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CAESAR OR CHRIST?

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(The opening lecture of session 1908-09.)

If a man is a thoughtful reader of history, and also a thoughtful observer of the times in which we live, he will be struck with a resemblance between the currents of the present hour and those which meet us in the years in which Christianity came into being. In Greek and Roman times a man was a citizen of the city-state. In it he was to realise himself, to it he owed his being, his culture, his significance, and to its service he was bound to devote himself. This tendency of the city-state to regard the citizen merely as a member of the community, was extended and hardened until in the Roman Empire the State was the only society which had a right to engross every interest of its subjects, religious, social, political, humanitarian. There was no room in Roman law for the existence, much less for the development on its own lines of organic growth of any corporation or society which did not recognize itself from the first as a mere department or auxiliary of the State. At the time, then, when Jesus said "Render unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's and to God the things that are God's" all things were held to belong to Ceasar. The distinction between things sacred and things secular had not yet been made. Religion was bound up with the service of the State. Its observances were enforced by civil pains and penalties. Neglect of its observances on the part of a citizen was treason. It was not without significance that the highest civil officer was also chief priest. All these tendencies were accentuated when the Roman republic passed into an empire. All the civil offices of the State were concentrated in the person of the Emperor. Or if they were enjoyed by others it was at

his pleasure. The empire was embodied in the Emperor. But there was something more. The position of the Emperor was not only identified with the prosperity and well-being of the empire; not only was civil allegiance due to him; not only had he gathered all civil and religious offices within his own office; he added to these religious functions also. He was declared to be divine. Emperor-worship became in the first centuries of the empire the authorized and recognized religion. For the might and majesty of the empire, its universal sway over the known world, its victory over other nations, which was regarded also as a victory over the nation's gods, had dwarfed the gods. Then, too, the Emperor was a sort of providence to the empire, and especially to the provinces, and in these there was a glad and joyous acceptance of the new worship. Inscriptions are still extant to tell of this religious gladness, and to bear witness to the fervour and devotion of the provinces to Augustus and his successors.

Thus at the time of early Christianity the State, symbolized by the Emperor, had gathered to itself all the sanctions which influence human conduct. To civil loyalty has been added religious enthusiasm, and the State was the civil, ethical, religious institution in which a man could realize himself, and also the institution which demanded his whole energy, dominated his whole life, and allowed nothing to interfere with its supreme and absolute claims. The State had absorbed the divine, it was itself the divine, and claimed the reverence and devotion which religion bound on its votaries. It would be long to describe the other ideal which arose about the same time as that in which the State formulated its claim to be divine. The State was soon confronted with an authority as absolute as its own. Two ideals confronted each other, the State with its absolute claims on the individual, with its demand that the life of the citizen should be wholly spent in its service, that his feeling, thought, and action should be within spheres and on lines prescribed by the State; and, on the other hand, a Church which equally demanded absolute obedience to the claims of Christ. The ideals were so far incompatible, and the person to whom they were presented had to adjust

them somehow. I cannot tell the story of the conflict here. Nor can I enumerate the progress of the tale from Augustus to Constantine, much less tell the subsequent story. Nor can I do more than outline the conflict at the present hour.

But we may obtain some conception of what the competing ideals were. I have already given in outline the claims of the State. Let us have a conception of the claims of Christ. In their own sphere they were absolute. He had no hesitation in interchanging the phrases, "For My sake" and "for righteousness' sake." He placed the phrase "I say unto you" on a level with the phrase "It is written." He placed devotion to Himself above all other claims. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that doth not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." Other passages to the same effect abound; His claim to the obedience of men is absolute. Nor is it a claim limited to outward observance or to outward conduct. Nothing is more striking than His demand to constrain the inward motive as well as the outward action, to rule the heart as well as the mind, to control the springs of action as well as the outward effect. There is nothing in the individual to which He does not lay claim. Other religious masters made no such claim; nay, the very service of the gods themselves was a limited service. It was not held by Greek or Roman that the gods had anything to do with the inward life. If a man paid his tithes, performed the observances, gave the gods their due, he did enough. That the divine beings had anything to do with the inward life, that they claimed the devotion of the heart and the allegiance of the will were thoughts which did not belong to Roman religion. But Jesus Christ claimed all. Carrying to its issue the tendency of the Old Testament that God demanded that men should love Him with mind and heart and soul and strength, He placed His own claims, which were also the claims of God, first, and all other claims were subordinate to this.

A striking thing to note is the way in which His disciples

responded to these claims. To them He was Lord and Master. He was to the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose authority was absolute, Whose word constrained their belief, Whose command enforced obedience. They belonged to Him, no longer to themselves. Paul writes of himself and puts in the forefront of his only epistle to a Church which he had not founded, "a slave of Jesus Christ." Writing to the people of the greatest city of the world, to people who despised servitude in all its forms, who gloried in the dignity of Roman citizenship, he yet describes himself as a bond-servant of the Crucified, Whom the Romans despised and rejected. Nor is this a mere phrase on the part of Paul. Christ had become the central principle of all his thinking, into whatever sphere that thinking penetrated. Christ was an ever-living principle which solved every problem, and ruled every difficulty. Principles of thought, principles of action, principles which guide and quicken feeling and emotion were found by the Apostle in Christ. I can only state this, I cannot illustrate it further. What Christ was to Paul, that Paul proclaimed Him to Christians. He was their Lord and Master. In Him they had their life, from Him they obtained their strength, to Him they owed absolute, unquestioning obedience. And they rendered Him that obedience. Tempted, tried, persecuted, they still refused to disobey their Master. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, they went gladly to imprisonment and death, for their Master's sake.

Nor will the matter be understood if we limit the relationship to one between the Master and His individual disciple. The very act of faith which bound a man to Christ bound him also to the body of Christ. He was made a citizen of a new commonwealth. His citizenship was in heaven. He became a member of a great society, constituted by a common interest in the common salvation, a common loyalty to a common Lord. Nor was this all. As they realized and believed in the new relationship, they believed that they were brothers in Christ, brothers to all who had been created anew in Christ Jesus. They exhausted the possibilities of language to describe their new relation to all who were in Christ. They belonged to the family of God, they were brothers of Christ, they were heirs of

God in Christ. In our broken and divided Christendom, it is difficult for us to realize the intensity of this conviction of unity with Christ and with one another, or to realize the strength which came to them from this sense of oneness of all believers in Christ.

But the main thing is that here we have a new fellowship, constituted by devotion to an unseen and present Lord, whose will was their law, whose presence was their gladness. They belonged to Christ, and they yielded themselves to Him. He had bought them, He had died for them, He was living for them, and the sense of His love constrained them to yield to Him all that they had, all that they were. They found in His service perfect freedom. These early Christians felt that they could not render unto Cæsar what belonged to Christ. Neither as individuals, nor as a society, could they refuse to admit Christ's claim on them. They were willing to admit that the powers that be were the ordinance of God. But they could not admit that they were God. They were willing to recognize the ordinances of man where these did not contradict the ordinances of God. But when they were called on to burn incense to the image of the Emperor, or to admit the claim of the State to divine honors, they refused. When the alternative was submitted, refuse or die, they unhesitatingly chose death. For they had been taught that there were things which belonged to God, and that these things could be given to no one else.

Conflict, then, there was bound to be, until men could come to understand how both the claims of God and Cæsar could be adjusted. Are they adjusted yet? No, nor are they likely to be while the ideals are so different. For the Christian ideal involves many things which are incompatible with the newer demands made on behalf of the State. The Christian ideal involves nothing less than a new humanity, constituted after the humanity revealed in the life and character of Christ. It means the revival of the older ideal. New values have taken the place of the older ones. "I say unto you love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." "The kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the

Holy Ghost." "My kingdom is not of this world," said the Master, yet it is a kingdom, a society with definite laws, aims, spirit, and constitution. While this is so, we must remember that the kingdom of Christ has other aims, and a wider horizon than any earthly kingdom. Its sanctions lie elsewhere than in temporal kingdoms, and its rewards are also not on this side. It is a rule not enforced with outer sanctions, but by the sanction of the inward spirit of a man. It rules the conscience, and appeals to the invisible and the eternal. There is no time at present to ask whether this ideal has ever been realized. The ideal of the New Testament stands by itself, the abiding standard up to which every Church ought to ascend, and the perennial judge of every Church, because no Church has ever yet attained to it. Every Church has been too much of a State, borrowing from the methods of the State, using too often the same means, and appealing to the same motives. No doubt, in so far as a Church is a visible organism, living and acting so far within space and time, she has to use means for her visible ends; but it is never to be forgotten that a Church of Christ, by her very nature, must never lose sight of the spiritual and eternal. She is Christ's Church, and must ever be in communion with her Risen Head. Happily for her she has the living word of Christ in her hand, with its grand economy, its splendid vision, its wide horizon, and its tremendous spiritual power to quicken, strengthen, comfort, and console. It is not the claim of any particular historical Church that we have to present over against the claim of the modern State to be the sole institution for the making of men. The Christian ideal is immeasurably higher than the attainments of any Church. It is the Christian ideal of the living man as a member of the body of Christ, and of the Christian society as the body of Christ, that we seek to vindicate.

But what may be the claims of the modern State, as these appear in the philosophies of the day, in the socialism of the period, which also find utterance in the many voices of the public press? From the time of the Renaissance onward there has been a growing tendency to renew the antique ideal of the State. In Hobbes the State is the great Leviathan, in Machia-

velli the State appears embodied in its chief or prince as the highest and the only ideal, which in its own strength justifies and sanctifies all means. The interest of the State is sufficient to warrant any means to that end. The Prince and the will of the Prince was the standard of right and wrong, and the interests of the State were supreme. In the Aufklärung movement similar thoughts occur. For at that period Christianity had sunk into such weakness that it could not worthily present its fundamental principle with any effect to the world, and it disappeared before the overmastering weight of the State. The State was all in all, religion was looked at as a merely private thing, or the property of sects. In another way the religious sanction was borrowed by the State, and the divine right of kings was the Aufklärung synonym of the Roman Emperor-worship. The reaction against this absolutist view proceeded apace, and there arose also a tendency to minimize the State. Individualism ruled the field, and the laissez-faire doctrine obtained the mastery. The functions of the State were set forth as mainly negative. In that conception there was no ethical worth. The State had only to see to it that people kept the peace. It had nothing to do with religion, but then it had nothing to do with education, with the protection of the young, or, in fact, with anything save to keep an open field in which people might strive in a competition in which the race was to the swift and the battle to the strong, while the weakest went to the wall.

We are now in the reaction against that extreme view. Many tendencies combine to enhance the ethical conception of the State. In the idealist philosophy the State and its ideal has come to occupy the highest place. It is the organism in which a man comes to himself—realizes himself. It is the meeting-place of all ideals, and its ethical worth is the highest known to idealism. From an opposite point of view it is for Comptism, the highest embodiment of the humanity which is the object of positivist worship. For the scientific, or those who bring the spirit of science to the investigation of social phenomena, the State is the organism which is both the sphere and the instrument by which happiness is secured. Thus all

the tendencies of modern thought conspire to enhance and to widen the ethical conception of the State. The feeling of home, the devotion to the Fatherland, patriotism in its deeper sense, has served to enhance the conception of the State. Christianity, too, with its new worths and values, has brought into this modern view of the State ideas which were foreign to the ancient conception.

The duties of the modern State is also conceived otherwise than in any former age. The ancient conception abides, and the State now, as of old, has a right to demand the service of its citizens, to demand from them their property, their life, their all, when danger calls. That seems to be taken for granted. But if the modern State has its demands on its people to which they must yield, the duties are correspondingly heightened. It is stated that the State must see to it that no one of his subjects is to be allowed to grow up ignorant, that no one must be allowed to starve. I have not time to enumerate all the functions ascribed to the modern State. But clearly it is to play the part of an earthly providence, with the result that it has to receive the honor and worship due to an earthly providence.

This modern conception is closely connected with the philosophic tendency towards Monism in philosophy and science. For in Monism the distinctive idea of God tends to disappear. God for Monism is the perfect whole. There is no distinction between Him and the universe. He is the universe and the universe is God. It is not a distant inference from this philosophic position to regard the State, or the organization of men into definite unities, as the highest form of the intelligible universe. For in this organized society the world has come to self-consciousness, and has embodied in itself the forms and powers which make for life, unity, and progress. It is not surprising, then, that the State, both for the philosophic mind, and for the social democracy of our time, has become the embodiment of the highest ethical ideal, and the power to which men look for happiness and blessedness.

Is this compatible with the Christian ideal? In other words, can the State be Christianized? Modern German phil-

osophy and theory, speaking through the lips of Professor Weinel, bluntly says that it cannot. Nor is he sorry for the fact that it is impossible, in his view, to Christianize the State. On the contrary, he thinks that, while the State, in its way, may utilize the new worths and values brought into human life by Christianity—which he is forward to recognize—the remedy is to enhance the ethical idea of the State, until it shall contain all the ideals, all the worths, all the values of human life, and shall be the object of human reverence, and the home of the human spirit in which it can find itself and its worth. Thus in its ideal, in its work, in its functions, the State is to fill the place which in former times was filled by the Roman Empire, which in Japan is filled by the State to-day. Clearly we have here in new forms the old question which has been more or less present in Christendom since Christianity began to be. What must be our attitude to this modern aspect of the doctrine of the State? Briefly, there are two ways of approaching the subject. How are we to regard man? As a being of space and time, who can be made, realized, made complete, so far as completeness goes, within the present life? Are we to regard man merely as a being of time, whose function is fulfilled here, or is he an eternal being, who needs eternity for his realization? We may answer the question from two points of view. We may say that the individual passes while society remains. Humanity in its organic forms continues, while the generations pass and disappear. They are for the social organism, and they fulfill their function, and make their calling complete when they feed the high tradition of the race. That is one point of view, and it is insisted on by many as the only tenable view. But it is not the Christian view. From this point of view it is society that passes away, while the person continues. Society as at present constituted, or even society as may be ideally represented, cannot outlast the lifetime of the sun. In all likelihood the period of the continuance of the present solar system is finite, and a day comes, as science affirms, when the heat of the sun will have disappeared, and all the gains of civilization will have vanished, and mankind will be no more. If this is so, then what a wasteful universe it is! Yet the

Christian belief is that man shall outlast the universe, that the individual person will continue, when the present form of society shall have passed away. What has been won here through the long conflict of the ages will not pass away. Society will take a new form in the kingdom of God. Such is the Christian hope. This world is a world for the making of men, but of men who will have their part and their work, their joy and their blessedness in God's eternal kingdom, which is more than a kingdom, for it is the family of God. Society, then, is here a means for the making of men. As the Master said, "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath," so we may generalize His statement and say that institutions, State, Church, is for man, not man for them. Thus the new claims of the theory of the State must be as closely scrutinized by us as the claims of the Roman State were scrutinized by the early Christians. We shall ever render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. But God alone is Lord of the conscience. If, in obedience to the State, we forget God, if, in view of present tendencies, we lose sight of the eternal, if we make our idea of man shrivel down to what is possible for him to attain and to be within the present life, then we shall lose these higher values which have for nearly twenty centuries given dignity and worth to human life. For you cannot confine these within space and time. According to the teaching of Christ, man has an eternal worth, and he abides when the heavens and the earth shall have passed away, when all temporal forms of organization shall have an end. The Kingdom of God cannot be compressed within the limits of any conception of the State, nor can the ethical ideal be expressed in its terms. I therefore desire to set forth what we, as a college, as a church, stand for. We seek to rise to Christ's conception of man as a being of infinite worth. We seek ever to remind men that they must realize themselves as Christian men, and that no gain of any kind can compensate for the loss of the personality. We are here to proclaim a religion of redemption, to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. That is first, always first, never to be placed second. We are here also to affirm that this life, while it is a place of growth and work, is mainly a preparation for another

life in which hindrances, all powerful here, will be overcome, a life in which God's servants will serve Him with a service unhindered and unhampered by the sinful conditions which thwart service to-day. We say that man needs more than the three-score years and ten of earthly life for the making of him, and that he can do more service to God than can be put within this earthly life. We must preach the eternity of man, his infinite worth, a worth for us proven by the eternal love of God to him, and proven by the fact that Christ died for man. Exalt the idea of the State as you may, make it the synthesis of all ethical ideals if you please, and I for one will not complain; yet when you have done all, the fact remains that man, the person, has thoughts that transcend the State, hopes that pass beyond the sphere of organized society here, and aspirations which need eternity for their satisfaction. May there not be a conception of the State which is not incompatible with the claims of Christ, and a form of service to the State which will not ignore the essential and independent worth of the individual? It is a relevant question, but one which cannot be answered here and now. Yet, is there not an answer in the two commands, Fear God, Honour the king? Yes, there is an answer, but not on the terms of the Roman or the modern conception of the State. We cannot regard the State as divine, nor yield to it the loyalty which belongs to God alone. An ordinance of God, powers ordained by God; yes, that we admit, but when the advocates of the modern view of the State, with its unlimited claim to loyalty and obedience, and with the ascription to it of the place of providence, present this to us as our highest and best, we simply say there is a higher and a better, and we reserve our deepest service for God and His Kingdom. For, to say it once again, we feel that we shall continue when earth and time shall have disappeared from us, that we have eternal interests, and even here we feel that when once we have known Christ, our life is already eternal life, and we are at home in a kingdom not organized after the fashion of earthly kingdoms, but constituted by a divine indwelling within us, which links us with Christ, and with the living Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which abideth forever.