, "the poor thing is so largely an ideal possibility. . . ." ¹ Although willing to admit Renan's dictum that "Tout est possible, meme Dieu," God remained for James a possible only. His Gifford Lectures, Varieties of Religious Experience, has no other message to offer: God is an hypothesis. Santayana put it well when he observed that

. . . there was accordingly no sense of security, no joy, in James' apology for personal religion. He did not really believe; he merely believed in the right of believing that you might be right if you believed.

And he adds decisively that James "by nature was a spirited man rather than a spiritual man." ² As Professor Long put it:

Although James defended joyfully the values, theories and imperatives of human life, yet he always spoke about religion from the outside. Standing for hope, nevertheless it was the hope stoically willed, not demonstrated in living faith, mystic experience, moral calmness, or rational certitude. ³

¹ Ibid., p. 220.

² George Santayana, Character and Opinion in the United States, pp. 77, 84.

³ Long, op. cit., Personalist, Vol. V, No. 4, p. 262.

James's own theism is essentially the product of religious dilettantism, and affords no stable basis for the religious consciousness. It gives us an hypothesis where we need conviction, without which is no permanent belief; and without belief, in turn, there is no permanent religious dynamic.

Having said all this, we again repeat that it was contact with the work of William James that awakened Bowne's interest in the pragmatic point of view. The basic difference between the two men is that Bowne worked from a believing base of operations while James worked from a skeptical base. Bowne was captured by his beliefs while James was trying to capture a belief. Bowne was stimulated by James, but he never could be considered a follower.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BOWNE'S PERSONALISM

A. INTRODUCTION

In the narrower sense of the term, Borden Parker Bowne was not a theologian. He was a philosopher. But nevertheless he looked upon theological education as definitely within the sphere of his university work. One main reason for his refusing to leave Boston University was the large number of theological students who attended his classes. With him, religion was a primary concern both in his thinking and in his personal life. In saying this we do not mean to imply that he ever subordinated truth to religious faith. This would have violated his whole mental tone and temper. Perfect candor marked his entire intellectual life and was one of the chief sources of his remarkable spiritual power. It probably accounts also in part for his special interest in theological education.

Bowne did not elaborate his theological views into a detailed and systematic treatise. But in a general way he expressed them openly in his lectures, magazine articles and books, and in private conversations. While he did not deal with his theological views in a technical way, we have sufficient material to know the main direction of his religious thought. The ideas in this field which he especially

emphasized have since his time continued to work as a powerful influence in American Protestantism. The scope of this thesis forbids a detailed presentation of Bowne's religious thought. His main concern was his philosophy of personalism, and its relationship to theism. Since we have dealt with these concerns, it is now our purpose to give a distilled account of his theological views.

B. BOWNE'S APOLOGETIC FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Bowne's apologetic for the Christian faith departed in several important respects from that of traditional Protestantism. Bowne rejected the crude realism commonly assumed by earlier Protestant theologians and thus eliminated the traditional sharp antithesis between the natural and the supernatural. In the preface to his Immanence of God, he writes:

The undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine is the great heresy of popular thought respecting religion. The error roots in a deistic and mechanical philosophy, and in turn produces a large part of the misunderstandings that haunt religious and irreligious thought alike. To assist in the banishment of this error by showing a more excellent way is the aim of this little book.¹

Bowne did not look upon nature as a self-running mechanism but as the ceaseless product of the divine energizing under the forms of time and space. It was, therefore, "supernatural"

¹ Bowne, The Immanence of God, p. 1.

in its causation. But if the popular distinction between the natural and the supernatural was to be retained, it was necessary to restrict the distinction to the phenomenal order and to reinterpret the words natural and supernatural. This Bowne did. He applied the word "natural" to the familiar and the word "supernatural" or "miraculous" to the unfamiliar modes of the divine activity. In this way he brought God into a direct causal relation to the whole world and made him real to the modern man as he had not been before. This brought a profound change in the traditional apologetic, so far as it had to do with the biblical miracles and with the ideas of revelation and inspiration.

A second respect in which Bowne broke with the traditional apologetic was in his theory of knowledge. In the traditional Protestant theory, religious knowledge was dependent for its certification and verification on the authority of the Bible. This authority was regarded as objective, as grounded in miraculous divine inspiration, and hence as independent of validation by the human reason. But authority of this kind found no support in modern epistemology. The latter contends that there can be no purely external or objective authentication of truth; the ultimate standard of truth must be found in the mind itself. In addition to this the infallibility traditionally ascribed to Scripture seem to bring its teachings at many points into conflict with the

conclusions of modern science. In order to preserve its Christian status as the Word of God it was, therefore, necessary to reinterpret the nature and scope of its authority. Bowne saw that it was necessary to conceive its authority as inner and spiritual rather than external and coercive. He limited the Bible to its basic and essential teaching. In this manner brought Biblical authority into accord with the free and advancing thought of modern man.

Another respect in which Bowne found the traditional apologetics unsatisfactory, had to do with the philosophical basis of religious faith. In the older view faith was based on the Bible and to some extent on rational considerations of general character. This made it dependent for its validation on supports more or less external to itself. It was not thought of as standing in its own right and justifying itself and was thus assigned a secondary status. Its need for a deeper ground was provided by Bowne who grounded it in accord with the teaching of Kant, Schleiermacher, and Lotze. Bowne maintained that religion is structural in the human mind, that it is fundamental, independent, and trustworthy as are the intellectual, moral and aesthetic interests of the human spirit. He claimed that man has an innate capacity for religious experience. This experience is coordinate with, if not superordinate to, the capacity for sense experience, moral experience, and aesthetic experience. This innate

religious capacity spoken of by Bowne is called a religious a priori by later scholars such as Ernst Troeltch, Rudolf Otto, and Albert C. Knudson.¹ Regardless of the name given the epistemological theory which affirms it gives to religion an impregnable position, grounding it as deeply and ineradicably in the human spirit as science, morality, and art. Speaking of this view, Albert C. Knudson says: "No profounder and more vital contribution than this has in my opinion been made to religious apologetics in modern times."²

C. PERSONALITY OF GOD AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

We now turn from Bowne's contributions to the general defense of the Christian faith to some of the basic Christian doctrines and his relation to them. We begin with two doctrines which are closely related to each other--the personality

¹ Cf. George Wobbermin, Die Religionspsychologische Methode in Religionswissenschaft und Theologie, pp. 353-358; Ernst Troeltsch, "Wesen der Religion und der Religionswissenschaft," in Die Kultur der Gegenwart, Teil I, Abt. IV, pp. 461-489; Karl Bornhausen, "Das religiöse Apriori bei Ernst Troeltsch und Rudolf Otto" in Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, 1910, pp. 193-206; and "Wider der Neofriesianismus in der Theologie" in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1910, pp. 341-405; Paul Spiess, "Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori," in Religion und Geisteskultur, 1909, pp. 207-215; D. C. Macintosh, "Troeltsch's Theory of Religious Knowledge," American Journal of Theology, 1919, pp. 274-289.

² Albert C. Knudson, "Religious Apriorism," Studies in Philosophy and Theology, edited by E. C. Wilm, pp. 93-127. This volume is a memorial number to Bowne and contains articles by his former students.

of God and the Person of Christ.

As we have mentioned previously, Bowne laid primary stress on the first of these doctrines. The personality of God is fundamental in his philosophical theology. And in a sense it was also the traditional teaching of the church. Its God was manifestly a personal Being. Being or essence was regarded as a deeper concept. Thus it has been frequently said that what the church taught was personality in God rather than the personality of God. There were three Persons in the Godhead, and personality might consequently be attributed to each of them. But the one God was not in his inmost Being strictly personal. The language of the church, at least, seemed to suggest this conclusion.

There was, however, much confusion of thought on the subject. This confusion was due in part to a lack of uniform and consistent terminology, but its deeper source was the current concept of personality. At this point a marked advance was made during the past century and Borden Parker Bowne had a significant part in this advance. Profounder philosophical reflection led to the insight that personality and it alone is the key to the ultimate reality. This new approach to metaphysics we have already treated in the chapter, "Bowne's Philosophy of Personalism."

Another phase of Bowne's personalistic or idealistic theism, worthy of mention in the present connection, is its

activism or doctrine of divine immanence. Popular religious thought has always had difficulty relating God in a satisfactory way to the physical or spatial world. In the pre-Copernican period the idea of a special abode for Deity in the highest "sphere" of existence helped popular thought to some extent. This divine home was nullified by the Copernican astronomy and now there is no "place" for God in the universe. If he is to be brought into a vital and rational relation to the world, if he is to bade truly "real" to modern thought, it must be as the causal ground of the universe. Bowne saw that only as its immanent, active, and creative source can God satisfy the demands of both reason and faith. With this in mind Bowne persistently stressed the doctrine of the divine immanence and rendered an immense service to the theological picture of his day.

Bowne's emphasis on the unitary personality of God has an obvious bearing on the traditional doctrine of the Person of Christ. Bowne did not develop his thought along this line as fully as might have been expected, but the direction in which it logically moves is clear. It rules out the traditional two-nature doctrine or at least insists on reinterpreting it. It holds that a complete human nature must include self-consciousness, a personal centre, an ego. As A. C. Knudson points out, without this personal centre

human nature would be a mere abstraction.¹ Christ then must have a human ego. And in order to avoid the hopeless dualism of two egos, one human and the other divine, Bowne's thought would logically lead us to construe his "divine nature" as a symbol of his unique dependence on God and his unique endowment with the Divine Spirit. This unique relation to Deity had a metaphysical basis, but it is to be interpreted in dynamic rather than substantistic terms. God was in Christ not as a mysterious divine substance, but as a Spiritual Power or Being upon whom he was uniquely dependent and with whom he was in reciprocal interaction. His divinity, therefore,

. . . is to be regarded as manifesting itself, not in his possession of the absolute attributes of Deity, but in his consciousness of spiritual oneness with God and in his exalted character and redemptive mission.²

D. DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

In view of what has been said concerning the doctrine of original sin, we can readily see Bowne's attitude toward the traditional satisfaction, penal and governmental theories of the atonement. These theories, he contended, may in the

¹ Albert C. Knudson, "Bowne in American Theological Education," The Personalist, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 (July 1947), p. 251.

² Ibid., p. 252.

past have had some value as metaphorical expressions of the divine grace and they may still be so employed. But as literal descriptions of the meaning of the death of Christ they are morally indefensible. Such ideas as ransom, appeasement of the divine anger, vicarious punishment, and penal example have no place in a truly Christian theory of the Cross of Christ. Furthermore, Bowne claims that sin and guilt are inalienable. It is impossible for them to be transferred to an innocent person. Both merit and demerit are inseparable from the persons to whom they originally belonged, and cannot be imputed to others.

Bowne holds that this basic insight was overlooked by the framers of the substitutionary theories of the atonement. The result was, as he puts it, a series of "frigid juristic speculations, lifeless and life destroying, the despair of reason and the opprobrium of faith."¹ The abstract theorists, referred to, also failed to see that, as Creator of the world, God "is the most deeply obligated being in the universe," and that in his consequent task of redeeming sinful men he could not resort to any mechanical or legalistic device. God's only possible method as a moral Being was to make the unrighteous righteous. This God sought to do through the perfect

¹ Bowne, Studies in Christianity, p. 140. See also account of his heresy trial in Appendix, p. 301.

revelation of his own love and righteousness in the death of Christ and through the profoundly moving example furnished by Christ in his absolute faithfulness to duty. This interpretation is the well known "moral influence theory" of the atonement, but according to Bowne, none other is needed.

In his little booklet on the Atonement Bowne writes with a practical aim in mind. Many minds are troubled and are unable to distinguish between the fact of the atonement and theories of the atonement. "To help such minds, not to instruct theologians"¹ is the aim of Bowne's study. We give in full Bowne's summary at the end of his little book.

Thus I have sought to relieve the doctrines of Divine grace from the verbal and mechanical misunderstanding which infest popular religious thought, and make the gospel itself a stumbling block to many. In concluding I emphasize several points:

1. We must distinguish between the fact of the Saviour's work and the theological theory of it. The latter is not of faith, but of speculation. Moreover, the fact is the essential thing; and the religious teacher must never allow any one to think he has abandoned the fact because he is dissatisfied with the theory.

2. We must note the instrumental and undogmatic character of Scripture language on this subject, and the resulting necessity of taking it in a free and living way rather than as the language of a dogma or a statute. A person who reads the Scriptures with no aid but the dictionary, and without knowledge of ancient life and custom,

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, The Atonement, 1900, pp. 2-4.

and without diligently comparing Scripture with Scripture, will certainly go astray in this matter.

3. The Doctrine itself must be brought out of the desert of abstract speculation, and be constructed and interpreted in the light of life and human experience. The ethical aim and aspect of the doctrine must be emphasized; and whatever conflicts therewith must be set aside. It is God's aim to save men from sin, not in sin; to save men from sin, not from penalty; to recover men to righteousness, not plant them in heaven. Forgiveness and salvation must be interpreted in accordance with this fundamental fact.

4. In religious instruction the teacher must put supreme emphasis on the fact of the Savior's work. He must proclaim the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and must summon men to discipleship in his name. This is practically the gist of the matter, and whatever attention we give to theory, we must never allow it to obscure this simple fact.

5. For practical purposes all we need is to become the disciples of our Lord, trusting in his promises and the Father whom he revealed. With this practical discipleship we shall receive all the benefits of the Savior's work without any theory; and without this discipleship we are lost, whatever our theory.¹

E. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In much the same way, though less drastic, Bowne sought to moralize the traditional conceptions of conversion and the Christian life in general. He was not opposed to

¹ Bowne, The Atonement, pp. 150-152.

emotional and mystical experiences such as were cultivated in American revival meetings. It was his opinion that they had proved themselves of too much value and for that reason should not be condemned. But when these experiences were sought as an end in themselves or were represented as essential to the Christian life, he branded them as evil. It was Bowne's firm belief that the only thing necessary to Christian discipleship was the changed heart and the obedient will. He says:

We are willing, then to allow religious experience to be anything whatever, within the limits of decency and sanity; but when it comes to giving it a divine significance, we insist on applying the rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them'; and we further insist on rejecting as mere delusion everything whatever that will not stand this test.¹

F. DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

In Bowne's mind, activity, is the clue to the connection between God as personal and all that we know of him in revelation. God is the acting one. In his metaphysics he equates activity and Reality. At this point Bowne is in harmony with the modern idea of revelation, i.e., that revelation is not the disclosure of truth about God so much as the

¹ Bowne, Immanence of God, p. 135. See also Bowne, The Christian Life, 1899.

self-disclosure of God Himself.¹ Bowne would say that Revelation is the self-giving of God, the action of the Supreme Self, and that faith is man's personal response. These two go together; revelation as a thoroughly personal happening between the Person and finite persons.

The significance of Bowne's stress on divine immanence and its relationship to revelation is at once apparent. In point of fact, Bowne deals with his views on revelation under the title of The Immanence of God. This fact being true we give a digest of his views on revelation in the volume mentioned.

God reveals himself in nature.

In the new conception the supernatural is nothing foreign to nature and making occasional raids into nature in order to reveal itself, but, so far as nature as a whole is concerned, the supernatural is the everpresent ground and administrator of nature; and nature is simply the form under which² the supreme Reason and Will manifest themselves.

Bowne sets aside the self-running nature and the conception of an absentee God. God is the ever-present agent in the ongoing of the world, and nature is but the form and product of his ceaseless activity. The cosmic order is no rival of God,

¹ Emil Brunner, The Divine Human Encounter.

² Bowne, Immanence of God, p. 17.

"but is simply the continuous manifestation and product of his divine activity."¹ God's will is not back of nature "at some awful distance of time and space, but is their present living source; and they in turn are but the form in which that will expresses and realizes itself."² The presence of God in nature does not mean that God intermittently performs miracles, but that the whole cosmic movement depends constantly upon the divine will and "is an expression of the divine purpose."³ Bowne, in Barkeley's language, makes nature speak a divine language.

God reveals himself in history. Not in signs upon occasion, but in the great historical movement and working his will therein.⁴ The great proof of God's presence in history, and the sole significance of that presence lies in the mental and moral realm.⁵

The slow moralization of life and society, the enlightenment of conscience and its growing empire, the deepening sense of responsibility for the good order of the world and the well-being of men, the

¹ Ibid., p. 24.

² Ibid., p. 32.

³ Ibid., pp. 43.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

gradual putting away of old wrongs and foul diseases and blinding superstitions--these are the great proofs of God in history.¹

Life itself, with all its normal forms and interests, represents the divine will and purpose, and from it God is never absent. His will is being done in and through the laws and movements of humanity, as it is through the laws and movements of nature.² A divine purpose, a moral development in humanity, is the essential meaning of God in history. This history, says Bowne, is the unfolding and realization of the divine purpose.

God reveals himself in the Bible. It should be mentioned that Bowne's aim in his volume The Immanence of God is to banish the error which asserts the undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine. He contends that this error roots in a deistic and mechanical philosophy, and in turn produces a large part of the misunderstanding that haunt religious and irreligious thought alike. He proceeds to say that the supernatural features of the Bible history are no more divine in their causality than the routine events of every day. They are simply extraordinary events which, from their form or circumstances of their occurrence, make the divine presence and purpose more manifest than is the case

¹ Bowne, Immanence of God, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 47.

with familiar matters. They are signs or calls for attention, which is made necessary by the mental and spiritual dullness of men.

Bowne believes in miracles and argues for their reality by the concrete results which followed. He says:

St. Paul may have had a fit on his way to Damascus, but it is the only fit that had such mighty consequences. The vision of the Risen One may have been an illusion, but when we see that it is the greatest event in all history, we begin to wonder whether illusions can be so potent. In that case, surely, things that are not are mightier than the things that are.¹

Furthermore, if for us God is a personal and moral being, and if his supreme aim in human creation is a moral one,

. . . we shall have no a priori hostility to miracle. If we believe in a God in whom we live and move and have our being, and if we believe that we may and do enter into fellowship and communion with him in prayer and holy living, it will seem to us the most natural thing in the world that there should be tokens of his presence.²

Everything, says Bowne, depends on our presuppositions.

For Bowne the important thing is that Christianity is a revelation from God. It is humanity's supreme treasure. It tells us about God, "what he means, what he has done and is doing for us, what life means and what our destiny is to be."³ This revelation is to be understood only in its history; and

¹ Ibid., p. 71.

² Ibid., p. 82.

³ Ibid., p. 84.

whatever in that history is necessary for its understanding, be it miracle or what not, we must retain. But we must take a long range view of history. History must be studied as a whole and not merely in its crude beginnings or in its miraculous attendants. Special attention must be given to the moral and spiritual grandeur of its outcome. The most important miracle is the "spiritual miracle of God's life in the soul and the realization of his kingdom on the earth. This "spiritual miracle is the only thing really worth while, or worthy of God."¹

The discussion of revelation as it is reflected in the Bible must be presented from the standpoint of the divine immanence. When the false naturalism of unbelief is eliminated, supernaturalism will be less disturbed if historical criticism should cast doubts on the details. It is no longer a question of divine causality but of method.

Belief need not fear evolution, or development, or natural agencies, when it is seen that the divine will and purpose underlie them all, and that they are really nothing but the form of the divine working. And unbelief, on the other hand, must not be thought to have triumphed because natural methods are traced in the supernatural revelation.²

But, says Bowne, we must admit that the revealing movement

¹ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

² Ibid., p. 87.

can be studied from the natural standpoint; that is, we may seek to trace the familiar laws of life and thought and history and human development in the progress and unfolding of the movement. "In God's world the teachings of history and the indications of experience are as truly a revelation as any series of texts or any voice from the skies."¹ While we admit, however, that the naturalistic study of revelation can show important preparations, historical continuities, psychological uniformities, rational harmonies"; we reach nothing final until we come to the immanent, self-revealing God."² As against false naturalism, Bowne insists that the fact of natural methods in God's self-revealing work in no way dispenses with the fact of the divine purpose and presence. As against false supernaturalism, he insists that God may be as present in his orderly methods and the steadfast ordinances of the world as in any or all miracles whatsoever. In any case, he says, "the important thing is not to find miracles, but God and learn his will and do it."³

Bowne dispenses with all dictation theories of inspiration. In their place he substitutes the conception of a historical and gradual unfolding in accordance with God's general

¹ Ibid., p. 90.

² Ibid., p. 91.

³ Ibid., p. 94.

laws in life, history, and humanity. This change does not lessen his belief in the revelation of the Bible. He says: "It seems to us diviner than ever, now that it has become more human; and more supernatural than ever, now that we trace God's universal natural methods in it."¹

In summation of Bowne's view of revelation in the Bible we can do no better than give his own words:

This only is of faith concerning the Scriptures, that God has revealed himself through them and the history which they record as a God of righteousness and grace. And this only of faith respecting Christianity, that it is God's great and supreme revelation of what he is and what he means for men. To depart from this faith is heresy. To live and work in this faith is to be a child of the kingdom.²

There is a divine immanence in the Word as well as in the Work, which makes it 'The fountain light of all our day, a master light of all our seeing.'³

God reveals himself in the human soul. As God reveals himself in nature, history, and the Bible, so he reveals himself in the soul. God does not work against the laws of the mind, but through them, that he might realize his purpose in us. Bowne says that this is an absolute condition of our mental and moral sanity. He says that if we are to lead a

¹ Ibid., p. 104.

² Ibid., pp. 105-106.

³ Loc. cit.

moral and rational life of any sort, there must be an order of life on which we can depend. God's revelation in the human soul is best understood in connection with his belief in the religious apriori which we have previously discussed.

For Bowne, revelation is the cosmic activity of the divine, and nature, history, the Bible, and the working of the soul are expressions of that immanent activity.¹

G. DOCTRINE OF FREEDOM

The speculative significance of freedom is a regulative doctrine in the writings of Borden Parker Bowne. It constitutes an essential part of the substructure of his system of thought. Bowne regarded freedom as a persistent problem of philosophy; he appreciated the value of the history of philosophy as a means of preventing needless repetition of errors of thought. This critical attitude led him to recognize a positive contribution to the problem of freedom made primarily by modern philosophers. Hildebrand points out that

. . . from the determinism of Leibnitz, the concept of noumenal freedom as expounded by Kant, the absolute doctrine of Hegelian freedom and the determinism of Herbart, Bowne found little more

¹ For further study see Bowne, The Christian Revelation. Note in index Studies in Christianity, Chapter II, and the account of his heresy trial given in the Appendix, p. 301.

than negative instruction.¹

But from Berkeley, Lotze, and, more in particular, from Ulrici and Renouvier, he found much in accordance with what he regarded to be the essential nature of freedom, and a direct contribution to his own thought. Even Ulrici and Renouvier, however, apparently failed to expound the nature of freedom so that it would be the regulative and fundamental postulate of their systems that it clearly is in Bowne's philosophy.

It is Bowne's contention that the most productive study of freedom is made when it is investigated in connection with reason. The doctrine of the speculative significance of freedom, then, shifts the venue of the problem from ethics to a study of freedom from point of view of its implications for the rational life. He says:

I am persuaded, therefore, that one wishing to find his way into the problem will do well to consider, first of all, the question of freedom in intelligence itself and the collapse² of rationality involved in the system of necessity.

While this method was not entirely original with Bowne, the truth to which it led was, in his opinion, a matter that had never been sufficiently recognized by philosophers in general

¹ Carrol Dewitt Hildebrand, "Bowne's Doctrine of Freedom," The Personalist, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (April, 1932).

² Bowne, Metaphysics, rev. ed., p. 408; Personalism, pp. 201-202; "The Speculative Significance of Freedom," Methodist Review, 77 (1895), pp. 683-689; Studies in Theism, p. 58; Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 293.

and by necessitarians in particular.

Bowne's method of discussing freedom and reason has the advantage of avoiding those ambiguities and partisanships with which much historical discussion of freedom and ethics has embrangled itself. "The speculative significance of freedom undertakes rather to adduce the epistemic value of freedom through a more satisfactory understanding of the nature of both knowing and being."¹ More specifically, freedom must be studied in connection with the self and causality in such a way that personality emerges under the aspect of dynamic or volitional causality conceived as the constitutive notion of the truly real. Bowne's own method in treating freedom reflects his logical and mathematical mind. His approach is not intuitive, it is rather a rational, scientific investigation properly described as empirico-inductive. In Bowne's mind coherence rather than intuition is the implied criterion by which freedom is judged to be true or false. We must use the word "implied" because Bowne regarded academic discussions of the possibility of criteria of truth as barren of any valuable result.² Bowne says: "The argument, then, must be somewhat apagogical, that is, it must consist, not so

¹ Hildebrand, op. cit., p. 104.

² Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 58; Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 293.

much in direct appeal to consciousness, as in showing that freedom is involved in facts which all admit."¹ Freedom then becomes a deduced necessity, to be sure, but it is an inference from the facts of experience which rests upon coherence as an explanation of an area of personality which remains less intelligible of any other hypothesis. When we have any experience, an interpretation of that experience is necessary before it has any meaning. This method reveals that freedom is the most coherent hypothesis available to rationalize certain patent facts of our experience. The purpose is not to demonstrate a theorem but to solve a problem, and freedom, like mechanism, constitutes an ideal explanation. Bowne, like Renouvier, considered it impossible to prove freedom a fact from a strictly demonstrable point of view. "We may not view it as absolutely proved; yet it is certainly a necessary postulate of reason and conscience and as such we hold it."² Freedom, therefore, does not admit perfect induction, but it is a necessary postulate of rational existence. It is possible for us to have some experience of freedom but the possibility and origin of it lie beyond our comprehension.

¹ Bowne, Methodist Review, op. cit., 77 (1895), p. 682.

² Bowne, Introduction to Psychological Theory, pp. 231-232.

The nature of freedom stated in connection with the category of causality utilizes the Lotzean dictum that "every cause infallibly has its effect" and that this term of the proposition must be stressed rather than that which affirms that every cause is itself an effect, which, to say the least, has never been demonstrated. We find that freedom lies in a new beginning. A free act is not represented prior to its occurrence by anything that must lead to it. In both personality and nature the universal course of things lies open momentarily to the possibility of innumerable beginnings whose origins lie outside them but, when once they are originated, must continue within them. This provides for contingency in the world and, therefore, precludes knowledge of when and where new points of departure occur. Bowne believed the indications that the events of external nature are effects rooted in antecedent facts, does not exclude the possibility of the inner mental life being free from an absolute mechanism bound by necessity. The inner mental life may possess a limited power to evolve from itself decisions and resolutions constituting self-originated, self-commenced activities none of which is determined by previous bodily phenomena. Upon the occasion of the self-origination of any act, however, the same at once flows into and becomes subject unto the laws of a causality working out its consequences under the limiting conditions of these established laws of

universal being. That is to say, that "freedom may choose the seed but it can neither determine nor escape the harvest."¹ Bowne defines freedom in its connection with speculative significance as follows:

By freedom I mean the power of self-control and self-direction in an intelligent being. More specifically, it is the power to form plans, purposes, ideals and to work for their realization. Or it is the power to choose between competing or conflicting possibilities and to realize the one chosen. Whenever this power is present we call the agent free.²

The relation of freedom and reason is the starting point of Bowne's investigation of the problem of freedom. He formulates his thesis by pointing out that in the field of thought we are universally required to assume that reason is a self-controlling force and that freedom of thought cannot rationally be denied without, at the same time, being assumed. It is in this way that we identify thought as a self-directing activity, proceeding according to its own inherent laws and ideals. Bowne defines thought as "that form of mental activity whose aim is truth or knowledge."³ And by knowledge we mean the certainty that our judgments correspond to truth or

¹ Bowne, Introduction to Psychological Theory, p. 234.

² Bowne, Methodist Review, op. cit., 77 (1895), p. 681. Metaphysics, rev. ed., p. 405; Personalism, pp. 199-200.

³ Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 9.

reality. Reality refers to all matters of fact of the inner and outer world. Truth means a system of rational principles. We are certain, then, that it can be no product of thoughtlessness; it must rather consist in the results of cogent inference. We can now show that, in the processes of reasoning, there is no proper distinction made between truth and error if freedom is denied. This, says Bowne, is the precise meaning of freedom.¹ Bowne formulates the argument both negatively and positively in such a way that it exhibits a defensive and offensive form respectively.

First, the negative argument as Bowne gives it. The negative argument for freedom is created by the dilemma of determinism arising in connection with the problem of error. We are required by rationality to postulate the essential trustworthiness of reason. Regardless of this postulate, however, it is a patent fact that a large part of human thought and belief finds itself involved in error. We locate the antinomy of thought in the attempt to reconcile error with the trustworthiness of reason. We find that every form of necessity proves to be an incompetent hypothesis to remove this antinomy. Necessitarianism claims that universal law and necessary causation of the mechanical type completely invade both the personal and the impersonal worlds. But

¹ Bowne, Personalism, p. 200; Metaphysics, rev. ed., p. 406.

where everything is equally determined, true and false ideas alike are effects of antecedents equally necessitated so that the distinction between truth and error is unintelligible. "Except the rational life be divested of its last remnant of integrity, a criterion for judging between truth and error must be forthcoming."¹ There is very little possibility of achieving such a norm on the necessitarian plane. Furthermore, however imperative a criterion in order to differentiate truth from error, granting that it were possible, the application of such a criterion would, on the necessitarian plane, be impossible. Therefore, freedom enters intimately into the structure of reason itself and any denial of this fact is equivalent to the denial of the possibility of knowledge. Borden Parker Bowne seems to never tire in his relentless criticism of Spencer's nescience which grew out of the latter's necessitarianism. Hildebrand states it well when he says:

The insolubility of the problem of error on every such scheme consists in the fact that error becomes cosmic in character and, therefore, constitutional to reality. Where this is true, epistemology ends in skepticism and every moral ontology is repudiated.²

As we have said, Bowne states the argument positively as well as negatively. The argument for freedom stated

¹ Hildebrand, op. cit., p. 107.

² Ibid., p. 108.

positively starts from the postulate that "the trustworthiness of reason and the validity of knowledge are the presuppositions of all science and philosophy,"¹ and that, "The general trustworthiness of reason presupposes that thought is a free activity based on rational insight."² There are, it is true, mechanisms within consciousness analogous to the uniformities in external nature but these do not unerringly make for truth. If they did, error would not exist. But it does. According to Bowne, truth requires a standard or ideal in the mind and the capacity for self-direction in our rational activity in order to assess and evaluate judgments and to replace the psychological associations of consciousness with the transparent order of logic. Where rationality and freedom are united, a criterion for truth is not only possible but it can be applied, because, once in possession of its inherent mechanism, "the mind is able to interpose a demurrer in the interest of coherence as opposed to the irrational character of such uniformities as those captioned habits and instincts."³ But the admission of error in human reason does not deny the possibility of truth. Freedom cuts the Gordian

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 146.

² Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 296.

³ Hildebrand, op. cit., p. 108.

knot of this dilemma by allowing the postulate of the universal trustworthiness of reason while providing, at the same time, for the misuse of our faculties of reason through failure to do persistent thinking or by carelessness, wilfulness and the refusal to accept responsibility for discriminating judgments. Bowne thus makes freedom become the source of our discovery of both truth and error, and being as necessary to moral action. Bowne did not ignore law within the realm of the mind, but regarded it as a discovery of the first magnitude that, "Freedom and uniformity must be united in rationality, and neither can dispense with the other."¹

The speculative significance of freedom is, in its scope of application, coterminous with reason itself. Bowne contends that all rational ideals, including those of science, philosophy, morality and religion, are, in their formulation, appropriation and realization, conditioned by freedom. Freedom enters into every structure of our reason and, as is not evident, is the source of the discovery of both truth and error in knowledge. Science itself becomes one of the great achievements of human freedom, for freedom and the uniformity of law are seen to unite in rationality. Freedom guarantees the perpetuity of science. The significance of freedom as a philosophical principle is apparent in its solution of the

¹ Bowne, Methodist Review, op. cit., 77 (1898), p. 687.

problem of error, in its conditioning of any real explanation, in its solution of the problem involved in reconciling the categories of change and identity, in the achievement of the rational demand for unity providing at the same time for the pluralistic aspect of experience and, finally, as conditioning the unification of a system of things with a common source into a plan of purposeful activity. When we consider the significance of freedom ethically, Bowne contends that moral responsibility is meaningless where freedom is denied. And in the religious field, which is our specific interest, free creation offers the only solution of the problems of good and evil, for knowledge, omniscience and omnipotence. In fact, "apart from freedom, all our rational ideals collapse, as does the whole career of reason, falling into innocuous desuetude."¹ Our conclusion is, then, that it is the notion of freedom and not that of necessity of which we can form any clear idea since, without it, the categories of thought and being are plunged into insoluble antinomies before which reason is impotent. The root notion of Bowne's doctrine of freedom consists in showing that it is a necessary postulate of the mental life apart from which reason is unable to function significantly. But in connection with freedom, the career of reason is, from the finite point of view, unlimited

¹ Hildebrand, op. cit., p. 109.

and one of the most valuable attributes of personality, human or divine.

The epistemological significance of freedom in contemporary thought reveals Bowne's superior insight in formulating the problem of freedom so as to reveal the true antithesis to exist between determinism and indeterminism rather than between determinism and freedom. Hildebrand points out Bowne's superiority over other writers in the notion of freedom:

In this respect, Bowne's notion of freedom is superior to that of Henri Bergson, James Ward, Charles Peirce and William James. In fact, the epistemological significance of freedom is not developed in the works of James, Royce and M. Bergson although its historical roots may be found in Saint Augustine and Descartes and, in more recent times, especially in Lequier and Renouvier. Excepting in those present writers such as W. E. Hocking, Louis Arnaud Reid, E. G. Spaulding and W. E. Johnson, and Bowne's disciples where the doctrine has been recognized as having peculiar significance, we do not find freedom and reason acknowledged by contemporary philosophers in general to the extent that it deserves in view of its significance as a principle of investigation.¹

A summary of Bowne's doctrine of Freedom reveals its theological implications. There is nothing more essential to personality than freedom or the power of choice. Without this power man would not be a person. He would be an animal or a mere thing. It is certain that he would be a non-moral

¹ Ibid., p. 110.

being. His conduct would have neither merit nor demerit. He would be incapable of either guilt or virtue. He would be neither saint nor sinner. He would be neither responsible for what he did nor for what he did not do. Responsibility could not have rational meaning for him because strict determinism is logically fatal to the moral life.

As Bowne says, however, such a theory is pure abstraction. No rational human being can wholly divest himself of his own moral nature. "Determinism as a philosophy exists only by the grace of inconsistency."¹ The professed determinist assumes the freedom which he denies. In practical life the only serious question with respect to freedom has had to do with its nature and the range or scope of moral responsibility.

After a true individualism had been established in the civilized codes of mankind, we find the primitive idea of solidarity persisting as a theological theory, called the doctrine of original sin. According to Bowne, this doctrine does not have its sole source in the individual will. There is such a thing as super-individual or racial sin, sin which is inherited or which somehow irresistibly invades the life of the individual. Those who hold this view claim that the

¹ Albert C. Knudson, "Bowne in American Theological Education," The Personalist, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 (July, 1947), p. 252.

universality of sin can not be accounted for without it; that there is ground for believing that the redemption from sin lies beyond all human effort and is necessarily the work of divine grace. The basic assumption underlying the theory is that sin is basically unavoidable and yet that we are responsible for it.

Bowne firmly believes that this traditional doctrine manifestly violates the dictates of an enlightened conscience. It demoralizes the concept of sin and irrationalizes Christian theology. Bowne was a vigorous critic of this traditional view. In opposition to this traditional view he advocated a consistent freedomism and a thoroughly moralized conception of sin. But he does not minimize the gravity of sin nor the need of divine grace. He emphasizes both in a genuine evangelical spirit, and gives powerful support to the freedomistic wing of Protestantism, which had been rapidly spreading over the English-speaking world since the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century.

It is Bowne's type of philosophy which is the bulwark against the current revival of the doctrine of original sin. What would Bowne's attitude be toward the revival of this doctrine? Albert C. Knudson, one of his former students, presumes to give Bowne's attitude:

To the religious earnestness underlying this revival Bowne would have raised no objection. He would rather have encouraged it. But he would

have insisted that its present irrational grounding is destined to have evil consequences. It is meet, right and our bounden duty, he would have said, to take a serious view of sin, but a grave mistake to make it dependent on subvolitional, subethical and subspiritual concepts, as is being done by the so-called neo-orthodox. There is a more excellent way to promote true Christian piety, one that does not do violence to conscience and reason.¹

H. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Bowne's personalist assumptions compel him to assert that God is immediately operative in all things and that his will finds immediate expression and realization in all events of nature.² What, then, is to be said in answer to the problem of natural evil that will neither ignore such evils nor lessen God's goodness?

Bowne approaches the problem with his eye to the lot of the individual and does not dodge the ugliness of the world. The solution which sees only the general outcome of society and overlooks the fate of individuals is unrealistic to Bowne. While he is personally convinced that the divine person is absolutely good, Bowne concedes that we cannot argue to the righteousness of God on the basis of empirical

¹ Knudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254. The writer of this thesis discussed the same problem with Dr. Ralph Tyler Flewelling, Editor of the Personalist and received much the same reply.

² Bowne, Theism, p. 228.

facts alone. A great deal depends on how we pick our facts. Some may see only the good while others may see only the evil.¹ In this way Bowne disparages the views of those who claim to know God's purposes of detailed events. Bowne, however, still insists that all that happens, happens because it is part of the divine purpose. The important question for Bowne is: "Are the facts of nature and life inconsistent with the belief that God is good?"² He answers that there is no logical basis for the faith that the world is ultimately good, or that God is perfectly righteous. We find marks of wisdom in the world but not perfect wisdom, so we find marks of goodness in the world but not perfect goodness. To follow a purely objective procedure would demand that we take all the facts into account, both good and evil, and then strike a balance. Bowne states that this would result in great uncertainty. If we view the world from the point of view of inductive reason, we are torn between considering it as the result of supreme wisdom and as the product of a blind demiurge.

The outcome would probably be the affirmation of a being either morally indifferent, or morally imperfect, or morally good but limited by some

¹ Ibid., pp. 266, 262-263, 270. Cf. Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 356; "The Design Argument," The Independent, XXIX (July 5, 1877).

² Bowne, Theism, pp. 228, 239; Personalism, pp. 187-188; Studies in Theism, p. 356.

insuperable necessity which forbids anything better than our rather shabby universe.¹

Such a collapse of its ideals the mind is not content to allow. Instead, the mind maintains its faith in the ideal and acknowledges its own limitations, assuming that underneath all the conflicts and evils there is perfect harmony. Bowne defends this attitude of the mind. He says that the mind does this in both the cognitive and moral realms, and not due to compulsion. The validity of the argument, he adds, cannot be estimated in passive contemplation or speculation, "but only in moral action."² The general issue between optimism and pessimism admits of no decisive demonstration either on the basis of induction or speculation. The problem must not be dealt with in the abstract; all such abstract and a priori discussions of the subject Bowne labels futile.

Reflections on the best possible universe, the infinite gradations of beings, the necessary subordination of all finite things in the scale of boundless existence are both theoretically and practically barren. The question so far as we can deal with it is one of experience rather than of argument.³

In brief, it is a question of the value of life and each individual must answer it for himself: "living men must come

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 258.

² Cf. ibid., pp. 258-260. R. T. Flewelling, Personalism and The Problems of Philosophy.

³ Bowne, Theism, p. 266.

forward and testify."¹

Consistent with his rejection of all speculative solutions to the problem of evil, Bowne directs his criticism specifically against the Leibnitzian solution. It is usually said that we cannot maintain that God is both almighty and good. If the problem of evil is to be solved, it is alleged, we must surrender one or the other of these contentions. According to Bowne the Leibnitzian theodicy set the fashion in this regard and seeks to rescue the divine goodness "by saying that God could not help the evil that is in the world." Leibnitz claimed that "all possible systems existed in the divine mind, each of which must logically lead to one certain outcome." Although an infinite number of systems are possible, their consequences are all determined.² God chose the best possible world but any government by general laws was bound to include individual hardships. "The eternal truths of reason and the invincible might of logical sequence forbid the system being other than it is."³

This "Leibnitzian logical determinism" Bowne rejects. The nonexistence of pain cannot be shown to run counter to

¹ Floyd Hiatt Ross, Personalism and The Problem of Evil, p. 9.

² Bowne, Theism, pp. 264 ff.; Bowne, Studies in Theism, pp. 340-356.

³ Ibid., p. 340.

some eternal truth.

So far as rational necessity, the only necessity of which we know anything, goes, the entire order to the world, for good or evil, is purely contingent. Whatever good purposes toothache, neuralgia, and pestilence, fang and venom and parasites may serve, there is no proof that any eternal truth is to blame for their presence, or would be damaged by their absence.¹

Floyd Hiatt Ross feels that Bowne is quibbling over words at this point. He points out that Bowne is technically correct in claiming that there is no proof that these apparently contingent facts go counter to any eternal abstract truths, but at the same time, the deeper issues involved have escaped him. Bowne has failed to see that

. . . any determinate, i.e., finite, situation carries with it certain indispensable conditions which give the finite situation its definiteness and existence and also, consequently, its limitations, since to exist at all evidently means to be bounded in some sense or other.²

Out of such accompanying conditions or limitations might well arise what from the human point of view are real evils. Leibnitz's phrase, metaphysical evil, to describe these indispensable conditions of any-world-whatsoever may be poorly chosen;

. . . but it stands for what seems to be undeniable fact--that any existent situation

¹ Bowne, Theism, p. 265. Cf. Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 340.

² Floyd Hiatt Ross, Personalism and the Problem of Evil, p. 10.

must be bounded, have 'limits,' and that such limits may involve what from the organic point of view are evils.¹

But this would imply that in a certain sense God was limited in creating, and Bowne avoids using such terms or making such a concession.

Since according to Bowne the notion of a best possible world involves a contradiction akin to the notion of a largest possible space or number, no theist is under obligation to prove that the present system is the best possible "for the simple reason that there is no best possible finite," "every finite must be definite both in intensity and degree of perfection."² In saying this, however, Bowne seems to admit an essential point in the Leibnitzian position which he previously condemned because of its logical determinism, i.e., that any finite situation must be less than perfect, must have limits.

Bowne is willing to admit that very conceivably this is the best kind of world for the purposes which God has for men. He points out that goodness may be interpreted abstractly or instrumentally. If God did less than the best, abstractly, his will would be imperfect which is not to be thought of.³ Consequently the goodness of a best possible

¹ Ross, loc. cit.

² Bowne, Theism, pp. 341, 358.

³ Ibid., p. 265. Cf. D. C. Macintosh, Reasonableness of Christianity, pp. 90-93.

system must be instrumental,

. . . in which case its goodness would lie in its fitness for its work. . . . The order of things might be highly imperfect as an end in itself and at the same time perfect as an instrument for the development of a race in character and intelligence.¹

This means that "the imperfection of the physical world in itself is its perfection, considered as an instrument for the upbuilding of men." There must be mountains to climb and the only demand we have the right to make is "that the system shall respond to the labor with adequate returns."² Thus it is possible to regard many of the evils of life as instruments of good in disguise.

To the specific objection that the existence of pain of any sort is inconsistent with the divine benevolence, Bowne replies that pain has in general a double function. In the first place, it serves as a warning or incentive to development; and in the second place, it comes as the consequence of transgressing some condition of existence. The pessimist may object that God should have made things perfect from the start, but Bowne has nothing but contempt for this view. Such a system to Bowne would be "a universal nursery for the perpetuation of helplessness and incompetency."³

¹ Bowne, Theism, pp. 265-266.

² Ibid., p. 276.

³ Bowne, Studies in Theism, p. 365.

The unrelieved physical evil in the animal world seems to be necessary and "is far enough from warranting a denial of the divine benevolence." With man "the higher manifestations of character spring almost entirely from the soil of sorrow."¹ When the human mind is in its normal and healthy condition, the goods which most crave "are not passive pleasures of any sort, but goods of the active nature, and the very notion of these implies obstacle, resistance, and hardship, as their necessary condition."² Man is willing to climb the mountains. The best possible kind of world for human beings such as we are, then, includes individual hardships--and the disagreement between Bowne and Leibnitz lessens considerably.

Bowne does not stop with this optimistic view. He is willing to admit that viewing the many evils as instruments of good does not solve the problem. He is amazed at the slow history of the organic world. Nor can he discern purpose in such things as parasites, fever, germs, etc. Even when purpose is to be found at times, matters seem to be made worse: "The arrangements for propagating disease are exquisite. The death-dealing instruments of nature are superb."³ Higher

¹ Ibid., p. 378.

² Ibid., p. 370.

³ Bowne, Essence of Religion, p. 48.

forms of life often succumb to the lower. Facts of this kind Bowne admits constitute a real problem. "Men have made very great efforts to explain them, but with very little success."¹ Even if we accept the evolutionary argument, the question still remains why "this progress might not have been accomplished at less cost of toil and struggle and pain."² To the question: How can these things be--these mysterious excessive evils of life which seemingly have no place in the scheme of things--Bowne replies that there is only a practical solution. "The justification of the world must be found in experience rather than in speculation, in life rather than in the closet."³ While admitting that the general considerations which he has brought forward may cast some light on the system as a whole, Bowne adds that so far as the vicissitudes of the individual lot are concerned, they remain as dark as ever. This means that "we must fall back on faith and some sense that our lives are in the hands of him that made us, and that he can be trusted though we do not understand."⁴ In the last analysis the theist has the

¹ Ibid., p. 53.

² Loc. cit.; Theism, p. 269.

³ Ibid., p. 282. Cf. Bowne, Essence of Religion, p. 45; Studies in Theism, pp. 355, 374.

⁴ Bowne, Theism, p. 282.

assurance that this life is a period of probation and a time of abnormal moral adjustment but that in the future life men will take their places according to their moral character.¹

From the foregoing it is clear that Bowne's solution to problem of natural evil is a purely practical solution. "It ends in a confession of ignorance and a profession of faith."² He says:

Questions why everything is not different or why everything is as it is, we pass by, as is most meet, in reverent silence. . . . And when we consider the enormous complexity of the universe and also its illimitable extent, and remember our own brief life and scanty insight, there is almost an air of grotesqueness in the thought of our assuming to criticize the Creator at all; as if he should apologize to us for not having made the world more to our mind and liking.³

From the standpoint of reflection it would be valid to say that such an appeal has as much value as any argumentum ad ignorantiam or argumentum ad verecundiam. Nor does Bowne's appeal to quantitative considerations carry weight in the matter.⁴ His acceptance of an intellectual impasse in this fashion seems highly unsatisfactory even to one in his own

¹ Ibid., pp. 282, 284; Studies in Theism, p. 374. Cf. Bowne, Essence of Religion, pp. 54 ff.

² Bowne, Theism, pp. 272-273.

³ Ross, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴ Cf. Brightman, "Religion as Truth," Contemporary American Theology, I, 75; Finding of God, pp. 118-119; Problem of God, p. 96.

tradition, E. S. Brightman, who feels that the reflective life deserves more consideration.¹ Ross feels that Bowne rejects the demands of reflection too readily and thus opens the door to general scepticism on other problems. In fairness to Bowne it must be said that it is unfair to assume that his confession of ignorance is a lack of reflection. Quite often the "demands of reflection" demand a learned ignorance.

It is true that Bowne's conclusions on the problem of evil are somewhat inconsistent with one of his basic metaphysical postulates, i.e., "the intelligibility of the universe."² One may ask why this opacity to human reason is confined to the problem of evil. We are faced with the facts of evil and suffering that simply are not intelligible but are definitely admitted to be unintelligible, opaque. The axiom of the complete intelligibility of the universe seems to shrink considerably. To this Bowne replies that the problem of evil is in no sense a speculative problem.³ But the problem has a speculative aspect if no further than the

¹ E. S. Brightman, The Problem of God, p. 36.

² Cf. Bowne, Studies in Theism, pp. 118-119; Theory of Thought and Knowledge, p. 35; "What is Rationalism?" op. cit., p. 99; "The Design Argument," The Independent, XXIX (July 5, 1887), p. 2.

³ Bowne, Theism, pp. 258, 266-267, 271-273.

demand that the theist think badly of evil without thinking badly of God. Thus Bowne exposes himself to the charge of going counter to his own basic principle of the complete intelligibility of the universe and thereby undermining the validity of his solutions to the various metaphysical problems interpreted in idealistic terms.

Regardless of the criticisms that may be leveled at Bowne, for the most part, he has carried the Boston personalists with him in his conclusions. The most prominent exception is E. S. Brightman,¹ and Brightman has troubles with

¹ E. S. Brightman, Finding of God, pp. 118, 169-170. In his earlier writings Brightman advocated essentially the same view he now reacts against so strenuously (cf. Brightman, An Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 295-297: "The problem of evil admits of no final, no completely enlightening solution. . . . Our partial knowledge of purpose implies larger purposes of which we are ignorant"). In his Philosophy of Ideals Brightman offered a "different suggestion" as to a solution of the problem of natural evil, anticipating his later, developed view: "The struggle which we find in ourselves between nature and ideals is in some way a consequence of a struggle within the divine nature." (pp. 90-100).

For convenience, criticism of Brightman may be classed under four heads. (1) Objections claim that Brightman's solution is no solution at all. G. W. Beiswanger, "Review of Brightman's Problem of God," Journal of Philosophy, XVIII, No. 16 (1921), 446. "None of the antinomies disappear, their locus is merely shifted--this time to a place within the psychic life of deity. The philosopher is still confronted with the insoluble problem of assimilating within the Supreme Personality that which is categorically antithetical to personality--the irrational, the material, the gross, the impersonal." (2) Criticism especially from the point of view of religious consciousness. Knudson, Doctrine of God, p. 366. "In the last analysis all faith in God rests in the ideal, and nothing short of the highest will satisfy this faith. If the existence of evil requires us to affirm either the
(Continued on the following page)

his finite God.

I. THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

All of Bowne's writings are shot through with an unbounded optimism. This is probably occasioned by his conception of man, his conception of the kingdom, Hegel's philosophy of history, the theory of evolution, and the manifest practical development of the sciences. The atmosphere of America in Bowne's day, as we have shown, was characterized by a cheery optimism. While Bowne uses scripture to substantiate his views of the Church and the Kingdom, it is difficult

¹ (Continued)

divine impotence or human ignorance, and if one theory is logically as tenable as the other, faith will have no hesitancy in making its choice in favor of the latter." (3) General objections swinging around the person and unity of God. D. C. Macintosh, "What Has Brightman Done to Personalism?" Religion and Life, I, No. 2 (1932), 305. Macintosh questions how Brightman "finds it possible to worship what may be still called God, but what turns out to be, albeit a person, a complex God and devil in one." (4) Criticisms of Brightman's dualism. Weiman, Review of Brightman's Is God a Person, op. cit., pp. 1204-1205: "All I can say is that when I love, serve, and adore God, I do not love, serve and adore that unspeakable horror of evil which is the Given nature of God. The line of demarcation which distinguishes God for me must exclude that. But then you really have two beings, the good will which is God, and the evil nature which is the Devil. In some abstract metaphysical sense the two may be treated as one. But religious devotion cannot treat them as one. For moral religion they must be two. When they become two, the premises which Mr. Brightman is trying to defend become impossible." For a full discussion of Brightman's Given see F. H. Ross, Personalism and the Problem of Evil.

to shake the impression that his basic authority stems from other factors.

With this background in mind we can understand why Bowne makes the Church subordinate to the kingdom. Churches are many; the kingdom is one. Churches at best are instrumental only, the kingdom is the supreme end itself. If the kingdom were here, we might not need the churches; but the churches without the kingdom would be a barren mockery. "Hence it is," says Bowne, "that the conception of the kingdom is so fast replacing that of the church in the Christian thought of today."¹

What is the kingdom and what does it aim to do? Bowne replies:

In our unspiritual way of thinking we are apt to fancy that the coming of God's kingdom would be some sort of spectacular manifestation in the heavens above and the earth beneath, with all manner of scenic glories for the delight of wonder-loving minds, and with complete cessation of all need of labor. But such a performance at best would be only a celestial circus, and would be unworthy of God and damaging to men. The real coming of the kingdom would mean that men were loving God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. This is what it would mean in principle. In application to this life it would next mean that this principle of love was being specified into the highest and completest forms of human life upon the earth, until man and society and all social and political forms and agencies and activities had been made perfect and brought into ideal completeness. Perfect love within must find perfect expression in the human

¹ Borden Parker Bowne, The Essence of Religion, p. 101.

world without. The principle of the kingdom is love, but the field of this love's manifestation is life; and this life must be built into ideal form. Mere good intentions alone would not suffice; for they might be thwarted by ignorance, disease, social and industrial inefficiency, and a low grade of development in general. Love must be guided by right reason, and both must have a ¹ vigorous life behind them, or under their control.

The aim of the kingdom is to realize the will of God. It is built upon the good news of God which Jesus proclaimed. This conception gives rise to the vision of

. . . a great spiritual society, transcending earthly distinctions and above all political organizations, a society whose citizenship is forever in the heavens, being hid with Christ in God, yet whose present sphere of activity is upon the earth, and whose members are united in the high purpose of doing the will of the Highest, and thus bringing in the divine kingdom.²

We next inquire as to who are members or subjects of the kingdom of God upon earth. Bowne rejects the idea that membership in the kingdom comes by performing certain rites or ceremonies. Even a knowledge of Christian truth is not enough. Membership in the kingdom depends "upon the attitude and affinities of the spirit."³ Bowne claims that knowledge of the Gospel is necessary for perfect spiritual living, but he also admits that the principle of the kingdom may exist

¹ Ibid., pp. 101-103.

² Ibid., p. 104.

³ Ibid., p. 105.

apart from knowledge of the Gospel.

Surely, [he says], the Good Samaritan was a member of the kingdom. Of course he knew nothing of Christ, but Christ knew something of him. And with equal certainty the priest and the Levite were not members of the kingdom. . . . One must be mentally and morally debauched by a mechanical theology who can doubt that the Samaritan belonged to the kingdom and the others did not. It is the glory of Christianity that its spirit is transcending its own formal institutions. . . . Thus the leaven, according to the promise, is leavening the lump.¹

While Bowne grants membership in the kingdom to all who are doing good in the world, he does not minimize the importance of the Church. The Church is a necessary fellowship for those who have individually related themselves to God by faith and obedience. This real and vital communion experienced by individuals can best be nurtured and expressed in the corporate fellowship of the Church.

The kingdom came with Jesus Christ; "for in comparison with his work and revelation the kingdom had not come before; and it comes now with any richness and fullness only in connection with him."² Likewise in the individual life, while all goodness is divine and a mark of the spirit's presence, life must become reflective and rise into self-conscious surrender to the highest before it can reach its ideal form;

¹ Ibid., p. 109.

² Ibid., p. 112.

and "this again is possible only in connection with the kingdom as our Lord has revealed it."¹

In extending the kingdom to take in goodness everywhere, even its embryonic and unconscious forms, Bowne does not intend "in any way to deny the supreme pre-eminence of our Lord, or the importance of a knowledge of the Gospel for the development of the life of the kingdom."²

What of the visible church and its relation to the kingdom? Basically, as we have said, it is instrumental.

As the political individual in isolation could never put forth those great activities needed for the development and triumph of humanity, so the religious individual in isolation would be utterly inadequate to the great efforts needed for the conquest of the world for righteousness. For this there is needed organized and corporate work for massing the isolated forces of individuals, and bringing them to bear in joint and abiding witness for truth and righteousness and in joint and abiding effort against untruth and unrighteousness in the world.³

The church is the ground and pillar of the truth. In his conception of the church, Bowne reveals the affection which tied him to the church for the length of his days. We cannot resist giving another long quotation at this point:

It is the institution which brings the individual out of his isolation and weakness, and re-enforces

¹ Ibid., pp. 112-113.

² Ibid., p. 113.

³ Ibid., pp. 116-117.

him by all those forces which root in the social nature. It is the perpetual testimony to the spiritual nature of man and his divine affinities, a relationship which the sense life is perpetually obscuring. It is the great teacher concerning the things of the spirit. Here the divine tradition of divine love is cherished and made credible. Here the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant meet together in the love of one Lord who is the Maker and Head of them all. Here too the spiritual forces of humanity centre. Here is a great universal confederation for spiritual purposes, and, through them, for all other purposes that look to man's upbuilding, freed from limitations of race and nation and condition, and bound by a common love to a common work toward a common aim, and that the highest. Surely this institution is rightly called the pillar and the ground of the truth.¹

For Bowne, the true church on earth does not consist of the various denominational bodies, but of the spiritual disciples of Christ, whether in these bodies or outside of them. It is Bowne's conviction that human nature as revealed in history makes it very dubious that all Christendom will unite under one ecclesiastical dominion. The main thing is that there will be a growing unity of the spirit.

Bowne has an exalted vision of the invisible church.

Let us raise our thought to the church invisible, the kingdom in its glorious majesty, including not only the faithful living but also the faithful dead, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of the just made perfect, freed from all earthly limitations and weakness, and set forever in the midst of the unwearying activities, the glorious living, the glorious loving, and all the

¹ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

ineffable, and divine revealings of the life immortal.¹

J. THE CHURCH AND THE TRUTH

Bowne indicts the church because it has lagged behind the intellect of the time. So much that has gone for orthodoxy "has been a synonym for ignorance, dullness, narrow-mindedness, and narrow-heartedness generally."² While granting the fact and value of conservatism and progressivism, Bowne feels that the Church has vitiated its influence by an unintelligent conservatism. This conservative attitude, reflecting itself in science, sociology, economics, Bible interpretation and theology, has brought disrespect of the Church. Bowne pleads for a more progressive attitude in all of these fields and especially in the field of Biblical interpretation and theology. But the fact remains, and the scandal remains, that the Church has blockaded both truth and progress. To put it in Bowne's words:

If the Church could have had its way, modern civilization would never have developed, and humanity would have been ruined. We should have been living in filth and squalor and superstition and intellectual abjectness of every kind. The Church saves the world; and the world saves the Church. Only the instinctive and irresistible impulse of human nature, whereby it has vindicated

¹ Ibid., p. 123.

² Borden Parker Bowne, Studies in Christianity, p. 359.

its own rights, has saved humanity from destruction by religion. This intellectual backwardness of the Church is nothing less than a calamity to religion, because it begets and continues the notion that religion is essentially a thing of inferior intellect, and that it is afraid to come out into the open field of the world where plain secular daylight shines, and be tested.¹

Bowne contends that much can be done to remove this scandal by simplifying Christian teaching. This he would do by reducing the fundamental Christian doctrines to a statement of what we conceive the essential Christian facts to be. The statement he suggests runs as follows:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his Son our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit, in the forgiveness of sins, in the kingdom of God on earth, and in the life everlasting. Let this be the Christian platform; and for our programme let that run, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.²

Bowne is very confident that this statement represents the true Christian orthodoxy, and that it provides a solution to the abnormal conservatism of traditional orthodoxy.

Historically, however, orthodoxy has been of another sort. It rises this way: There is a natural desire to formulate Christian doctrine so as to show its philosophy. We seek to pass from the revealed facts of God's grace to a theory about them; and this theory becomes the orthodox one.

¹ Ibid., pp. 371-372.

² Ibid., pp. 372-373.

Of course this formulation must take place in accordance with the reigning philosophy of the time; and when the progress of thought displaces the philosophy there is a conflict of reason and faith.¹

Again, the Christian facts cannot lie in the mind unrelated to all its other beliefs, but is spontaneously adjusted to them. Thus it becomes complicated with the science of the time; and when the science progresses, we have a conflict of science and religion. "Further," says Bowne, "Christianity tends to adjust itself to existing social customs, and views any departure from them as dangerous and irreligious."² When society progresses the Church is left behind, vainly protesting against the "spirit of the times" as the "spirit of the Antichrist," "itself appearing meanwhile as the foe of humanity."³ In this way orthodoxies arise in every field.

Bowne pleads for a body of scholarly investigators to do the Church's intellectual work. These men would "formulate" the spiritual life so as best to express it and keep it from losing its way in swamps of ignorance and superstition. They will also have to adjust religious thought to the ever-advancing thought of cultivated intelligence so as to remove

¹ Ibid., p. 375.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

needless misunderstanding."¹ Bowne does not mention how he would get his unintelligent and imately conservative Church to willingly listen to the novel statements of his religious intelligencia.

At any rate, he is convinced that if we had had such a group of men the Church would have been spared the scandal of being opposed to truth. It is his opinion that if

. . . our churches in the last generation had real leaders, who were equal to their position, and who commanded the respect of the churches by their scholarship and their character, to speak about the disturbing religious questions of our time and to say to the churches: These questions at best are only of subordinate importance and do not affect the fundamentals of the faith, we should have been saved much confusion, friction, and disgrace.²

The Church, Bowne concludes, must get a deeper sense of obligation to the truth. "Only thus can this age-long scandal of a church hostile to the truth and perpetually compelled to surrender with dishonor be done away."³

This chapter has not attempted to present all that Bowne said on religious subjects, but it does in substance represent the main direction of his religious thought.

¹ Ibid., p. 382.

² Ibid., pp. 398-399.

³ Ibid., p. 399.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORTH AND INFLUENCE OF BOWNE'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Like Creighton and Howison, Borden Parker Bowne was very influential as a teacher. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, one of Bowne's students, says that

. . . everyone who sat in the classroom where Borden Parker Bowne lectured was conscious of being in the presence of greatness. His dignity, his sheer power, his comprehensive grasp of philosophical issues, and his lucid exposition ¹ of personalism made him seem almost a superman.

During the period of his professorship in Boston University, from 1876 until his death, many students who later became teachers of philosophy or allied subjects came under his tutelage and carried away a deep impression of both the man and his vision. Bowne's students included such men as Dean W. M. Warren, Dean Albert C. Knudson, Professor G. C. Cell, Professor F. L. Strickland, G. A. Coe, G. A. Wilson, R. T. Flewelling, H. A. Youtz, L. R. Eckardt, H. C. Sanborn, I. R. Beiler, and many other men prominent in the thought life of America.

Bowne's voice was potent in the councils of his own religious communion, and his writings had considerable effect on leaders in other religious creeds. "He played a large part

¹ Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Bowne: Eternalist or Temporalist," The Personalist, Summer 1947, p. 257.

in keeping his denomination from yielding either to fundamentalism or positivistic humanism."¹ Dr. Carl F. H. Henry writes of Bowne's influence on Augustus Hopkins Strong, the leading Baptist theologian of America.

In 1894 Strong contributed three articles to The Examiner, tentatively adopting "ethical monism"--a metaphysical monism--a metaphysical monism and psychological dualism of the Lotzean kind, as he called it. The chief American influence in this direction appears to have been the writings of Borden P. Bowne, so that Strong became, in intent, a champion of qualitative monism and quantitative pluralism.²

Other prominent men in religious circles influenced by Bowne include the names of such men as Bishop Randolph S. Foster, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Lynn Harold Hough, S. Parkes Cadman, Charles E. Jefferson, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Dean Charles Brown, John Wright Buckam, and John H. Snoden.

Bowne's influence was not restricted to America but include the British Isles, Europe, and Japan as well.

Dr. James Iverack^h in a letter to Dr. James Hastings writes of his estimate of Bowne:

In 1880 a volume of Professor Bowne came into my hands and interested me so much that I kept a

¹ Brightman, "Personalism and the Influence of Bowne," Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, 1926, p. 164.

² Carl F. H. Henry, The Influence of Personalistic Idealism on the Theology of Augustus H. Strong (Abstract of the Dissertation), p. 2.

sharp lookout for any further writings from his pen. The title of that volume is the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer. It was the fullest and most able of the criticisms of Spencer which I have met, and it still occupies the first rank. . . .

He has written also an Introduction to Psychological Theory, a Treatise on Ethics, both of which I highly value, and which have proved exceedingly useful in my work. After many years of reflection on philosophical questions, Bowne in 1898 published a revised edition of his Metaphysics, in which he dealt with metaphysics proper, leaving out epistemological questions. . . . He dealt independently with Epistemology in the Theory of Thought and Knowledge, and this is perhaps the greatest of his works. It was very helpful to me when I was writing "Epistemology" for you in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. There is also the volume on Personalism which you yourself reviewed.

I have not time to give you an estimate of the value of Bowne's contribution to Philosophy and Theology. He is of all one of the foremost American thinkers of my time. I have known Royce and James and I have read for many years the Philosophical Review, and from it have learned much of present tendencies in Philosophy in the States, but in my judgment Bowne is the equal of any other thinker in his knowledge of the history of philosophy, in the keenness of his intellectual grasp, and in the clearness of his exposition. His contribution to Theism is of the highest value.¹

Rudolf Eucken declared that Bowne was "distinctly America's first philosopher" and said that his writings "are pervaded by an energy and manliness which show no fear, either

¹ Letter is printed in The Personalist, Vol. I, No. 1 (April 1920), pp. 32-33.

of criticism on the part of the half-enlightened, or the dictum of those assuming to be in authority."¹

Morris Cohen in the Cambridge History of American Literature calls Bowne "one of the keenest of American Metaphysicians."²

Professor William Ernest Hocking of Harvard speaks of Bowne as

. . . a leader of critical thought in metaphysics, a master of the weapon of Kantian analysis, and at the same time a man of strong and earnest creedal affiliations--an institutional man. This was an achievement of exemplary importance to our American community of scholars.

Hocking also praises

. . . the consistent dignity of Bowne's writing. There is nothing in it, [he says], that is trivial, nothing that is not thought-filled and thought-provoking. It is throughout the work of a man of distinction and power. Its affect³ and also its intrinsic interest are permanent.³

Professor George M. Duncan of Yale says that Bowne "was a decidedly original and independent thinker who had a clearly thought-out philosophy of his own."⁴

Edgar L. Hinman, former Professor of Philosophy at the

¹ Quoted by President Marsh in his Founders' Day Address at Boston University, and published in Bostonia, April 1937, p. 3.

² Morris Cohen, Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. III, p. 240, n. 2.

³ Marsh, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴ Loc. cit.

University of Nebraska, says: "I know of no book superior to Bowne's Metaphysics." Concerning Bowne's treatment of Spencer, Professor Hinman says: "It appeals to me as the most serviceable assemblage of fair and analytical criticism of Spencer's position which we possess."¹

Weber and Perry's History of Philosophy, calls Bowne "the most influential exponent in America" of the Lotzian theory.²

President Marsh of Boston University begins his Founders' Day Address with the statement that

. . . Professor Borden Parker Bowne of Boston University was the greatest philosopher America has yet produced. Most teachers of philosophy acquaint their students with the history of philosophy and with the various systems of philosophical thought, but are not themselves original producers in the field of philosophy. Boston University from its beginning to the present moment has furnished a stimulating exception to this rule.³

Since Bowne was the first professor of philosophy at Boston University, the implication is obvious.

In this same Founders' Day Address, President Marsh challenges his audience to refute his claim that Bowne was America's greatest philosopher. He says:

¹ Weber and Perry, History of Philosophy, pp. 651-652.

² Marsh, op. cit., p. 5.

³ Loc. cit.

You may be willing to concede that Bowne was a profound philosopher and yet may take exception to my naming him as America's greatest philosopher. But whom would you put ahead of him, Emerson? Emerson was a poet and essayist more than a philosopher. John Dewey? But Dewey's fame is in the field of educational psychology. William James? But James was a psychologist, not a philosopher. James and Bowne were reciprocally appreciative personal friends. In trying to arrange for Bowne to lecture at Harvard, James assured him that "the Harvard philosophers are all filled with admiration" of his talents. In 1901 when James was in Rome he wrote to Bowne for a copy of The Christian Life, a new book that Bowne had written, saying, "I need it for my work." When James received it, he wrote a letter of thanks, in which he said, "The book seems to me an admirable piece of clearness, compactness and good practical sense." . . . In 1908, when Bowne's work on Personalism appeared James read it and declared it to be "a very weighty pronouncement, and form and matter taken together a splendid addition to American philosophy." After James had lectures at Oxford University, the Oxford Professor of Philosophy, J. Cook Wilson, wrote to Bowne a letter in which he spoke critically of James's service, and expressed the hope that Bowne would come to Oxford to lecture. On another occasion, Wilson pronounced Bowne "the most important of modern American philosophers."¹

We have mentioned that Bowne's influence extended to Japan. In 1905-1906, when he made his world tour he received an enthusiastic reception in that country. His passage through the streets of the leading cities of Japan

. . . was a procession through triumphal arches with showered flowers and cheering throngs. He lectured almost every day to vast crowds that² received with eagerness every word he uttered.

¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

² Ibid., p. 6.

President Marsh's statement that Bowne is America's greatest philosopher receives support from one of the leading contemporary philosophers in the United States. In a monumental work entitled, The History of Philosophical Ideas in America, W. H. Werkmeister declares that

. . . the first complete and comprehensive system of philosophy developed in America which has had lasting influence and which still counts some of our outstanding thinkers among its adherents, is the 'Personalism' of Borden Parker Bowne.¹

Bowne is mentioned in the article on "Personalism" in Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language. He is given good treatment in Ralph Barton Perry's Philosophy of the Recent Past. In 1933, a philosopher who does not belong to the Bowne school of thought, G. Watts Cunningham, drew a full length account of Bowne and his work in The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy. Professor Ralph Tyler Flewelling, a former student of Bowne, not only wrote the article "Personalism" in Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, but he also edits The Personalist, a quarterly magazine which carries on the Bowne tradition. In 1928, Professor George Croft Cell wrote an excellent exposition of Bowne's system in an article on American Philosophy in Uberweg's Geschichte der Philosophie and a few years later

¹ W. H. Werkmeister, History of Philosophical Ideas in America, p. 103.

Professor Brightman contributed, by request, a study of Bowne for the international quarterly, Idealismus, published in Switzerland.

A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh had high regard for Bowne. After reading Bowne's Personalism he wrote Bowne a letter of appreciation.

It is long since I read a volume with whose arguments I more fully sympathized. I admire very much the clearness and simplicity with which you have stated the main contentions and the felicitous illustrations by which you sometimes help them out. In fact, I do not think I have anywhere seen the case of "Personalism" as you fitly call it, so broadly and victoriously stated. Your happy use of Comte's scheme, your "transcendental empiricism," which refuses to try to explain the explanation, your demonstration of the objective reference in knowledge and the necessity of mind at both ends, and the whole of your admirable discussion of causation are some of the points to which I refer. . . . Your proof that mechanical causality does not provide for change at all is, I think, most useful, and among minor matters I may be allowed to say that your illustration of the dream space and time (p. 130) is both happy and useful.¹

Typical of Bowne's influence on thoughtful men in the Church is reflected in the writings of Lynn Harold Hough and Washington Gladden. Hough says:

Professor Borden P. Bowne in his personal idealism rendered a service to the Christian

¹ Written August 17, 1908 and quoted in a footnote by Albert C. Knudson in his Philosophy of Personalism, p. 63.

thinking of our time of the utmost value. His trenchant, critical mind bombarded ancient fallacies with a sureness and skill of the most extraordinary character. And his constructive work offers a view of the universe where personality in God and man, moral freedom and responsibility, the dominance of the spiritual, and coherence of physical, rational, ethical, and religious in a rich and roomy monism, with an ¹ ultimate person on the throne, are all secured.

Washington Gladden, a prominent leader in the church, likewise testifies to Bowne's influence on religious thought:

I have been interested in Borden P. Bowne from his college days; I have followed his brilliant career with the keenest interest; I have found much help in his stimulating thought, and I have greatly enjoyed the freshness and pungency with which that thought is expressed. My belief is that he has done for his generation, and especially for the church to whose fellowship he has lent honor, a most important service. His posthumous essay, printed in the last number of The Hibbert Journal, entitled, "Gains for Religious Thought," is an admirable resumé of recent progress in religious thinking. To those gains he has himself been a large contributor.²

Bowne's influence on the Methodist Church in America is unmistakable. Speaking from the vantage point of a philosopher gave him an authority he would not have enjoyed as a minister or a religious teacher. It gave his teaching and writing a sort of unbiased scientific objectivity and seemed to suggest that he had come to his religious

¹ Lynn Harold Hough, The Quest for Wonder, pp. 69-70.

² Washington Gladden, in the Introduction of Charles Bertram Pyle's The Philosophy of Borden Parker Bowne, pp. 3-4.

convictions by the way of science and philosophy. He became the intellectual champion of the Church at a time when that institution was being jarred by the theory of evolution, naturalism, and higher criticism. While he was viewed with suspicion by the fundamentalists and uneducated, he was eagerly listened to by the younger men entering the ministry. As we have already mentioned throngs of ministerial students made their way to Boston University to study under Bowne. The result was that in a few years his influence had permeated not only the Methodist Church but had spilled over into many other communions as well.

Bowne's main contribution to religious thought is his criticism of naturalism and his presentation of Personalism. Bowne first came into prominence as a critic of Herbert Spencer. Something of Bowne's role as a critic of Spencer is dramatized by Charles Bertram Pyle:

Because of dizziness induced by the new facts and discoveries and mutual misunderstanding, science and religion stood opposed like hostile armies. "The Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side; and there was a [great] valley between them. And there went out a Champion [a Goliath] out of the camp of the Philistines [named Spencer of Derby] whose height was six cubits and a span." And he had a helmet of brass upon his head and he was armed with a scientific coat of mail "whose weight was 5,000 shekles of brass." And he had greaves of brass upon his legs and a target of brass between his shoulders and the "staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam," and one by the name of Darwin, "bearing a shield went before him." "And he defied the armies of Israel" and called for a man to come

out and fight him. And the armies of Israel were dismayed and greatly frightened so that their knees smote together. "And all the men of Israel when they saw the man fled from him and were sore afraid." And every man who hated religion leaped out of a dark ravine or cavern and pelted them as they fled. In the midst of rout and consternation Borden Parker Bowne, the young David, appeared. With a sling of profound insight and a few smooth stones of sharp criticism he confronted the giant and slew him.¹

Bowne's philosophy of personalism is the heart of his thinking and contains the religious concepts which were pumped out into the religious and philosophic arteries of his day. In point of fact, it is impossible to tell where Bowne's philosophy ends and his religion begins. It is all religious. This probably accounts for the fact that Bowne was never fully accepted by the family of technical philosophers.² The fact that he did not join any philosophical society and rarely quoted from others no doubt had some influence at this point, but in all probability the main reason was that they considered him more of a theologian than a philosopher. This assumption finds partial justification at least in Bowne's not infrequent impatience with views opposed to his own and his manifest preoccupation with vivid and fixed religious convictions

¹ C. B. Pyle, The Philosophy of Borden Parker Bowne, 1910, pp. 17-18. See Appendix B, p. 317.

² Woodbridge Riley omits Bowne entirely from his American Thought and A. K. Rogers in English and American Philosophy since 1800 barely alludes to him. He is seldom quoted in philosophical discussions or monographs. See also F. J. McConnell, Borden Parker Bowne, pp. 270-274.

which often seem to color his considerations of technical, philosophical issues. But regardless of the technical philosophers, Bowne's philosophy of personalism was readily accepted by the thinking men of the Church. After the depression of the greater human values which had accompanied modern science, Personalism reinstated man in his true place in the cosmos, not the regal one which he held in the old anthropocentric universe, but a truer and worthier, because less detached and more congenital one. Men had gone through the harrowing experience when it seemed as if man had been swept away by the tides of natural science to the verge of the universe, at the very time of his conquest of nature bereft of all his spiritual acquirements and kinships.¹ But with a deeper insight into the meaning of evolution and the nature of selfhood, Bowne seemed to have brought man back to his own. John Wright Buckham says: "It is fitting to rejoice over his recovery, for he was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."² Buckham continues:

Yet though Personalism restores man to his true place in the universe, it does not necessarily leave him unrelated to his world but rather makes him brother as well as lord of all creation, true lord only as he is true brother. Man finds in

¹ Appendix B, p. 317.

² John Wright Buckham, "Borden Parker Bowne: Personalist," The Personalist, Vol. V, No. 2 (April 1927).

himself the key to his world and only as he reverences and understands himself can he reverence and understand nature. Such reverence and understanding are impossible, however, if he is his own source and end. Personalism does not leave him thus alone and unexplained with no personal source to whom to refer his being and his end. It recognizes Original and Infinite Person, not only as World-Ground but as source and goal of existence.¹

In a day when man was a victim of Hegelian logic, religious predestination, and Spencerian necessity, Bowne successfully fought to re-instate personality, freedom, self-determination, and moral responsibility. He emphasized the existence of real evil in the world and the reality of a personal God who struggles and strives with us for the overcoming of evil.

One aspect of Bowne's personalism that has had tremendous influence on religious thought has been his personalistic view of nature. He contends that nature is phenomenal reality and that it finds its metaphysical source in the volitional causation of a Supreme Person. This contention has given rise to a number of influential religious implications. With the establishment of this view Bowne has achieved the main purpose of a philosophy of religion, that of subduing the physical and making it the instrument of the spiritual. Hebrew-Christian thought has always regarded nature as being

¹ Ibid., p. 99.

an instrument of the Divine Will. The phenomenality of nature according to Bowne carries with it the ideality of space and time, which is a devastating argument against mechanism as a world view. It also overcomes the standpoint of metaphysical dualism, making possible the unity of an ultimate metaphysical monism. Bowne's personalism, in order to be complete, requires the postulate of a theistic monism [God] as the mediator or necessary ground of all interaction in the system of created persons and things. This offers a most important theological aspect of personalism, i.e., that all knowledge of persons and things rests on a theistic faith. Bowne's view of nature removes forever the possibility of conflict between science and religion. Science may proceed without encroachment upon metaphysics. Bowne denies ultimate reality to nature which is the realm of science; thus, at a time when the progress of science was such as to absorb and preoccupy human thought so as to create the contemporary secularism, it reminds us that the world is of instrumental and secondary importance, rooted in an ultimate and spiritual order of truth and value. This has provided a much needed antidote for the anthropocentric magnification of this world. Bowne's theory of nature, in Berkeley's language, makes nature speak a divine language. As human reason is the condition of our knowledge of nature, so a Supreme Reason is the metaphysical cause of nature's real existence. The personalistic

interpretation of nature involves the principle of teleological explanation. Nature is discovered to be a product of the Supreme Person willing according to a rational moral plan or purpose. Since God, whose willing is the immediate cause of nature, is a person supremely free, nature is contingent upon free will working out a moral plan through law and cosmic process. Furthermore, finite persons, through limited freedom, may discover and co-operate with the divine plan. God's free relation to history provides a much needed religious philosophy of history. By making the personalistic theory of nature find its metaphysical cause in God, the home of all value and the one who conserves and creates values, Bowne makes nature a form of divine activity working for the production of values. Thus Bowne makes nature serve a spiritual purpose. In this way, conscious experience beyond man becomes the foundation of human values and guarantees their objectivity. Bowne's view of nature reveals the impersonal finite to be the product of divine energizing; it is, therefore, shot through with morality. The Personal Infinite and the personal finite constitute ontological reality. This asserts the eternality of the Personal Infinite and the immortality of the personal finite. By asserting the phenomenality of nature, Bowne rids religion and ethics of all illusionistic conceptions of nature with their pessimism and their teaching that nature is evil. On the other hand, Bowne's view regards nature as being

instrumental to moral and spiritual ends. It is nature's abuse, not its use, which is the great evil.

Against materialism, naturalism, empiricism, sensism, and positivism, Bowne has rightly insisted that man's personal unity and identity, his free and rational will, his religious experience, his spiritual and ethical ideals are not merely illusions or the mere sum of interacting, material forces. These are facts of experience for which the lower-category philosophies have been unable to account. To say that they are but the results of matter in motion is to ignore their uniqueness; to look upon them as something less real and less ultimate than matter is to accept a view which is woefully partial and in no sense a Weltanschauung. Bowne has done yeoman service helping to expose the inadequacy of such theories.

On the other hand, in his attack on absolute idealism Bowne has benefited philosophy and religion. Hegel's influence has always been strong in America. While rejecting Hegel's absolute, or even Lotze's improved absolute, Bowne consciously or unconsciously utilized the Hegelian dialectic. His philosophy all the way through is a philosophy of mediation. So while attacking materialism on the one hand and absolute idealism on the other his synthesis was not entirely free from Hegel's influence. Bowne was in the idealistic stream but he strongly protested against the engulfing character of the Absolute of absolute idealism. Bowne was

essentially correct in refusing to submit to such a system and in his appeal to empirical fact for his justification of the unity, individuality and freedom of the finite person. Logically he has pointed out that an idealism, which makes us all one with the Absolute, cuts at the roots of true religion and morality by its denial of the reality of the finite self and the fact of the self's freedom. Furthermore, Bowne has clearly shown that a vague, impersonal, absolute experience, which may be identified with the world, cannot be the personal God, whom we serve by worship and love. Bowne's whole philosophic thrust insists that God must be conceived as a personal, intelligent and free Being. It cannot be doubted that Bowne, by his emphatic opposition to absolute idealism and materialism has rendered sound service to religious thought.

In endeavoring to appraise Bowne's legacy to American thought it is necessary to consider his conception of the nature and function of philosophy in relation to religious thought. On the one hand he tries to simplify philosophy and on the other hand he tries to intellectualize religion. Bowne's conception of the immediate function of philosophy is, as related to life, positive, clear-cut, and simple. It may be termed the theory of philosophy as the interpretation of experience. It is an appeal for the recognition of the whole man, as concerned with the truth that he needs for the best

and fullest life. By simplifying philosophy, however, he does not mean to surrender intelligence, but rather to vindicate it, as that which summons the whole of our nature to the rational discovery and application of truth to life.

"Philosophy aims at a rational and systematic interpretation of experience."¹ By means of this conception of philosophy, Professor Bowne is enabled to make an adjustment and harmonization of those three too often conflicting viewpoints-- common sense, science, and philosophy. In Bowne's adjustment the three co-operate. In resorting to experience as the road to truth and interpretation as its goal, the claim for demonstration must be frankly abandoned. This is true of all forms of truth. Science is as far from the ability to demonstrate its assumptions as is philosophy.

Bowne's dedication of philosophy to the interests of the whole man has approved itself to many minds as fundamentally sound and pertinent. It provides as healthy a revolt from a dry scholastic idealism as does James's Pragmatism. Often in his writings Bowne harks back to the wan spectre which the eighteenth century raised and upon which, in spite of its inadequacy, Bishop Butler relied so completely. It may be possible for probability to answer in the realm of

¹ Bowne, Personalism, p. 44.

science and even in practical affairs, but it will not support conviction in the realm of the ultimate and spiritual. It is too easily swept away by some new form of experience or interpretation.

Furthermore, a philosophy of our undifferentiated total nature is too heavily weighted on the side of the temporal, physical and practical. It says too little of the principle of values, upon which Bowne seems to have laid comparatively little emphasis even though it holds a prominent place in Lotze's philosophy. It is too oblivious to intuition. The validity of intuition is, of course, open to question. Although Bowne might have challenged it as he did the validity of demonstration, he simply left it on one side. In ignoring intuition, his restriction of philosophy to interpretation is left without sufficient warrant. It leaves the content of experience undifferentiated and hence unappraised. This is a weakness not only in Bowne's philosophy but in Bowne the man. "He was too much the practicalist and too little the mystic."¹ He spoke with too slight respect of "the affirmation of a transcendental something above thought and extension as the well worn phrase to which there is no responding thought."²

¹ John Wright Buckham, "Borden Parker Bowne: Personalist," The Personalist, Vol. V, No. 2 (April, 1924), p. 93. But he writes of experiences that seem to refute this criticism. See Appendix C, p. 320.

² Borden Parker Bowne, Theism, p. 156.

Another friend of Bowne and his philosophy, Lynn Harlod Hough, makes the same criticism:

With all his services perhaps Professor Bowne had one limitation. He does not give you the sense of a triumphant experience of his own philosophy. It is splendidly effective in its critical aspects, nobly adequate in its constructive work, but it remains objective. It does not become a subjective passion in the mind and the heart of the author. It is correct rather than in the highest sense kindling.¹

Interpretation is the chief aim of philosophy but it falls short unless it goes back of experience to that intuitional truth which lies at the root of both religion and philosophy and which enters into experience itself, giving it not only depth but anchorage.

Bowne's philosophy transcended its earlier limitation when it advanced beyond interpretation to the interpreter and came to focus upon personality. Experience meant nothing except as the experience of a person. As his thought developed he came to the insight that we are in a personal world from the start, and the first, last and only duty of philosophy is to interpret this world of personal life and relations. Philosophy for him took the form of personalism. The interpretation of experience might have led him to pure empiricism, as it has often done, if he had lost sight of the experiencer in the experience. But he did not make this

¹ Hough, op. cit., p. 70.

mistake, and as a result, he came to conclude that the self is the key to knowledge and reality.

The previous pages have mentioned and shown the integration of Bowne's philosophy and his religious thought. He was one of the few American philosophers who moved naturally and without effort, bringing his philosophy with him into the sphere of theology and the Church. Here he exercised a most salutary influence. From the year 1898, when he wrote The Christian Life, until his death in 1910, Bowne gave himself to the task of reconciling the conservative views of the Church with the progressive views of science and Biblical interpretation. His volume The Atonement, (1900), the Immanence of God (1905), and Studies in Christianity (1909) had tremendous influence, especially on the Methodist Church. The Social emphasis of the Methodist Church in America is largely due to Bowne's insistence that the Church must be at the head of all the forces of life that make at once for social permanence and social progress. From the vantage point of fifty years after, however, we can see that Bowne's religious teaching is quite typical of religious liberalism at the turn of the century and that this social emphasis is part of the optimistic view of man, and with it, the progressive view of history. But as we have previously said, Bowne's unique position gave his words added authority.

Borden Parker Bowne was a man with a genuine Christian

experience. This experience was jeopardized by the claims of science, philosophy, and higher criticism. In order to defend his religious experience, Bowne developed a philosophical apologetic which has its basic ground in his philosophy of personalism.

This contribution has stood the test of time and is very much alive today.¹ Edgar Sheffield Brightman in his address to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy said:

His thought moved in the regions where the central and inevitable problems of philosophy are located. His personalism, therefore, is a way of understanding experience which will always have to be reckoned with, and which opposing views will have to consider.²

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss Bowne in relation to Barth and Brunner, but it is difficult to escape the thought that the neo-orthodox critical thrust is for the most part aimed at the religious formulations represented by Bowne. Compare for example Bowne's religious thought with the following statement by Brunner:

Protestant theology of our day is in a state of rapid dissolution. . . . The religious convictions and values, which still play a great part in it, are not the necessary consequences

¹ See Appendix D, p. 322.

² Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Proceedings Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, p. 167.

of the self-communication of the transcendent and super-rational God but the implications of a religion based upon the conception of the immanence of God. . . . Gradually the Biblical dualistic concepts were replaced by a progressive, monistic, and optimistic idealism; the Biblical doctrines of salvation and revelation by Stoic and Platonic ideas. . . . Salvation was identified with religious behavior and ethical betterment; judgment and forgiveness were resolved into subjective values of a sentimentally religious kind. From the year 1700 A.D. to 1900 A.D. Christian theology changes its distinctively Christian bearings, and drifts with an idealistic-faith into theological liberalism. The year 1900 marks the approximate date when it begins to sink into a sea of relativistic scepticism.¹

There is little doubt that Bowne, with robust forcefulness, contributed much in weaving the fabric of the later nineteenth century liberalistic synthesis. This synthesis has become the antithesis of the contemporary neo-orthodox theologians. But it would be a myopic view which failed to see the worth of Bowne's religious thought, not only for the day in which he lived, but also for our contemporary scene today.

¹ Emil Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, pp. 2, 4, 6, 7.

RE-PARCHMENT

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

THE HERESY TRIAL, 1904

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APPENDIX A

THE HERESY TRIAL, 1904*

I am indebted to Dr. George Elliott for the following statement of the charges and the essential portions of Bowne's testimony. The statements are taken from the Methodist Review, May-June, 1922:

In the spring of 1904 at the session of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which Doctor Bowne was a member, charges of heretical teaching were brought against him by a member of another Annual Conference. These charges were wholly based on passages taken from several of his published works. He was charged with teaching:

1. Doctrines which are contrary to the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

2. Doctrines which are contrary to the established standards of doctrine of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

First Specification. He denies the Trinitarian conception of the Deity and also the moral attributes of the Deity as set forth in the first and fourth Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

(This specification was followed by extended quotations from Bowne's Metaphysics and Philosophy of Theism.)

Second Specification. His teaching on miracles is such as to weaken if not destroy faith in large portions of the Old and New Testaments. His views on the inspiration of Scripture are contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures themselves, contrary to article five of the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and tend to destroy faith in the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice.

(Quotations from Bowne's booklet on The Christian Revelation.)

* All the material in Appendix A is quoted from Francis John McConnell, Borden Parker Bowne, pp. 189-201.

Third Specification. He denies the Doctrine of the Atonement as set forth in the second and twentieth Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church and as taught by our established standards of doctrine.

(Quotations from Bowne's booklet on The Atonement.)

Fourth Specification. He teaches such views of the divine government and of the future of souls as to destroy the force of Christ's teaching about the future punishment of the wicked and the future reward of the righteous.

(Quotations from The Atonement and Metaphysics.)

Fifth Specification. He teaches views on the subject of Sin and Salvation, on Repentance, Justification, Regeneration, and Assurance of Salvation through the Witness of the Spirit that do not represent the views of the Methodist Episcopal Church as expressed in our standard works of theology.

(Quotations from The Christian Life and the Philosophy of Theism.)

The Conference session was held in Simpson Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., under the presidency of Bishop Cyrus D. Foss, April 6-12, 1904. The Select Number appointed to represent the Conference in the trial was made up of fifteen of the most distinguished names in that body, many of them outstanding leaders in the church at large. Here is the list: J. E. Adams, D. W. Couch, John Rippere, Francis B. Upham, Herbert Welch, J. O. Wilson, A. H. Wyatt, Francis L. Strickland, George Preston Mains, C. H. Buck, S. O. Curtice, David G. Downey, Charles L. Goodell, J. Wesley Johnston, William V. Kelley. The Rev. Dr. Frank Mason North was appointed to represent the bishop in presidency at the trial. Dr. James Monroe Buckley appeared as counsel for the defendant. The prosecution was represented by A. C. Eggleston, B. F. Kidder, and Arthur W. Byrt, by appointment, whose function was chiefly to secure for the complainant, who was a member of another Annual Conference, his full legal rights at the trial.

The First Specification

After the alleged evidence against him had been presented Professor Bowne took the stand.

Mr. Chairman and Brethren: I am astonished with a great astonishment to find these things brought forward as proofs of

a Unitarian view. They really have no more connection with the specific doctrine of the Trinity than they have with the binomial theorem, or the Roosevelt administrative policy of the Panama Canal. Those propositions would prove me guilty of stealing horses just as quickly as they prove me guilty of Unitarianism. I simply cannot make any reply whatever to these first pages. I can make no reply because there is absolutely no occasion. I was arguing in a general way some points in epistemology, etc. And as I go along, I make these statements with as utter innocence of any thought or bearing on the Trinity as could possibly be. That I must simply rule out.

In the next place, a statement is made here as to the relation of the world to God. I say the world is neither in nor out of God in a spatial sense, and that God is neither in nor out of the world in a spatial sense. That is, God is not a great circumference with the world inside of him. Nor is God a spatial circumference here with the world outside of him in picture form. In thinking in these regions, thought carries us at once beyond the regions of spatial picturing. The world depends unpicturably upon the divine power. We do not think of the thoughts of the mind inside of the mind in the spatial sense. Thoughts are not in the mind spatially. Neither are they out of the mind spatially. But thoughts are in consciousness. We think and we know that we think. That's the end of it. The world is not in God spatially, and God is not in the world spatially.

As to pantheism, the essential distinction between pantheism and the idealistic Theism which I hold is found in the freedom and self-hood of mind. Now, we have this measure of self-hood, this measure of self-direction whereby we are constituted persons with the power of self-control, to some extent, constituted moral persons, subjects of a moral government. This is not pantheism. And that is my view. . . . As to this other question, all that that statement means is that by way of speculation we should not get very far into the nature of God.

The Second Specification

After many extended quotations from his works had been made and interpreted by the complainant, Professor Bowne continued his testimony.

Mr. Chairman: It hardly seems worth while to take up your time. You know very well that these biblical questions have been burning questions of late years. There has been a great deal of uncertainty in popular thought, especially among

educated people, graduates from our high schools and colleges, and those who have been familiar with the literature there, and when I wrote this book, or these books rather, I meant to meet difficulties which are in the minds of those persons. Philosophy is not everybody's affair, and so biblical discussion is not everybody's affair; and this is so in the religious use of the Bible and biblical questions. There is many an old saint whose reading is "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and there is a religious use and a great use of the Bible by a great majority of people. But then there are these other questions which belong to scholarship and which, in the long run, are very important. In the confused condition of things it has seemed to me very desirable to reach some point of view which would serve as a kind of modus vivendi, and so I have raised the question, What is the central thing in Revelation? and I have said it is the revelation of God. It tells us what God is, what he means, what his relation to us is, what is his purpose concerning us, what he is going to do, and what the meaning of life is. Now I consider we get through Revelation certain ideas which I call the "Christian Revelation," the essential thing, and I believed it was important to fix our thought upon these central things in order that we might have the great value of Revelation. For, really when we take the book from many a point of view, and look around for specific treatises in speculative theology, it does not seem that we have much of value, and when you look upon it as a Revelation of God we see the significance of it. We as Christians are living in the light and power of certain great Christian conceptions which are here, have been here, are believed here, and will be here as long as the world endures. . . . If we hold these central ideas, we are Christians. I think you will admit that I affirm nothing here. I affirm nothing as to the composition of the Pentateuch or the Second Isaiah. A great many scholars at least agree concerning the Pentateuchal question; that we find something originally written by Moses, but also redactions and additions. Let that turn out as it may, they still have the Christian idea. Or "The Second Isaiah." They still have the Christian idea. Now, these are questions for expert scholars. I do not claim the ability to decide them, and I know very well that many cannot; they are questions for expert scholars, and will be decided by expert scholarship, and nothing can be settled by hue and cry. Those must be settled by scholars, and we must be perfectly assured that, in the long run, the truth will make its way-- truth will make its way. In the meantime, we fall back on the great essential ideas of God, what he is, what he means, and we live in those ideas, and we rule our lives by them. It is a modus vivendi which I conceived, and to secure such, I wrote the book.

Now, concerning page 65: "However we insist on the presence of mythical and unhistorical matter in the Bible, it has not prevented God's highest revelation of himself. . . . All we can insist upon is, that the record, the legend, the myth, if there be such, shall not obscure the purpose of the whole, the Revelation of God."

My thought is that the revelation of God is the great central thing. There are persons who say it is a myth and unhistorical matter; and I say, well, suppose that is so? nevertheless, it does not obscure the great thing, the great revelation of God; the important ideas concerning God, what he is, what he means--these come to us along the lines of revelations in the Scriptures.

Doctor Buckley: The complainant in this matter has mutilated the passage and withheld from the church and the committee a very remarkable passage which runs in the other direction. I will read from the book and request the committee to compare what I read with what is presented in the charges: "However we insist on the presence of mythical and unhistorical matter in the Bible, it has not prevented God's highest revelation of himself. This is the treasure which the vessel of Scripture, however earthen, demonstrably contains. What the Christian thinker should maintain is the divine presence and guidance in the rational movement as a whole. He need not concern himself about details whether for better or for worse." Why that was omitted in the affirmative proposition concerning nature or revelation I do not know, but that was omitted.

Professor Bowne: Now, with regard to the remarks on pages 79 and 80. I think that there is no question that the Jews spoke of the supernatural in a way that showed that God was the agent in all things, and they referred things to God without reference to a secondary, intermediate causation. The Lord said this, the Lord said that, etc., in which case they may have been entirely correct in the standard of causality. In other words, had we seen anything that looked divine, it would have looked as the plague of locusts looked, or like the plague of grasshoppers in Kansas now. The locusts flew very much like as they do in the West. This does not seem like a divine power in the matter. As I said in the book, suppose an Armada should be sent on the coast of Palestine, and one of the old prophets had described it, he would have described it in the form of a divine standard: "The Lord sent out his lightnings and he blew upon them and they were scattered," etc., etc. But if you had been there, and had seen just such a blow and a scattering you would have believed that the Lord directed them and not angels flying about and

raising a wind. That is all that means.

Now, with regard to this other passage: "When we come to the distinctively miraculous, to that which breaks with the natural order and reveals the presence of a supernatural power, we may still look for some of the familiar natural continuities. Miracles which break with all law would be nothing intelligible." While we believe in a good deal that is supernatural without affirming that it is miraculous, we believe in the Divine Presence in our lives, but we do not mean by that that we have angels or anything of that kind coming and directing us. But we believe that our times are in God's hands. And so our lives go on, and we still believe we are in God's hands. There would be a supernatural guidance without anything miraculous grating with the laws of life and psychology. I believe that all the processes of nature are supernatural. They obey the divine will and are carried on with the ever-living will in which we live, and move, and have our being. I do not think everything is miraculous. On the contrary, there are other ways of doing things.

But, suppose we come now to the distinctly miraculous. How think of it? It would be no more divine than the outdoings of the world; no more dependent upon God than the sparrow which does not fall without the Father. What is the meaning? Why, it would be necessary to attract sense-bound minds who would otherwise be immersed so that they might know God as theirs.

A. C. Eggleston: Do you believe that?

Professor Bowne: I am a crass supernaturalist.

Doctor Buckley: Speak of the resurrection of Christ.

Professor Bowne: "Miracles which break with all law would be nothing intelligible." That sentence as it stands is not very clear. It means this: that when God works miracles, still there is a great body of law, and that, connecting the miracle with these other things through that body of law, there is no break. Suppose God wrought a miracle and enlightened a common person. We can imagine a distinct break. Take Saint Paul's case. Law was such and held in such a way that God did not make Paul a new being without some reference to the old body. When he wanted to work a miracle he worked for us. God might have performed the same miracle in the mind of Peter and James as in the mind of Paul. The miracle was wrought on the foundation of law, and Paul was able then to go on with all that back-lying amount of law and nature and developing into something which, without a miracle, James or Peter could never have reached.

A. Voice: Do you apply that to the resurrection of Christ?

Professor Bowne: I believe in the resurrection of Christ. I believe in it.

A. C. Eggleston: You say, "With this view you can dispense with everything else." What does that "everything else" convey? Is it a general feeling that whatever was said--

Professor Bowne: Of course the language must be applied to the subject under discussion. If we are able to hold the Christian view concerning God and man; and if we are Christians and have that, we are Christians. We can let everything else go that need be. It must apply to a great many persons. Many are not sure of this or that. But I say if you can hold on to God and Christ and to the view of the relation of God to us, with the Christian view of what God is, and the meaning of life and destiny, leave out other things.

A. W. Byrt: Let other things go.

Professor Bowne: It is unessential for Christianity. I do not hold that in order to be a Christian one must believe that the ax swam.

D. G. Downey (Quoting): "When we consider it as a dogmatic treatise in abstract speculative theology, or as a textbook in ethics, or as anything but a revelation of God, it is easy to doubt whether it has any special and abiding religious value." The Professor does not intend to teach that the Bible is not a good textbook in ethics.

Professor Bowne: It is a question what we shall put first. It used to be a good way on works apologetic to begin with the supreme difference in Bible teachings in ethics. There were deep and profound essentials found in the sacred books of the East. And the answer was always then, People have to rummage about among other sacred books to find something as good. They made a good talk about the Golden Rule. They said they could not find anything like that anywhere, and they rummaged about in the works of Confucius and pre-Christian writings, and there were a lot of books and a lot of talk, but I have said the important thing is the Doctrine of God, and out of that comes the very important theological teaching. But the central thing is the revelation of God. Dr. Harris' book, in which he makes the whole discussion of revelation, turns on the title, The Self-Revelation of God. That is the

new form which Apologetics has taken on with all those whose writings command much attention now. The central thing is God! There is a very excellent little book, now out of print, entitled The Chief End of Revelation, much better than recent works. In this the especial emphasis is the revelation of God. All the ethics and theologies are important. I do not think with regard to abstract theology that that thought leads into the ground, but I remember this, that there was a theology which taught that in God there was one essence, two processions, three persons, four relations, five notions, and a circumcession.

Doctor Kidder: In the passage referred to, pages 41 and 42, as a quotation you say: "This conception of a dictated book has always ruled popular theological thought, and for manifold reasons. The notion of a revelation through history, through the moral life of a community, through the insight of godly men, is comparatively difficult and uncertain." Do you give these two as the only interpretation of inspiration of God's revelation to man as recorded in the Scriptures or out of the Scriptures? Do you mean that the revelation through history through the moral life of the community, comparatively uncertain though it be, is the better revelation or the more accurate revelation of God?

Professor Bowne: I think that is the way revelation has been made. Revelation has been made in that way, and that the Bible has not come through such dictation. There may be passages, here and there, where it says, "The Word of the Lord came to me."

Doctor Kidder: Then the conception of a dictated book you rule out?

Professor Bowne: I lay that aside.

Doctor Kidder: Then we have no other alternative except this: "through the moral life of a community, through the insight of godly men." If that is the only other alternative, does your conception of the Bible mean that God is still making a progressive revelation of himself with equal authority by which he made it through Isaiah, Paul, and John? You say there is a middle ground that is not defined. In other words, as Bishop Foss said, referring to Doctor Horton's lectures at Yale, does God still reveal himself to us in precisely the same manner as he did to Isaiah and Paul? Or did those men have the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God revealing himself to them, so that they spake with authoritative utterance?

Professor Bowne: It would depend altogether upon the contents of the revelation and the cogency with which they appealed to Christian thought. As a matter of fact, the Christian Church has agreed that we have received a revelation through those men which outranks the revelation in any other way. If anyone should start up with a revelation that was distinctly contradictory to the revelations which came through those men, we should think this new revelation was a mistake. At the same time it is also perfectly clear that the subjects which they had have been brought out in their meaning in the light and life of the church, as the Spirit was promised to lead us into Truth. The early Christian Church accepted the germ, had no such clear ideas as we have. I say nothing at all about it, but there is a question whether Saint Paul himself had as clear a conception of what was meant as we have now. We cannot separate the authority of the Bible from the authority of the church and the authority of the Christian consciousness that would set up one as independent of the other. This question of authority is something which can never be settled except in practice. To attempt to discuss authority in an abstract way and get it drawn out in logical formulae always ends in confusion. Precisely the same thing you have in the general question of certainty. How do I know that I am saved? The next thing is to plunge into the very depth of uncertainty. I fall back upon the use of our faculties, and reach such certainty as experience gives. And so with regard to the Bible and religious certainty in general. There is a great blunder that the churches largely make. First, we have churches resting on the authority of the church. It is a perfectly easy thing to explode. Then we have the Protestant Church with the authority of the Bible, and it is perfectly easy to take that abstract thought and make it uncertain. We have the authority of the church and the Bible, the authority of the religious community, all the work of God, including great conflicts, vital functions, but there is no possibility of separation. I do not believe, for instance, that any church would long consent to accept statements in the Bible which were agreed upon as distinctly contradictory to reason and conscience. On the other hand, I do not believe that reason and conscience would very long support themselves without the use of the Bible. I do not think that either one of them would support itself without the Christian community in which the Christian life were going on.

Doctor Kidder: The point has not been quite reached. We will set aside the "dictated" conception of the book, and we accept the manifestation of God's presence to the human mind and heart in spiritual relationship now. But Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal

life, and they are they which testify of me," and Paul said, "All inspiration, given of God, is profitable . . . for reproof," etc. . . . In another place, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The point is this. The church at large has held that through the writing contained in the Scriptures there is a special concentration of light touching man's relationship to God that does not come with equal authority through any inspiration that a man may receive directly from and now apart from those sources. And in these statements here there does not seem to me to be any necessary acknowledgment of that fact, although there would not be any necessary denial of it. And I would like an interpretation, whether this "insight of godly men" is equally authoritative as that of the prophets.

Professor Bowne: One cannot say everything at once. I have said elsewhere that this knowledge of God, which I have spoken of as of exceeding value, a great source of light and inspiration, "The light of all our day"--that this comes to us along the line of God's revelation to man through his Son. If any modern prophet arises I should be willing to listen to what his revelation might be, and probably discount it.

A. C. Eggleston: Where do you make a difference or distinction between the "insight of godly men" and "man's invention?"

Professor Bowne: Insight is one thing, and invention is another. . . . Revelation leads to insight.

A. C. Eggleston: How did Moses come upon that wonderful characterization of God, "long-suffering, full of compassion, and that will not acquit the guilty?" Did he get that from his insight?

Professor Bowne: God gave him the insight. That is the way I should put it. I suppose he had the insight that God was there.

A. C. Eggleston: I suppose that, too. But now about this "inerrancy of the Bible." "And thus it appears how barren and practically irrelevant is the abstract question as to the inerrancy of the Bible" (page 57). How does that come in there? "The doctrine is of no practical interest."

Professor Bowne: Well, it is not. Let me talk about that for the moment. I am speaking of the "absolute inerrancy of the Bible," the technical inerrancy, such absoluteness of statement as forbids the notion of mistake. . . . For instance, the inscription on the cross in several forms; there is a high

probability that one was not exactly so. Then you have thousands of different readings in the manuscripts, and it is plain that there cannot be absolute equal inspiration in everything. The great thing is to obtain its general trustworthiness. One says, "If you admit inerrancy at all, how can you be sure of anything?" I say, that is an abstract question which does not admit of answer and which doesn't need any.

Doctor Buckley: I would ask, Doctor Bowne, whether you believe that the revelations in the Bible have come with abiding power and definiteness in the world's thought and life, only along the line of God's revelation of himself and God's providence.

Professor Bowne: All this I steadfastly believe.

Doctor Buckley: I am asking whether he believes certain things here; I would like to find out whether he believes these things. Do you believe that when you compare Christianity with outlying religions we feel its measure of superiority?

Professor Bowne: All this I steadfastly believe.

Doctor Buckley: When we compare it with the revelation of nature, etc?

Professor Bowne: All this I steadfastly believe.

Third Specification

The charge as to heresy on the doctrine of the Atonement was wholly based on extracts from Professor Bowne's little book, The Atonement, in which he criticizes substitutionary, commercial, and governmental theories as being based on excessive literalism.

Professor Bowne: Our wheels drag heavily. My purpose in writing this booklet was as in writing the other. However clear theologically that may be in itself, there is certainly a great deal of misunderstanding among many thoughtful young people who are trying to consider this question on the basis of their good sense, and view of right and wrong, etc. I had a letter from a woman in Washington which was an attack on the doctrine of the atonement as a rational doctrine. She set forth all the difficulties that were in her mind. I refer to that as an illustration of the kind of cases that I meet very often--young people in colleges especially. And it was to help them, not to instruct theologians, that I wrote it.

Now, first of all, as I think I have said here, I have declared the Christian Church has always held that the great work of divine grace has been wrought for the salvation of men. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto . . . but to give himself a ransom for many." I could give you many quotations. I believe most emphatically, without any reservation of any kind, in the great redemption wrought by our Lord. And, as I have said here in another passage, in my thought there is nothing beside. The great work of grace has been wrought. The Father gave the Son for the salvation of men. That is what I consider to be the fact of the atonement. There is nothing which demands theorizing. It is the expression of the divine love for the blessing and the salvation of men. Up to this point we have a fact. But then the rational nature always insists upon rationalizing, systematizing its views, and, of course, that demands thought. Now, out of that come the various theories of the atonement. The church has always held to the fact. It always will. The fact given up, there would be nothing distinctively Christian, nothing left worth preaching. The incarnation for the purpose of atonement to mankind is the very gist and evidence of Christianity. But then as to the theories. Now, you know what very crude theories were held at an early date. The mind of the race went into eclipse brought about by having heathen notions thrown upon the Christian mind; there were a great multitude of these which were pagan notions. The Christian thought remained in that condition and then they began to rationalize in theory, and from that time it has gone on down to the present day and we have had a great many theories, and we have still many now. Doctor Miley, in his book, on the Atonement, quotes somewhere one who says, "There are thirteen theories of the atonement." But Doctor Miley thinks that some of these do not so differ as to be separated. And the end is not yet. What have these men been trying to do? To form a theory of the atonement. These theories of the theologians have been in the highest degree unsatisfactory, and I have sought in a fashion to say things, not to give an entirely new interpretation, but an interpretation of the atonement which is in entire harmony with the Scriptures, more in harmony with the present type of Christian thought, with all the enlightenment there has come to it in the illumination of the Spirit and of experience, more in harmony than the theories which have hitherto obtained among us. And a good many of the Bible students find what I do not find. There is not an entirely satisfactory theory. The work of grace is set forth in a variety of ways in the Temple service and Roman law. Paul gives no consistent view. He says a good many things, all of which are significant and of value, but we have not a perfect system in the Scriptures

and not in theology. Neither have we in our Methodist teaching. Our Methodist teaching was originally somewhat a satisfaction view. It remains a modified satisfaction view in the Southern Methodist Church still. In our own church it has gone over somewhat to the governmental view, set forth by Doctor Miley, but that by no means commands the acceptance of all the members of the church.

Doctor Couch: Do you urge the governmental view?

Professor Bowne: I reject anything which needs to be carried forward. It was carried forward from the things behind it, but we are compelled to go on.

Doctor Couch: "That God might be justified, and become the justifier of him that believeth."

Professor Bowne: All these expressions I accept. It is a matter of interpretation of what these things mean. I myself use the Scripture terminology with great freedom. I have no difficulty with using such a hymn as "There is a fountain filled with blood." I can sing it with great zeal, but after you have said that, how do you interpret it? It is an adumbration with a great meaning behind it. We try to get the meaning into the minds of men. I do accept and use the language of the Scriptures. It has never occurred to me to find the least difficulty in them. I do not butt against analogy. I am after meanings.

Now it is said that I have spoken against "satisfaction." That term--satisfaction. We have a satisfaction and a substitution theory, and when I speak of satisfaction it is not satisfaction I am speaking of. I am speaking practically of that doctrine of penal substitution, penal satisfaction, which our church rejects. And when I say, "It is a satisfaction that does not satisfy," it means that. If that view were true, perfectly true, exactly correct, then it would follow that since the work of Christ all for whom Christ died would be necessarily free from the consequences of sin. The Calvinists always drew that conclusion, and the Calvinistic Universalists always draw that.

Now, I use the term "satisfaction" with regard to that theory. Doctor Miley draws himself that conclusion, and makes it one reason for setting aside that view. And I found him drawing precisely the same conclusion; and I say a great many times--unfortunately expressed perhaps--that we are having a satisfaction that does not satisfy, and an expiation that does not expiate, because we are left to bear the visible

consequences of our evildoings, and that leads to the suspicion that on this view some of the unseen consequences may come around to us.

We are setting forth simply the logic of the doctrine. Various views are given and finally we must interpret this work of God and his grace in accordance with our ethical ideas. We cannot interpret it satisfactorily on the forensic plane.

Fourth and Fifth Specifications

On these final charges much less time was taken in the trial and Doctor Bowne was called upon for but little testimony.

Here is a short statement as to the defendant's views on future punishment:

Professor Bowne: The only force of this charge is that I am a Universalist. I am not. I would like to be if I could, but I am not.

Doctor Couch: Would you like to be?

Professor Bowne: Only in this sense; I should like to believe that it was God's purpose finally to bring all souls into obedience unto himself. I should like to have that faith if I could. I am not a Universalist. As to these remarks about metaphysics and the light, I have said simply that, left to metaphysical reasoning, we should not get very far concerning the future of the soul. That is all. Any positive conviction we have depends on our moral nature or some word of revelation.

Doctor Buckley: I ask him whether he believes that there will be any probation after death for a person thoroughly instructed in the gospel of Christ in this world?

Professor Bowne: I do not know of any such thing, and I should feel perfectly unjustified in telling anyone, "You shall have another chance."

The Verdict

After two hours of argument by the prosecution and the defense, the full Select Number of Fifteen being present, votes by ballot were taken on each of the Five Specifications. The result in each case was the same: Sustained, none; not sustained, fifteen.

The verdict of the Committee was expressed as follows:

The Select Number, to whom were referred the charges against Borden P. Bowne for "disseminating doctrines contrary to the Articles of Religion and our Standards of doctrine," report:

That all the evidence and testimony offered by complainant and defendant in this case have been received and carefully considered, and that counsel for each has had ample opportunity for the presentation of arguments.

That the Select Number, by unanimous vote taken by ballot, find and decide that of the five specifications none are sustained, and that the charges are not sustained.

(Signed.) Frank Mason North, Chairman.

Wm. H. Burgwin, Asst. Secretary.

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APPENDIX B

BOWNE'S CRITICISM OF HERBERT SPENCER

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APPENDIX B

BOWNE'S CRITICISM OF HERBERT SPENCER

As to the part Bowne played in helping to clear the mind of his day of its confusion between evolution as a final theory of the universe and a theory of causes and progress, let his "enemies themselves be judges."

James M. Cain in an article on "The Pathology of Service" in The American Mercury of November, 1925, writes a typically American Mercury article--typically American Mercury of 1925. He lampoons, denounces, condemns, and ridicules the idea of service. He intimates that American society is pathological in respect to service. In the course of this extraordinary article he credits Bowne's treatment of Herbert Spencer's philosophy with being the bacillus of "service." He says that Spencer "announced the thesis that society is itself an organism, and that is in process of evolution exactly like a biological organism." Spencer's theory, in his own hands, "produced no godly results at all, but appeared to lead straight to atheism and despair. Pursuing his studies in the evolution of moral ideas, he was led to the conclusion that there can be no such thing as an absolute standard of human conduct." According to Cain, this "was equivalent to giving the Summum Bonum a kiss on the head with a potato masher." That is a rather inelegant way of saying that if Spencer's theory had been allowed to go unchallenged, it would have dealt a quietus to any ideas of moral purpose or of truth, beauty, and goodness in human society, or in the universe. He deplores, however, that this was not the result; for something happened that endowed Spencer's writing with "evangelical overtones." Then he asks how this philosophical basis for service was accomplished, and answers his own questions by saying.

"My guess is that it came about through the writings and speeches of Borden P. Bowne, who, during the closing years of the last century, was professor of philosophy at Boston University. Although forgotten by the laity, Bowne enjoyed tremendous academic prestige in his day, and his influence must have been considerable. His specialty was examining the arguments as to whether there is or is not a God, and his bias was in favor of God. Writing at a time when evolution had rocked men's faith, he did much to hearten them for another try at the trail. Atheists confronted him, demanding proof of God, and he had back at them by demanding proof that there

was no God. If a burden of proof lay on believers, he said, an equal burden lay on non-believers; here were phenomena which could be explained two ways, and neither side could claim exemption from logic. Having thus cleared his decks for action, he opened up his guns, and he had pretty good guns. It is absurd, he said, to hold a mechanistic view of life and the universe. Matter could not spontaneously have sprung into life, and life could not mechanically have developed into Man. We must have another conception of causation and teleology. We must get away from that theory of causation which regards the cosmos as a series of pool balls in a row, with the No. 1 ball in the side pocket. Rather we should regard the cosmic process as a great musical composition, wherein each part has a separate existence taken by itself, and yet fits into a planned and logical whole, and wherein all the parts move toward a preconceived goal. Thus he took the small orchestra of Spencer, the orchestra of the flora and fauna, and augmented it by adding an infinite number of pieces; he set planets and fixed stars to banging great instruments in the heavens, and earthquakes to rumbling down in hell. And above all, he said, it is unthinkable that all this fuss could have been set going as mere caprice; there must have been some reason for it, and all of it must be moving toward some goal worthy of it." (See Bowne's Theism)

"It was a fine cacophony, and even the professors could catch a little of it. The orchestration was beyond them, but the main tune they could hear, and this they fashioned into a stave of their own.

"Such is the opinion of a man not friendly to the very things for which Bowne stood; but, in spite of himself, he pays a real compliment to the cogent, kindling work of Bowne. He lists nine different books written by such persons as Muirhead, Hobhouse, Dole, Van Ness, Myers, Everett, Coffin, Kimball, Drake, and others--books that have been commonly used in college classes, and which according to the American Mercury writer, were echoes of Bowne or inspired by him."

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APPENDIX C

MYSTICISM IN BOWNE

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APPENDIX C

MYSTICISM IN BOWNE

In a letter which bowne wrote a member of the family he said: "At Copenhagen we went to the Thorwaldsen Museum and to the Church of Our Lady where his famous group of Christ and his Apostles is found. No other Christ compares with this. Christ seems so majestic yet so tender, so regal yet so winning, removed by such infinite-heights yet so condescending as to be infinitely near. Thorwaldsen seems to have aimed to unite both the invitation and the benediction. When I first glanced at it I said "that is the way Christ must have looked when he said, 'Come unto me.'"

Again I thought that the attitude was one of blessing and underneath I found the words "Lo, I am with you always." The pierced hands and side show that the moment is that of the Ascension and of his final benediction on the disciples. But the other text shows that the other moment was in his thought also. I looked at the marble for a long time without noticing the text, and when I was almost filled and almost overwhelmed with its presence I read below "Lo I am with you always." It almost seemed to me as if He spoke himself to me. I could not keep back the tears and could scarcely refrain from sobbing aloud. I wanted to kneel down and pray, it would have been a joy and a relief. But there were others in the church, so I entered into the closet of my own heart and having shut the door I prayed to Him who seeth in secret."

* Bostonia, (April 1937), p. 15.

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APPENDIX D

PERSONALISTIC CREED

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APPENDIX D

PERSONALISTIC CREED

Bowne's continuing influence is reflected in the Personalistic Creed of President John A. W. Haas of Muhlenberg College, Pennsylvania.

Personalistic Creed

"I believe that the energy of the universe demands will as its solution.

"I believe that the order of the universe calls for intellect and purpose.

"I believe that the beauty of the universe implies supreme feeling.

"I believe that the moral implications of life indicate ultimate goodness.

"I believe that the progress of history points to final righteousness.

"I believe that a sound theory of education must posit universal freedom.

"I believe that the best philosophy of religion ends in the axiom of God as Spirit and Love.

"I believe that all these claims are best united in a doctrine of personality, divine and human, individual and social."*

* President John A. W. Haas, Muhlenberg College, Pennsylvania, in The Personalist (January 1922), p. 4.