

Science, Philosophy and Christian Philosophy

An excerpt from the writings of Eugene Halliday

We are going to study Christian Philosophy. But before we do so, we will first shortly define the difference between Christian Philosophy, philosophy in general, and science.

Science approaches the problem of the world by using the human sense-organs to collect information about things, relations and events, and then uses reason to produce theories which might explain the known facts and aid prediction of events. If predicted events then occur, it is accepted that for practical purposes the theories are true.

Philosophy in general starts with certain ideas which are taken as basic, like the idea of "Unity" or of "Substance", on the basis of which it tries to construct by strict logic a coherent system of reality and man's relation to it.

The authority of science rests on the information amassed by the use of the human sense organs, organised by human reason. The authority of philosophy in general rests on **certain ideas found in the human mind** and assumed to be basic, and the application to these of **strict logic**.

But **Christian Philosophy** derives its **authority**, not from masses of scientific information gained by using our physical sense organs, nor from ideas assumed to be basic in the human mind. Christian philosophy rests on the **words spoken by Jesus Christ**. Only that philosophy which can be shown to derive **logically** from Christ's words can legitimately be said to be Christian. Let us examine some of the words of Jesus and draw from them the basic truths of Christian philosophy.

Jesus says, "*The words that I speak unto you, they are **spirit** and they are **life***". (John 6.63.). Here He says clearly that by His words we can come into relation with Spirit, and can live in a way that is not possible for us without His words. This means that the words of Jesus must be very special words, words which, if we accept them in the right way, can **open the door into a totally new kind of life**.

The first fourteen verses of John's Gospel constitute a prologue to the whole message of this scripture. The first verse says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Verse fourteen says, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth".

The Greek word here translated as "Word", is "Logos". Logos means "Word", but it means also "Ratio". Thus it is quite correct for us to translate this verse, "**In the beginning was the Ratio of all things, the Reason for their existence, and the Ratio was with the God, and the Ratio was God**". Then we can say, "This Ratio became flesh, or was embodied in the only begotten Son of the Father."

Even the words of the prologue to John's Gospel must be tested by the words of Jesus Christ Himself, but as we shall see later, the ideas expressed in this prologue are given the support they need.

If we accept Christ's statement that His words are spirit and life, and see in Him the Son of God that He many times declared Himself to be, we can see that **He embodies in Himself the Ratio, the divine Reason of all things, the principle by which all things have come into being and exist**.

Verse Three of John's Gospel says, "All things were made by Him (by the Word, or Ratio, or Divine Reason) and without Him was not anything made".

We know that there is a ratio, or law of proportion, in all things. We see the evidences of it in all natural things, in the way that crystals grow their geometrical forms, in the patterns of snow-flakes, in the arrangements of petals of flowers, in the way that trees branch out and spread their leaves to gain maximum light and air, in the way their roots continually divide to find the moisture and minerals they need for their maintenance. Everywhere we look, if we use our intelligence, we see evidences that the Universe in which we live is permeated and ruled by a great Principle of Reason, the Logos-Word or Ratio of all things.

Scientists assume some Principle or Ratio as the basis of the possibility of their science.

Philosophy in general assumes this Ratio as the basis of all **valid human thinking**.

Christian philosophy declares this Ratio on the authority of Jesus Christ, for He declares His Unity with the Creator of all things in his words, "I and my Father are one".

The Unity of God is the origin of the Ratio or proportion which manifests in all things. If there were no unity at the basis of the Universe, there could be no Ratio, no principle of proportion between things, and therefore no possibility of Justice or of Love. (What the relation is between Justice and Love we shall see later.)

Now, if we accept Jesus' words that He is one with God the Father, Creator of all things, and that His words are spirit and life, we will see that His words must be parts of the great Word, parts of the Logos-Ratio or Supreme Reason by which all things came into being. Then we will pay special attention to His words; we will not treat them as we deal with the words we daily use to refer to the things of the outer material world. We will realise that when we hear words of Jesus Christ, we are hearing **words of power, which can lead us into the world of spirit**, and give to us the very means of real life, more abundantly than we have ever known before.

The life of mankind as we see it generally showing itself in the material world, is but a shadow of the real life possible for us. Ordinary life from day to day is a life of materially conditioned activities, of routine procedures, of repetitive patterns of behaviour which tend, by their sheer repetition, to become shorn of all real meaning.

Meaninglessness in life in the physical world has become increasingly the concern of modern **existentialist philosophy**. Materialistically based civilisations, their activities dedicated to conveyor-belt systems of **production for consumer societies**, visualise an **endless spiral of ever-increasing, ever-accelerating production of commodities, with planned obsolescence and inbuilt rot** to guarantee the continuance of the cycle of production and consumption, while the consumers stand by with unvoiced but visible uneasiness, awaiting deliveries of the "goods".

In order to free ourselves from the meaninglessness of the Mammon-mechanism of a materialistically grounded existence, we need a New Word, a Word of Life, which will indicate for us a direction and goal for all human activities. Jesus Christ gave us this New Word, the Word of Spirit and Life, which, if we will receive it, will transform our whole way of looking at reality.

In chapter 13, verse 34, of John's Gospel, Jesus says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye shall have love one to another".

After nearly 2,000 years, in our materialistically grounded world of human civilisations, we do not see much evidence that people have taken seriously these words of Jesus. We do not see much loving kindness and mutual helpfulness in the competitive world of the rat race, where material success and the pursuit of worldly honours occupies most men's minds. In such a world it is not surprising that an Archbishop of Canterbury (*Archbishop Ramsey. Ed*) should predict a diminishing number of real Christians, nor that the increased value of the few will be in proportion to the decrease in numbers. Christ Himself said, "Many are called, but few are chosen". (Matthew 22.14). This idea of the "few chosen" is one of the most difficult ideas in Christian Philosophy.

Let us consider for a few moments the world as we observe it to be. In it, man occupies a most peculiar position. He lives on a planet (our earth) moving in a certain orbit in the solar system, in unique conditions not found on other planets. On our planet we find a fantastic number of different forms of life, from the tiniest bacteria to the greatest whales, from the simplest single-celled creatures like the amoeba, up to the most multi-celled organisms like our own.

Life has called into being innumerable forms of creatures, but only one of these forms has been chosen to receive consciously the influx of divine spirit, and this one form is that of man. Of all the immense number of living forms called into existence, only man has been chosen to become the lord of his own being "Many are called, few chosen." Man is of the few. To belong to mankind is to belong to the chosen few.

The fact of the choosing of man from amongst the vast number of living beings in the universe, makes him a very special case. For the fact that he has been so chosen means that **he himself is also to choose**. Man is a being with an inbuilt possibility of **exercising a power of choice**, a possibility built into him by his Creator.

This fact of the possibility of choice in man makes him indeed into a very special case. For this possibility makes him **responsible** for his own actions, for his thoughts and for his feelings, for his hopes, his dreams, his aspirations, and his ambitions.

But this possibility of choice in man is not always exercised, and where it is not exercised, it is **as if he did not possess it**. And if a man does not use a **talent** which has been given him, it may be taken away from him. Chapter 25, verse 29 of the Gospel of Matthew warns us of this possibility in Christ's parable of the talents, where are His words, "Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath".

Here we see that, because of his possibility of choice, man has a very high responsibility in the world, and in the parable of the talents he is warned of the possibility of the withdrawal from him of his capacity for choice, if he neglects to use it.