

Classics

Editorial Note. With this June 1988 issue *Zygon* inaugurates a new section called *Classics*. *Classics* is intended to be a section of the journal in which, from time to time, articles are published that call attention to individuals and institutions whose work predates that in *Zygon* but whose vision of the relation between science and religion is essentially the same as that expressed by many current articles in our journal.

Paul Carus was born in 1852 in Ilsenburg am Harz, Germany. The son of a Lutheran minister, he studied mathematics and classics in the Gymnasias and philosophy, classical philology, and the natural sciences at the universities, receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Tübingen in 1876. After moving to the United States, in 1888 he became editor and manager of the Open Court Publishing Company, founded a year earlier by Edward C. Hegeler. Under Carus's editorship Open Court became internationally known for its titles in philosophy, religion, science, and mathematics.

The press's first publication was the journal *The Open Court*, begun on 17 February 1887. Its first editor, Benjamin Franklin Underwood, was replaced by Carus about a year later. The purpose of this semipopular journal (first published fortnightly, then weekly, then monthly, then quarterly until 1936) was enunciated by Hegeler: "The leading object of *The Open Court* is . . . to establish religion on the basis of science and in connection therewith it will present the Monistic philosophy. . . . While advocating morals and rational and religious thought on the firm basis of Science, [it] will aim to substitute for unquestioning credulity intelligent inquiry, for the blind faith rational religious views, for unreasoning bigotry a liberal spirit, for sectarianism a broad and generous humanitarianism" (Sherwood J. B. Sugden, 1987, "Historical Introduction," *Open Court: A Centennial Bibliography 1887-1987* [La Salle, Ill.: Open Court], 16).

In 1890 Paul Carus began editing a more scholarly journal *The Monist*. In the 1895 issue of this journal, British biologist C. Lloyd Morgan summarized the basic ideas of the monism that Carus espoused:

that nature is one and indivisible and is explicable on one method, the method of reason; that experience is one and indivisible, though we may distinguish its subjective and objective aspects; that man is one and indivisible, though our analysis may disclose two strongly contrasted aspects, body and mind. It contends that man in both aspects, biological and psychological, is the product of an evolution that is one and continuous; and combining the results of its theory of knowledge with those of its analysis of man, it identifies the mind, as a product of evolution, with the subject, as given in experience (Sugden 1987, 21).

Paul Carus continued to edit *The Open Court* and *The Monist* until his death on 11 February 1916. Editorship of these publications was continued by Mary Hegler Carus, his wife and the daughter of Edward Hegler, until her death in 1936. At that time both publications ceased, but in 1962 *The Monist* was revived by Open Court and continues to be a leading philosophical journal, with John Hospers the current editor.

In addition to editing two journals whose stated purposes are very close to the goals of *Zygon*, Carus wrote some 2000 books, articles, reviews, and poems on mathematics, symbolism, ethics, language, art, law, statecraft, mythology, and oriental culture. Major works include *Metaphysik in Wissenschaft, Ethik und Religion* (1881), *Monism and Meliorism* (1885), *Fundamental Problems: The Method of Philosophy as a Systematic Arrangement of Knowledge* (1889), *Gospel of Buddha* (1894), *The Foundations of Mathematics* (1908), and *Truth on Trial* (1911).

The essay that is reprinted here as a *Zygon* Classic is from *The Dawn of a New Religious Era and Other Essays* (Revised and Enlarged Edition, Chicago: Open Court, 1916), 114-28. Although some of its specific scientific ideas and its style reflect the period in which it was originally written, it captures remarkably well the vision of *Zygon* in developing constructive and positive relationships between science and religion. It is reprinted, essentially as originally published, by permission of the Open Court Publishing Company. © Open Court Publishing Company.

K. E. P.

THE WORK OF THE OPEN COURT

by Paul Carus

The Open Court Publishing Company was founded to serve as a center for an earnest and thoroughgoing reformation of religion under the influence of science, and in working to this end it has combined a fearless radicalism with a reverent conservatism. Its founder as well as its manager,¹ together with most of its friends, are convinced that this is the only correct attitude, and that, therefore, the publications of the Open Court Publishing Company are leading in the right direction on the path of progress, foreordained in the history of mankind by the law of evolution.

The Open Court discusses the philosophical problems of God and soul, of life and death, and life after death, the problems of the origin of man and the significance of religion, and the nature of morality, occasionally including political and social life without, however, entering into party questions.

Since we cannot build up the future without comprehending the present and since the present has grown from the past and finds its explanation in the history of bygone ages, we deem it necessary to discuss not only philosophical problems but to enter also into the questions of the history of religion, presenting the results of Biblical research, of Babylonian and Egyptian excavations, the religions of Egypt, of India and of China, and kindred topics, all of which directly

or indirectly throw light on the origin and significance of our own religion today. None of them, be it ever so remote in space or time, but possesses some intense interest to us, either by having contributed to the makeup of our own souls or by affording a parallel to the development of Christianity, or even constituting a contrast to it, so as to become interesting on account of its very difference.

SCIENCE THE REFORMER

This is an age of science. Science is surely though slowly transforming the world. Science reveals to us secrets of nature and explains the constitution of the universe as regulated by unfailling law. Science guides the inventor's hands and makes things possible which in former days were deemed attainable only by magic.

Science is the attainment of truth through methods of exact inquiry. Its aim is a statement of truth verified by rational proof, by experience, and experiment.

The influence of science upon practical life is not limited to the domains of industry, commerce, transportation, and the methods of communication by mail, telegraph, telephone, and so on, but extends also to the intellectual and moral fields. It does away with ignorance, narrowness and bigotry, but while it overcomes superstition, it will not usher in an age of irreligion; on the contrary it will make the future more intensely religious for under our very eyes it is bringing about a salutary and much needed reformation.

Now it is true that science applied to religion has wrought much havoc with the traditional interpretation of established creeds. Philosophy recognizes the anthropomorphism of the old God-conception; psychology discredits the traditional theory of a soul-entity; comparative religion dispels the claim of the unique and exceptional position of Christianity; higher criticism proves the human origin of the Bible and disposes of a belief in special revelation. For these reasons science has been regarded as hostile to religion, and so the old-fashioned religionists look upon science as godless and dangerous while the freethinkers and infidels triumphantly proclaim that science will make an end of religion and the future will be an age of irreligious science.

To a superficial observer the spread of unbelief may appear to be a symptom of decay, foreboding a final dissolution of religion, but a deeper insight will reveal the fact that we live in a stage of transition and the disintegration of dogmatism is merely preparatory to a reconstruction of our religious faith on a firmer foundation—firmer because truer, and it is a reconstruction because it will discard only the errors of the past but not the good that it contains, not the old ideals, the moral endeavor, and the serious spirit of religious aspirations.

EVOLUTION

We reject the traditional interpretation of religion because we can no longer believe its dogmas, but we do not join in the hue and cry against religion. While we realize the imperfections of all current creeds, we do not look upon their existence as evil. On the contrary, we recognize them as powerful factors for good and as an indispensable preparation for the religion of the future. Churches may be deficient in many respects, but they are much-needed organizations, and we cherish no hostility toward them. We are too much convinced of the truth of evolution as a general principle of all life not to apply it also to the spiritual domains of civilization, morality, and religion. We cannot begin the development of life over again simply because the present state of things is imperfect. We believe that the future of mankind must be built upon the past, and we must evolve the living present by way of progress and reform; not by a revolution or a destruction of the old traditions and former experiences. The future can not obliterate the past, but must use it as the foundation for a higher and truer religion.

FULFILMENT NOT DESTRUCTION

We must not identify religion with the religious superstitions of the past; we must bear in mind that all progress leads to truth through error. Truth—in science as well as in religion—is first groped after in a search which instinctively divines the right solution and formulates it first in a childlike way, then more and more clearly, until finally an exact statement becomes possible.

The path to truth naturally passes through myth and allegory, through a representation in parables, through mysticism and other visionary approximations, to a scientific comprehension of the actual state of things, and this law of intellectual evolution holds good not only for religion but also for the sciences and the arts.

Science has not originated fully equipped and ready-made as Athene came with her entire armament from the head of Zeus. The mythological period was as much an indispensable phase in the history of science as in the history of religion. Alchemy prepared the way for chemistry, and a close scrutiny of the history of knowledge will reveal that this law of gradual development holds good for all the sciences, indeed for all the different domains of life and also for religion.

Religious institutions are more conservative than any other of the affairs of human life; therefore it is natural that the magic conception perseveres longer in the religious domain than elsewhere, but as surely as astrology has changed into astronomy, so theology will become theonomy; that is, a truly scientific conception of God.

THE ROOT OF RELIGION

Originally religion is not clear and conscious. It appears first as a vague impulse, but as a rule (though not always) it is an impulse for good. The religious sentiment develops from a quality inherent in all beings, nay in all things. It is a quality akin to gravity that attracts mass to mass and holds together all material things. An analogous law sways the domain of sentiency, for every living soul is naturally endowed with a longing beyond its own self, a yearning for otherness, and an anxiety not to lose its connection with the whole of which it is a part. This sentiment, which may fitly be called panpathy or all-feeling, is the germ from which spring all our ideals, first social and erotic, then religious and ethical, and also artistic and scientific.

Religion is ultimately sentiment, but it is also thought and will. It is in command of the three H's, the Heart, the Head, and the Hand. As sentiment it resides in the Heart, as thought it directs the work of the Head, as will it guides the Hand. In different men it will manifest itself differently in one way or another, but it will not be perfect unless it dominates the whole man, his heart, his head, and his hand.

GOD

Life is transient and every happening, whether good or evil, pleasant or unpleasant, praiseworthy or detestable, will pass by. Nothing bodily can endure and all things that have originated must come to an end. Man is no exception to the rule and his individuality rises into being and is doomed finally to dissolution. Yet man possesses the divine spark of reason. He sees the universal in the particular, eternal in the transient, and the general law in its concrete realization and so he longs to find his anchorage in the bottom-rock of all existence. Under the influence of the humanity of man, of his reason, and his spiritual comprehension of things, his panpathy broadens into a love of the eternal, the infinite, the all-hood of existence.

This is the ultimate norm of life which dominates the world with the necessity of natural law, irrefragable and without allowing exceptions; this the ultimate authority upon which finally all moral maxims are founded, and this the standard of truth and untruth, of right and wrong, of justice and injustice. We call it God, and we believe that even the atheist will not be prepared to deny its existence. This God is a reality undeniable and as sure as our own being; for without it, reason would be impossible, science would not exist, purposive action could not take place, ideals and moral aspirations would be illusions, and the universe, instead of a law-ordained cosmos, would be a meaningless chaos.

Religion makes man feel himself one with the source of life, it identifies him with the law of being, and prompts him to work for the purport of the whole.

THE DUTY OF INQUIRY

The idea that our knowledge of religious truth is and should be final is characteristic of the period of dogmatism, but it is an error that is gradually disappearing. Dogmatism with its persecutions and heresy trials is fast passing away. We know now that our interpretation of religious doctrines has undergone changes and that these changes are necessary. Even St. Paul confesses of the message which he had for the world, that "now we see through a glass, darkly," and he understands that congregations in a state of babyhood must be fed on milk but that the time will come when they will put away childish things.

The ideal of a perfect religion is most assuredly not, as a few reactionary advocates of the past would have it, blind faith, being a belief in doctrines even though they be a contradiction of science and a condemnation of all that by application of exact methods can be discovered as truth. Our ideal of religion can only be an actualization of truth itself, and by truth we understand truth pure and simple, not a mystical statement of visions and imaginary revelations, purely subjective conceptions and oracular utterances, impressive though they may be to the large masses of mankind, but truth objectively verified by the maturest and most painstaking investigations of science.

Some devout believers resent the investigation of their dearest beliefs; but would it be advisable to investigate all that appertains to our bodily welfare and regard our religious beliefs as exempt, too sacred for inquiry, and thus leave them to the haphazard of tradition? This would be a mistaken policy. If religion is of the right kind it must be true, and if our religious conceptions are erroneous, it is our most sacred duty to revise them and make them true.

THE DIVINITY OF SCIENCE

It is a mistake to look upon science as secular and profane while religious dogmas are deemed sacred. All truth is sacred and dogmas can be sacred only if in the garb of symbolism they contain truths that can stand the test of scientific criticism.

Science, if it be but genuine science, is not human, but superhuman. Science is divine. Scientists do not make science, they search for it and they discover scientific truths. Science is a revelation in the true and original sense of the word.

In the history of mankind the recognition of moral truths such as the wisdom of the golden rule, our need of justice, the bliss of righteous-

ness, the power of a heart animated with universal good will, have mostly come to man by instinctive intuition, in a similar way as a poet is inspired to give expression to thoughts prophetic which are grander than his age; and therefore we will not say that science alone is revelation; sentiment, devotion, art, poetry, and so on, are also channels of the divine spirit; but science (i.e., genuine exact science) is certainly unique in its way because of the sureness of its steps and the reliability of its results. Therefore, it can not be disregarded in our religious life and the time in which it will produce most glorious results is near at hand.

THE OLD TERMS IN A NEW SENSE

Critics of our position in both the ultra-conservative and the ultra-radical fields, blame us for using the old terms of religious nomenclature in a new interpretation, but we answer them that we do so because we are convinced that this is the right method of procedure justified not only by precedent but also by a correct comprehension of the law of progress. Even our scientific terms are an inheritance from a prescientific era. We speak of sunrise still, though every child knows that the sun does not rise, it merely seems to rise; electricians call the oscillations of the ether *currents* as if they were like a flow of water in rivers, yet we know that they are waves passing through a medium that is comparatively stationary. The process is an infinitely rapid transfer of a certain form of motion, but no flow, no current, no streaming of any kind. Yet the word is used and an attempt to discard it would merely elicit smiles, for it is next to impossible to have a scientific nomenclature free from allegory or terms that remind us of the prescientific period of mythical notions.

The truth of the matter is that it is easier to continue using the old terms in a new sense than to invent new terms. It is natural for man to name things as they first strike him and then investigate their nature and describe them in exact definitions.

Religion is not an exception, but in this it simply follows the general law of life. No religious reform will succeed unless the innovations are a product of the past and are felt to be so. In using the old terms in a new sense we are confident that we preserve the old spirit and give it a deeper and better interpretation.

We believe in evolution and believe that man has attained his present position by an intellectual growth which is but the consistent outcome of the old aspirations and an actualization of the ideals of a conviction formerly regarded as orthodox, of a religion of right doctrine; and the change came about because the salient points of truth, of the attainment of truth, and of the right doctrine were taken seriously.

THE GOD OF TRUTH

The first condition in religion is always sincerity and honesty, that is, a love of truth, a free acknowledgment of what must be conceded to be true, and above all an earnest endeavor to actualize the truth in our life.

This is an old aspiration and we simply draw the ultimate conclusion of its consistent application. We read in the first book of Esdras a passage which deserves to be quoted and requoted.

As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore.

With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things; and all men do well like of her works.

Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty, of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.

NO SUBSTITUTE

Sometimes men who observe and regret the breakdown of the traditional forms of faith express the desire for a substitute for religion. We sympathize with their sentiment, though we would not brook surrogates, for we want the genuine article. Yet we claim at the same time that the religion of truth is no substitute. On the contrary, it is the true religion, and all previous religions have been mere temporary makeshifts; they are preliminary statements whose main value consists in the fact that they should develop into a more perfect form. This more perfect form has to be worked out in the slow process of mental growth, and when it comes, it will fulfill all its hopes as much as the maturity of a perfect manhood actualizes the fond dreams of our childhood.

Upon the principles here set forth, we advocate a religious reformation with new conceptions of God, of the soul, of immortality, of inspiration, of revelation, and all other factors of our religious life.

Religion is not belief of any kind, it is not church membership, not mere devotion, not the performance of ritual, not the lip service of prayer; religion is part of our own being; it is the dominant idea of our soul, and it is characteristic of religion that it comprises the entire man, his sentiment, his will, and his intellect. Religion is always a world-conception in which our relation to the All of life finds its determination. As such it consists of ideas, commonly formulated in doctrines. These ideas, however, are not purely intellectual; they possess an emotional character and are rooted deeply in the subconscious regions of our being. They link our life to the All and represent, as it were, the will of the universe. Being a power within us they are mightier than we and govern our will, frequently in spite of ourselves.

DIFFERENCE AND UNITY IN RELIGION

The different religions appear from this standpoint as aspirations all striving to reach the same goal. They are by no means equal, for very few of them approach, much less attain to their common ideal. They differ in many respects, especially in their general attitude toward the world. Sometimes the attitude in religion is a matter of interpretation, and it may happen that two sects of different religions possess the same general attitude and thereby become more akin the one to the other than each of them is to other sects of its own faith. Aside from differences of attitude there is an agreement among the several religions in moral maxims which is well nigh universal, and has given a strong support to the view that they, the moral maxims, are the essential feature of religious life. It is possible, even probable, that all religions on earth—nay on other planets also, wherever rational beings develop religion with its cosmic ideals—the same morality will be preached reflecting the same conviction as to the essential constitution of the universe, though they may be expressed in different symbols. There are incidental features which naturally diverge in different localities, so we must learn to discriminate between the essential and the accidental and must respect the common religious spirit without taking offense at differences.

THE FUTURE

Mankind is one and has the tendency to become one more and more. Families coalesce into tribes, tribes combine into nations, and nations develop international relations from which a cosmopolitan spirit is bound to spring; and as it is in politics so it will be in religion. Rituals and symbols may vary according to taste, historical tradition, and opinion, but the essence of religion can only be one, it must be and remain one and the same among all nations, and they all search for this common ideal, the religion of truth pure and undefiled. The sooner mankind recognizes it, the better it will be for progress, welfare, and all international relations, for it will bring "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace toward the men of good will."

We can see as in a prophetic vision the future of mankind; when the religion of love and good will has become the dominating spirit that finally determines the legislatures of the nations and regulates their international and home politics. Religion is not alone for the churches, but the churches are for the world, in which the field of our duties lies. The churches have to travel the same way as we; religion develops in converging lives with philosophy and science, and at the point where they meet there lies our common goal.

The essentials of religion are always questions of morality, and morality is nothing but an application of truth to the issues of practical life. So far as accidentals are concerned we may without quarrel have as many religions as there are differences in temperament and preferences in externalities, but in all essentials it is possible,—nay it is desirable, and it will finally be necessary to come to an agreement.

Here is the whole religious problem in a nutshell: What we need is truth and what we want is truth; there is no salvation except in truth. The truly religious man is he alone who is truthful, who seeks the truth, he who trusts in the truth, he who loves the truth, he who identifies himself with the truth, and above all he who lives the truth.

O let us to ourselves be true,
 And true to others ever;
 The trust in Truth inspire our souls
 And dominate our endeavor;
 The spirit of Truth descend on us
 With consecrative vigor
 To lift us up, to strengthen us,
 Our whole life to transfigure.
 If we're but truthful, O what bliss!
 Life loses all its terror.
 For Godward every step will be
 And Truthward e'en through error.

NOTES

1. Open Court Publishing Company was founded in 1887 by Edward C. Hegeler of La Salle, Illinois. Paul Carus began his work at Open Court as editor and manager in 1888.