

**Cornelius Van Til
Collection of
Articles
From
1920–1939**

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Freedom

To the American patriot the month of February brings fond memories. Washington and Lincoln, the very mention of whose names brings a thrill of feverish joy, were born in this month. Successive generations of Americans have looked up to these men as models to pattern after. Their public virtues and private principles are far beyond our power to add or detract; we, too, join the many thousands who gaze in breathless pose at their colossal grandeur.

No, we do not stand in the back row of those that admire these men. But how shall we honor them most? Goethe has told us that the greatest homage we can give to any man is the ever-renewed attempt to understand him. Goethe has said well. We, too, would put forth an ever-renewed attempt to understand and fathom the richness of the personalities of Washington and Lincoln. Then, too, do we study Americanism, for we can study Americanism in no better way than by poring over the life of its greatest representative?

This is what Calvin College students have tried to do in the past; this they will continue to do. The successive editorials of *Chimes* have reflected the attitude of the students in this matter and will do so in the future. Now one of the main objects Washington and Lincoln sought to obtain for their countrymen was freedom. Freedom, it is the watchword of Americanism. Let us briefly study freedom. The leaders of our nation would not draw attention so much to their person as to the principle for which they stood; they would have us understand and live in freedom, for only then are we true Americans.

We all wish to be free. Ofttimes we think that if only there were no authority to impose any kind of laws upon us, we should be free. However, freedom is not a negative idea, an absence of all restraint. It is much rather a positive idea. Manifestly, if we are to enjoy freedom we must be free ourselves. You must first determine whether you, in your inmost being are actually free. The reply to this question will vary with the view you take of man's origin, nature, and goal. If man is the product of spontaneous generation, of his essence is a wave of the ocean of humanity, his goal the exaltation of himself, his freedom will be a different freedom from that of the Christian.

The Christian turns to Scripture when he wishes to determine the origin, nature, and goal of man. There he finds that man is a spiritual being. "And God spake, 'Let us create man in our image, after our likeness.' " When God created man, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Man received his spirit directly from God. This spirit it is that distinguishes man from the rest of earthly creation. This spirit it is, also, that makes man a self-conscious being endowed with intellect and will. Man is even of God's kind, the object of Satan's envy, king of the earth, priest of God.

Equally true it is that man is God's production. God spake, "Let us create man." Man, though of God's kind, is compared to his Maker less than a drop in the bucket. The creation of man carries a distinct implication for his freedom; it uproots at once all Deistic or Pantheistic freedom. There can be no Deistic freedom for man who stands in spiritual, personal relation to God; no Pantheistic freedom for a creature of God.

Where, then, are we to look for man's freedom? Our view of man as the spiritual production of God points to God as the archetype of all human freedom. Human freedom must be like God's freedom, since man resembles God, and it must be different from God's freedom since man is a finite creature.

In God, then, lies the archetype of human freedom. What is this freedom of God? Would you dare to assert that God is not free? I think not. And yet, O vain man, do you picture His freedom as you picture your own, and absence of all restraint or the ability at any time to do or leave a thing undone? No, God, though independent of all without Him, is still dependent on all within Himself. He can not deny Himself. His essence determines His will. But we find the strictest harmony between His essence and His conscious life, and this harmony constitutes His freedom. God is righteous and holy; He also wills righteousness and holiness. What harmony, what freedom!

We are fashioned after God and our freedom after God's freedom. But never ought we to lose sight of the fact that our freedom is distinguished from God's freedom by reason of our finitude. Our freedom is, therefore, primarily a freedom to answer to our *raison d'être* according to the laws of our being. Only through abiding with the laws of our being as spiritual creatures of God are we free indeed.

Can you think of a greater tribute of praise to Washington and Lincoln than the pouring of this conception of freedom into the current of American life? Can we act as nobler sons of Calvin than by proclaiming from the housetops the gospel of freedom *coram Deo*? Can we be worthier followers of Christ than by living in the freedom wherewith He has set us free? Can we be truer children of the living God than by thus accomplishing the task He has sets us to do?

Our Attitude Toward Modern American Literature

By the hand of Providence we, as Christians of Reformed persuasion, are placed in America at the dawn of the twentieth century. This fact has much to say to us in many ways. At this time I would call attention to but one thing about which it has something to impart to us as Calvin students, namely our attitude toward modern American literature.

The fact that we are Calvin students implies that the realization of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is our one supreme aim in life. Now, Christ's Kingdom is a beautiful Kingdom; everything that stands connected with it must partake of its eminence, of its heavenly harmony and melody. It follows that when we tell the world of this heavenly Kingdom, we shall do it in a form best suited to the beauty of the content. And since modern literature, according to its best critics, yields us unexcelled forms of expression, the conclusion seems warranted that we as Calvin College students should diligently seek to feel at home in it.

When we read *De Reformatie*, we find that its editors have not been slothful to conform themselves to the language of the age. Study their entire mode of expression. They express their mind and character in modern Dutch. Explain the straightforwardness, the strength and spontaneous flow of the style of *De Reformatie* in general if it be not that its editors have saturated themselves with the speech of *De Tachtigers* and their followers.

Why should we not in like manner here? Is our American literature of recent date less beautiful than that of Holland? I do not know, but a mere taste of it convinces one that we cannot bear a deluge of it and come out the better for it. Many of us have no cultural but an agricultural background. Alas! the Muses did not hover over stumps and cornfields. But that is only another consideration urging us to make up for what we lack in early training.

What! Shall we adapt Christ to the age and not the age to Christ? Yes, we shall adapt Christ to the age, but in order that the age may adapt itself to Christ. Did not Christ accommodate Himself to the sinner that the sinner might accommodate himself to Him? Did not Christ adapt Himself to the Dutch the English, the German, that these in turn might adapt themselves to Him? We do not compel the children of this age to conform to the age of Christ and the Apostles. Why should we then urge a new generation to fashion itself after the model of generation just gone by? Is the Dutch and English of fifty years ago superior to the language of Christ and the Apostles that we award it greater honor?

"But yes," you reply, "theoretically you speak well, Socrates, but we poor Athenians have daily to contend with practical difficulties. We have the speech of the Areopagus and the Forum to master before we can think of the Imagists. We have no time." "No time!" That argument has killed, yes killed a good many of us. We have heard it rehearsed in our ears till we believe it. It has been said that at Calvin students have to work very hard. And we believe it. When will this argument be silenced once for all? Can we not begin right now by pledging to ourselves that for a week, a month, a year the phrase, "I have no time," shall not pass our lips within the hearing of a fellow-student? If we will acquaint ourselves with modern American literature; if we will become more artistic in the expression of our ideas; if we will be true Calvinites also in this respect that

we cultivate art for art under God, there is a splendid opportunity for us. Let us take more of the courses offered in this line and request others to be offered. The teacher in English is all too glad to help us. Then, there is the splendid opportunity of our college and City Library. How often do we spend a couple of hours in the reference room to browse in literature? The opportunity is there, let us lay hold on it!

In order to encourage the study of modern literature, the *Chimes* Staff offers two prizes: one of fifteen and one of ten dollars for the best and the second best essay on some phase or representative of "Modern American Literature." Essays are not to exceed two thousand words. Any Calvin student may become a contestant. Even should a third year theologian wish to stoop down from his giddy Alpine heights of attainment to pick up this little pearl, he is welcome. Let the essays be forthcoming. We shall publish them all if possible. Competent judges will be found in time. For further information see the Editor.

Students And Controversies

Enrollment on the list of a college record makes one apparently a student, but not necessarily in fact. Though our names have graced the pages of the catalogue for a decade, we may still lack the characteristics of a genuine student. We may well call attention to this fact, for here lurks a far from imaginary danger.

We would call attention to this not so much in general, however, as to a specific instance that is indicative of the absence of a proper student spirit. A student's attitude toward a living controversy is a fairly accurate thermometer with which to grade his quality as student.

A student's attitude toward a controversy may be said to be normal if it reveals an intelligent and diligent following of all points in dispute. A student wants to learn. He is filled with an insatiable desire for knowledge. To gain knowledge, in the broad sense of the term, is his exclusive aim. For the purpose of acquiring knowledge he goes to the class-room. For that purpose he reads, reads much. With that purpose in mind he views current events and tries to ascertain the principles that impel men to act. With that purpose in mind he is to view, chiefly, any and all controversies of whatever nature.

But now in actuality we find that oftentimes we are not normal, but abnormal students. We are either too cold or too hot. If the controversies that fill the very air about us with their din do not even reach our ears, if we seal ourselves hermetically within the circle prescribed by our text-books, we are too cold or too narrow. We either overemphasize the student virtue of concentration on our school work, so that it becomes a vice, or our pulsebeat is too slow, so that we need a tonic to restore our lost vitality. Happily, however, it may be asserted that most of us do not manifest abnormality in this direction. If we did, it would be sad indeed, especially if it were due to lack of vitality. No, we more quickly display abnormality in the opposite direction. We are very much subject to fevers. In the past an occasional sufferer has become delirious as was evident from the look in his eye and the words of his mouth; fatalities have even occurred.

To explain this phenomenon fully would be difficult, but we may point to some factors that bring about our fevers. Many of us have a strong orthodox-instinct within us. When the premillennial question was urgent, we strutted through the halls as so many incarnations of sound Reformed doctrine condemning the heresy without having felt the force of its argument or understanding its implications. Others, again, have a would-be-scholarly-progressive instinct which need only be seen to be ridiculed. When one hears an undergraduate student talk about doing research work, while his *amo, amas, amat*, is still the result of distinctive effort, he has a fairly representative sample of the would-be-progressiveness among us.

Then, there is the desire of all of us to pose as though we know. We dislike to confess our ignorance. We wish to take a stand; we wish to have convictions. To have no convictions about a point in dispute, we consider to be a weakness. During the progress of the controversy engaging the attention of all at present it has happened that we took a far more definite stand than many of our leaders. While the soup was still much too hot for Professor B. K. Kuiper, so that he was afraid to touch it lest he burn his paws, many of us had already pushed our jaws to the bottom of the pan. We took definite stand for or against.

And do not say that this applies to the Seminary only, because that is too obviously untrue. The conversations of many college students are proof to the contrary.

Now this desire to pose as orthodox or on the other hand progressive, and the desire to appear as men of conviction does much harm. Surely, we wish to be orthodox, but we must first learn what real orthodoxy is. Surely, we wish to be progressive, but we must first have a basis to progress from. And to be mature in judgment, even were the givens all in our possession, is manifestly out of place for students.

It may be replied that the relentless wheel of time is about to cast us into the midst of actual life when we shall have to give leadership, when we shall have to take a definite stand on questions that vex us now. We often picture ourselves in the midst of actual life. There we see a host of troubled souls flocking to us for the solving of their problems. To give them answers of yes to this and no to that will be our business. But is this view of leadership the correct one? We are inclined to believe it is not, but that it is a bad source from which springs our wrong attitude toward controversies. To be leaders must we be some sort of encyclopedias? Must we give a material answer to every question that may be asked? To do that would presuppose a numerically, a mechanically complete world- and life-view. But can anyone ever gain such a world- and life-view? Evidently one can not. Now, since it is impossible in a lifetime to acquire a yes and no view on all questions, how absurd is it for students to take a definite stand on questions with implications about which little has yet been written. It may not be out of date for us to hand one another some "Certificates of Incompetency." The consciousness of the unfathomable depth and the sweeping width of the questions in debate should come upon us with such overwhelming force as to keep us from all rash statement or stand. How many of us have the ability to judge about a case of hyperbole in the Hebrew language? Remember Dr. Wilson.

If, on the other hand, the questions are as simple as some would have us believe, we students need not concern ourselves about it at all, because then they will surely be settled in the right manner without our aid.

May we then have no convictions; may we never take a stand? Would we advocate a fake, would-be scholarly attitude of which indecision and doubt are the prime characteristics? Not in the least. We can scarcely help having at least tentative convictions about questions at issue. Our entire psychological constitution compels us early to have certain tentative convictions, and to find logical reasons to bolster them up. Then, there is the fact that our instruction is often rather colored and tendential. I mean by this that in the class-room a line of argumentation is set forth which seems supremely convincing in itself, but which does not at every step present the difficulties that arise. Difficulties, if not ignored, are often quite unsatisfactorily presented. We do not make this an accusation. It is, I take it, almost unavoidable for any teacher, especially in controversial times, to try to make disciples. For a teacher to propagandize, however, presupposes either too much or too little ability in the students; too much if he thinks the student will independently weigh all difficulties; too little if he thinks the student will not some time or other throw over the card house. Thus it comes that we are almost sure to have convictions, and this need not harm if we only remember that they should always be tentative. Tentative convictions do not block the way for intellectual and moral progress as do permanent convictions. Tentative convictions do not rob us of the great gain we

may derive from controversies as do permanent convictions. Permanent convictions among students must be destroyed.

Still another reason why we are in danger of losing much of the profit we might gain from controversies is our habit of group-debating. An individual always feels stronger when surrounded by a cohort of fellow-believers. In a group one says something very cute, another something rash; a third adds a little to both. An extreme statement of the opposing side is taken and pilloried as the very embodiment of backwardness or radicalism, as the case may be. The psychological effect of this group-debating is not easily over-calculated. The spirit of the mob lays hold on us; we run into extremes.

So it often occurs that due to our natural inclinations, our orthodox or progressive-instinct, our desire to pose as men of conviction, our teaching, together with our group-debating, we take an altogether harmful attitude toward controversies. We rob ourselves to a large extent of the benefits that especially students may derive from being moulded in a controversial period. We as students should look at the bright side of all polemics. We could not desire a better period of time to get an education than now. The problems under consideration are forced upon us with the irresistible push of actuality. They bid us revolve them in our minds, grapple with them, make them part of ourselves in the sense that we envelop them, that the strength of their various aspects has to us the reality of flesh and blood. Were we benefited by the pre-millennial controversy? Only if we have tried to understand its content, only if we have been pre-millennialists in the sense that we have allowed its current of appeal to overflow us unrestricted and have emerged to a higher level, are we come out the better for it.

Much profit we may thus obtain from following the arguments for and against different positions which our leaders take. A controversial time will help us gain this profit. If now we are only on our guard lest we be swept off our feet and carried along with the current. If we are swept along with the current, we are not educated but stunned in our intellectual growth because we cease to think when we begin to propagate. Then, we are stunned in our spiritual growth also because we allow a schism between a few mortals to widen the chasm between our Christ and us, and between our fellow-believers and us. We are in danger that our hearts grow cold towards those with whom we are in the future destined to work for the coming of God's Kingdom. That would be irreparable. Hence we are to be on the lookout lest our entrance into controversies does not dampen our appreciation of our fellow-students, lest our internal differences should later weaken our offensive against the enemies of our King.

And now you say: "These things are past, why touch upon it yet again?" Let me offer that these things are not past and that they will come up stronger than ever in the near future. The present controversy will soon come to its culminating point. Let us now as student body consciously, deliberately determine that we are going to benefit by the question at issue; that we shall try to acquaint ourselves with its different aspects, gain vital connection with all, not only some of the views offered for solution. Let us here and now decide that apparently plausible argumentation shall not lead us to premature judgments which in turn would lead to the intellectual and spiritual retardation of ourselves and our fellow-students.

We may thank God that we live now. The world is full of pressing problems. We live in an age of world-congresses and world-movements. World-situations in all their sweeping largeness appeal to our youthful romanticism. We want to do something big.

But at the same time our period of training falls within a period of denominational controversy. For this also we may thank God because it contains many a blessing for our later lives. May we not turn away this blessing by our own rashness and lack of reflection.

He Arose

Nahum 1:15. "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass thru thee; he is utterly cut off."

Judah was called upon to keep its solemn feasts, to perform its vows. Good tidings were approaching; its attention must be called to the great peace and happiness given it by God.

To us the good tidings have come. The death and resurrection of Christ have become facts. Shall we then forget to keep our solemn feast, to perform our vows? We need to be constantly reminded of the meaning of the great facts in the scheme of salvation. Not only need we to be reminded of their meaning, for much we still have to learn about them before we can be reminded.

The great fact of the resurrection of Christ, then, is a subject upon which we can never sufficiently meditate; about which we can never study enough. Thanks to the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Church today fathoms deeper than ever before the mysterious depths of the richness of divine love displayed in the resurrection. At our disposal are the works of eminent divines who have thought deeply on the subject and who have interpreted the Scriptures for us in much of its full and precious message. We as students must enter into the labors of our forefathers before we can build upon their foundations, before we can be of use to the Church of Christ. On the other hand, we also have immediate spiritual needs. To work diligently at a Christian institution of learning we must be Christians indeed; we must keep our spiritual life on the highest level possible. And what will keep up our spiritual life more effectively than living into the great facts of Christian experience? And which fact of Christian experience stands out in the relief of the plan of salvation more clearly by its importance and sublimity than that of the resurrection of Christ?

All the facts of salvation are established and sealed by the resurrection of our Savior. All the promises are now fulfilled; the type has become reality. Rejoice! Rejoice! Creation is restored. He arose after He had showed Himself the mighty conqueror of him who had the power of death. He arose a victor of the dark domain. Sascha Schneider's painting of Satan standing at the side of the corpse of Christ with wistful eye, showed that he understood the Easter message. Satan does not trust the corpse. Will it remain a corpse? No, his is only a false triumph. Christ arose indeed, restored creation from the ravages of sin, snatched it forever from the clutches of the Evil One. As from the soul of man the poison of sin penetrated to the very circumference of the created universe destroying all, thus from the soul of Christ as centre the restoration of sin is begun and will in time again reach the circumference, renewing all. From Christ as centre a new life radiates to all those that are in Him and from them to all creation.

Therefore rejoice, the honor of God has been maintained. In vain did Satan attempt to wrest creation from the Creator. Therefore rejoice, our salvation is secure and does not depend upon us. If we are raised together with Christ we have part in His redemptive work. As surely as He is raised from the grave our salvation is secure if we believe in Him. Therefore rejoice, God has given us a great and noble work to do. We are now co-laborers with God to realize the coming of the Kingdom. Creation has been restored in its centre, but Satan still exerts his influence. Much must still be made tractable to the will of

God and we may be used as instruments to bring this about. Therefore rejoice, after our labors here on earth are done, the resurrection of our bodies into glory will surely follow, and as faithful servants we shall enter on a gracious reward.

The Easter Message And The World

The world laughs at our rejoicing. It does not understand the Easter message. When we have for some time meditated upon the unsearchable love of God, we do not grasp how the world can disregard such love. But we need not marvel. Easter bells ring out the news of life in Christ and the destruction of death. In order to comprehend the full value of this message we must feel the deep contrast between life and death. We must understand death as the result of Satan's power over us, as the result of sin. We must know death as the deep unholy power of evil which destroys the harmony and unity, the inner beauty of our souls and which plays havoc with all the pure and undefiled happiness of man. From this God-defying, heinous power of death Christ has rescued us and restored us to life. He has restored us to a life so beautiful and fair, so magnificent beyond description, that one must feel its divine breath to appreciate its meaning. Only when we learn to feel and experience the fulness of life ever deeper do we fathom the misery of death as its opposite. Then we learn to rejoice in the Easter message.

But alas! the unbeliever has weaned himself from the Biblical view of death and life. The world has wrested itself from the tutelage of the Church. In the Middle Ages, and even much later, the ideas of the Church were to an extent supreme also in the world. This has changed. The philosophers and teachers of the age have caused their home-made concepts of life and death to be shared by nearly all the people. Science has made of life only an anatomical process which we have in common with the animal, and of death the mere disintegration of the chemical substances of the body. The contrast between death and life is well-nigh gone. Some even prefer death to life, witness the ever-increasing number of suicides. Why should one fear death? It is the natural consummation of life and must be bravely met. To die philosophically is the latest scientific style.

Moreover, the burden of the Easter promise will be fulfilled in the future, in the life to come. But the life to come, as we understand it, is excluded from the modern scheme of life and death. How, then, can its appeal reach and urge to action him who does not know it? How beautifully does Dr. Bavinck picture to us the modern man who either with Nietzsche strives to become an *Uebermensch* condemning the common herd, or otherwise with Tolstoi reduces life to mere passivity. Neither knows the meaning of life.

Now if life is only that which we see on earth, if death is nothing but decomposition of the body, why rejoice in the resurrection of Christ? It has then no meaning for our lives.

But we as Christians are also influenced by the spirit of the age. We, too, have a stronger tendency than ever before to minimize the hideousness of death and to underrate the value of life.

Hence our present duty. Hence the call to renew in ourselves the full sense of the meaning of death and life, and impart it to the world, so that the world may appropriate unto itself the glorious and eternal life there is in Christ.

Science And Christianity

The above heading was the topic of one of Dr. Wishart's recent sermons. According to his presentation Science is indeed at odds with Christianity, if we mean by the latter acceptance of the Bible from cover to cover, with its creation myth, its legend of the Sun's standing still at the command of Joshua, its absurdity of physical resurrection, etc. Science and Christianity are not at odds if both are understood correctly, if Christianity is made scientific and Science christian. The miracles especially must be done away with. The Church of Mediaeval times believed the story of the Sun's standing still upon Gibeon and the Moon in the valley of Ajalon. Even the Reformers Luther and Calvin, clung to this antiquated idea, while Calvin is the remote founder of Calvin College.

The insinuation is plain. Calvin College is presented as a mere remnant of Mediaevalism. Turning away from the disorders of this wicked world, its inmates delight in contemplation of the blessedness of heaven. The message of Copernicus has not even reached their ears.

Of course, this presentation of Dr. Wishart is entirely unfair, but it shows that the genuine modernist does feel that there is a chasm between him and the evangelical Christian. Was this not plain from the manifestation of extreme hatred on the part of modernists when the campaign against the abolishment of Free Christian Schools was on? Should we then consider the chasm less deep? Let us not deceive ourselves. Let not the siren of modernism entice us to its fold. When once in its vortex of fashion it is hard to get away. The struggle of Satan to conquer Christ is still continued in the attempts of modernism to undo the evangelical work of the Church. Surely, modernism would not subscribe to being called the enemy of Christ. Certainly not, does it not pray in the Master's Name? Does it not speak of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; does it not engage in humanitarian work? Modernism does not see the inconsistency in calling Jesus Master and at the same time denying that He is the Son of God. If Christ was not God, as He allowed Thomas to call Him, He was the vilest imposter that ever lived.

We as students should learn to see in modernism one of the greatest antagonists of Christianity and be ever on our guard. Its creed appeals to the evil within our hearts; its much-praised enlightenment appeals to our imagination; its humanitarian efforts soothe our antagonism. How easily are we led to believe that it is one with us. We know that the heathen are in need of the Easter message; how little do we realize that modernism is in still greater need of this message because it knows the way of salvation but thinks to have superseded it. May our attitude be one of watchfulness and prayer. May we make an earnest attempt to convert modernism to Christianity, to the Christianity of Christ the Savior who is risen indeed.

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¹Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Articles from 1930–1939

God And The Absolute

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In many quarters the idea seems to prevail that Idealism and Christianity have formed an alliance against all forms of Pragmatism. Both Idealism and Christianity, it is claimed, stand for the maintenance of absolute truth and value while Pragmatism has frankly embraced the relativity of truth and value. Is this presentation correct? I think it is not. Idealism as well as Pragmatism, it seems to me, has embraced the relativity of truth and value. Idealism as well as Pragmatism is a foe of biblical Theism. Together they form a secret alliance against Theism. Such will be the contention of this paper.

The method by which we would establish our contention is to show that the God of Idealism is not the God of Theism but is rather the God of Pragmatism. If Idealism and Theism differ radically on the concept of God they are bound to differ radically on religion and morality.

Theism And Pragmatism

Why should Theism¹ consider Pragmatism² to be its enemy? Is it because Pragmatism opposes Christian morality? Yes, but there is a deeper reason. Is it because Pragmatism is the enemy of the Christian religion? Yes, but for a still deeper reason. Theism considers Pragmatism its foe because Pragmatism serves another God than the God of Theism. Theism serves God; Pragmatism serves gods.

The Pragmatist admits, nay avows, that he serves other gods than the Theist. He likes to speak of “The Obsolescence of the Eternal.” He holds that belief in God is due to “miasmatic exhalations of a false intellectualism.”

What are the Gods of Pragmatism? They are principles of goodness, truth and beauty. Humanity has, in its development, first postulated them and thereupon canonized them.

Jesus saw that there are intelligent creative forces at the basis of the universe. He told us, therefore, that the Father is love.

It is clear that this is the opposite of historic Christianity. Apart from questions of historicity, we may say that for Pragmatism the “ideals” of goodness, truth and beauty exist independently of Christ, while according to Christianity these principles issue from Christ. This distinction one finds to be a never-failing shibboleth.

¹ We use the term Theism to signify biblical Theism, of which we take the notion of an absolute, self-sufficient, personal God to be the central metaphysical concept.

² By Pragmatism we signify not only the movement in Philosophy properly so-called, but also all other movements that openly avow the evolution concept as a metaphysical tenet.

The same shibboleth can serve to distinguish Pragmatism from Theism for the sufficient reason that Christianity is Theism in a world of sin. Christ is God. Principles of value proceed from Him because He is God. God is the source of all value as well as its standard. But for Pragmatism value exists independently of God as well as of Christ. More than that, "The purpose of God is the attainment of value in the temporal world."³ The temporal universe is said to be a wider concept than God. God is sometimes said to be "only the ideal tendency in things."⁴ Or he is called, "in the strictest sense not a creator but a creature."⁵ Theism says that God created the world; Pragmatism says that the world created God.

Thus a metaphysical difference of the first magnitude separates the two. The Pragmatist thinks it quite possible to ask: "Who made God?" Back of God lies mere possibility. Possibility is a wider concept than actuality. God and man both dwell on the island called Reality. This island is surrounded by a shoreless and bottomless ocean of possibility and the rationality that God and we enjoy is born of chance. The Theist thinks it impossible to ask: "Who made God?" God is for him the source of possibility: actuality is a wider concept than possibility. The little island on which we dwell rests upon the ocean of the reality of God; our rationality rests upon the rationality of God. Pragmatism maintains a thorough metaphysical relativism, while Theism will not compromise on the conception of God as a self-conscious absolute personality.

A radical empiricism in epistemology corresponds to the metaphysical relativism of the Pragmatist. No initial assumptions of any kind are to be allowed. The "scientific method" is to be applied to metaphysics. We must be open minded and follow the facts whithersoever they lead us. In searching for the laws of phenomenal life we can never hope to see our efforts crowned with success unless we are strictly neutral. Who knows but God may be a law of phenomenal life. If one holds to metaphysical relativism one must be "neutral."

This insistence on "neutrality" is highly significant. "Neutrality" in method is not a mere matter of course, a hallmark of ordinary intelligence. It is imposed upon the metaphysical relativist. He cannot choose to be "prejudiced" or "biassed," he must be "neutral." Therefore he too is "biassed" and "prejudiced" in favor of "neutrality." "Neutrality" is implied in the supposition of the "open" universe. If the universe is open, facts new to God and man constantly reinterpret the meaning of the old. Our method then must be basically synthetic; God's method is also synthetic. He too must wait to see what the new facts may bring. God can do no more than man. He cannot interpret the meaning of reality to man since He has not yet interpreted himself. Therefore man must interpret for himself and must be neutral; his thought is creatively constructive.

The Theist, on the other hand, cannot be "neutral." His conception of God makes him "biassed." He holds that for God the facts are in: God knows the end from the beginning. He admits that facts may emerge that are new to man; he knows they are not new to God. History is but the expression of the purpose of God. As far as the space time universe is concerned the category of interpretation precedes that of existence. Man's interpretation must, therefore, to be correct, correspond to the interpretation of God. Man's synthesis

³ Wm. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 31.

⁴ Wm. James, *Pluralistic Universe*, p. 124.

⁵ Alexander, *Space Time and Deity*, vol. 2, p. 399.

and analysis rest upon God's analysis. Strictly speaking, man's method of investigation is that of analysis of God's analysis. We are to think God's thoughts after Him; our thought is receptively reconstructive.

Viewed from the side of epistemology the same difference between Pragmatism and Theism appears.

To be "neutral" in method implies metaphysical relativism. This is the simple converse of the statement that metaphysical relativity implies a "neutrality." You cannot be "neutral" unless the universe is "open" to God as well as to you. If the facts are all in for God you must accept God's interpretation. To be "neutral" implies that system is non-existent. To be "neutral" implies that synthesis is prior to analysis for God as well as for man. It implies that God is then within the universe. It is determined beforehand that you cannot come to the acceptance of an absolute God; metaphysical relativity is assumed.

The Theist, on the other hand, because of his "bias" must have an absolute God. If God were not absolute, if for Him analysis does not have significance prior to and apart from synthesis, man would have to interpret the facts for himself. Interpretation of reality cannot be a cooperative enterprise between God and man. Co-operation presupposes equal ultimacy. Now, since man is temporally conditioned, his equal ultimacy with God would imply that synthesis is just as basic as analysis for God and man alike. This again implies the "open universe"; and this open universe gives priority to synthesis while a God who must synthesize is no God.

Even if man admits or maintains that he finds the truth and does not make it he is still the final interpreter if God is not. Principles rest in personality. If the principles of goodness, beauty and truth are not considered to be resting in and issuing from the personality of God, they may hover about for a while, as for instance in the case of the Platonic Ideas or Kant's categorical imperative; but soon they are seen to rest in and issue from finite personality.

Illustrative of the basic differences between Pragmatism and Theism is Pragmatism's conception of religion. It is, we now expect, a religion without God. Religion is defined as "an emotion resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large."⁶ Again, religion is said to be, "man's sense of disposition of the Universe to himself."⁷ Man is not responsible to God but to the Universe. Since the universe is impersonal, responsibility returns to man; religion is morality and morality is autonomous.

Thus we see the great gulf fixed between Theism and Pragmatism. It is not always realized that there is no possible middle ground between them. The Pragmatic Christian and the Christian Pragmatist alike are hybrids fore-doomed to sterility; reversion to type constantly takes place: the theistic veneer of Modernism scarcely conceals its Pragmatic metaphysics. We are either metaphysical relativists or metaphysical absolutists. If the former, then we are "neutral," if the latter, then "biassed." Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve! Whom will Idealism serve? Will it stand with Theism or with Pragmatism? Our contention is that it stands with Pragmatism though it tries to hold a midway position. Before we seek to establish this contention directly we must still further prepare the ground. Thus far we have been looking at Theism and Pragmatism as if they were two

⁶ McTaggart, J. E., *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 3, 1906.

⁷ Perry, R. B., *The Approach to Philosophy*, p. 66, 1908.

figures in repose with the view of comparing a third figure with them. Now we should see the two figures, Theism and Pragmatism, in action with a view to seeing not only which Idealism resembles most in appearance, but also which it resembles most in behavior. If Pragmatism and Theism are in conflict—they are admitted to be antagonistic—and Idealism does not remain neutral but even sides with Pragmatism, does this not place Idealism in a position of enmity against Theism? Allow us then to watch the combat between Theism and Pragmatism.

God does not settle the dispute between Theism and Pragmatism. The Theist says He may, nay, He will. Through the ages one increasing purpose runs. God's purpose is realized in history and man must be God's willing instrument. This is Christianity: true, but Christianity is Theism in a world of sin. The Theist calls upon all men to conform to God's plan. He therefore also calls on the Pragmatist to do so. "I'll wait and see," is the answer of the Pragmatist. "Where do you obtain such knowledge as you say you have? I'll be honestly agnostic, humbly scientific."

Again the Theist urges his case and again the Pragmatist replies: "All speculations about an Absolute are but miasmatic exhalations of a false intellectualism which has misconstrued its own nature and powers."⁸ Present axioms once were postulates. All that human thought is for is to find our way efficiently from a known fact to an unknown one. No one knows how many are yet to be discovered. No one can tell us that history will terminate in a judgment day. You, my friend, dare not be open-minded."

"Quite true," answers the Theist. "I dare not be open-minded because I cannot be. Have you been open-minded? You have spoken about what cannot be. But to be 'open-minded' all things should be possible. 'Open-mindedness' requires an 'open' universe; and 'open' universe requires an 'open mind'; your mind is closed against the Absolute. Or was it inconsistency merely? Do you really wish the open universe? Open for the fact of the judgment, that is, for the Absolute? If so then your universe is really a one. To be a genuine relativist you must be a brave absolutist; to be really 'open-minded' you must be 'closed' minded. You were after all quite logical in seeking by one *a priori* 'cannot' to strike God out of your universe. It cannot be done any other way. Only you have failed to observe that an 'open-minded' man must never use 'cannot' as a weapon. An 'open' mind should be 'unstable in all his ways.'"

"Moreover, 'neutrality' seems to be an unreasonable position for a finite, time conditioned man to take. It implies, as we have seen, the open universe, where a new fact may appear at any time. Suppose the 'judgment' should prove to be a fact. Could you meet it 'neutrally'? You could not; since the judgment implies that the facts are now in for God so that you ought to be 'prejudiced.' On the other hand, if it be said that the very meaning of the 'open universe' is that the judgment is not to be a fact, this must be established by *a priori* argument. To be 'neutral' implies the 'open universe'; but no human being can establish the openness of the universe by a neutral method. The assumption of a metaphysical relativism and 'neutrality' would seem to be unreasonable except for one who is absolute, which by admission you are not."

"To be 'neutral' is therefore, to try to be something no human being can be. I see this most clearly when I notice how readily the advocates of Pragmatism turn from a radical empiricism to an extreme form of *a priori* reasoning. They constantly tell me what can

⁸ Schiller, F. C., "Axioms as Postulates," in *Personal Idealism*, p. 54, edited by Sturt.

and cannot be. They tell me, for example, that the very terms 'relative' and 'absolute' are correlatives so that it is impossible for us to think of God otherwise than as a correlative to man. This is but one example of the commonest form in which the assumption that all categories of thinking are the same for God and man is stated. The assumption underlying this is once more that of metaphysical relativism. Only upon the basis of this assumption can you maintain that all categories of thinking are the same for God and man and therefore conclude that the correlativity for us of such terms as 'absolute' and 'relative,' necessarily implies the correlativity of these terms for God. Now metaphysical relativity is just the question at issue; least all of them have your friends who boast 'neutrality' a right to assume it. 'Neutrality' must beg the question."

"These considerations have often made me more 'biased' than ever. I feel that it is better to be 'biased' in favour of the Absolute and admit my bias than to be 'biased' against Him and deny my bias. I do not close my eyes to difficulties as they centre about God's relation to His temporally created world, but I have yet to find a solution of these difficulties that does not begin by dissolving one of the terms to be related, that does not begin by assuming metaphysical relativism. Is it hard to believe in God? It is far harder not to believe in Him."

Much more might have been said by the Theist. The Pragmatist however, already admitted the main point, that is, that he has been led to the pragmatic "will to believe" or the will to disbelieve God by the sound of such words as "neutrality," "open-mindedness" and such phrases as "follow the facts wherever they lead." These words and phrases he had often heard in university lecture rooms and has actually been led to believe that they have an unlimited application in the field of metaphysics as well as a limited application in the field of science. He now saw that one must either presuppose God or presuppose the open universe.

Theism And Idealism

Theism presupposes God and Pragmatism does not. That, we saw, in the last analysis is the difference between them. This difference we considered from two points of view. In metaphysics Theism has an absolute God and a temporal creation, while Pragmatism has no absolute God and no temporal creation, but a space-time Universe in which God and man are correlatives. In epistemology Theism avows that man's thought is receptively reconstructive of God's interpretation, while Pragmatism says man is "neutral" and therefore creatively productive in the matter of interpretation.

Where now does Idealism stand? The one question to be asked is: Does Idealism presuppose God? If it does it is theistic; if it does not it is pragmatic. The question may be conveniently studied by regarding it in turn from the point of view of metaphysics and that of epistemology. We shall ask whether Idealism (a) assumes a relativistic metaphysics and (b) whether Idealism wants to be "neutral" in its epistemology. If we find that such is the case we are driven to the conclusion that Idealism will take sides with Pragmatism in its combat with Theism as described above.

A simple dichotomous division will be all we need. The differences between Idealism and Pragmatism may still be many and great even though we must conclude that neither is theistic. We have no desire to remove these differences. The necessity of a simple alternative is nowhere greater than in cases of doubt. If such an alternative is available we

should use it. Idealism is the case of doubt. It might be hard to determine whether or not it is theistic. Pragmatism has, however, simplified the matter for us. If Pragmatism were not with us it would have behooved us to invent it.

Even with the aid of the simple alternative now at hand the question is not easily settled. If you have watched the face of the Idealist when he beheld the struggle between the Theist and the Pragmatist you will have noted what seemed to be hesitation or even sudden reversals of purpose on the part of the Idealist. Sometimes it seemed as though the Idealist would unequivocally take sides with the Theist. Then again the Theist drew such merciless conclusions on the matter of "neutrality" that the Idealist seemed to think he ought to change his allegiance in order to save Pragmatism at least as a buffer state.

On the whole the Idealist when asked in court: "Have you or have you not presupposed God?" he answers: "I have." But that does not exclude cross-questioning. Perhaps the Idealist thus readily avows his alliance with the Theist because of an undiscovered ambiguity in his thinking. Perhaps the Idealist thinks it is impossible to presuppose God with the Theist and be "neutral" with the Pragmatist. Or perchance, though seeing that such would be impossible, the Idealist may be "neutral" in spite of himself; as without one's knowledge cancer may be doing its certain work from within.

Of an organism it need not be shown that all its parts are affected with a fatal disease. Especially in case of the intricate spiritual organism of knowledge the finding of one pathological area warrants sanatorium treatment of the patient.

Again, in the debate about God the Theist takes the affirmative and the Pragmatist the negative. To win the debate Pragmatism need find but one weak spot in the argument of the affirmative. The main point of the Theist may be attacked in any of the corollaries that issue from it. On the other hand if any of the corollaries of the Theistic conception of God are attacked the conception is also attacked. If we find then that Idealism sides with Pragmatism on any one point the Theist can no longer consider the Idealist his ally.

The Idealist has not presupposed his Absolute and therefore his Absolute is or tends to become the God of the Pragmatist. Such is our main contention. The Idealist has recognized the necessity of presupposing the Absolute but has not been able to do so because of the "neutrality" involved in his logic. As in the case of the Pragmatist "neutrality" leads the Idealist to and is itself an evidence of his metaphysical relativism.

First, then we would note that the Idealist definitely sides with the Theist against the Pragmatist according to his own statements. The Idealist has been very insistent against the Pragmatist on the necessity of presupposing an Absolute. Many mediating theologians were led to believe that Christianity must look to Idealism for a genuine metaphysical defence for its position. The Idealist would not come one whit behind the chiefest apostle of Theism in his protestation that God is absolute.

The Idealist even uses interchangeably the terms "Absolute" and "God." The Idealist says not only that he presupposes the Absolute, but that the Absolute is God. Thus the Idealist's claim that his Absolute is the God of Theism looks very plausible. It is this plausibility, we believe, that led many to a hasty identification of the Absolute with God.

¹ This plausibility we must account for. We shall do so by examining the thought of recent representatives of Idealistic philosophy.

¹ By "God" we signify the God of Theism unless otherwise stated.

Appearance and Reality is the title of F. H. Bradley's masterpiece of metaphysics. The title indicated that which the contents of the book seeks to substantiate, namely, that "Appearance" is riddled with contradictions while in "Reality" these contradictions are "somehow" to be neutralized or harmonized. "Reality" is accordingly thought of as "beyond" appearance.

The supposition of Bradley's philosophy is that the real is the rational. Lack of rationality in Appearance reduces its reality to a minimum. Comprehensive rationality makes Reality real. Rationality, that is, complete, comprehensive rationality must "somehow" be the everlasting arms underneath Appearance or Appearance would not even appear. Appearance would be reduced to a minimum not only but to zero unless complete rationality were underneath.

The similarity of Bradley's position to that of Theism is striking. Both demand complete rationality somewhere. Bradley seeks it in the Absolute; Theism seeks it in God. Together they maintain that on the Pragmatic basis our experience would be meaningless. Bradley seems to be even more insistent on the common demand of complete rationality than is Theism. He claims that any reality to be real must be completely rational, that is, perspicuous to itself. Theism demands no more than that God be completely comprehensible to Himself. Bradley has exactly the same demand for Appearance that he has for Reality; Theism has a higher demand for God than for man. For Bradley Appearance is unreal because not comprehensible; for Theism Appearance is real not because comprehensible or incomprehensible to us, but because it is the expression of a comprehension of God. The soul of the difference is that Bradley speaks of comprehensibility *per se* while Theism distinguishes between comprehensibility for God and comprehensibility for man. Bradley has assumed that all thought must be measured by one standard, that all thought human and divine is of one type.

The *fons et origo* of the difference between Idealism and Theism is therewith discovered. From the Theistic standpoint this assumption of the unity of type of all thought is the cancer working its deadly work in the idealistic organism. It is the sin of Eve: she thought that she might be as God; so she became "neutral" between God and the devil. From the idealistic standpoint the rejection on the part of Theism of this assumption leads it inevitably to, or is itself an expression of, a metaphysical dualism. Idealism insists that the assumption must be made in order that the necessary unity within which all diversities are to play may be at hand. Such unity may be presupposed or it cannot be found at all.

Waiving now the question, who is in the right, we call attention to the impassable gulf between these two types of epistemology. From the idealistic assumption that all thought is of one type it follows that the Universe is a wider concept than "God." It is the Universe in the case of Bradley as in the case of other Idealists, that is really the Absolute. "God" and man operate within this Universe. They are aspects of this Universe, correlatives one of the other. They are really equally ultimate aspects, or they could not be aspects of one Reality at all.

It may not immediately appear that this metaphysics of Bradley leads one toward the relativism of Pragmatism. However, let us at this stage keep in mind two things. In the first place that in Bradley's metaphysics man is a charter member of the Universe. This implies not only that plurality is for Bradley as basic as unity—to which, if applied to the Trinity, the Theist will agree—but that the conditions to which man is subject will

influence Reality as a whole. Reality becomes the one subject to which all predicates must apply in the same way. Secondly, a corollary derived from the first point is that time must be real for God in the same sense that it is real for man. If time is unreal for God it must be proved that the Absolute or Universe as a whole is non or supra-temporal. On the other hand if it should not be possible to prove the unreality of time for man; it will be equally impossible to maintain the supra-temporal nature of God. A basic metaphysical pluralism is involved in Bradley's epistemology which, we believe, can never furnish the unity that he thinks it furnishes. And this basic pluralism, because it has man as a charter member, must become a pluralism in flux.

Add to this the observation that the idealistic assumption in epistemology that man's thought is on the par with God's is the "neutrality" of Pragmatism since it seeks to make the interpretation of reality a co-operative enterprise between God and man which implies that man ultimately interprets reality for himself², and we already see "neutrality" chasing "relativity" as a dog chases its tail.

Bradley seems to have felt something of the difficulties involved in his position. He ends up one argument after another with an appeal to mystery. "Somehow" Reality will absorb all the difficulties of Appearance. His Reality becomes much of a Moloch, requiring the sacrifices of the Appearance. There is in Bradley an acosmic strain. But the Theist fears this acosmic strain; to him it is an evidence of a false priorism that says man cannot be man unless he is a god. A Moloch demanding human sacrifice is an idol; by that token can one know it. Moreover Idealism has no right to appeal to mystery. One who assumes that the Real is the Rational and at the same time makes man a charter member with "God" in the Universe cannot without destroying his basic principle appeal to mystery. There may be, on idealistic basis, a sphere of the unknown to man, but never one of the unknowable. By this token too is Idealism distinguished from Theism. Theism says there is nothing unknown or unknowable for God, but there is for man one territory unknown but knowable and another unknown and also unknowable. If it were not so man would be one with God. Thus if Theism appeals to mystery it appeals to the ultimate rationality back of our experience.

We may now distinguish between Absolute Number One called "God" as "Beyond" and Absolute Number Two as the Universe or the Whole. Both concepts are used by Bradley and by Idealists in general with much ambiguity. Absolute Number Two, we believe, fits into the scheme of Idealistic logic, while Absolute Number One is the product of an acosmic strain unnatural to and subversive of the demand that reality must be essentially perspicuous to man as well as to God.

More clearly will this be seen in the philosophy of Bernard Bosanquet. We meet first of all with the same demand for complete rationality lest there be no reality at all. We meet also with the same appeal to Absolute Number One in which this rationality may be found because if we ask the deep of our personality the reply comes back; Rationality, comprehensive rationality is not found with me. The same disappointment also, but a disappointment now expected, meets us when we find that it is Absolute Number Two, the Universe that really has the love of his heart. The reason for this process is also the same as it was in Bradley's case, namely the "neutrality" involved in the assumption that God's thought is subject to the same limitations as ours.

² *Vide* discussion in previous pages on the differences between Pragmatism and Theism.

Bosanquet abhors the open universe of Pragmatism. He feels certain that if one begins with a plurality of independently existing atoms you will never have coherence in experience at all. The very nature of the judgment as we employ it in scientific investigation implies that unity underlies all difference.³ Take, for example any object of empirical research: “Why do some animals change colour?” You at once ask a biologist for possible alternative solutions. You recognize that there is a biological world into which the incident must fit. The biological world in turn is related to other worlds, such as those of logic, aesthetics and ethics. We find then that in beginning with a given complex of experience whose consequences we desire to consider the character of the whole of reality has to be respected and maintained. “Thus it follows from the nature of implication that every inference involves a judgment based upon the whole of reality, though referring only to a partial system which need not even be actual.”⁴

Moreover we cannot disregard this nature of the judgment without denying ourselves. You are nobody but for the universe that forms your atmosphere. Without the Universe you would disintegrate upward and downward, forward and backward, to the left and to the right. Without this universe the law of contradiction, not as an abstract principle, but in the sense that things cannot exist in an infinity of ways, at once would have to go, “and so the conception of determinate experience would have to be, though it cannot be, abandoned.”⁵

Pluralism destroys the possibility of knowledge. Such is Bosanquet’s contention. Such is also Theism’s contention. Both maintain that unity must be basic to difference.

Naturally, if Bosanquet opposes a pluralistic universe in general, he will also oppose Pluralism in flux. Pragmatism contends or assumes that time is a constituent ingredient of the universe. The Space-Time continuum is the matrix from which all things human and divine proceed. This, we have contended, is the contradictory opposite of Theism. Either the Space-Time continuum “creates” God or God creates the Space-Time continuum. Between these two Bosanquet has seemingly chosen to stand with Theism.

Bosanquet recognizes the fact that if the Space-Time is to be the matrix of all experience the unity which knowledge needs cannot be obtained. “If the basis of the universe were changeable the basis of our argument whatever it might be, would vanish with the stability of the whole.”⁶

There, as elsewhere, Bosanquet clearly demands that actuality must be prior to potentiality. Most incisive and completely comprehensive is this alternative. If the Universe, including gods and men, is basically temporal then bare potentiality is raised to the highest possible metaphysical status. Our thinking will then be compelled to rest in an infinite regress or a complete void. Our little island of rationality would then rest upon an ocean of irrationality and would therewith itself be irrational. The least bit of our rational experience presupposes the rationality of “the basis of the universe,” and this rationality is gone if the “basis of the universe” is subject to change. On this point Bosanquet and Theism agree.

³ *Implication and Linear Inference*, p. 4.

⁴ *Essentials of Logic*, p. 70.

⁵ *Implication*, p. 159.

⁶ *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 191.

We have said that our experience “presupposes” God. Even here the agreement between Bosanquet and Theism seems to continue. Both would employ the transcendental method. It is very easy to find difficulties for thought if the method of formal logic be applied to any position of metaphysics; witness the “Appearance” of Bradley. So it is quite easy to point to what seem to be outrages to our reason in the conception of a God creating a temporal universe. But if it be found that any alternative to this position leads us to an annihilation of rationality itself it may still be reasonable to presuppose God’s existence. Thus the Theist holds. Similarly Bosanquet reasons for the necessity of a timeless Absolute.

The “basis of the universe” must be timeless; that basis we may call the Absolute of God. Thus we may speak of God as beyond or above the changing world. A God beyond the changing world, Bosanquet feels, we need lest our rationality disappear entirely. He criticizes Italian Idealism by saying that it has substituted for the true insight: “If God is then I am nothing,” the other statement—“If God is then I am not.”⁷ “The reason,” he continues, “as I have explained elsewhere, I believe to lie in the equation of thought with thinking and of thinking with reality, which is another aspect of the rejection of all transcendence.”⁸ Without the Absolute as a Beyond our experience would be meaningless. At this point the similarity between Bosanquet and Theism would seem to intensify into identity; the Samaritans avowed allegiance to the God of Jerusalem.

Moreover Bosanquet’s zeal for the Beyond far outruns that of Theism for God. At least so it seems. As Bradley, Bosanquet demands human sacrifices for the Absolute. He tells us that no categories from our temporal experience, such as teleology or purpose can have meaning for the Absolute. In the case of the Absolute we can speak of value but not of purpose.⁹ More pointedly this same thought appeared in the symposium held before the Aristotelian Society on the subject whether individuals have substantive or adjectival existence. Pringle-Pattison charged Bosanquet with making of men “in ultimate analysis connections of content within the real individual to which they belong.” There is a determination in Bosanquet, says Pringle-Pattison, “to reach a formal identity by abstracting from differences on which the very character of the universe as a spiritual cosmos depends.”¹⁰

I have omitted nothing of value to anyone interested in establishing the identity between God and the Absolute of Bosanquet. We have allowed the defence to exhaust itself. All the evidence is in. We feel relieved now, not because we shall have to maintain that the Absolute is not God, but because if we do so justly in this instance we do so justly everywhere.

We may begin our criticism of Bosanquet by saying that the defence has proved too much. There may be too great a zeal for the Absolute. The God of Theism demands no human sacrifice; if the Absolute does, he is not God. The “Appearance” of Bradley was sacrificed to his “Reality” because he applied to them the same test of comprehensive consistency. And this similarity of test was simply assumed to be of one type. Similarly with Bosanquet. The acosmic tendency in his thinking which demands that human beings

⁷ *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 70.

⁸ *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 70.

⁹ *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, Lect. 4, pp. 122ff, London.

¹⁰ *Proceedings Aristotelian Society*, N.S., 1917–1918, p. 522ff>f.

be considered “connections of content” or “foci” of the Absolute is pantheistic, not theistic. And more important still the reason for Bosanquet’s acosmism is the assumption of the identity of the nature of human and divine thought. The Absolute cannot think in terms of purpose since purpose is a temporally conditioned category. This sounds theistic. But when it is added that our thought, to be genuine, must be like God’s thought, beyond time, the Pantheism is apparent. It seems as though we are exalting “God” very highly when we say that His thoughts are not temporally conditioned, but when we add that our thoughts also are not temporally conditioned the exaltation of “God” is neutralized. Not only that, we meet here with the same contradiction that we noted in Bradley’s thought. The appeal to the Absolute is an appeal to “mystery,” the existence of which is denied by the idealistic demand that Reality be perspicuous to thought *per se*, human as well as divine. Absolute Number One, the fruit of Idealism’s acosmic strain is unnatural to and would, if taken seriously, be subversive of idealistic logic itself. Moloch was an Idol because of his demand of human sacrifice; even Absolute Number One, is not the God of Theism.

There where Bosanquet most closely resembled Theism, his position is nevertheless the exact opposite of Theism. Thus ran our argument. Even the Absolute as Beyond is not the God of Theism. What then shall we say if we further observe that Bosanquet actually served Absolute Number Two more faithfully than Absolute Number One? That such must be the case we saw to be already involved in the fact that Absolute Number One is an unnatural growth, in the organism of Idealism. That such must be the case we also expect since Absolute Number One contradicts the basic demand of Idealism that reality be essentially perspicuous to man. That Bosanquet actually does what the logic of his position demands we must now seek to establish. Bosanquet speaks much of the Concrete Universal. The unity that is to underly our experience is not to be independent or exclusive of diversities. Against Pluralism and Pragmatism Bosanquet has contended that unity must be as fundamental as diversity. If one begins with a plurality, and thereupon attempts to get unity into this plurality, the unity will be abstract and functionless. On the other hand Bosanquet asserts that the unity will be equally abstract and functionless if diversity is not as fundamental as unity itself. Would this *per se* make his thought anti-theistic? Not necessarily. Theism may also say that diversity is as basic as unity. Theism may contend that the Trinity is not a burdensome encumbrance to a theology already heavily loaded with irrationalities but the very foundation of rational thought. Formally the Theist and Bosanquet agree but materially they differ. Bosanquet seeks for his diversity not within Absolute Number One, but within Absolute Number Two, the Universe. Man is again a charter member of the Universe and furnishes part of the original diversity. The Concrete Universal is constantly referred to as the final subject of all prediction. What is said of man is said of the Universe inclusive of “God.”

Again, Bosanquet has constantly affirmed that actuality must be prior to potentiality and therefore analysis to synthesis. For this reason he found it necessary to find a timeless Absolute. But equally insistent is Bosanquet in holding that synthesis is as fundamental as analysis. By his theory of implication he would avoid the false *a priori* of Rationalism as well as the false *a posteriori* of Pragmatism, both of which he calls “linear inference.” “Implication” seeks to follow an evolving system. With this attempt Bosanquet tried to do the impossible. His was a search for a self-generating *a priori*; the search seems as hopeful as that for the Holy Grail. We may dislike “either-or” alternatives, but here we

must face one: your *a priori* is either in the timeless self-conscious God with the result that history realizes the purpose of God, or your *a priori* is to develop in a universe inclusive of God, with the result that history is self-dependent.

We shall soon see this aspect of Idealism run into an open avowal of Pluralism in the case of McTaggart and Pringle-Pattison. Suffice it here to have pointed out that a metaphysical Pluralism is embedded in the heart of Bosanquet's logic. There seems to be no escape from the consequence that "God" must be (a) one of the members of the pluralistic universe in which case He is finite, or (b) the universal nature within the members of the Pluralism in which case this transcendence has disappeared, or (c) the combination of these in which case God is identified with the Universe or Whole, so that there is no more need of speaking of "God" at all. The first road is not open to Bosanquet since he has constantly opposed the idea of a finite God. The second road is not open to Bosanquet since he has invented the concrete universal for the very purpose of slaying the abstract universal. The third road is that constantly followed; it is the very road of the Concrete Universal. The Absolute is the Universe inclusive of "God" and man. "God" is thus to be an element in this Concrete Universal; the element of unity or universality. Man is also to be an element, the element of diversity. The eye cannot say that it hath no need of hearing; "God" cannot say that He hath no need of man, they are members of one organism.

This basic Pluralism tends to become Pluralism in flux. Bosanquet has constantly affirmed that actuality must be prior to potentiality and therefore analysis prior to synthesis. For this reason he found it necessary to hold to a timeless Absolute. Only for a timeless Absolute would all the facts be in. Here his thought seemed to be thoroughly theistic. Yet we saw that when Bosanquet was inclined to take this idea of a timeless Absolute seriously he demanded that all thought be supratemporal. Even on this basis then it was the Universe inclusive of God and man that was thought of as timeless. The Universe is the ultimate subject of all predication; it is either wholly timeless or wholly temporal. Now, however, this same Universe tends to become wholly temporal instead of wholly timeless. Insistent as Bosanquet was that analysis be as fundamental as synthesis he was equally insistent that synthesis be as fundamental as analysis. By "implication" Bosanquet would seek to avoid the "linear inference" of deductive as well as of inductive reasoning. Seven plus five is an 'eternal' novelty. It is also an eternal 'novelty.' "Implication" would follow an evolving system. Bosanquet sought for a genuine *a priori*, for a self-generating one. The possible must be as fundamental as the actual.

What becomes of "God" in this self-developing system? He is one of three things: (a) a developing member within the Whole, or (b) the generating *a priori* within the Whole, or (c) the Whole itself. "God cannot" be (a) because Bosanquet has constantly opposed the idea of a finite developing deity. "God" cannot be (b) since he would again be but an abstract principle within a developing whole. "God" must be the self-developing Whole. Only it may well be questioned whether "God" can be a self-developing Whole. Does not this controvert the basic demand of Idealism that the actual precede the potential? Bosanquet's great desire for inclusiveness has led him to compromise his principle. One cannot have his cake and eat it. The unity for which he seeks, which he says we must even presuppose, turns out to be merely a member of the plurality, or an abstract principle within it, or thirdly the Whole plurality itself and all of these in flux. By his attempt to make the possible as fundamental as the actual and synthesis as fundamental as

analysis for “all possible experience” Bosanquet has embraced the Pragmatic principle and is wedded to the apotheosis of the possible.

Thus the Absolute is defined as “the high-water mark of fluctuations in experience of which, in general, we are daily and normally aware,”¹¹ and Reality is said to be “essentially synthetic.”

Our conclusion is that Bosanquet has tried to serve two masters. As a great logician he saw that a temporal plurality, or the open universe cannot account for our knowledge; the “neutrality” that is the invariable concomitant of metaphysical relativism is but an apotheosis of negation operating in a vacuum. But when he assumed without question the identity of the nature of “all possible experience,” when he made synthesis as fundamental as analysis, and the possible as fundamental as the actual, he took the “ultimacy,” the underived character of time for granted and with it the Universe as a wider concept than God. He tried to be “neutral,” after all. Reality is that which thought, that is, our thought operating on experience finds it to be. After this assumption of the Universe as the subject of all predication God could not be presupposed. Bosanquet desperately seeks for a God within the Universe and therefore could not presuppose Him beyond the Universe.

We may state our conclusion differently by regarding it from the point of view of interpretation. We saw in our discussion of Pragmatism that interpretation must originate with God if God is genuinely presupposed. Human thought is then receptively reconstructive. Deny this receptivity of human thought and you cannot presuppose God. Bosanquet has denied the receptively constructive character of human thought and therefore is wedded to a metaphysical relativism.

That Bosanquet has denied the receptively reconstructive nature of human thought is implied in his assumption that “all possible experience” is subject to the laws of thought in the same way. God and man are then to interpret the Universe together so that God does not have the initiative. Further, since Reality is sometimes said to be “essentially synthetic” the whole system grows. The end is not known to the Absolute from the beginning since the Absolute Himself has to wait for the facts to come in. In such a case there is no complete actuality at the basis of possibility.

Moreover, Bosanquet’s logic may be said to be one of the finest expressions of the Coherence theory of truth. We can only touch on this important point. Let it suffice to recall that the Coherence theory of truth as maintained by the Hegelian tradition implies the essential perspicuity of the Universe to the mind of man, as well as to the mind of God, since the statement that the real is the rational and the rational is the real is applied to the Universe of God and man. Add to this that the Coherence theory of truth is the logical development of Kant’s view of the essential creativeness of human thought and the contrast between the epistemology of Bosanquet and that of Theism is seen to be as great as it could be. All of Kant’s objections to the “theistic arguments” have done little damage to Theism in comparison with this conception of the creativity of human thought. Creativity implies autonomy. Kant carried out his idea in the field of morals; Hegel consistently applied it to all of reality. The creativity view of thought in epistemology is

¹¹ *Phil. Rev.*, 5, 32, 1923, p. 587.

the source of “neutrality” and metaphysical relativity. Ruggiero¹² has beautifully shown that the extreme immanentism of Gentile and Croce was but the logical development of Kant’s creativity theory. Italian Idealism, moreover, is a twin sister to Pragmatism.

Our interpretation of Bosanquet on this point and on the whole matter is corroborated by J. Watson. It is Watson’s contention that inasmuch as Bosanquet has never openly denied and all the while positively implied that our knowledge is absolute, not in the sense of comprehensive but in principle, he has no right to an Absolute as a Beyond in any sense. Watson holds very definitely that the idealistic theory of judgment implies the essential perspicuity of Reality to the mind of man. Thus Absolute Number One would be a false growth on the basis of idealistic logic. More than that, the Beyond would be entirely destructive of Idealistic logic since the Beyond sets a limit to the perspicuity to human thought.¹³

A similar criticism is made by M. C. Carrol. He says that Bosanquet “failed to disclaim that there is any real sense in which we can speak of an absolute subject.”¹⁴ The point of Mr. Carrol is that since we are “adjectives,” “foci,” or aspects of the Whole the Absolute can be no more. Together we form the convex and the concave sides of the same disc.

Bosanquet represents the high-water mark of recent idealistic thought. He has worked out the implications of idealistic logic more fully than anyone else. In his Logic he has clearly shown that the unrelated pluralistic universe of Pragmatism as it corresponds to and is the necessary correlative of the so-called “scientific,” “open-minded,” “neutral,” method of research is destructive of knowledge itself. God is a fact that must be presupposed or He cannot be harmonized with other facts. Accordingly Neutrality is impossible. But if “neutrality” be still adhered to, god is denied and with Him the rationality which we need as much as breath. “Neutrality” we saw to be inherent in the heart of Bosanquet’s essential creativity theory of thought by virtue of which he constantly speaks of laws that hold for “all possible experience.” The result has been that Bosanquet has forsaken the transcendental method, returned to the false a priorism imbedded in every “scientific method,” when it determines what is possible and impossible. What was actually proved impossible on this assumption of the essential unity of human and divine thought is the presupposition of God.

We are not directly interested now in defending Theism against Bosanquet’s position. Incidentally it appears that if Bosanquet’s logic is sound it tells against himself and in favour of Theism. The burden of his argument is that our knowledge or experience in general needs to presuppose system and this can be presupposed in the Absolute only. Now we found that the Absolute of Bosanquet is not absolute but is after all an aspect of a self-developing whole. Our main purpose was to prove that the “Absolute” is not God. We could do this no more effectively than by indicating the formal similarity of arguments employed against Pragmatism by both Bosanquet and Theism and at the same

¹² *Modern Philosophy*, G. de Ruggiero. Tr. by A. H. Hannay and R. C. Collingwood. London, 1921.

¹³ *Phil. Rev.*, v. 4, 1895, pp. 353ff; pp. 486ff, and *Phil. Rev.*, v. 34, p. 440.

¹⁴ *Phil. Rev.*, v. 31, 1921. Article, “The Nature of the Absolute in the Metaphysics of B. Bosanquet,” p. 178.

time their radical difference; Bosanquet and Dewey are allies; their motto is: Theism must be destroyed.

In our criticism of Bosanquet we saw that as the result of his view of the inherent creativity of thought the Absolute which he feels he needs will have to respect (a) an ultimate plurality, (b) a plurality in flux, that is, a self-developing Universe, and therefore (c) the final interpretation of experience by man. Has subsequent history justified our criticism?

In seeking to answer this question we limit ourselves to a discussion of a few representative Idealists. Our contention is that recent exponents of Idealism have themselves felt the ambiguity in Bosanquet's position. They are frankly denying transcendence and embracing immanence.

We may begin with the philosophy of McTaggart. McTaggart has keenly felt that Idealism must do either of two things: it must admit a temporalism in metaphysics or it must deny the reality of time. For, and this is highly significant, McTaggart simply assumes that the Absolute of Idealism is Absolute Number Two, that is, the Universe inclusive of God and Man.

The demand of Bosanquet's logic that the Universe is the subject of all predication is rigidly carried through by McTaggart. Hence he no longer seeks for a timeless basis of the universe. That would involve the application of two contradictory predicates to the same subject. For him the Universe is either wholly temporal or wholly non-temporal.

The Universe is non-temporal. Time is an illusion. Such is McTaggart's position ¹⁵ Only a timeless reality is complete and therefore furnishes the system necessary to thought. Now we might develop a criticism here that to prove the unreality of time, be it objective, subjective or merely as an illusion is highly artificial. We might add that McTaggart has not proved the unreality of time and is therefore seeking to interpret one ultimate in terms of another ultimate. We pass these criticisms by to observe that granted McTaggart has proved his case even so the Absolute is in no sense Beyond. The reason for this is that McTaggart has insisted on the metaphysical ultimacy of plurality. To be sure he still maintains the unity is as fundamental as plurality, but the only unity that can be maintained consistent with an equally fundamental plurality is that of a universal, expressing itself in particulars. As human nature reveals itself in various human persons and may be said with respect to any one person to be largely beyond him so the Absolute is the universal manifesting itself in particulars though largely beyond any one particular. If anywhere, it is in this rarefied acosmic atmosphere that the Absolute as Beyond is seen to be entirely inconsistent with idealistic logic. The principle of Bosanquet that diversity must be as fundamental as unity while this diversity is assumed to be expressed in humanity, has been consistently carried out by McTaggart. Thereupon the Beyond is seen no more.

Pringle-Pattison tells us the same story. In his book, "Hegelianism and Personality," he sounded the bugle call for opposition against the aggressiveness of the Absolute. He spoke of the "imperviousness" of the finite individual. And though he later modified this phrase in his argument with Bosanquet on the subject whether individuals have substantive or adjectival existence he still maintains that the individual seems "the only

¹⁵ McTaggart, J. E., *Mind*, N.S. 524, p. 326, in articles on "Time and the Hegelian Dialectic."

conceivable goal of divine endeavor.” When Bosanquet criticizes his view of individuals as being “members” within the Absolute Pringle-Pattison replies that Bosanquet in turn should recognize “the significance of numerical identity as the basal characteristic of concrete existence.”¹⁶ In themselves these individuals are no doubt abstractions, but so is the Absolute by itself an abstraction. Pringle-Pattison was quite right in appealing to Bosanquet’s basic position that diversity in the Universe is as basic as unity to oppose Bosanquet’s inconsistent insistence upon the Absolute’s priority in any sense.

In his splendid book on *The Idea of God in Modern Philosophy*, Pringle-Pattison tells us that in his first series of lectures he seeks to establish the existence of so-called “appearance.” In this first series he has little or no need of the category of the Absolute. He tells us this in answer to a criticism on his views by Rashdall. This confession corresponds exactly with our criticism; the Absolute is for Pringle-Pattison a late arrival. History has justified our criticism of Bosanquet; pluralism has come forth out of the best idealistic logic.

Pluralism soon becomes Pluralism in flux or avowed temporalism. The acosmism of McTaggart was unnatural. His argument for the unreality of time is unconvincing. But more than that, the pressure of idealistic logic opposes it. If synthesis is to be as fundamental as analysis and the *a posteriori* is to be wedded to the *a priori* for God and man alike, time is real. It is, whatever else, it is underived, an inherent ingredient in the Universe, even the source of plurality or diversity. Seven plus five are twelve is to be ‘eternal’ novelty, but also an eternal ‘novelty.’ The individuals to whom in the case of McTaggart and Pringle-Pattison membership is accorded in Ultimate Reality are temporally conditioned.

In the philosophy of Pringle-Pattison this temporalism begins to show itself. In his thinking the Absolute has arisen in the East and died in the West; from being the presupposition of possible experience the Absolute has become the logical universal of many particulars, and is then submerged as a vague stability within a developing whole from which He finally comes forth—though not altogether comely because of the disfiguring detritus of the Space-Time continuum—as the Ideal of humanity. “The presence of the Ideal is the reality of God within us.”¹⁷

J. Watson, more outspokenly than Pringle-Pattison, rejects Bosanquet’s non-temporal Beyond as inconsistent with Idealistic logic. He thinks it is in the natural outcome of the principle of idealistic logic that there be no Beyond at all. He thinks that the very nature of all thought must be temporal. Reality, says he, in its completeness must be a thinkable reality; the real is the rational. Reality must be essentially perspicuous to the mind of man. Hence it will not do to separate the “what” from the “that” too sharply as Bradley has done. There can be no Absolute that is incomprehensible for us; the Absolute must be within the Universe. And since we are temporally conditioned beings reality in its broadest sense “is not for us stationary, but grows in content as thought, which is the faculty of unifying the distinguishable elements of reality, develops in the process by

¹⁶ *Proceedings, Aristotelian Society*, 1917, 1918, p. 512.

¹⁷ *Idea of God*, p. 246; also *Mind*, 1919, the note in which he replies to a criticism of this statement by H. Rashdall. He says: “The Ideal is precisely the most real thing in the world,” and therewith thinks he maintains “transfinite reality.” But this does not effect the course of our argument.

which those elements are more fully distinguished and unified.”¹⁸ The self-generating *a priori* inherent in the creativity view of idealistic logic is here boldly leaving the timeless basis of the Universe with the purpose never to return.

A frank acceptance of temporalism in metaphysics, Watson tells us, is not only the logical outcome of idealistic logic, but is also the only safeguard against agnosticism. Hegel and some of his followers still asked the question why the Absolute should reveal Himself, assuming that he was beyond. Watson, on the other hand, tells us that: “If it is asked why the Absolute reveals itself gradually in the finite, I should answer that the question is absurd; we can only state what its nature, as known to us, involves.”¹⁹ What the Theist asserts to God, that is, that it cannot be asked who made Him, Watson asserts of temporal reality. In other words, the Space-Time continuum is frankly accepted as the matrix of God. Metaphysically we are coming very close to the position maintained by S. Alexander in “Space, Time and Deity.” All reality “implies succession, and hence we must say that there is no conceivable reality which does not present the aspect of succession or process.”²⁰

Now it is this emphasis on time and succession as an inseparable aspect of the whole of reality that leads Idealism far away from Theism and very close to Pragmatism. To be sure there remains a difference which we have not the least interest to obliterate. The chief difference seems to be that in spite of the metaphysical relativism which Idealism has in common with Pragmatism, Idealism continues to maintain that Reality or Actuality must be the source of possibility. A. E. Taylor puts the alternative clearly: “either accept the priority of the actual to the potential or be ready to assert that you can conceive of the possible non-existence of any reality whatsoever.”²¹

Watson himself asserts that the least bit of experience presupposes complete rationality. We would, says he, not be able to ask any question about the Absolute or about anything else if the Absolute were not the source of our ability. On the contrary Pragmatism frankly accepts the position that it is possible to ask whence Reality came. Idealism continues to demand an Absolute. Our only point is that Idealism cannot satisfy its own demand. Its logic involves temporalism or metaphysical relativism and temporalism is the apotheosis of bare possibility. Pragmatism is on this point consistent and Idealism inconsistent and consistency wins out; Idealism is fraternizing with Pragmatism. History has justified our criticism of Bosanquet; Pluralism has become Pluralism in flux.

In distinguishing between Pragmatism and Theism we maintained that the difference when viewed from the standpoint of interpretation is that according to Theism God has made the facts and therefore interprets them while according to Pragmatism the facts are not made by God and therefore not interpreted by him. We saw further, when criticizing Bosanquet’s view on this matter, that he sides with the Pragmatist in this issue because his creativity view of thought could lead to nothing else.

Has history also justified this criticism? We believe it has very definitely done so. In test case Idealist writers very frankly decide for man against God. On questions of

¹⁸ *Phil. Rev.*, V. 4, 1895, p. 360.

¹⁹ *Phil. Rev.* V. 4, 1895, p. 367.

²⁰ *Phil. Rev.*, V 4, 1895, p. 497.

²¹ Hastings, *E. R. E.*, “Theism,” p. 278.

morality this especially apparent. To whom is man responsible? "To God who is the source and standard of good," says the Theist; "to man who is the source and standard of good," says the Pragmatist. What answer does the Idealist give?

The Idealist answers that man is responsible to the law of goodness. If we put the alternative whether the good is good in itself and therefore God wants it or whether the good is good because God wants it, that is, that the good is expressive of His nature, Idealism chooses unequivocally for the former, while Theism chooses unequivocally for the latter. Idealism follows Plato while Theism follows St. Augustine. The distinction is basic. The former position implies that the universe is a wider concept than God. And in this Universe God and man are correlatives; they have equal interpretive powers. Each is finally to determine for himself whether the other is engaged in offensive warfare.

Such we see to be the case even for such men as J. Lindsay²² and H. Rashdall.²³ To these men it seems impossible to come to anything but a Pantheism on the basis of Bosanquet's thinking. Lindsay wants a free and non-necessary relation of God to the world. Rashdall insists that God has created the world by the power of His will. Once insert the term will into your conception of God's relation to the world, thinks Rashdall, and you have freed yourself from pantheistic thought.

If these conceptions were carried through we should expect that God would definitely be exalted as the final interpretative category of our experience. However, with all of Lindsay's insistence on a free relation of God to the world he tells us definitely that he does not want a God who is "cosmically independent." The Universe is still a wider concept than God and therewith man is relieved of responsibility to God. Similarly for Rashdall the will of God is strictly conditioned throughout by law which is above God and operates in a cosmos without which God could not exist. God wills for the best in an independent situation; possibility is greater than God. When the critical juncture arrives so that Rashdall must tell to whom or what he thinks we are responsible it is not to God that he directs us but to the bureau of laws and regulations of the sovereign republic of the Universe.²⁴

The finite moral consciousness thus becomes the arbiter on every question of morality. It could not well be otherwise. Autonomy is the very definite implication of the creativity view of thought. If human thought is essentially creative it can allow for no heteronomy of any sort. Even though law be conceived of as absolute, this absoluteness is not really absolute. Laws are ideals and as such subject to transformation. The developing moral consciousness transforms them. Man is on this basis responsible to self, not to God.

It is also important to note how completely Idealism has discarded God in its philosophy of religion. Many an idealist would perhaps agree that the validity of our knowledge has its source in the Absolute and would still not hesitate to proclaim with Kant the complete autonomy of the moral consciousness.

In the philosophy of C. C. Webb we have a case in point. In his work, "Problems in the Relation of God and Man," Webb clearly proclaims his general agreement with the

²² Cf. *Theistic Idealism*, pp. 1, 24, 152, 154, London 1917.

²³ "Relig. Phil. of Pringle Pattison," *Mind*, N.S., v. 27, 1918, p. 273. Also *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 34, London 1902.

²⁴ *Contentio Veritatis*, pp. 38, 39.

idealist theory of logic. The usual idealistic argument for the necessity of a system is advanced fully. Still he thinks it quite possible to study the phenomena of the religious consciousness without any metaphysical presuppositions. Webb wants an Absolute and still be “neutral.” He tries like Bosanquet to serve two masters. He wishes to assume no metaphysics at the beginning of his investigation, which means that he has assumed the metaphysics of relativity. Webb has as a matter of fact assumed that religion must be worship of the whole.

If the Absolute of Idealism were God He would be determinative of the moral consciousness instead of the moral consciousness determinative of the Absolute. Still the later position is assumed without the least attempt to harmonize this position with the idealistic contention that Idealism presupposes the absolute. Looking at the terrifying extent and character of evil Webb concludes that God cannot be omnipotent or He would have prevented the entrance of evil or at least long since have destroyed it. The moral consciousness is clearly said to be determinative of the Absolute; therefore Webb has no Absolute.

Surely on this issue Idealism ought to choose which master it will serve. If its demand for a presupposed Absolute be taken seriously then its “neutral” method in the philosophy of religion stands condemned. On the other hand if Idealism wishes to be “scientific” or “neutral” in its investigations of the religious and moral consciousness it must say farewell to the Absolute. The solution is sought by gradually immersing the Absolute. The idealistic philosophy of religion is built upon a metaphysical relativism throughout.

Thus we see that the view of the moral consciousness as determinative of the Absolute is the natural result of the Kantian creative theory of thought which is inherent in idealistic as well as Pragmatic logic. We are not surprised that Idealism approaches Pragmatism on this point. We should be surprised if it were not so. Both Idealism and Pragmatism attribute to man’s moral consciousness the power to modify the Absolute at will or to reject Him altogether, and this cannot be done except on the presupposition that no Absolute exists.

Perhaps one of the keenest attempts of recent years to make the experience of God real to men is found in W. E. Hocking’s work, “The Meaning of God in Human Experience.” Hocking would make the experience of God so basic that it will control the whole of life. Yes, even further: “Evil becomes a problem only because the consciousness of the Absolute is there: apart from this fact, the colour of evil would be mere contents of experience.”²⁵ Here Hocking maintains with specific reference to evil the general idealistic contention that no temporal experience of any sort could become a problem for thought were it not for the fundamental God-consciousness that underlies all our thinking. Hocking desires earnestly to do justice to this idea. If anywhere we shall expect that here God is presupposed.

The human self, says Hocking, placed within the stream of experience would have no meaning for itself nor would the current of phenomena urge upon us any problem were it not that at the outset the consciousness of the Absolute is given. The human self without the God-consciousness is but an “irrelevant universal.” It is not ourselves but God who is the first to be met with in experience. At least if God is not the first to be met with we will never meet Him later. No God is found at the level of ideas that is not already found

²⁵ *Meaning of God*, p. 203.

at the level of sensation.²⁶ “The whole tale of Descartes’ discovery is not told in the proposition, I exist, knowing. It is rather told in the proposition, I exist knowing the absolute, or I exist knowing God.”²⁷ We see how basic Hocking attempts to make the God-concept. To show us the originality of the God-consciousness Hocking even seeks to restate the ontological argument. We do not first have an idea of God in order to deduce from this idea of God His existence but the idea itself is the fruit of a more fundamental intuition. “We are really only justified in attributing reality to an ideal of reality if reality is already present in the discovery of the idea.”²⁸ Such is Hocking’s argument. Despite this argument Hocking has not presupposed God. His has been after all an “Empirical development of Absolutism.”²⁹ As to form no Theist could wish for a better argument. But Hocking has not been faithful to his contention that if God has once been seen He remains forever after determinative of our experience. He tells us that early in life we have to face the grim reality that has produced us and yet seems to overwhelm its offspring and devour it. Immediately we sense our rights and: “The God-idea thus appears as a postulate of our moral consciousness; an original object of resolve which tends to make itself good in experience.”³⁰ The question that must here be pressed is: Whence this original sense of justice of which Hocking speaks. According to Hocking’s own mode of reasoning it should begin to function because of a God-consciousness which is fundamental to it. Only then would his splendid statement of the ontological argument be made effective for moral as well as for other ideas. But Hocking does not carry his argument through. Just at the crucial point he becomes unfaithful to it. For Hocking the first functioning of the moral consciousness is independent of God.³¹ Man meets a universe first and a God afterwards. Thus man is the ultimate interpretive category in matters of morality. God becomes once more, for Hocking, as for Webb, an Ideal that may be and is constantly revised as human thought progresses. Before long Hocking tells us that the problem of the religious consciousness is a “problem of the attributes of reality.”³²

It would seem that the foregoing discussion has explained why it is that so often Theism and Idealism are considered to be close allies while in reality they are enemies. Idealism has constantly avowed its friendship towards Theism. Idealism has maintained the necessity of presupposing (a) a unity basic to diversity, (b) a timeless unity basic to diversity, and (c) one ultimate subject of interpretation. On these points Idealism seems to be on the side of Theism. Yet on these points Idealism only seems to stand with Theism for Idealism has also maintained that we must have (a) a plurality as basic as unity (b) a temporal plurality as basic as unity, and (c) a plurality of interpreters of Reality. These two conflicting tendencies cannot but seek to destroy one another. Logic demands that Idealism choose between the theistic and pragmatic motifs. Logic also demands that if the pragmatic motif is entertained seriously at all it will win out altogether in time. History

²⁶ *Idem.*, p. 201.

²⁷ *Idem.*, p. 201.

²⁸ *Idem.*, p. 313.

²⁹ D. C. Macintosh, *Phil. Rev.*, v. 23, 1914, p. 270 ff.

³⁰ *Meaning of God*, p. 147.

³¹ *Idem.*, p. 146.

The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 143.

has amply justified the demands of logic. The Absolute of Idealism is today no more than a logical principle and that a changing one. The “obsolescence of the eternal” has taken place. Idealism as well as Pragmatism is a foe of Theism; the “Absolute” is not God.

²Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Story Of Westminster Theological Seminary

The Banner

1930

Volume 65, Pages 657ff

Dear Dick:

In your letter of recent date you say that some of your friends are not altogether certain that the existence of Westminster Seminary is justified. They are not as pessimistic as you are about conditions in the Presbyterian church as a whole and about conditions at Princeton Seminary. You ask for data that bear on the matter. Let me assure you that I shall be glad to furnish you all manner of data for I am persuaded that the existence of Westminster will be justified in proportion as the facts are known. First, let me say a few words to your friends who are as pessimistic as you are. Some of them will readily admit that Westminster has a right to exist but feel its efforts will be useless. If a great institution such as Princeton could not maintain the purity of the church, what use is there in trying anything new? So runs their argument.

The Pessimists

Rotten wood cannot be split. Into a dead organism life cannot be injected. Such statements are sometimes made with respect to the Presbyterian Church. To what extent are they true? I do not know. Who does? Is there any definite way to find out? No there is not. That a great many ministers are modernists is beyond dispute. In 1923–1924 nearly 1,300 of them signed the so-called Auburn Affirmation. His Affirmation declared that one need not hold to the virgin birth of Christ or his miracles or his offering of himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice or his bodily resurrection from the grave or the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, in order to be a minister in good standing. The Affirmation is clearly anti-Christian and anti-theistic. It denies the absoluteness of God, of Christ and of Scripture, it is based upon the principle of relativism which is paganism. Nevertheless, the signers of the Affirmation are tolerated in a church with a definitely Calvinistic creed. Dr. Charles R. Erdman, a professor at Princeton Seminary, when Moderator of the General Assembly, appointed a committee of fifteen to investigate whether there was anything wrong with the church. As reasonably might a man whose leg is half demolished investigate whether anything is wrong since he does not “run” as easily as otherwise. The committee found nothing seriously wrong. All the ministers of the church professed to be faithful to its confessions; there were only minor differences of “interpretation.” Such was the report. A later assembly accepted this report. The representatives of the people said in effect that there is no difference between paganism and Christianity. Add to this that the people did not object to this trend of affairs and your pessimistic friend seems to be quite right.

Yet all these things do not prove that the rank and file of the people are modernists. They are asleep at best. But who knows that they may not be aroused? Perhaps they need

a shock. The very fact that there has been so little opposition on their part against liberal preachers seems to indicate that they do. That Westminster is not the result of a “*volksbeweging*” is no argument against it. A blessing it would be if Westminster might be used to originate a “*volksbeweging*.”

“Exactly,” says your friend, “a renewal of consistent Christianity among the people, is what we need. But what difference does it make through what agency such a renewal is begun? Whether it began from Princeton or Westminster is immaterial.” But surely if your friend begins to think about his statement he will see that he assumes that the men of Westminster were wrong. He assumes that Westminster is “just another seminary.” It is just so that the new editor of *The Presbyterian* is willing to mother this new born child. How magnanimous! Yet, Westminster would rather die than be mothered thus. It was because they had no hope at all that a consistent Calvinism would continue to be taught in all the departments at Princeton that the men of Westminster thought it imperative to organize a new seminary. Just as Dr. A. Kuyper felt that, humanly speaking, it would be useless to expect the movement of a renewed Calvinism to endure, unless the Free University were organized, so the men of Westminster felt they dare not pray for a renewal of a consistent Christianity unless they did all that was in their power to organize a new seminary of which there is a reasonable guarantee that it will cling to the Reformed Faith.

Furthermore, suppose your friend is so pessimistic that he despairs of any attempt by any institution to revive an interest in consistent Christianity, you can, it would seem, appeal to his very love for Calvinism and his conviction that the Reformed Faith is the only consistent form of Christianity in order to justify the existence of Westminster. Only a consistent form of Christianity offers any real opposition to paganism at all. The very backbone of evangelical Christianity would be broken if the Reformed faith should disappear. Finally, if your friend is a true Calvinist, he will maintain that it is imperative for Calvinists to maintain consistent theological seminaries irrespective of consequences. The man most pessimistic about “results” can, when a Calvinist, still be enthusiastic about consistently Calvinistic seminaries.

The Optimists

Your other friend, the optimist, has recently heard Dr. Speer say that the trouble at Princeton was but a personal matter. He has also read the statement of Dr. Stevenson (president of the seminary at Princeton) and of the new Board, that they intend to be even more faithful to the original plan of the seminary than the old Board of Directors could be. He has also been told over and over again that Drs. Erdman and Stevenson are as orthodox as could be desired. “Accordingly,” he says, “it may be that these men are right. When good men differ, how decide?”

You are quite right in not beginning a battle about personalities. I would place before your friend a few simple facts.

In the first place the orthodoxy of no one is in question. The only thing with which Drs. Erdman and Stevenson have been charged is pacifism. Dr. Erdman for example says that this is no time to fight. Such an attitude is hard to understand when over 1200 ministers are Auburn Affirmationists. It seems to resemble the attitude of the man who is

too busy with “constructive work” for the family to protect his children from murder. But the charge of pacifism is not a charge of heterodoxy.

Secondly, the professions of faithfulness to the plan of the Seminary on the part of Dr. Stevenson and the new Board must be brought into harmony with other statements and actions that seem to contradict such professions. Dr. Stevenson and the new Board seem to have a new “interpretation” of what it means to be faithful to the plan of the seminary. Did not the Rev. H. Hoeksema maintain that his position was truly Reformed? Yet Synod judged otherwise.

It should be remembered that the men of Westminster who now appear as innovators have constantly opposed reorganization at Princeton. They were perfectly satisfied with things as they were. A Board of Directors directed the seminary and a Board of Trustees conducted its finances. It did not worry them greatly that the Board of Trustees contained several outspoken modernists, as long as the trustees had no vote in the appointment of professors, etc. For over a hundred years the seminary was considered by friends and foe alike to be a bulwark of the Reformed faith.

It was Dr. Stevenson and the reorganizers that brought in something new. They are the innovators!

Was their innovation justified? Those who oppose Westminster will have to say that it was, for Westminster was organized in opposition to that innovation alone. It is not possible to say that you are opposed to both, for that at least reduces the innovation at Princeton to a mere trifle. And a trifle, all that know, will say, it was not. The reorganizers would reject with scorn the intimation that they engaged in a long and bitter fight for a mere trifle only.

Once more, was the reorganization justified? Why reorganize at all? The majority of the Board of Directors opposed it till they were exhausted. The majority of the faculty, including Drs. Wilson, Vos, Greene, Armstrong, Hodge, Machen, Allis and Jenkins opposed it to the last. They fought it hard. They wrote pamphlets and articles against it. The reorganizers wrote articles and pamphlets in favor of it. Was it a trifle? Was it merely about a few personal matters? A few personal matters could have been adjusted more easily than that. Or if it be said that the reorganizers wanted to lose no one, neither Dr. Machen nor Dr. Stevenson they could foresee that they would in all likelihood lose several men by adopting the reorganization plan. As early as December 1927 Dr. Machen wrote that if the reorganization of the seminary should come about, much as he hoped it would not, the establishment of a new seminary would in his estimation be imperatively necessary. Rightly or wrongly the majority of the faculty deemed the reorganization to be destructive of the seminary. It is not unfair to say, then, that if the reorganizers did set any value on the services of the majority of the faculty they took great chances of losing them all when they persisted in carrying through their measures. If we must take them at their word when they say it was only the adjustment of personal matters that they had in mind, we will have to think of them as of a physician who recommends a large dose of carbolic acid to a patient suffering from the scurvy.

But the reorganizers do not always say that it was merely personal matters they had in mind. They also say that through the reorganization the seminary could better live up to its plan. Does this second argument sound reasonable? It seems to me that an honest Modernist would have to admit that it is not. An honest modernist will admit that modernism is not historic Christianity, but its contradictory opposite. An honest

modernist will admit that it is not likely that a Board containing signers of the Auburn Affirmation will better serve to defend historic Christianity than a Board containing no such signers. The new Board, composed in general of members of the old Board of Directors, of members of the old Board of Trustees and of members chosen from the church at large does contain signers of the Auburn Affirmation. The General Assembly has approved the membership of this new Board. The chief court of the church saw no inconsistency there. But will your friend also see no inconsistency there? If he does not he ought to see no objection to having some members of the Calvin Curatorium embrace the views of Dr. Fosdick.

These facts will, I trust, lead your friend to the conviction that the reorganization was unwarranted not only, but destructive of old Princeton. In the old Board of Directors lay the real power. Those members of it that wished to maintain historic Calvinism were in the majority. Now the words of Scott might be applied to them:

“How few, all weak and withered of their force,

Wait on the verge of dark eternity, the tide returning hoarse,

To sweep them from our sight.” The few that remain have no right to oppose a man as a candidate for membership in the Board or in the Faculty on the ground that he is a modernist. The church has set its stamp of approval upon modernism inasmuch as it has set its stamp of approval upon the signers of the Auburn Affirmation.

Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, president of Princeton Seminary some years ago favored the plan of organic union between the Presbyterian and other churches. Such a union could not be effected unless the Calvinistic confession of the church were to be set aside. True, Dr. Stevenson said that he was opposed to setting the confessions aside. But there lies the difficulty. How is it possible to run east and west at the same time? What must I understand you to mean when you solemnly and piously affirm that you are faithful to your wife but also frankly strive for “organic union” with your neighbor’s wife?

At the Assembly of 1926 Dr. Stevenson proposed that Princeton Seminary should be a seminary of the “whole” church. This statement, if it was to mean anything at all, could mean nothing else than that the seminary should serve every doctrinal wing of the church, Affirmationists as well as others. At the same Assembly Dr. Stevenson opposed the confirmation of Dr. Machen as professor of Apologetics. Of the “Thompson Committee” appointed at Baltimore in 1926 to investigate the situation at Princeton, president Stevenson asked, “Is this seminary to be what its charter prescribes, ‘The Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,’ or to be an institution of a turbulent section in our own and other churches?”¹ This question, too, if it was to mean anything, signified nothing less than that the majority of the faculty represent only a “turbulent faction” of the church. Would it be likely that the policy of such a president, approved by the last assembly, would help to keep the seminary true to its Calvinistic position? Or if it be said that Dr. Stevenson will remain only for a few years, is it likely that a Board created in approval of his policies would elect a man who would once more follow the policy of the “turbulent section” of the church?

Finally, to mention no more, the official bulletin of the seminary of November 1929 white-washed the whole Affirmation movement by saying that the signing of the Affirmation might be quite an incidental and insignificant thing. The bulletin apparently thinks it quite reasonable that a man should sign the Affirmation and also sign a solemn

¹ *The Presbyterian*, December 8, 1927.

pledge that he will help direct the seminary according to its plan. Could any more definite proof be offered that the Princeton Seminary authorities are adapting themselves to the mind of the church which has learned to be tolerant to and inclusive of modernism?

How unfair then is it to say that Westminster Seminary was started for trifling reasons, or that the men of Westminster welcomed the reorganization at Princeton as an excuse for them to leave! The fact is—and this is all important—that Drs. Machen and Allis resigned from Princeton before they saw any immediate prospect for a new seminary at all. They resigned from Princeton for fear lest evangelical people might think that all was well at Princeton.

Many more data I could furnish but these are sufficient, I trust, to present to your friends a reasonable argument for the imperative necessity and therefore the complete justification of Westminster Theological Seminary.

Your friend,
C. Van Til

³Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

A Christian Theistic Theory Of Knowledge

The Banner

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We may say that there are six foundation stones that underlie a true theory of knowledge and a true theory of reality; namely, a correct concept of God, of man, of Christ, of salvation, of the church and of the last things. These, you say are the things that I heard about in the catechism class. These, you say, are the ordinary concepts with which theology deals. Does philosophy then deal with these same concepts too? Yes it does. There are no concepts besides those mentioned with which any human being can deal. On the other hand every human being, if he thinks at all, must think about these concepts. Whether one be a scientist, a philosopher, a theologian, or all of these combined as most people are, one must say something about these concepts either explicitly or implicitly. It is for this reason that the distinction between “layman” and “professional” must not be drawn too sharply. All the departments of knowledge deal from a certain point of view with the totality of possible human knowledge.

Among all these departments of human knowledge it is philosophy that stands closest to theology. Both theology and philosophy deal with knowledge as a whole while the other branches of knowledge limit themselves largely in their explicit statements to certain aspects of experience. Why then have both theology and philosophy? I shall not try to answer that question fully. Just one consideration may suffice in this connection. The “world” has no theology. It has only philosophy. Should we for that reason reject philosophy? Rather the contrary! We must set over against the false philosophy of the world a true Christian philosophy. If we are to preserve a true theology there is scarcely anything more important than that we should cultivate a sound philosophy.

Now in order to do so it is first of all necessary that we reduce the concepts of theology to those of philosophy. This too we cannot do fully but we may say that there are two main philosophical concepts underlying the six concepts of theology spoken of above. These two main concepts are a true theory of knowledge and a true theory of reality. Everyone must know what he thinks the nature of God, of man and the world to be. Such knowledge gives us a theory of reality. But even before we have such a theory of reality we must be sure that we really know that our knowledge of reality is not an illusion. Accordingly we must first of all have a theory of knowledge.

It is all important that these two foundation stones be solid and correctly laid. The big guns of the attack of a false philosophy and a false science are directed against them. We need not flatter ourselves that our theological structure will stand if these foundations should be destroyed. In two brief articles we shall try to see what these foundation stones are and why we consider them to be immovable.

The Believer's Theory Of Knowledge

I see a cow. I say it is an animal. But what is an animal? To answer that question fully I should be able to say what life is for a cow is living. I watch the cow eat grass. Does the grass live too? Yes it does. The grass grows out of the ground. Does the ground live also? No it does not. But some say that it does. At any rate I see that the lifeless is indispensable for the living. Hence I cannot say what life is unless I can also say what the ground is. I cannot really say what a cow is until I can tell what the whole of physical reality is.

But now comes a still greater difficulty. We are ourselves a part of this reality. That might seem at first sight to give us the advantage of inside view. But it would certainly have the disadvantage of only an inside view. We usually have only an inside view of ourselves. Others have an "outside" view of us. And how much more correct they usually are than we! Suppose then that there is a God. He will have the best "outside" view of us. Our idea of ourselves would be wholly wrong unless it corresponded to God's outside knowledge of us. Thus we begin to see that if we are to have an answer to the question what the cow is we must first know all about God and man. In other words we may say that we must know all about all things if we are to know anything about anything.

We must answer then that we do not know what a cow is. But such an admission does not seem to be so serious. Even if I do not know what a cow is I can milk it anyway. But the question becomes more serious when I am asked whether I know myself. I must know a good deal about myself. There are those who claim to have an outside view of me and they say that I am a sinner and damnation-bound. Is that true? I ask them how they know? They tell me that the revelation of God tells them about it. Is there such a revelation? Perhaps there is not. But am I sure that there is not? I ought to know all about myself; that is, I must know all about what is going to happen to me in this life and in the future, if there is one, before I can be certain that those prophets of evil are mistaken. I grow desperate. I must know here and now whether I know.

In despair I look again at that revelation of which my accusers speak. The Scriptures tell me that God knows all about all things. Suppose that this claim is true, would that help me? Would that make me know all things? No, it would not make me know all things but it would help me just the same. A child does not need to know all about the road he is to travel if only his father does. So also we may say that if God knows all about all things we can know all we need to know about ourselves. If God knows all things He must have created all things. God could not know all if all were not dependent upon him. God could not know this world if his rationality were not stamped upon it. Then too all knowledge that any human being has and possibly could have must be from God. It must be true then that we are created in the image of God. God's rationality is stamped upon me. Hence, if God exists, the knowledge that I seem to have, must be from God and therefore true.

But does God exist? We have till now been asking what would be true if God exists. Is it nothing but a fine vision that we have seen? Our answer is that God must exist or the very questions that we have asked about Him would be meaningless. We have seen that God must know all things if we are to know anything. Hence it is also true that my asking about His existence would have no meaning unless He does actually exist. In other

words, I must presuppose God's existence for my experience to have any significance. My belief in God is as necessary as breath to me; He is "nearer than hands and feet."

Faith

The position outlined above may be called the position of faith; it is the believer's position. When the believer is asked to give a reason for the faith that is in him he reasons as we have reasoned above. It then becomes clear that the believer's position is a reasonable position. It is reasonable for a mere human being to be a believer. It is very scientific to be a believer. The only unscientific position is an unreasonable position. If science today does not believe in the existence of such a God as we have spoken of we can only say that "science" is unscientific.

Faith then is not the thoughtless acceptance of something that we like to think of as true. On the contrary faith comes only in answer to fathomless agony of soul. The deepest faith is due to the deepest thought. Only when the prodigal is brought to bay will he believe.

Faith implies the recognition of God's absolute priority and originality. Faith allows no aspect of the human personality to escape subjection to God. It does not set aside the intellect to God. It is only thus that the intellect is truly free; only thus is there an atmosphere in which it can operate. Thus too faith becomes the source of all true science.

The Unbeliever's Theory of Knowledge

John sees a cow. He calls it an animal. But what is an animal? Webster fails him. He turns to the philosophers Plato tells him that this cow is all imitation of cowness in the eternal world of ideas. But is there such a world of ideas? What did Plato know about it? What can any human being know about anything that is eternal? But Plato was an ancient Greek. Perhaps a modern American knows more about it. So John asks William James. James tells him in effect that nobody knows anything about anything. James tells him to forget about all this mad chase for a knowledge of reality. "Milk your cow and have done with it" says James. "Be practical."

John tried to be "practical." So did the prodigal at the swinetrough. But how could John be sure that it was unpractical to speculate about a judgment day? Even Methusaleh died. Likely John would too. And then what? Who can tell him? He cannot help but ask such questions again and again. Yet he may not accept the answer of Scripture for Scripture is on this basis no more than a collection of human opinions. It were an insult to his intelligence to accept anything on authority. He wants to be his own authority. He grows desperate. He grows insane. He commits suicide. Or other wise he gives up thinking and denies his manhood.

Reason

The position outlined above may be called the position of human reason and one holding it may be called a rationalist. The rationalist pretends that man can without the

aid of God solve all the problems that face the human mind. Fearlessly he meets the Sphinx. Boldly he spurns all God-proffered. "He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed man "

When failure comes again and again he is not dismayed. He persists in his efforts and calls such a persistence true scientific patience. We would call it stubbornness and conceit. The rationalist would rather change the "we do not know" which he must readily confess into the "we shall not know" of his faith (therefore admitting final and utter failure) than allow that there may be a God who knows all things. He would rather attempt to harvest the wheat of the world with a scythe than admit that there may be such things as binders and tractors.

What then is our complaint? That the rationalist does not want to set aside his intellect? On the contrary we charge him with refusing to use his intellect sufficiently. Are we afraid that in public colleges and universities men will learn to think and therefore reject the faith of their fathers? Not at all. Our only fear is that they will not learn to think soberly as men ought to think. Do we fear that young men and women will criticize our concepts of revelation and inspiration? Not in the least? We only fear that they will stop half way. If thought goes far enough and criticism deep enough it has to admit that man because of his finitude needs God and because of his total depravity needs Christ, and that neither can be known except through the Spirit.

Our Task

What then is our task? Our task is to wrestle with our faith. We must make the psalms our own. It is well to make holiday with the multitude as we go with it to the house of God but we must also learn to make dialogue with our own souls. When alone in the land of the Hermonite, when dwelling on the hill Mizar, when surrounded by scoffers who sneeringly say, "Where is now thy God," we must learn to respond, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance." To be alone and think makes us strong. By meditation we gain such confidence as David had. To wrestle with God before we can meet Esau.

Once more, what is our task? To bring the gospel to all men? Surely it is that. But woe unto us if we proselyte all nations as the Pharisees did. And yet our preaching and our teaching and our missionary effort is constantly in danger of becoming Pharisaic. We hold our position all too easily oftentimes. We struggle so little with ourselves and for that reason make so little headway in our struggle with unbelief.

Is it wrong to be sure of the truth of our position? Do we preach too apodictically at times? Not at all. We should teach and preach with more conviction still, but with conviction that is more deeply grounded. No one can work effectively if he works apologetically. We are on the Lord's side. "Wherefore the nations rage"? Let them kiss the Son even now lest one day they cry to the mountains and the hills to cover them from the face of Him who sitteth to judge the peoples.

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⁴Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

A Christian Theistic Theory Of Reality

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We saw the last time that the first main foundation stone of a true philosophy is such a theory of knowledge as is involved in the conception of a God who knows all things. We must now see that the second main foundation stone is once more the conception of an absolutely self-conscious God. At once you object and say that then there are not two foundation stones but only one. Exactly so. The two agree in one. The two are one. The reason for this is that in God knowledge and reality are identical. This point is fundamental as we shall see. Let us here note that because of this identity a true theory of knowledge implies a true theory of reality and vice versa. On the other hand a false theory of knowledge is not an innocent plaything, but involves a false theory of reality and vice versa. It really makes very little difference where you begin your course of reasoning as long as you take God into consideration from the beginning. An absolutely self-conscious God is the presupposition of a truly theistic philosophy of life.

The reason that we must presuppose God is that we cannot have Him in any other way. To be sure you can have a god without presupposing him but it cannot be more than a finite God. The kind of God we need must be presupposed. If you are very "scientific" you cannot afford to begin with a presupposition. But I cannot afford to be without an absolute God. Is it then much as two men one of whom prefers a home for his money and the other an automobile? No, we must reason together till we die. I will continue to maintain that your position ends in hell and mine in heaven. I do this boldly because I do it humbly as one who has received by grace.

God

In theology we speak about the attributes of God. If now we take all these attributes together and bring them into one concentrated thought we may take that thought as the foundation stone of our theory of reality. That thought itself cannot be expressed in any other word than God. In our theory of reality the most important thing to maintain is that God has reality of Himself. We hear much about "ultimate reality." God is our ultimate reality. As such He must be eternal; everything temporal is derived. As such He must be completely self-conscious; everything not completely self-conscious is derived. As such He must be self-sufficient; everything not self-sufficient is derived.

The Universe

The term “universe” is often taken as inclusive of God and the world. We take it as expressive of all reality not identical with God. Theism holds that the universe is temporal. For a genuine theism the term “dependence” when applied to the universe does not mean “logical dependence” only. It implies the inherent temporality of the universe in distinction from the eternity of God. Rome may be satisfied to say that philosophically we need not and cannot maintain anything more than “logical dependence,” as Protestants we cannot but hold that the doctrine of temporal creation is a constitutive element of Christian theism.

The relation between time and eternity we cannot fathom. As Christian theists we frankly admit this fact. If anyone feels that he cannot accept a philosophy unless he can fully understand all its concepts he cannot be a Christian theist. Our only answer to him is that we cannot afford to do without God. If we cannot have both cake and bread we would rather have bread than to have neither of the two. But our opponents make light of our inability to do without God. They think it an “evident token of perdition” intellectually. To them our view of temporal creation is the high-water mark of mental incompetency. Let us see what they say.

The God Of Antitheism

They say that our God is as useless as a minister on pension is said to be. Our God is said to have no “value” for the “religious consciousness.” On the contrary He attracts a great deal of energy from men that were better directed toward the uplift of the slums.

For our “useless” God they substitute a useful god. To be really useful a god must not be “aloof” from the world. He must be a “God in the dirt.” He must not sit as an oriental monarch sits but must be “the President of a Great Commonwealth.” Accordingly He is placed in office by popular vote; He must be “the Idealized Common Will” and “the Democrat.” Such a God is said to be truly useful because He will do all He can to help us as well as to help himself; He is “the Great Toiler.” If we feel discouraged He is at our side and if He is discouraged He may “draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity.” This God is a good mixer. He is not as that “bickering monopolist who will have no other gods but Me,” of which we read in the Scriptures.

This God will allow us to be “scientific.” He is really himself a pioneer scientist. He is truly “open-minded.” He is always looking for new facts. His youth is constantly renewed as is the eagle’s. “Now deity is always the next higher empirical quality to the one presently evolved.” He is a “variant” instead of a constant. He is the product of Becoming instead of the Source of Being. He is intimately united with the universal flux of things. Hence He can be and is the true scientist.

The Universe Of Antitheism

For us God is the source of the universe. For our opponents the universe is the source of God. For them Space-Time precedes Deity; Process is prior to Reality. God “is in the strictest sense not a creator but a creature.” Or again if we prefer we may say that God is an aspect instead of a product of the process of the universe. He is “only the ideal tendency in things.” In each case the universe is more original than God; God and man are citizens in the universe which exists independently of them both.

About the origin of the universe no one really knows anything. But no matter. Accidents will happen. If you set six monkeys to strumming on so many typewriters they would eventually produce all the books of the British museum. The rational somehow proceeds from the non-rational; the greater proceeds somehow from the lesser; bare possibility somehow produces reality.

The future of this universe is equally a matter of chance. There may be purpose in the world but if there is, that purpose is at any rate self-generated; God has not placed it in there. All in all we must say that the universe has bought out God and has publicly announced the merger. While the transition is being made men can still write checks on the old bank and they will be honored by the new. Soon, however, new stationery will be printed and men’s religious commerce will be carried on exclusively with the universe. Why not buy some shares in the new “venture of faith?” Religion does not need the old God. For a while you may still think it does. You have been used to your old God as you have been used to your old hat. And as you became used to your new hat after wearing it a while so you will become used to your new God. He really looks much better than the one. He will last much longer. It is time to change.

Conclusion

Have we made a caricature of our opponents position? No, we have not. There are many philosophers who believe in just such a God as we have described. You need not look in dusty volumes but in the most popular books of the day to find such a God and such a universe as we have spoken of described. It is not unfair then to say that the God portrayed is the god of a great deal of current literature. It is true that there are idealistic thinkers who would not use the crass terminology of their more pragmatic brethren. Yet if they were to work out to the bitter end the implications of their own position they would end exactly where the Pragmatist ended. The Idealists as well as the Pragmatists take for granted at the outset of their thinking that the “universe” or as they constantly speak of it “reality” is a larger and a more fundamental concept than the concept of God. They may not say that in so many words but it amounts to that just the same.

They include both God and man in their term “reality.” Thus their position is monistic at the outset. And if God is thus bound up with or a part of the universe at the outset, God can be finite only. More than that, if God is thus bound up with the universe he must become an evolving or temporal god since the universe is temporal. When the one moves the other also moves just as with Ezekiel’s wheels. We may conclude then that the God we have outlined above is the only alternative to the God we serve. You must serve either of these two Gods. Every human being actually serves the one or the other.

The completeness and the exclusiveness of this alternative should be pointed out in season and out of season. Joshua said that it made very little difference which gods the people served of all the gods available. All idols, he maintained, were at bottom the same no matter what their name or what their form. Nor did Joshua try to hide these gods from the people. He displayed all the idols before the eyes of the youth and told them to make their choice. His policy was to display all these idols in order that their hollowness might appear. Is such a policy dangerous? It certainly is. But every other policy is more dangerous than this one. Safety cannot be found in trying to hide from our youth what is going on in the world. They will find out anyway. The only question is how they will find out whether with us and under our guidance or be themselves. So we must seek in the development of a true Christian philosophy to show to our young men and women that every position but the theistic one leads to the utter and final destruction of all human experience. If we are faithful in this our task we may with confidence expect that the Spirit of God will use us as instruments for the establishment of His kingdom in the hearts of men.

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⁵Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Penitence And Controversy

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On October 31 visited a meeting of the presbytery of Philadelphia. A certain amount of time was allowed on the docket for foreign missionaries to report on their work. After one of these missionaries had spoken, the Reverend J. Clover Monsma asked the question of presbytery as a whole, or of any individual member who might be able and willing to answer, whether there was any truth in the charge so often made against foreign missionary work that it is not as evangelistic as it should be. This question was given further urgency when another member of presbytery who had acted as a missionary for some time openly stated that the issue between Modernism and Orthodoxy is simply ignored by many on the mission field.

While the Rev. Monsma was speaking still another member of Presbytery arose and said that the time allotted for foreign missions was up and that therefore the question was out of order. This reminded me of the Sophist Eutyphro who did not like it very well when Socrates asked him whether he was certain that he was doing right in prosecuting his father for murder and therefore said, "Another time, Socrates, for I am in a hurry and must go now."

Then the moderator spoke. "Everybody's eyes were directed toward him, perceiving that something wonderful might shortly be expected. And certainly they were not far wrong; for the man, Crito, began a remarkable discourse well worth hearing and wonderfully persuasive as an exhortation to virtue."

The moderator feelingly told the presbytery that this was of all times the most inopportune for introducing any such controversial matters as those pertaining to the orthodoxy of missionaries since in accordance with the request of the Federal Council of Churches, the presbytery was about to engage in a period of penitence and prayer.

The Reaction

"Posiedon," I said, "this is the crown of wisdom; can I ever hope to have such wisdom of my own?" According to my simple childlike logic it had seemed to be a matter of course that, if an individual or a church should do penance or engage in special confession of sin and guilt, such an individual or church should know to some extent what it is that requires the special penitence. Moreover, it had seemed to me to be a matter of course that Christ would consider it an insult to himself if His Church, instead of preaching the gospel, should engage in the propagation of paganism within and beyond its borders. I formerly thought this to be as natural as to think that the pope would feel insulted if one said of him that he is the worst of Protestants. But now I suddenly imagined myself as a Roman Catholic church member about to do penance and about to confess all my sins, saying to some one who suggested that I had grossly insulted the

Pope that I could not engage in controversy on this point just now since I was about to engage in penitence and prayer.

Is it a wonder that I was struck dumb and lay prostrate, when suddenly by such high authority as that of a moderator all this simple childlike logic of mine was swept away at one blow? I had the same admiration for the authority of the speaker that Socrates had for Dionysodorus and his brother Euthydemus, two great Sophists who came to Athens and confessed to be able to “teach virtue in a short time and in the very best manner.” Dionysodorus asked Socrates whether he really wanted Cleinias to become wise. When Socrates answered in the affirmative Dionysodorus replied, “You wish him no longer to be what he is, which can only mean that you wish him to perish. Pretty lovers and friends they must be who want their favorite not to be, or to perish.”

So now the moderator seemed to ask me, “Do you want the Church to become really wise in her missionary work and preach the old gospel only? And you want the Church to engage in special penitence and prayer because she has harbored and propagated paganism? This can only mean that you want the Church to be other than it is, that is, you want her to perish.” In this manner I seemed to be shown up completely as an enemy of the Church. I really ought to drink the hemlock cup.

The Demon Protests ¹

At this I wept much. But the demon within me charged me not to weep but to protest and not allow the moderator to “make so uncivil a speech to me as that I desire my beloved, whom I value above all men, to perish.” But I chained the demon saying, “He may skin me alive, if he please, (and I am pretty well skinned by him already), if only my skin is made at least, not like that of Marsyas, into a leathern bottle, but into a piece of virtue.” I was determined to have the full benefit of this for penitence had come. The moderator seemed not so grieved at this as I was. I only wished that he had had more pity on me since I did not know how to do penance until the controversy had been settled.

I was left then to fight the demon within me without the help of the modern Dionysodorus. And bravely did I try to slay the dragon. My greatest difficulty was that in my heart I still agreed too much with the demon. I still seemed to feel as Socrates felt when Dionysodorus proved to him that he had no father since Sophroniscus his “father” was “other than a father” and therefore not a father—just as what is other than a stone is not a stone. And just as Socrates feared that his evil nature would still rebel even if Dionysodorus should prove to him beyond the possibility of doubt that he was a stone, so I inwardly wanted to contradict the moderator though I knew that his logic must be infallible.

With a bold front I approached the demon in me saying, “Do you want me to appear ridiculous? Do you challenge me to contradict the moderator? Do you dare me to question his statement that penitence would be impossible if controversy had preceded? No sooner should I make any objection or any contradiction or he would say to me, ‘Your contradiction is out of order for it does not exist. No contradiction exists. You take

¹ Note: “Demon” is used here not in the popular sense of evil spirit but, as among the Greeks, in the sense of one’s guiding spirit.—Editor

for granted that what I mean by the Church and by the work of missions is the same thing as that which you mean by the Church and missions. But that is not the case. My Christ does not feel insulted if the Church does not preach the gospel of salvation through the blood of the cross because he never meant that gospel to be preached. You have a different Christ and a different Church and a different missionary task than I; and because you have a different Christ than I, you are talking about a non-existent Christ and therefore your contradiction does not exist. You cannot talk about anything that does not exist. Now since I am the moderator, I cannot allow you to waste your time talking nothings but must urge you to join us in true penitence.’ ”

The Demon Still Protests

But do you suppose that my presentation of the invincible argument of the moderator could for a moment silence the demon? Not at all. If anything, he protested still more loudly and persistently than he did before.

His first objection to the infallible logic of the moderator was that, if the moderator as-erted that my contradiction of him was nonexistent and meaningless, he himself should not get so excited over it. Would Dionysodorus get excited over such a trifle as proving to Socrates that he had no father? Not at all. Even if the father of Socrates should be present, Dionysodorus could easily prove that he was “other than father” and therefore not father. But the modern Dionysodorus seemed not to be so well at ease as the ancient one.

In the second place, as to the arguments of the moderator the demon boldly said that he would be more ashamed of employing them in the refutation of others than of being refuted by them. “Suppose,” he said, “there is really no possibility of contraction; that is, suppose we cannot reason together about the truth or the non-truth of modernism and orthodoxy, then there is no truth at all and the moderator is a moderator of nothing and what the moderator says means nothing. When, then, the moderator compares modernism’s idea of missions and orthodoxy’s idea of missions, he compares nothing with nothing and decides that the first nothing is ever so much better than the second nothing. Moreover if there is nothing but two nothings between which the moderator has to decide, he has not kept out of controversy but has decided in favor of the nothing of modernism in a purely arbitrary fashion. He has simply taken the place of a dictator of nothing. Then too he has engaged in the greatest controversy about nothing just before he went to the hour of penitence. Thus the moderator has contradicted you if there is such a thing as contradiction and he may be wrong as well as you may be wrong while if there is no such thing as contradiction you have not contradicted him and have not engaged in controversy as he said you did and you are just as well prepared to go to the hour of penitence as he, if only in that case there were any sense in going to prayer. The conclusion is,” said the demon, “that no one can help being a controversialist even in the hour of penitence. We must pray for the destruction of the powers of darkness, in the devil, in ourselves and in others. All talk of desiring no controversy before prayer defeats itself.”

It was on this wise that the demon spoke. He seemed to restore to me my childlike faith in the old-fashioned logic. I felt as though the moderator would not be able to convince me that I was a stone even if his logic was infallible. The line between the

moderator's logic and his *ipse divit* seemed to be very thin. As formerly I could not answer the moderator, so now I could not answer the demon. Alas, for poor human nature! How can it sustain such a conflict? My only hope is that at the next meeting of presbytery the moderator will drive the demon from my hungry soul and feed me with the new logic that is higher than I. Perhaps I can go along to the hour of penitence then. For this time I was unable.

But what if the doorkeeper will not let me in next time?

Since writing these reactions I learned that the moderator is orthodox. This shows what happens if orthodox people talk like modernists.

⁶Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

What Do You Mean?

The Banner

1932

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Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick delivered an address to the students of Princeton University some years ago. In that address he said among other things that he believed in the divinity of Christ.

Is Dr. Fosdick then no modernist? We have often heard him spoken of as a modernist and a leader of modernists. But if he believes in the divinity of Christ, can he really be a modernist?

Perhaps, some one will say, he is no out and out modernist. Perhaps he denies some other doctrines of our faith while affirming his belief in the divinity of Christ.

But in the same address in which Dr. Fosdick affirmed his belief in the divinity of Christ he also asserted his belief in the necessity of regeneration. Now if one believes in the divinity of Christ and in the necessity of regeneration, one will logically have to go the whole way and assert his belief in all the doctrines of Christianity. Of course, we are often thoughtless and illogical. We sometimes think that we can marry the daughter without becoming related to the mother-in-law. But must we think Dr. Fosdick to be so illogical as to believe in regeneration and not to believe in sin from which regeneration is to save us? We see at once that we cannot look for a solution here in the case of Dr. Fosdick or of any other leading modernist. As a matter of fact, if you ask many a modernist, he will tell you that he believes in God, in creation, in sin, in atonement, in Christ, in regeneration, in faith, in the sacraments, in sanctification, in heaven and in hell, in revelation and inspiration, in the Holy Spirit, and in the return of Christ. All this and more many modernist ministers do freely and easily when they say that they believe in the system of doctrine continued in the Westminster Confession. This Westminster Confession contains an excellent statement of the Calvinistic faith. Yet many a modernist minister gladly signs his name to it.

How then can we tell whether a man is a modernist? Or if a man calls himself a modernist, but is willing to subscribe to all the essential doctrines of Christianity, is modernism then as bad as some of our orthodox writers would have us believe?

To discover whether a man be a modernist or not, we shall have to ask him what he means by the words that he uses. We so easily take for granted that men mean by their words exactly that which we mean by them. We forget that words derive their meaning largely from the context in which they are used. Of if you will, words differ in their meaning as they are placed before different backgrounds. Now there are two—only two—possible backgrounds before which words may be used. There is first the Christian-theistic background. It is this that we take for granted when as orthodox Christians we use among ourselves such words as regeneration, faith, etc. The other background is the non-Christian or, as we may say, the pagan conception of things. It is clear to all that if a heathen bows before an idol he does not serve the God we serve, however much he may call that idol God. Now in such a case we need not ask the worshipper what he means by the word god when he uses it. But when men no longer bow before wood and stone but

have spiritual idols that are just as far from being identical with the Christian idea of God as any wooden idol could be, it becomes necessary to ask men what they mean by the use of their words. So we would ask Dr. Fosdick whether he uses the word “divinity” in a pagan or in a Christian sense when he applies it to Christ.

Will He Tell Us?

Will a modernist tell us what he means by the words he uses? Perhaps he would not if he were asked verbally. Many men are very skillful at evasive answers when asked point-blank questions; witness many a classical examination. But if we only wait, if we only suspend our judgment till they have talked freely, modernists will usually betray pretty clearly that they use Christian terminology before a pagan background. Give the calf plenty of rope and he will hang himself.

So, for example, when Dr. Fosdick reasserted his belief in the divinity of Christ in one of his radio sermons last winter, he remarked that he also believed in the divinity of his mother. According to Dr. Fosdick all love is divine, and whoever embodies a large measure of love may and must be considered divine.

A moment's thought will tell us now that when Dr. Fosdick uses the word “divinity,” he uses it in the pagan and not in the Christian sense of the term. By that one word “also” Dr. Fosdick has clearly designed himself as a modernist. Modernism is the use of Christian terms for the purpose of conveying pagan thought. We see from Dr. Fosdick's use of the term “divinity” that he would apply it to human beings as well as to God. In this way the distinction between God and man is done away with at one stroke. And that is the basic principle of paganism. In this way the term “divinity” is no longer exclusively characteristic of the absolute personality of God. Man is raised to the level of God and therewith God lowered to the level of man.

Christianity Rejected

And now, if I imagine myself asking well-instructed catechumens what more would follow from such a statement as that made by Dr. Fosdick that he “also” believes in the divinity of his mother, I would, I think, receive a swift reply that the rejection of all that the Bible teaches is implied in such a statement.

Would you be deceived as to the meaning of the word “creation” when used by one who has just before told you that he believes in the divinity of his mother? Of course, you would not. You would at once realize that this word too will carry a pagan content. If God is not absolute, as He is not if men may also be divine, then He has not really created the world but He—or we may rather say he, or still better it—has evolved, developed, with us in a Universe that has somehow come into existence.

And so we might continue. All the words that we daily use and give a Christian meaning must now receive a pagan meaning. Sin becomes nothing more than a condition of this Universe, or of the human race, for which no one is responsible. “Atonement” is an upward movement of the race. “Regeneration” is equal to a firm resolve on your part to mend your ways in order no longer to retard the progress of the race. “Faith” is an

optimistic trust in your fellow man, and a belief that somehow all is well with the world. “Sacraments” exist to help us think of one another’s divinity.

“Sanctification” is to become more refined in our ways. “Heaven” is the state of mind by which you feel satisfied with the general tendency to uplift in the world. “Hell” is to feel no urge for progress. “Revelation” is the unfolding of the powers somehow inherent in the Universe. “Inspiration” is the feel and the vision of still greater things that all of us have at some time or other. The “Holy Spirit” is the spirit of love that pervaded Christ and our mothers. The “return of Christ” is the wide extension of the spirit of love.

We see then that while verbally affirming his belief in some or in all the doctrines of Christianity, a modernist like Dr. Fosdick makes plain to us by his further interpretations, by his also’s and by his if’s that he does not believe what we mean by Christianity at all.

Alertness Needed

Plain as all this would seem to be, it happens none the less that orthodox believers are constantly deceived. When Dr. Fosdick spoke in Princeton University, even seniors in the seminary maintained that Dr. Fosdick was orthodox because he affirmed his belief in the divinity of Christ and in the necessity of regeneration. Now if those who are soon to be leaders in the Church have not yet learned to make the simple distinction between a pagan and a Christian background, we should not be surprised if our young people are led astray by the subtle and often brief messages that come over the radio.

All the more does it appear to be necessary for all of us to be ever ready to ask the question, What do you mean?

What do you mean? Is it an unfair question to ask of anybody? It is no more unfair than to ask a soldier in war time to which side he belongs. In a time of war we must know whether we deal with friend or foe. If a man says he believes in the divinity of Christ but he puts in that term the pagan meaning that we have seen Dr. Fosdick put into it, he is an enemy the faith and all should know that fact. Any one should be more than ready to tell us what he means. If one means orthodox Christianity, he will be glad at any time to give an account of the faith that is in him.

What do you mean? That is a question that young people must learn to ask. Young people must learn to become “critical,” that is, they must learn to judge a comprehensive judgment. Young people are, as a rule, to ready to accept or to ready to reject. Of course, that is true of most older people too. Most people never grow up. But we ought to try to grow up as much as we can. We cannot be strong soldiers until we grow up.

What Do I Mean?

But in order to ask someone else what he means we must be able to tell him what we mean. That is only fair. If we wish other people to tell us precisely what they mean, we ought to be willing and able to tell them what we mean.

However, there is another and a more important reason why we should ask ourselves what we mean. Unless we ourselves know what we mean, say by the divinity of Christ, we cannot even intelligently ask any one else the question what he means by the divinity of Christ. It is true that our own notions may be clarified when contrasted with the beliefs

of our opponents; yet we need, first of all, some sort of standard by which we can judge the beliefs of others. How can you judge whether Dr. Fosdick is orthodox unless you know what orthodox teaching is? The real reason why those seniors were so easily deceived into thinking that Dr. Fosdick was orthodox was that they themselves did not clearly know what was orthodox. They wanted to be orthodox. They were very well-meaning. But that is not enough. They were very serious. But even that is not enough. That is surely not enough for ministers. Nor is it enough for others.

Still further, the reason why men have not asked and do not ask the question, What do you mean? with any serious intent is that they have slowly forgotten and neglected to ask the question, What do I mean? of themselves. We often blame modernists because they subtly introduce a pagan content in the vehicle of a Christian terminology. And there is no doubt that they are to blame morally. But we ourselves are much more to blame. If we had constantly asked ourselves what we mean, and had constantly and consistently taught our young people what we mean, there would be little danger of being led astray through the Christian terminology employed by modernists. If we live in a rough climate we ought to take cod-liver oil and dress warmly rather than complain about the weather. Religiously we live in a climate that ranges from the torrid heat of eastern mysticism to the polar frosts of modern universities. The changes are as sudden when one presses the button of a radio or turns the pages of a book. We have to learn to adjust ourselves to such a climate, with such a range and with such suddenness of change. We must know what each situation requires. We must ask the novelist what he means. We must ask the painter what he means. We must ask even the musician what he means. We must ask the newspaper what it means. Do they mean Christianity or do they mean paganism? They all mean either one or the other. But we will ask this question of none of all these unless we first learn more persistently to ask ourselves the question, What do I mean?

So Moses died, and God buried him. We do not read that God hid his sepulchre; only that it has not been found. It was a lonely death, for Moses died in accordance with his own law that the wages of sin is death. Yet his death was not as lonely as that of Christ. Moses died in the comforting presence of God; Jesus called out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Moses' death, says McLaren, confirmed his own law that the transgressor shall die. Hence it could carry us no further; the grave of Moses might as well be unknown. But the death of Jesus, the antitypical Mediator, both confirmed and repealed that same law. For He, too, must die because of sin, but it was not his own sin, but ours. Hence, by saying "Amen" to the law of Moses He swept it away. By paying the wages of sin in submitting to death, He has obtained for us "the free gift of God, which is eternal life" (Rom 6:23).

Moses' death, moreover, teaches us that, after all, our death, like his, will be a lonely journey. Yet not like the loneliness of Jesus Christ. As our beautiful Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper has it, "on the tree of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken of Him." Moses died apart from the nation, having mounted to the tops of Pisgah alone in his unabated physical strength; Jesus Christ died in the midst of physical darkness on Golgotha; we, as Bunyan pictures it, shall see the shining ones stand ready across the river of death, when, upheld by the hand of Hopeful, we put our trust in the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

Thirty days the children of Israel mourned for Moses, and that was a longer time than the funeral atmosphere lasts in our day and age: yet “so the days of mourning for Moses were ended.” But no one mourns over the grave of Christ; for it is an empty grave, and it points to the day when both Moses and all who by the grace of God have been “faithful in all their house” will receive an immortal body and dwell together in the Father’s house whence none go out or cause mourning.

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⁷Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Cradle And The Grave

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It is a pity that so many people celebrate Christmas without getting any real benefit out of it. And why do they not get the proper benefit?

Because they do not correctly connect the cradle of Jesus with the grave of Jesus. Jesus came into the cradle in order that He might go into and come out of the grave. The manger without the empty tomb would be the saddest farce upon a sad-mad race.

No Cradle And No Grave

There are those to whom the whole of Christianity is a farce and a delusion. In this class we might, of course, place all those who are not really Christians at heart. If one knows about Christianity and does not accept it, this can only be because one thinks Christianity's claim untrue. Yet we speak now of those only who openly say that for them Christianity is a delusion. The number of such is increasing. And that is fortunate. Of them we know that they are enemies of both the cradle and the cross. There is no doubt about their attitude to us; there need be no doubt about our attitude to them: it must be that of frank opposition.

In the group of which we are now speaking some deny that such a person as Jesus ever lived. Satan never did accomplish much harm upon the Church through them. It was a crude attack and crude attacks are easily observed.

A much larger number in this group simply ignore the cradle and the grave of Christ. They do not even take the trouble to deny that Jesus ever lived. What difference does it make, they say, whether such a man as Jesus lived or did not live. If He had not discovered the ideas He did discover, some one else would have discovered them. To these men it is a foregone conclusion that no individual event that takes place in the course of time can have a unique significance for us. Satan has accomplished much harm to these people and through these people. Satan has made these people so "wise" that they have not only missed all the good of the cradle and the grave but have brought upon themselves the evil implied in the rejection of the cradle and the grave. And many would-be philosophic minds have followed in their train. Many a university and college hall is robbed of Christmas cheer because their inmates have embraced this pagan philosophy in a Christian land.

The Cradle As Myth

But one must be somewhat of an intellectual giant to become thus suddenly and permanently immune to the charm of the cradle and the grave. Outside of college halls Satan usually feeds his quinine in capsules or in adulterated form. At Christmas time one can see the busy druggists of his Satanic majesty's dominions sally forth to paint the

billboards full with the pictures of the beautiful Christ myth. Is not the cradle a reality? Certainly it is. Is not Santa Claus a reality to the child? No, do not laugh at this. Do not think that you are “too big” to be influenced for good or for bad by imaginary things. Just try to be a child with a child. Tell him some fantastic stories. See if you do not get delight out of his delight. Then catch yourself day dreaming of a fairy land. We are all but grown up children.

Is there then no use in this? Ah, yes, you have been lifted out of your drab existence to breathe more easily for a while. It brings a little sunshine in your life. It spreads a little sunshine about you. Do we not need this in the depression? Do we not need to learn to become inwardly victorious over circumstances that surround us? We must learn like Paul and Silas to sing at midnight in a jail. Then all the prisoners of circumstance will listen. We bring them “spiritual values” that lead them closer to the “Master.”

Thousands there are today who are deceived by this seductive form of the denial of the cradle and the grave. Satan has found this method very successful. Many an easy victim has become immune to the real influence of the cradle and the grave by this inoculation program of Satan. Satan is the one who opposes. He opposes by the homeopathic method. He works on the principle that “like cures like.” A small dose of the mythical cradle will make most men immune to the real cradle. But the tragedy of it is that no one on earth can remain forever immune from the cradle of Jesus. Those who have held to the mythical cradle will one day meet Jesus on a real throne and receive a real punishment.

A Cradle And A Grave

Less extreme than those who deny the cradle of Jesus altogether and than those who give it only mythical significance are such who allow for a real Jesus with a real cradle and a real grave but who deny or ignore the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. These men are looking for the real historical Jesus, they say. They wish to discover how this Jesus actually lived and how He died in order to benefit by his example. They may be willing to admit that Jesus spake as no man spake and that it is therefore very profitable to listen to him. Jesus can perhaps teach us how to live and how to die.

One cannot say that these men separate the cradle and the grave. They may even lay the greatest emphasis upon the death of Jesus. Was it not in his death on the cross that He gave the supreme illustration of the power of love? He was able even on the cross to pray for his enemies. Such, it is said, is more than cold intellectual argument about principles. Here was a unique example of actual life.

Satan has had a little harder time with these than he did with those in the former class. The mythical inoculation did not immediately “take” with them. They needed larger doses of “antitoxin” in order to protect them from exposure to those who insist that Christianity is an historic religion. But though it required more effort on the part of Satan to win these men now that he has won them he has a better hold on them. To hold to a real cradle and a real grave gives a greater sense of having the “real thing” than the holding to the mythical theory could possibly give. These men think they have done justice to the uniqueness of Christianity just because they have insisted on the real cradle and the real grave.

In reality they have flatly denied the uniqueness of the cradle of Jesus as well as of the grave of Jesus. The uniqueness of both of these comes from the resurrection that followed. Without the resurrection the cradle of Jesus is but A cradle among cradles and his grave is but A grave among graves. And A cradle plus A grave do us no good at all. There are enough cradles and enough graves without that additional one. In the day of days those who have believed only in A cradle and A grave will discover that they should have believed in the cradle and in the grave. The resurrected and glorified One, who by his resurrection turned A grave into the grave, will turn their cradles into everlasting graves. It were better for them if they had not been born. How can their present Christmas joy be full? It rests upon delusion.

The Cradle And A Grave

Another class of men seems to come still closer to the Christian position than those who hold to a real cradle and a real grave. They realize that one cannot speak of a cradle at all if the uniqueness of the person of Jesus is to be recognized. They wish to speak of the cradle by all means. Never was there born such a man as Jesus. Hence his cradle may truly be spoken of as unique. Jesus' birth shows us by way of a sample, not by example, what the divine-human forces of life may bring forth. Why should not such samples become more frequent? Why should not the exceptions become the rule? There is hope for the race. Jesus has shown us that there are intelligent creative forces at the basis of the universe and that all is well with the world.

Satan has had a particularly hard time in winning these. For these are they that love and fear the scientific mind. And with respect to the scientific mind things were more simple formerly than they are now. When nearly all scientists were mechanists most of them did not attempt to celebrate Christmas, because most scientists thought they could not be Christians at all. How could one believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus if all things happen according mechanical law? How could one then speak of the grave of Jesus in distinction from the graves of others? The scientists of that day who did celebrate Christmas celebrated it with their hearts but not with their heads. That too was a poor celebration.

But now all this seems to have been changed. Science is, generally speaking, no longer mechanistic. It seems to allow for totally new things to appear. So then it seems to be possible now to be truly "scientific" and at the same time to believe in the uniqueness of the birth of Jesus. And this has attracted many. It could not be otherwise. It seems to enable men to celebrate Christmas with head and heart alike while at the same time they may retain their scientific standing. It was quite a long way about for Satan to travel to get at the matter in this way and yet it has proved worth while from this point of view. Those that he has gained in this way will not easily escape from his grasp. Once a man thinks he has fully satisfied both Christianity and "science" he is hard to move.

Yet it is plain that the uniqueness of the present day scientist is not the uniqueness of Christianity. The uniqueness of present day science is based upon the idea that anything at all may happen while the uniqueness of Christianity is based upon the idea that all things happen in accordance with the plan of God. According to the uniqueness of some recent scientists many miraculous births and many miraculous resurrections might occur. And in this way the cradle becomes once more A cradle and the grave again becomes A

grave. How hopeless then to try to connect the cradle with A grave; it is illogical and cannot be done.

The Cradle And The Grave

Rejoice then we may and must that by the very power of the cradle and the grave we sense that we need more than A cradle and A grave. By grace we have escaped the wiles of the evil one. We are not wiser than others: we are only recipients of the gift of spiritual sight. By the Spirit's power we connect Christmas with Easter. By the Spirit's power we connect the cradle and the grave with our cradles and our graves. Only thus does the cradle of Christ transfigure our cradles. Look at that babe. Has it come into the cradle only to be thrown eventually into a bottomless grave? Such would be its lot if it were not for the cradle of Jesus. That cradle has made our cradles reception rooms to everlasting glory. Joy to the world! the cradle has come.

⁸Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

For What Are We Contending?

Christianity Today, (a Presbyterian Journal, 1930–1938)

1932

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In the *Christian Century* of June 14, 1928, appeared a brief article on “German Fundamentalism” by Professor A. C. Knudson. The writer instituted interesting comparison between “American” and “German” fundamentalism. In this comparison “German” fundamentalism is presented as dwelling on a much higher intellectual plane than “American” fundamentalism. A pathetic picture is drawn of an “American” fundamentalist seeking in vain to fathom something of the great work of the “German” fundamentalists. Says Knudson, speaking of Barth and others, “They certainly are not fundamentalists in the ordinary American sense of the term. What they at times say about errors in the Bible would shock the average American fundamentalist; and not only that. Their general theological independence would baffle him, their intellectual subtlety would dismay him, and their paradoxes would bewilder him. These German theologians move on a quite different level from that of the American fundamentalist movement. The latter is not devoid of intellectual vigor. Professor Machen and others who represent it have stated their case clearly and effectively. They know what they are driving at, and have argued their cause with skill and ability. But it would hardly be claimed for them that they are creative thinkers. They have shown considerable acumen in their criticism of current liberalism; but they have no new organizing principle under which they are rethinking the Christian faith.” Still further Knudson tells us that the German fundamentalists do not “single out a number of specific doctrines . . . and make them tests of theological soundness.” And finally they do not, with patent allusion to American fundamentalists, offer a “mere echo of the past.”

We use these statements of Knudson as typical of a general attitude that seems to prevail with respect to American fundamentalism.

In the first place it is confusing to speak of American fundamentalism and include in that phrase the Reformed Faith as maintained by the Presbyterian and other churches. Reformed theologians are interested in the propagation of the Calvinistic life and world view, while many other “fundamentalists” are not. But we pass this by.

More important it is to note that every American fundamentalist entitled to a hearing believes in simple historical Christianity as a system of truth. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., for example, asks of all its candidates for the ministry that they pledge themselves to a belief in the system of doctrine of the Westminster Confession of faith.

This Confession of faith contains a definitely Christian-theistic theory of knowledge. In this Confession God is thought of as the creator of the universe. Hence man’s thought is derivative. It is primarily receptive. It is reconstructive of God’s thought. This is the “organizing principle” under which the theologians and philosophers of the church have sought constantly to “rethink” the Christian faith.

This “organizing principle” satisfied St. Augustine. It satisfied Calvin. It satisfied Jonathan Edwards. These men met the “theological independence,” the “intellectual subtleties” and the “paradoxes” of their day fearlessly. They disclaimed any “theological independence” that was out of harmony with their “organizing principle.” What else could they do if as thinking men they had once adopted that “organizing principle” self-consciously? If one could be called a “creative thinker” only if one adopted a new “organizing principle” they did not wish to be called creative thinkers. They did not wish to take for granted that a new “organizing principle” must be accepted merely because it is new. Hence they were not “shocked” at the “intellectual subtleties” of the heretics. These “subtleties” grew out of a non-Christian principle: They had been met and conquered before. And as for the “paradoxes” they appeared to resemble the paradox that Satan offered Eve when he said that man could become as God. Such is a simple reading of history.

All that the “American fundamentalist” claims for himself then is sufficient intelligence in order to adopt self-consciously the “organizing principle” of St. Augustine. This comes to him first to be sure, as an “echo” of the past. Is there any one who does not as a child live by the “echo” of the past? Do men still spring full-grown from the foreheads of the gods? The point is that the “organizing principle” does not petrify as a mere echo of the past but is adopted with a full realization of all that this implies.

It is for this reason then that at least certain “American fundamentalists” who call themselves Reformed do not want the new “organizing principle” of the “German fundamentalists.” The “organizing principle” of the “German fundamentalists” appears to be identical with the “organizing principle” of the American modernist; both deny the receptively reconstructive nature of human thought. Accordingly Reformed theologians disown the “theological independence,” the “intellectual subtleties” and the “paradoxes” of both the American modernists and the “German fundamentalists” because they are satisfied that the adoption of all these tit-bits would be the death of their own “organizing principle.” They will not accept these things even though they are new. They will not accept them even if such an acceptance would make “creative thinkers” of them. They would rather not create than create falsely.

We may add to this that Reformed theologians are satisfied that the “organizing principle” of American modernists and the “German fundamentalists” is not new at all. There have always been two and only two “organizing principles.” The one is that of Christianity, namely the idea of God as self-sufficient; the other is that of non-Christian thought which at best believes in God as a correlative to man. All the “professional” theologies with all the “theological subtleties” cannot add to these two.

We have seen that orthodox theologians who, for example, accept the “organizing principle” of the Westminster standards are not for that reason thoughtless traditionalists, as Knudson implies that they are. Similarly we can show that those who accept the system of truth of the Westminster standards are not for that reason mere traditionalists. As every minister in the Presbyterian Church accepts a theory of knowledge so every minister accepts a theory of reality when he pledges faith in the standards of his church. These standards present a logically coherent and consistent complex of ideas about God, man and the world. And all this comes, once more, as an echo but not as a mere echo from the past. If a theological student has been fortunate enough not to have had his

curriculum cluttered with the non-sense syllables of “religious education” and the like he will have learned to accept or reject self-consciously the “system” expressed in the standards of his church. And what he has accepted he has accepted as a system of truth, a system in which all the parts mutually depend upon one another.

It is this fact that Christian truth presents itself as a system that is forgotten by Knudson when he criticizes the “American fundamentalists” for singling out a number of specific doctrines as tests for theological soundness. Knudson ought to know right well that the specific doctrines mentioned e.g., by the Auburn Affirmation are nothing but points of present attack on the part of modernists. Is it any wonder that the “fundamentalists” marshal their forces to those spots on the battle-line that receive most of the bombardment? Or does any one suppose that when Dr. Machen defends the “virgin birth” he could be quite indifferent about the Christian doctrine of God? On the contrary he defends one doctrine in detail in order thus to defend the “system” of Christian truth as a whole. So too, orthodox ministers make the “substitutionary theory of atonement” a test of orthodoxy when candidates for the ministry are examined because they are convinced that no one who denies that theory can help but eventually deny the Christian idea of God.

What ought to be plain is that the opponents of orthodoxy have sinned against the idea of a “system” of truth. They have torn out bits of flesh here and threads of tissue there. So Dr. J. I. Vance e.g. thinks he can reject several individual doctrines of the Westminster standards without injuring its idea of God. All this should cause the orthodox to be alert. They cannot afford to “fall” for the new because it is new and in fashion.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:20–24)

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⁹Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Reformed Religion Dynamic

Keynote Address
1932

When young men graduate from the school these days, they have already made an acquaintance with some of the basic principles of electricity and magnetism, and have been captivated by the great display of power that they have seen. Power is a powerful word. So also all young men have seen much in the way of speed. The papers are constantly filled with reports of races and new records set. Speed is a powerful word. Then, too, the atmosphere is full of the idea of efficiency. Americans, we are told over and over, are averse to theoretical considerations. They want something that works. We see a young boy stand beside a new automobile. He looks with pride at the powerful motor. He talks with enthusiasm about the speed it can make. But he is not satisfied till he has been in it and has seen the power and speed displayed. He must see that it works. Nay, he must work it himself.

Nor does it take long as a rule, before the son can drive the automobile as well as or better than his father. And especially when it comes to repairing the motor while stalled on the road, the son is usually far handier than the father. He will make the thing work when father stands by, looking at it in despair.

In view of these facts it is not to be wondered at that a young man will also think that in other matters he can outstrip his father. He soon thinks that his father is too theoretical. When it comes to religion his father speculates about eternity, about God, and the judgment-day. Those are such far-away, such theoretical subjects. Why not get busy to do something for your fellow-man on earth instead of speculate about your own future glory?

While arguing this point with his father, the son turns on the radio, since he is tired of the argument. Dr. Cadman is on. He is holding forth on the discoveries made by the modern mind. His theme is the liberation of science from the thralldom of a bigoted Church. In glowing terms he shows how the orthodox religionists have always resisted the true spirit of the progress of the race. But at last we have been set free. At last the modern mind can go on its way. It has already made much progress in the field of mechanics. It is now about to invade the realm of the spirit. In this respect a mere beginning has been made. The possibilities before it are unlimited. When we all set our hearts on the welfare of mankind, we will make this old world hum along as smoothly as a twelve-cylinder motor car. Let, then, the mind of youth stand forth and claim its own! Let it no longer tolerate the waste of time involved in idle speculation about heaven and hell, but set itself to the present improvement of the race.

“There, there, that is it,” said the son to the father as he turned off the radio. We want a religion that works. We want a religion that has power in it. We want a dynamic religion. That word dynamic he had just learned from Dr. Cadman, and it sounded powerful to him. Dynamic is the opposite of static. Compare a smooth moving new limousine to the old Ford in the junk yard and you have the difference between dynamic and static pretty well. Then, too, you have the difference between the new religion and the old pretty well in mind.

Was this the young man, of whom we have been speaking, out of a family where the Reformed conception of the old religion was held? I do not know. Sometimes I think that it is scarcely possible. If a young man has already by virtue of his solid training received a pretty good grasp of the differences between the old and the new religion, he is not so likely to be misled. And nowhere does a young man receive such a good training as in Reformed circles. Yet it is also true that every Reformed young man must come face to face with the same choice that faces every other orthodox young man, namely, the choice between the old and the new. And the choice is, in the one sense at least, far more difficult for the Reformed young man than it can possibly be for any other. The Reformed faith is the most consistent form of the old religion. It does not yield in anything to the new form of religion. Accordingly, the Reformed conception of the old religion is singled out by the advocates of the new religion, in order to pour out the vials of their wrath upon it. The scorn, the ridicule will be particularly heavy upon you if you are not even willing to let go of the doctrines of election and reprobation. The great emphasis placed by the Reformed conception of the old religion on the differences between the people of God and the people of the world draws the fire of hatred from the opponents. It is for this reason that a young man with a Reformed background will have a particularly hard trial to go through.

In view of this fact we want to imagine today that we see a Reformed young man placed before the choice of the old and the new religion. The point by which they are to be tested is as to which one works better than the other. In other words, we want to see which one is truly dynamic.

1. Who Is To Judge?

In the case of automobiles it is quite easy to see whether or not they work. Yet in an automobile race it is not always easy to see which one has worked. In that case the question is not whether or not they have been able to move along the road. Nor is it even the question whether or not they have been able to move very fast along the road. It is possible that an automobile has moved at the rate of two hundred miles per hour around the race track, but that it cannot be said that it has worked as far as the race is concerned. In a race only the one that has won can really be said to have worked.

So also if two teams are playing ball it is not till the whole game is over that you can really say which side has worked. If I should, *mirabile dictu* be brilliantly successful in hitting the ball, the first question is whether I shall make the first base. If I do not, my strike has not really worked. But if I do, has my strike really worked? That still remains to be seen. It depends whether I succeed in making second base, third base, and most of all, whether I make the home plate. If I am tagged out while running for home plate, I am out just as well as when I knock out a fly that is caught. But even when I have made the home plate it is not certain that my strike has been successful. I may be Babe Ruth himself and make more than one home run and still be on the losing side. Whether my strike has really worked cannot be told till the whole game is over.

But suppose now that the game is tied till the last strike of the last inning. I once more hit the ball. One man is on third. I can scarcely make first. I run for all I am worth. I think I have made it. My side also thinks I have made it. The other side thinks I am out. Both sides scream and yell as the children of Israel yelled when the earth did split. Did I really

make it? Did my strike count? Did my first strike count? Will the game be won? It all depends upon the umpire.

Now it is not too much to say that in the race or the game or the fight between the old and the new religion it all depends upon the decision of the umpire as to which one really works. It is undeniably true that the two sides are in more deadly opposition to one another than the opponents in any earthly game or race or war could ever be. Suppose for a moment that the old religion finally appears to be the one that works, then the adherents of the new religion will be subject to an everlasting punishment. If the old religion will finally appear as the one that works, then it will be because God, the absolute God, the God of the Scriptures, is the umpire that gives the decision in the strife. And suppose, for the sake of argument, that the old religion is right, then there will be many who have been on first base, there will be many who have been on second base, there will be many who have been on third base, there will be many who have made home runs as far as the appearances of things on earth is concerned, who will nevertheless find that all their strikes and all their home runs have not really worked. They have lacked the true dynamic. By those home runs on earth they have not made the home plate of heaven. The umpire has said to them that they are out. And even though they remonstrate that they have been very successful, and have worked marvelously on earth, even to the extent of having prophesied and cast out devils in the name of the umpire, they will nevertheless be told that they are out, out in outer darkness. And if the old religion is right there would be no appeal from the umpire to any higher court. It would be impossible for the losers to do what "Jimmy Walker" is now trying to do in New York, namely, appeal from what he regards as an unjust procedure of law to the verdict of the people. If the old religion is right the issues of life and death will not be settled by a majority vote but by the final decision of God alone.

From all this it must now be abundantly clear that the young man, who faces the choices between the old and the new religion, ought to make up his mind very definitely on this question of umpire of heaven and earth. Is there such an umpire? By what arguments has the Church maintained that there is? And by what arguments are the proponents of the new religion maintaining that there is not? It will not do to follow the crowd in this respect.

But the first thing that he hears from the side of the new is that the adherents of the old actually have merely followed the crowd. It was a mere superstition of the past to personify the powers of nature and think of them as gods who are to punish or to reward. The modern mind had been liberated from this superstition because it has dared to think for itself. It has boldly made the mind of man the standard of truth. It has investigated the principles at work in the universe and has not discovered anything but natural laws, laws of darkness and of light, laws of good and evil. So we are told.

Now we would have our young man notice that when it comes to following the crowd thoughtlessly, the adherents of the new religion are not one whit behind the adherents of the old religion.

It is fashionable and it is up-to-date to follow the new religion, and that is enough for many. Surely, such a course is out of the question for any one who boasts his independence of mind. The old religion is not afraid of losing its youthful adherents because of too much thought, but it is mortally afraid of losing its adherents and of not gaining converts because of the lack of thought.

But how shall the young man proceed to think about this most important question of an umpire between the old and the new? If numbers and noise could decide, he would at present unquestionably follow the new. But his experience with umpires is that they have a mean way of often reversing the judgment of the crowds. Before he follows the crowd he should make sure that there is no umpire. And before he joins Riverside church he should make sure that even if there is an umpire, he at least is subject to popular reelection, so that there is an appeal to the higher court of the people.

Suppose, then, that our young man faces this question of the umpire. The first thing he will notice is that the question whether there is an umpire, and if there is, what kind of umpire there is, is one and the same question. The adherents of the old religion maintain that there is an umpire who makes decisions of eternal weal and woe. The adherents of the old religion are not interested in every kind of umpire. They are interested in an absolute umpire alone. The question of the existence of just such an umpire is the whole question.

If it were granted that there is an umpire, but that he is not such a one as the old religionists say he is, it would have to be admitted that the modern religionists are right. The only possible alternative in this matter of umpires is that either God or man is umpire. This is plain from the point already adverted to, namely, the question of higher appeal. The adherents of the new religion do hold that it is possible to appeal to a higher court if God seems to handle the thing in an unfair way; while the adherents of the old religion maintain that such an appeal is out of the question. Is God the judge of man, or is man the judge of God? That is the whole question.

Who Appoints The Umpire?

Now, if these things are as we have represented them, it also follows that it is impossible to follow in religion the procedure that is followed in the case of a ball game; namely, that the two sides decide upon an umpire by common choice. In the case of religion there cannot be an umpire upon which both sides agree at the outset. Those that cling to the old religion will never admit that man can himself be the umpire; while those that who cling to the new religion will never admit that God is the umpire. Yet nothing is more common than to have adherents of the new religion present the matter as though they, of course, are perfectly willing to get together and discuss in an impartial manner who is to be the umpire. They say, for instance, that of course we are all interested in justice and goodness and truth. We all want the right thing to be done, and so we are all willing to submit to these principles of justice and goodness and truth. But one thing we will observe, namely, that when the advocates of the new religion put the matter in this way they always leave it undetermined as to who is to decide what is good and what is true. And if this is left undetermined it simply means that not God but man is to be the umpire.

Now, it goes without saying that the Reformed young man cannot and will not just take for granted that the other side is right. He will want to face both sides of the question. Note well, I do not say that he will wish to be neutral. If he wants to be neutral he does not face both sides of the question. In that case he slides into the side of the new without so much as a look at the side of the old. To be neutral in respect to the umpire of the universe is to be negative with respect to God.

The only thing that the young man will wish to do then, is to ask of those who reject the old umpire to tell him for what reason they have rejected him.

Many reasons will be given him, of course. Among these, we may be sure, will be such as that the old umpire did not play fair. He was very partial. He showed favoritism to the Jews of old, and showed favoritism for the Calvinists later. Then, too, the old umpire was lazy. He claimed to be strong enough to save all the people of this world from misery, both in this life and the next, and yet he allowed hundreds of thousands, nay, millions and millions, to fall over the brink of perdition into eternal ruin for no reason at all but that he was too lazy to make a move to save them.

Now, of course, these seem to be very weighty objections. But the question that will not be suppressed is: Who is making them? The answer is natural enough that man, especially modern man, is making the objections. However, if the old religion is right, then man is a sinner who was created perfect, but who insulted God to the face. Accordingly this sinner is an enemy of God, and his ideas about goodness and truth that are diametrically opposed to God's ideas of goodness and truth. So the question returns with redoubled force: Who is right? Who is to be the umpire? Is man to be the umpire of God, or is God to be the umpire of man? In the objections raised in the old conception of religion, those who hold to the new conception of religion have just taken for granted that man is the umpire of God. They have not proved that as a matter of fact he is, or even that he should be.

Before going over to the other side, the young man of whom we are speaking will surely want better argument than that. Above all will he expect from those who have boasted that the modern mind does not take things for granted but tests things to see whether they work, that they will prove to him that their religion works. But as long as it is not certain that God is not as a matter of fact to be the final judge as to what is true and to what is good, it does not help matters much to hear someone say what he thinks ought to be the case. We want to know what reasons the adherents of the new religion have for thinking that God is not as a matter of fact going to be the final judge. It becomes increasingly clear that it is, in the last analysis, a question of fact. It is, of course, true that the adherents of the old religion will maintain that God ought to be the umpire. It is, of course, also true that the adherents of the new religion will maintain that man ought to be the umpire. And if the old religion is true, God is the umpire because He ought to be, and He ought to be because He is. It follows, then, that anyone who wants to see both sides of the question before he decides, will not just let the adherents of the new religion determine what sort of an umpire there ought to be, and let that settle the question whether there is such an umpire.

So, then, the young man will once more ask the proponents of the new religion for further arguments. But no further arguments are forthcoming. No further arguments are forthcoming for the sufficient reason that the whole argument for the side of the new religion has been exhausted when man has said what he thinks ought to be. But whether that which man thinks ought to be, is also going to be, is an altogether different question, and a question about which man can say nothing. He can say nothing about that question because he is not the maker of the universe and its laws.

And it is this fact that certainly ought to make the young man doubly hesitant in accepting the new religion, the fact that the advocates of the new religion say all manner of things about that of which in the nature of the case they can say nothing. To be

consistent in their religion they must make the prodigious statement that as a matter of fact there is no such umpire as we old-fashioned religionists say there is. For if they cannot make that statement, there might, as far as they know, be such an umpire, and if there is such an umpire, he will certainly say to them that their religion does not work because it did not have in it the dynamic of the blood of the cross.

Is it reasonable, then, for men to say that there is no such umpire? To be able to say that, and have it mean something, man would himself have to know all things. He would not only have to know everything about everything that now exists, but he would have to know what the future could possibly bring. Now, of course, no one in his right mind will self-consciously make such a statement. Yet it is the silent assumption that lies at the bottom of the new religion. It is the one thing the adherents of the new religion do not wish to talk about. Such questions, it seems, should not be discussed in polite society. Why are so many people followers of the new religion? Because “everybody” is. And why does “everybody” follow the new religion? That’s what “everybody” keeps still about.

God The Umpire

How far more reasonable it is then to hold, as the old religion holds, that God is and ought to be the umpire of the universe, and of the game that is played between the old and the new religion. Man certainly cannot be the umpire. Nor can the universe run without an umpire. The fact that there is a game at all is proof that there must be an umpire. And the fact that the game is played at all is also proof that there must be such an umpire as the old religion says there is. Without such an umpire no decision could be made. The nature of the decision to be made is that one is right and the other is wrong, and no such decision can be made except by one who believes that God is the standard of absolute right and wrong. Without an absolute umpire not even a judgment or relative right or wrong could be made. The only alternative to an absolute umpire is no umpire at all. It is either God or chaos.

Now, if this issue is clearly seen, there can be no doubt about the choice our young man will make. He will unhesitatingly choose for the old. That old religion will receive for him a new meaning. He will have a new vision of its power. He will see the high and holy one exalted. Does the new religion work? Does it have dynamic? It does not work, and it has no dynamic whatsoever. Alas and alack, would that we would have to say nothing worse about it than that it does not work, as we say of an automobile that it has not worked because it has not gained first prize, even though it may have run beautifully at two hundred miles per hour. But the new religion works hard and fast downward to destruction. Since it is not a savior of life unto life, it is, in the nature of the case, a savor of death unto death.

But does the old religion work? Does it have dynamic? It certainly must work! It certainly does have dynamic! God is back of it. Almighty power makes it move.

A might fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe

Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

2. By What Is The Umpire To Judge?

Now it seems to me that the issue has really been settled when our young man has faced the question whether there is an umpire in the game. Yet we may profitably consider the same problem from the point of view of the criterion by which the umpire, if there is one, is to judge. In a ball game there is not only an umpire, but the umpire has a set of rules according to which he is to determine whether or not one is out or not.

Now in a game such a set of rules is previously agreed upon by both parties. Both parties have had a voice in making them. All that the umpire needs to do is to judge impartially according to those rules. So, then, the question is once more whether in the game between the old and the new religion both sides have had a voice in the making the rules. Or even more important than that is the question whether or not there are any rules at all. How are we going to be able to tell whether the old or the new religion works best or works at all? By what rules shall we judge?

How shall we judge? Why, that is easy, says the new religionist. Christ himself said that by their fruits ye shall know them. If I see a man who professes to be a Christian, but is unkind to his neighbor and careless about the needs of the poor, I do not place much value on his words. And if I see a man who does not go to church, but I see him bringing a basket of food to a poor family, I know that he is really a Christian. With him Christianity is really a principle that works. Or when I see a group of Calvinists talking about the glory of God, and at the same time see them go to war to kill their fellow-men, I do not care for their hairspun theological distinctions about election and reprobation. I know that their Christianity does not work.

Now it would seem that any right-minded man ought to agree to such a criterion, would it not? Any one would, of course, agree that the poor ought to be aided, that honesty ought to be practiced, that justice ought to prevail. A Sunday school superintendent once told the story of a poor boy who was selling pencils and gum to earn a few pennies for a sick mother. A ruffian came along and kicked the poor boy's basket over. Then a kindly man came who gathered the scattered articles together and placed a dollar bill on top. The boy looked up to this kindly man and said, "Are you Jesus?" There, we were told, was a man whose Christianity worked. There was real dynamic in it. Can any one object to that?

Our answer is, of course, that no one objects to such a deed. But what we do object to is that such stories are used to blind men's and especially young men's eyes to the real issues of life. For, suppose that the old religion is true. In that case the man that brings a basket of food to the poor may not have done this for anything but a selfish motive. And by that I do not mean that he is a schemer who has immediate political or social advancement in mind. I only mean that such a man may not have had God's glory in mind as the ultimate reason for doing what he did. The Heidelberg Catechism says that a good deed is one that is done from a motive of faith, in accordance with the law of God and for the glory of God. So, then, according to this it is altogether possible that the deed

of the man who helped the poor boy did not really work at all. If he were an unbeliever it was only due to the principle of common grace that he was able to do such a deed at all. In himself he would be totally depraved. He might do hundreds of such deeds and still go straight for destruction. Indeed, such acts as his may be a means by which his real opposition to God is more effectively concealed from himself. In that case then, when his "Christianity" seemed to work best, it would be working for destruction fastest. Just as a train that runs very smoothly and very fast goes to destruction more swiftly, in case the bridge is out, than a train that runs slowly, so also the life of many a refined person leads more easily to destruction than that of a drunkard. The latter is more likely to hear the gospel message from the Salvation Army than the former.

So far, then, from the attempts of both sides to agree on the criterion or standard by which it is to be decided whether a religion works, it is rather true that they cannot agree on the criterion any more than they can agree on the umpire. The new religion makes the welfare of man the standard by which all deeds are to be judged. The old religion makes the glory of God the standard by which all deeds are to be judged. This is a complete antithesis. The reason why it is not clearly seen to be an absolute antithesis is that the old religion, of course, also has the welfare of man at heart. It even claims that it alone really has the welfare of man at heart. For it is true that man may do ever so many things like that of helping the poor boy and nevertheless be eternally lost, yet it is the best kindness to him to tell him so. So the question between the old and the new religion at this point is once more as to what constitutes the welfare of man. The old religion says that the welfare of man is furthered most if man is taught to regulate his life according to the glory of God. The new religion says that man's welfare is served most effectively by not thinking about the hereafter but by concentrating his thought on the present only. Thus the antithesis between them is complete. Either the one is right or the other is right.

So then our young man will once more learn to be on his guard. He will not allow the proponents of the new religion subtly to insinuate their notion of a standard under the cover of neutrality, and that without so much as a word of proof. He will once more demand that the adherents of the new religion give some good reason for rejecting the old and accepting the new standard. He will inquire carefully into the foundation of their argument. He will ask them on what ground it is that they base their confident expectation that all is well with the man who helped the poor boy.

Their answer will be that experience has taught this. It is in this way that the human race can progress best on earth. Plainly they will say that if no one shows any kindness to his fellowmen this world will not be as good a place to live in, as when there are many such kind men to be found. But surely such an answer is not going to blind our young man. He will detect that no answer at all has really been given to his question. For it is simply taken for granted in this answer that man is able to judge, on the basis of his own little span of experience, what is really the most important thing for him. We have already seen that it is not till the end of the game that it finally appears whether or not the seemingly successful strike has really been successful. So, too, the new religionist should first prove to us that there is no judgment coming after this life in which Christ will judge all the deeds of men in accordance with the standard that He himself has set, namely, in faith in him as the one that gives true righteousness. And how will the new religionist prove that there is no judgment day coming? Surely he cannot do it on the basis of the little span of experience of himself or of the whole race. Surely he cannot do it by the so-

called scientific or empirical method of reasoning, because that is based upon the assumption that man's little span of experience is the standard of what can or what can not be true. So, then, the new religionist is once more up to the difficulty that we saw him face when discussing the question as to who was to be the judge, namely, that he has to make large sweeping statements about that of which he must confess that he knows nothing, and in the very nature of the case can know nothing.

And what of the boasted dynamic of the new religion? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of their own reasoning. If it is, as they say, wholly uncertain what the future may bring, it is also wholly uncertain whether the religion which they advocate does work or not. And if one is completely doubtful about the issues of life, there is not likely to be much incentive to noble action. At best it will always remain uncertain whether anything has worked upon the basis of the new religion.

But more than that, it is not enough to say that at best things remain wholly uncertain on the basis of the new religion. It is certain that the new religion does not because it cannot work. The new religion has placed man in an infinite void. In such a void there can be no friction, and therefore no movement of any sort. At most man could show forth the spectacle of an automobile all ready to leave the factory, but which automobile refuses to move because there is no engine in it. Or if there is an engine in it the engine will not work.

And now contrast with that dead religion the living and vital religion which we have called the old religion. We have seen our young man look up in enthusiasm to the umpire, when he became aware of the fact that there is nowhere else an umpire to be found but in the old religion. So now we can see him look up with enthusiasm to that selfsame umpire as the criterion, as the standard by which the game is to be judged. The umpire himself has laid down the rules of the game. It could not possibly have been done any other way. God himself determines what is just and good and true. To this very fact I owe the meaning of my life. I could live in no other atmosphere than that provided by an absolute God. With the knowledge of such an umpire who has himself laid down the rules of the game I contemplate the whole realm of nature and of history in peace of mind. The sense of utter futility that I experience when looking at the new religion leaves me, and a sense of inward victory pervades my being.

It was this sense of history that made St. Augustine build the City of God, in which the powers of righteousness were finally the conquerors of the powers of unrighteousness. It was this sense of victory that made Athanasius challenge the whole world to stand on one side while he would stand on the other. It was this sense of victory that emboldened Luther to defy the mighty emperor at the Diet of Worms. It was this sense of victory that was the secret of the arduous perseverance and the prodigious labor of John Calvin.

Would that the issues were thus clearly seen along the whole front of the fight between the old and the new religion. But they are not. There are everywhere tokens of compromise. There are everywhere signs that the issues are being blurred.

When even good, well-meaning orthodox Christians say that the highest purpose of the work of Christ was the salvation of man rather than the Glory of God, they have already to some extent compromised on the question of the umpire and the criterion of which we have spoken. In that case it is no longer possible to say that the umpire is absolute and that he alone lays down the rules of the game.

Or again, when those that cling to the old religion say that the special revelation of God to man, as we have it in Christ and the Scriptures, would naturally come because God would naturally reveal himself in his kindness to man, it appears that men have once more failed to see the deepest issues between the old and the new religion. In that case it is not God's grace alone that receives the glory, and if it is not God's grace alone, it is something in man that receives a share of the credit.

And herein, then, lies the challenge to you as young men of Reformed persuasion. You, above all others, must see the issues clearly. The tactics of Satan are nowhere more subtly revealed than in his effort to blur the issues. If he can in some way or other succeed in getting us to agree with the adherents of the new religion that we can together choose our umpire and together lay down the rules of the game, we are completely lost. As young men it is your business to be wide awake and not to be imposed upon. No, I am not pleading first of all for high schools and colleges. I am pleading for an intelligent membership in our churches and for intelligent adherents of the Reformed faith.

Nor limit your watchfulness with respect to the new religion to those who are its professed advocates, such as the preachers or teachers of religion directly. The new religion comes to us in the garb of science and of art, of civilization and of culture, in the papers that we read, in the songs that come over the radio, in the pictures that stand in the gallery. Everywhere man, and not God, is made the end-all and the be-all of existence.

And finally, let us be positive as well as negative and negative as well as positive. We cannot be truly negative to the new religion unless we have been and are truly positive with respect to the old religion. On the other hand, we need not imagine that we can be truly positive of our own religion unless we are truly negative with respect to the new religion.

It is thus, too, that I think you as a Young Men's Federation think of your task. You are not conceited. You are willing to learn. You are perfectly willing to see the good in other bodies of Christians. But you are looking for that form of Christianity which offers the most opportunity for development in true religion. You have faced the issue between the old and the new religion. You have seen that the new religion offers to you no challenge at all. It is a perfectly dead affair. If you should give your life and labors to it, it would mean that you would work for nothing and worse than nothing all your life. Accordingly you have whole-heartedly given your life to the old religion. Then, among the forms of this old religion, you notice that there are some that do not make a clear-cut break with the new religion. If you should affiliate with them the result would be that a certain percentage of your labors would be in vain. There would be too much loss of power and too much loss of directness of operation. In short, you are looking for a new car that runs smoothly and that has the most speed, as well as a concrete road that goes straight to the point to which you wish to go. If it is that that you desire, if it is a religion with the most dynamic that you wish, go not far away and search not in the distance. Stay at home. It is right in your midst. Perhaps you have not fully seen this fact, because familiarity breeds contempt. But contrast it then with whatever else is offered, and see if you do not return well-satisfied with what you have at home. Said Joshua to the people of Israel, "And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and for my house, we will serve the Lord." So we ask you not to close your eyes, but rather to open them. And so we

are assured that as Joshua knew that only Jehovah God had a strong hand and an outstretched arm, as Joshua knew that only the God of Israel made the Red Sea to stand aside, and the nations to flee, so we also know that only the God of the old religion, the selfsame Jehovah, has dynamic. Hence only if we serve Him will there be dynamic in our religion.

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¹⁰Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

A New Princeton Apologetic

A Discussion in Two Parts
Christianity Today, (a Presbyterian Journal, 1930–1938)
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Part 1: Volume 3, Number 9 (January 1933): Pages 4ff
Part 2: Volume 3, Number 10 (February 1933): Pages 5f

Part 1

Since the reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary Dr. John E. Kuizenga has occupied the chair of Apologetics there. When Professor Kuizenga entered upon his work it became apparent at once that a new type of Apologetics was to be introduced. His inaugural address, which appeared in the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* for November, 1931, served as a manifesto of the new course to be followed. His articles on “Religious Education,” which were published in recent issues of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, contained a further development of the new policy already on its way. But we pass these by in order to call attention to an address which has been printed in the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* of November, 1932.

The subject of this address is “The Remaking of Human Nature.” Professor Kuizenga seeks to answer three questions: (a) “What is this human nature which may be remade,” (b) “What is the power which can do this work,” (c) “How may we know when the transformation is actual fact.” We propose to look in turn at the answers given to these three questions.

Professor Kuizenga tells us in effect that many modern psychologists and the Bible are agreed on the answer to be given to the first question. Both speak, he says, of a lower and a higher aspect of man. The lower aspect is that which we have in common with the animal and the higher is the more specifically human. On the basis of this supposed agreement between modern psychologists and the Bible, Professor Kuizenga feels warranted in defining the moral issue of the day as follows: “The question of the day is whether we shall regard the animal powers as the essentially human, whether we shall build our lives around the animal powers only, and use the higher powers so far as they are not utterly delusive to build the life of humans as glorified animals; or whether we shall take seriously our higher powers, subordinate to them the animal, and so build our lives through time to God.” Both the psychologist and the Bible teach us, according to Professor Kuizenga, that man is made with a “capacity for God” and that what is needed is the development of this capacity.

By means of this unsatisfactory way of putting the matter Professor Kuizenga has succeeded in adapting the Bible to the needs of modern non-Christian psychologists and philosophers. He has done so chiefly by significant omissions of the specifically Biblical teaching on the question of human nature as it is today. The Bible does indeed teach that man has a body as well as a soul. This body we may speak of as the lower aspect of man if we will. We may even say that since our bodies are physical and the bodies of animals are physical that we have something in common with the animal. But the Bible nowhere

teaches that this “lower” aspect of man is evil merely because it is lower. On the contrary it is characteristic of pagan thought and of pagan thought only to teach that matter is inherently evil. Christian theology has fought for ages to have this pagan doctrine ousted from the church. And now at this date Professor Kuizenga does not even think it necessary to argue that the pagan and the Christian doctrines are identical but simply takes for granted that they are.

This assumption of the identity of the Christian and the non-Christian view of human nature leads Professor Kuizenga to a thoroughly non-Christian formulation of the moral issue of the day. That issue is, he says, whether the lower or the higher aspect of man is to conquer. But this exactly is not the main issue according to Scripture. Scripture nowhere teaches, and least of all in Genesis one, to which Professor Kuizenga appeals in proof of his contention, that the chief object in man’s moral strife is to overcome the evil naturally inherent in the body first and in the soul afterwards. If anything is made clear in the first chapter of Genesis it is that man’s “lower” as well as man’s “higher” aspect were equally perfect when they were created by God. There could be no strife between them. Scripture teaches not that man had originally merely a “capacity” for God but that he was in actual and full communion with God. It was this perfect man, perfect in body as well as in soul, who wilfully, self-consciously, insulted God by breaking His law. Thus man became a sinner. Hence sin is primarily guilt before God. That in man as he is today the “lower” often dominates the “higher” is the result and not the cause of the guilt of man. Such is the doctrine of original sin. The individual man may add to his guilt by yielding to his “lower” self but he is guilty before he has done one self-conscious deed.

What then is the moral issue for man? Is it merely to overcome the “lower” and to strive for the “higher”? It is thus that all non-Christian systems of thought, interested as they are in denying or making of non-effect the Christian conception of guilt, have constantly put the matter.

It is thus that evolutionary philosophy speaks when it says that the idea of guilt before a creator-god is a primitive notion that the race has naturally outgrown. It is thus that the higher critics speak when they deal with the “blood-theology” of Paul. It is thus that Pelagian theologians speak when they wish to remove the offense of the Cross in order to make it palatable to the natural man. It is thus, finally, that Modernism, heir to all this patrimony, speaks when it wishes to lead poor benighted Fundamentalists on to higher things.

Scripture, however, does not define the moral issue in this way. Isaiah said that all our strivings after higher things are in themselves as filthy rags before God. Paul strove mightily for “higher things” till he met Jesus on the way to Damascus. Then he learned that Christ’s righteousness must be the foundation of our striving if our striving is not to be in vain and sinful in the sight of God. The taproot of sin remains untouched so long as man strives for “higher” things unless his guilt has been atoned for. “How shall a man be right with God?” That is primarily the moral issue for man as he is today.

From these considerations it appears clearly that a new type of Apologetic is being taught at Princeton. One could not possibly think of Professor Wm. Brenton Greene, formerly Professor of Apologetics at Princeton, speaking or writing in the way that Professor Kuizenga does. Professor Greene’s Apologetics sought to be in harmony with the Systematic theology of the great Reformed theologians such as Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield. The numerous articles of Professor Greene all attest his anxiety to point out

not only the distinctive character of orthodox theology but also the distinctive character of Reformed theology. He pointed out again and again that Christianity teaches while modern evolutionary philosophy denies that man was originally created perfect. He taught clearly that man as a sinner is subject to the wrath of God unless the substitutionary work of Christ has reinstated him into God's favor. Accordingly he boldly spoke forth against the modern evolutionary philosophy whether it appeared in the current pragmatic philosophies or in the more subtle form of idealism. Indeed it was Professor Greene's constant concern to show clearly that the idealist type of philosophy, which speaks in terminology that resembles the terminology of Christianity, is often a greater enemy of Christianity than the crassest materialism just because the difference between Christianity and idealism is for the untrained mind difficult to detect.

The new Apologetic, then, differs from the old, we believe in two important respects. In the first place the old Apologetic was clear and the new is obscure. No one could read the articles and lectures of Professor Greene and not know precisely what the difference is between Christianity and non-Christian types of thought. In contrast with this no one can read the writings of Professor Kuizenga and discover from them clearly that Christianity has any distinct teaching at all.

In the second place the old Apologetic was strongly defensive of and the new Apologetic is weakly apologetic for Christianity as a distinct message for the world. Professor Greene contended boldly for the utter insufficiency of the "naturalist" interpretation of human life and the complete sufficiency of the "supernaturalist" interpretation. Professor Kuizenga, so far as he at spots seems to indicate that the supernaturalist and the naturalist interpretation of human life differ at all, hastens to apologize for the implied affront to the natural man by allowing that the best of non-Christians have really always held to the same thing that Christianity holds to.

What, we now ask, is the practical significance of this difference between the old and the new Apologetic? The practical difference is that the old Apologetic was a help and the new Apologetic is a hindrance to the spread of the gospel. The gospel needs to be clearly understood and boldly proclaimed if it is to bring men to Christ. If it is scarcely distinguished from and meanly apologized for, it chloroforms men already asleep.

The new Apologetic is dangerous to the church especially at this time. The report of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry tries to show that there is really no difference between Christianity and other religions. According to the recommendations of this report the highest and best that is in Christianity should unite with the highest and best in other religions in a common battle against the tendency of man to yield to the lower aspect of his being, to the merely animal within him. According to this report Christian missionaries should no longer go to heathen lands with the claim that they have a distinctive religion but should join the other religions in a common fight against irreligion. "The case that must now be stated is the case for any religion at all."¹ Will the church agree with such a proposal? Modernism will, of course. The only hope, so far as human agency is concerned, lies in an outspoken opposition on the part of orthodox leaders in the Church. But in the present emergency the church will look in vain to the Apologetic of Princeton for help. If they look there for help they will be dismayed to find that in the writings of professor Kuizenga there is the same vague indefinite talk about

¹ p. 33.

the “lower” and “higher” aspects of man, the same idea that man’s chief struggle everywhere is against mechanism and materialism that one finds in the report of the Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry.

Then too Buchmanism threatens to overrun the church. In effect it denies the centrality of the cross of Christ. It maintains in effect that Christians and non-Christians can have genuine spiritual fellowship with one another. Ministers as well as Laymen are led astray by it. They need guidance. Will they get it from the new Apologetic at Princeton? Certainly not! From the new Apologetic no one could learn that the cross is central to Christianity at all. Paganism from without and paganism from within are besetting the church. Yet we look in vain for a clear note of warning from the new Apologetic. That Apologetic is useless not only but dangerous to the church in the present emergency.

Part 2

In his address on “The Remaking of Human Nature” Professor Kuizenga seeks to answer three questions: (a) “What is this human nature which may be remade?,” (b) “What is the power which can do this work?,” and (c) “How may we know when the transformation is actual fact?” In the last issue of this paper we discussed the answer given to the first question.

We found that the answer Professor Kuizenga gives is scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from the answer given to this question by the evolutionary and idealist philosopher, the negative critic and the Pelagian theologian. We propose now to look at the answers given to the second and third questions.

The second question is of great significance. There are two and only two answers that can be given to it. Christianity says that God through the atoning blood of Christ and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit must initiate and complete the remaking of human nature. Non-Christian thought says that man can remake himself. The alternative is in itself simple enough.

A difficulty appears, however, when we observe that much of modern idealist philosophy, though giving the non-Christian answer, gives this answer in terminology that resembles the Christian terminology. As an illustration we offer such a book as *Human Nature and its Remaking*, by Professor Wm. Ernest Hocking, chairman of the Appraisal Commission sent out by the “Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry.” Hocking accepts the current evolutionary view of the origin of man. He denies the supernatural at every point in the remaking of human nature. He does not believe in the Christian view of the atonement through the blood of the cross. He has no place for the church’s doctrine of regeneration. Yet he uses practically all of the ordinary Christian terminology. For this reason many people are greatly confused. They are tempted to think that idealism and Christianity are in agreement on the interpretation of life.

Now it is upon this confusion between idealism and Christianity that Modernism largely feeds today. Christian theologians ought therefore to flee this confusion as the plague. Their language should, as far as possible, never allow of an idealist as well as a Christian interpretation. The church cries out for a clear-cut, unmistakable testimony to the teachings that distinguish Christianity from an idealism such as that of Hocking.

Yet if Hocking were minded to prove that the church has no reason to complain of the report on missions unless it also complain of the new Apologetic at Princeton he could make out a very good case indeed. As in the answer to the first question asked by Professor Kuizenga there was not a word of man's guilt before God, so in the answer to the second question there is not a word about the removal of that guilt through the atoning blood of Christ. As from the answer to the first question one could not clearly learn that Professor Kuizenga believes that "sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God," so from the answer to the second question one cannot clearly learn that the removal of sin must be accomplished by Christ's "once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice." Such omissions are fatal. Brevity cannot be pleaded. If nothing else was said that much should have been said. To omit the fall of man and the substitutionary atonement from a summary dealing with human nature and its remaking makes such a summary as ambiguous as a summary dealing with the differences between the white and the colored race would be if it omitted to tell us that the white race is white and the colored race is colored.

And what is true of the omission with respect to the objective work of redemption is equally true of the omission with respect to the subjective work of redemption. Does Professor Kuizenga believe in the church's doctrine of regeneration? We take for granted that he does, just as we take for granted that he believes in the substitutionary atonement. From the article under discussion, however, one cannot learn clearly that regeneration is necessary for the remaking of human nature. Professor Kuizenga does say that "human nature cannot be remade without the gospel of the grace of God and the present power of the Holy Spirit." This may be given an orthodox interpretation, if taken by itself, but may equally well be given a Modernist interpretation. The Modernist interpretation would, moreover, be more in accord with the context. There is not one spot in this section of the article where it is made clear that the initiation of the work of redemption, in the heart of man, is exclusively the work of God. On the contrary it is said without any limitation or qualification that: "If in the end 'it is not of him that wills nor yet of him that runs,' neither is it of him that wills not nor of him that runs not." Does Professor Kuizenga, in such words as these, teach that in regeneration, as well as sanctification, man is active? We take for granted that he does not wish to do this. Such teaching would be out of accord with the Reformed Faith. Such teaching is in perfect harmony with idealism but wholly out of accord with Christianity. Yet Professor Hocking could more fairly interpret the article on this point in an idealist fashion than we could interpret it in a Christian fashion.

To the omissions just discussed we must now add that Professor Kuizenga constantly uses the subjective instead of the objective form of statement in what he says about the remaking of human nature. He speaks of "our faith to Godward," that is to be "the hope of the new man and of the new humanity." Again he says that he does not see how we can love men unless we first love God and how we can love God "unless we believe that he first loved us; unless we believe that he sent his only begotten Son . . ." Why does Professor Kuizenga put the matter this way instead of saying simply that man and humanity are hopeless unless God has actually sent his Son? Is it in the interest of bringing the old truth in the language of the day? That were laudable indeed. Unfortunately it is the Modernist who prefers the new language because he does not believe in the objective facts of historical Christianity. Consequently an orthodox

theologian cannot afford to use the subjective language unless he makes it plain that it is not because he agrees with the Modernist but for some other reason that he uses it. But since Professor Kuizenga has omitted from his summary the most characteristic doctrines of Christianity and has nowhere unequivocally asserted his belief in regeneration, the subjective language only adds to the general confusion and obscurity.

We see then that at the point where we should certainly expect a Christian theologian to indicate clearly the difference between all the schemes of self-salvation on the one hand and Christianity on the other hand Professor Kuizenga has at best been obscure. His trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound that will call no one to war against the mission report or against Buchmanism.

In answer to the third question as to how we may know that human nature has actually been remade, Professor Kuizenga says: "The marks of Christianity in conduct are at least these three, love of the kingdom, zeal for righteousness, and power to overcome the conventionally respectable sins of our day." Professor Kuizenga does not tell directly what he means by "the kingdom." He only tells us a story of a "Christian minister" a native of India, who came to America, and who, while here, hastened to express his gratitude to "a little ordinary Dutch woman" who had supported him "that he might be educated and become the Christian man he was." Can any one learn from this whether the Modernist or the orthodox conception of kingdom is meant? For all the reader can see it may mean just what is meant by the "kingdom" in *Rethinking Missions* when it is there said that perhaps the most perfect way of describing the goal of Missions is found in the phrase, "Thy kingdom come."

Again in the section dealing with the "zeal for righteous-ness" no distinction is made between the righteousness of the "natural man" and the righteousness of the regenerated man. Does Christian character need the righteousness of Christ for its foundation or does it not? We cannot tell from the article under discussion. That we have no right to presuppose that in this section the truly Christian conception of character is meant is plain from the fact that in the answer to the second question there was no clear-cut division made between justification by works and justification by faith.

Professor Kuizenga does indeed say that he does not see how we are to have a zeal for righteousness unless we believe that God has sent his Son into the world; but even here the phraseology is subjective and might as fairly be given a Ritschlian as a Christian interpretation. The net result is that in an age when salvation by character is motto of Modernism and when blurring of distinctions is the order of the day we have at best an uncertain sound from the new Apologetic at Princeton.

Finally we note that the same ambiguity meets us in the idea that it is a mark of a true Christian to have power to overcome the conventional sins of our day. We take for granted that what Professor Kuizenga means is that a good Christian may to an extent be distinguished from a poor Christian by a great sensitiveness of his Christian conscience. Yet as far as the article is concerned it is not clear at all that this is meant. Professor Kuizenga has not even made clear to us the difference between a poor Christian and a non-Christian. Many a man who is not a Christian claims to have power to overcome the conventional sins of the day. There are many "good moral" people who are not Christians at all. Yet for all we know from the article they ought to be accounted Christians.

We conclude then that in the answer to the second and third questions Professor Kuizenga has been just as vague as in his answer to the first question. The Scripture

quoted near the end of the article would, if interpreted in the orthodox sense, imply those teachings which we have found to be omitted from the article. The mere quotation of texts tends but to confusion. The texts quoted in the article are not woven into the warp and woof of the argument.

We think we have adduced enough evidence to prove that in the present crisis of the church, when we so sorely need to unite the orthodox forces in deference of the true presentation of Christianity, the new Apologetic introduces a split into the orthodox camp by making men waver on the question whether there is any profound difference at all between the idealism of the mission report and the Christianity of the Westminster Confession. Such writing as that of Professor Kuizenga gives aid and comfort to the enemy and paralyzes those who are truly in Christ. We reiterate that the new Apologetic, as it appears in the article now under review, as well as from other articles of Professor Kuizenga, is not merely useless but dangerous to the church.

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¹¹Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Who Are You?

The Banner

1933

Volume 68, Page 320

It is a starlit night. I tell my little boy the stars are bigger than the moon. He tells me he cannot believe me. He is certain he can take one in his mouth. How dare he question my astronomy? How dare he question Jean's astronomy? All I told him was based upon the authority of scientists! I do not worry but smile. It was a child speaking. Moreover, he was speaking of something that is not as important to me as some other things are.

Helen Keller is introduced to Bernard Shaw. "I am so happy to meet you," she said to him. "Why do all you Americans say the same thing?" he said to her. Then Lady Astor reprimanded Shaw: "Shaw, don't you realize that this is Helen Keller? She is deaf and blind." Came the reply: "Why, of course! All Americans are deaf and blind—and dumb." Did he mean this to be a joke? It is likely that he did. But suppose he didn't. It would still be a joke; Shaw himself is a joke—on himself. Will we trouble to ask him, "Who are you?" Scarcely! We do not worry but smile.

My Calvinism Challenged

I hear Dr. Howard Moody Morgan preach. In the midst of his sermon he decries denominational pride. His words were something like this: "Some say, 'I am of Calvin,' and others 'I am of Luther.' Where did this denominational pride come from, I would like to know? One person said he had been a member of a Presbyterian church for forty years. Don't ever let that prevent you from being a Christian!"

And now things are getting worse. The youthful astronomer questioned me as to who I am in astronomy. The old cynic asked me as to who I am in nationality. The middle-aged preacher now asks me as to who I am in my church affiliation. All of them tell me that I am nothing. But it is far worse to have a fully responsible person, a person supposed to be an expert in his field, tell me that I am nothing than to have the same thing told me by a child or an old cynic. It is far worse too, to have some one attack me in my religious viewpoint than to have some one attack my astronomy or my nationality. Moreover, I often preach that men ought by all means to be Calvinists. I tell men that, though, to be sure, no system of interpretation has grasped all the truth, they may be sure of finding more of the truth if they follow out the road of Calvin than if they follow out any other road. And now I am told that this preaching of mine is nothing. Nay, worse than that. I am told that it is thoroughly bad. What I had attributed to the grace of God, is ruthlessly traced down to pride.

Self-Defence

In sheer self-defence then, I cry out, "Who are you?" I am as an animal brought to bay. In a church with a Reformed confession I am warned that preaching Calvinism too vigorously may keep men from being Christians. I am persecuted in my own house. Men burn my house down over my head. Will they expect me to stand idly by? Do they who bring me to bay, think for a moment that I will not dash for their throats? If I am so ignorant of psychology and of history, as my persecutors say I am, they may surely expect that my instinct of self-preservation will act with unabated animal force. If I bring an animal to bay it is my responsibility if he tears my throat.

Instinctively I first of all attack the psychology of my persecutors. Is it really possible for me to consider the truth to be something comprehensive of what I now hold to be truth and what I now hold to be error? I readily grant that I must seek a more comprehensive statement of truth, but I cannot get myself to seek for truth, by the exclusion of error, if I am forced, over and over again, to include the old errors in the new truth that I discover. I sort a batch of seed potatoes. I wish to plant good ones only in order to obtain a harvest. Along comes some one and tells me that my potato crop will be much larger if only I will plant the bad ones as well as the good ones. I ask him who he is and where he is from. He tells me he is from the city and I tell him that I thought so. Similarly I say to my would-be psychological persecutor that he is a poor psychologist.

Then too, I instinctively attack his interpretation of history. Has the truth that we now have, granted it is not as comprehensive as it ought to be, been discovered by a policy of indifferentism to error? We all know the reverse to have been the case. We all know that whenever error was allowed to remain undisturbed in the church no new truth was discovered. A child is often stunted in its growth because of its tonsils and its adenoids. But here comes some one who tells us not to remove any part of the child's body because that body will be much smaller than it is, if we do. In this way your interdenominational agitator flies in the face of all the laws of organic growth when he tells us that truth is inclusive of truth and error. If he asks me again, "Are you of Calvin?" I will answer, "Yes I am, and I wish you were too. Then we might together discover new truth from the crucified One."

My Christianity Challenged

On the same day that I hear Dr. Morgan, I also hear a sermon by Dr. Eliot Porter, editor of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, and a well known writer and speaker on Christian education, in Christ Church of West Overbrook, Pa. His text was John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The speaker simply took for granted that Jesus was speaking as a human being about truth that exists apart from himself. The speaker took for granted that these words have nothing to do with those other words of Jesus, "I am the truth." The speaker took for granted that the Bible teaching about sin is wrong. If the Bible teaching about sin is right, untruth, the lie, has come into the world because man willfully disobeyed God's law. The speaker, however, ignored this Bible doctrine and spoke as though the lie is naturally inherent in man. For this reason too, he implicitly denied that Christ came to make us free from the curse of

sin. He simply told us that freedom is found if we willingly fit ourselves into the laws of the universe. Somehow the laws of the universe will help you if you seek what is right.

But now things are getting still worse. My astronomy was counted as nothing, my nationality was counted as nothing, my Calvinism was counted as nothing, and now even my Christianity is counted as nothing. And all of that within twenty-four hours. Note too the increase in authority: a child, a literary man, a preacher and a preacher who is an educational expert. By some sort of authority I can no longer talk about the stars and about patriotism. By a much higher authority I can no longer preach Calvinism to grown-ups, and by the highest authority I can no longer teach Christianity to children.

The child shouted, the critic growled, the preacher spoke politely and the educational expert assumed. None of them used any argument but the first three at least thought it worth while to tell me that I am wrong. The last one seemed to think that his authority was so great that he could drown me in silence.

Self-Defense Again

But if I am such an one as has no reason; if I am such an one to whom no arguments need be addressed, when my greatest treasure is taken from me, will not the instinct for self-preservation within me make me strike at the head of any persecutor? The usurper is in my house. He no longer argues with me about my living in it with him. He simply takes possession of it. Of course I must say, "Who are you?"

Who are you ecclesiastically? Who gave you the authority, in the name of the church and in the employ of the church, not to teach what the church teaches in her standards? Who gave you the authority to act as though there were no body of doctrine to which you have sworn allegiance? No, you shall not drown me in silence! I will arise and shake myself in the name of the Lord! I will blow the trumpet from Dan to Beersheba till the hosts to battle go. For my own safety and for the safety of my children you must get out. Do I persecute the robber when I drive him out of my house? No more do I persecute you if I compel you leave the church!

Do I act uncharitably to the robber when I drive him from my house? No more do I act uncharitably when I compel you to leave the church! Am I a poor neighbor if I raise alarm at midnight when the robber is in my house? No more do I act against the spirit of Christ and the best interest of his church if I warn the church publicly of your policies!

And who are you philosophically? Perhaps you say that you are quietly seeking to bring the church, especially by way of instructing the youth, into the new vision of truth that you want her to see. But are you certain that your interpretation of life is so much nearer to the truth than the church's interpretation of life is, that you think you are doing the church a great kindness by teaching her children the reverse of what her standards contain? Are you certain that you can separate the person of Christ from his teaching that you dare to ignore his claims of deity? Are you so certain that the evolution hypothesis is true that you deem yourself to be doing God and man a service if you substitute it in your Sunday school literature for the creation doctrine?

Whence all this certainty of yours? Whence your plenary ability to prove that God is not absolute? Whence your full assurance that no judgment, such as Christ depicts in the gospels, will come? We Christians found our belief not on ourselves; we claim to know nothing in ourselves. We hold that we are in darkness unless God interprets life to us. But

you do not accept such a humble position. You undertake to interpret the world without God, without Christ and without Scripture. You assume that you are able to do this. Who then are you?

You are an earth-born creature such as we. There are no resources of knowledge open to you that are not open to us. You are as limited as we. You may be expert in one field or another, and for that we honor you, but on the ultimate issues of life you know nothing that we do not also know. Yet you treat us worse, by far, than Bernard Shaw treated Helen Keller. You do not speak openly against us but silently undermine us. You do not attack us openly as a man of war but you sail under our flag and carry poison gas with which to stifle our children. Our prayer to God is that He may make your evil work of non-effect and that He may turn you from your evil way. One day we shall all stand before Christ's judgment seat and hear him say to us, "Who are you?"

¹²

¹²Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Psychological Explanations

The Banner

1933

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If you do not like me, explain me psychologically. That is often the most effective method of putting me out of the way. Tell the world what sort of social group I have come from. You can easily explain why I still cling to the orthodox, or even to the "outworn" Calvinistic faith if you only show men that I am, by virtue of my background, slow to change and loathe to accept the new light of science and discovery. Tell men that I am Dutch, or, worse than that, that I am a Groninger or a Fries. Tell them that as far as church life is concerned, I have been nurtured in the narrow, rural sectionalism that marked American life in general some years ago. Accordingly I have not been able to rid myself of the religious attitude of the pioneers. What was the attitude of these pioneers? Listen to the following description. "Difficulties constantly burdened the minds of these pioneering souls. In the face of the stubborn forces of nature, bravely they tried to wrest a secure settlement. Deeply concerned to have their sins blotted out, they sought safety in God's economy of grace. Before anxieties natural and spiritual, men turned to the local church as a sufficient haven of refuge. This institution's assurance of pardon from guilt and of participation in a perfect world to come fell like manna from heaven upon the toilers for food and the seekers for salvation."

Now it is no wonder that I have not learned how to express my religious ideals in non-ecclesiastical service. It is no wonder that, "though the doctrine of inerrancy of the Scriptures received its fatal blow in the seventies," I still continue to believe in it. It is my background that explains why I still cling to "prescientific theology" and appeal to "an aristocratic authority in the form of biblical literalism." If you explain me psychologically, you can show why I am "hard to get along with," and why I cannot follow a give-and-take policy in matters which you think of no importance. In short, psychological explanations are like those little X-ray machines that certain boys carry in their pockets in order to "look right through you" whenever they please. And the beauty of it is that anybody can handle the little psychology-machine. It has a big name but that need not frighten anyone. Anybody knows that *hexylresorcinol* is simply S. T. 37. So too every one knows that when we give a psychological explanation of some one we simply explain "how he got that way."

Now this game of explaining people that we do not like would be a fine thing if it did not work both ways. Unfortunately, however, psychological explanations are like a sharp two-edged sword. If you explain me psychologically and have done with me, I will explain you psychologically and have done with you. If you hold your finger on the trigger of the little X-ray machine that you always carry in your hip-pocket, I will hold my finger on my pistol too. I will tell the world that your father belonged to that group of liberal church men who "incorporated into their conception of Christianity the best ideals of the rising secular culture." I can easily explain that since your grandfather was a unitarian and your father always was a member of a "broad-minded" congregation downtown, you could not help but be a liberal today. It is not difficult for me to explain

how it is that you are a “peace at any price” man and a “middle of the road” church-union advocate. If you can explain why I vote as I do, I can as easily explain why you vote as you do.

Whose Vote Is Right

Then whose vote is right? Is my vote wrong simply because it is the “result” of a “backward” culture? Is your vote right simply because it is the fruit of a “forward” culture? Is your vote right and mine wrong simply because your culture has come upon the scene of history fifty years later than mine? You who ridicule the idea that the first century should set rules for the twentieth century, have you the right to turn about and set up the present culture as that which is right? If the whole thing is nothing but a matter of psychological explanation, the only logical conclusion is that one explanation is as good as another. We will then stand with drawn pistols till both of us starve to death. Even if you control the field by virtue of numbers and thousands of your comrades stand at your side, all of them pointing their pistols at me, and all of them shooting with a great deal of noise, I will not be hurt since none of the pistols have any bullets in them, but all of us will starve to death.

What you need to do then, if you wish to prove that your vote is right, is to prove that your psychological explanation is right while mine is wrong. In other words you have to show that you can “look right through” me while I can’t even get “under your skin.” You have to prove that your pistol has lead in it and mine nothing but blanks.

Unfortunately, you can never begin to prove anything of the sort. The very idea of your explanation is that whatever is last is best and that there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong. If you were to try to prove that your explanation of me is right and my explanation of you is wrong, you would first have to admit that there is such a thing as right and wrong. But you cannot maintain that there is such a thing as absolute right and wrong unless you first renounce your own position of merely relative right and wrong. Now if you renounce your whole conception of right and wrong, you would also have to renounce your own psychological explanation of me. Hence I never need to take your explanation of me seriously since if it were true, there would be nothing that any one needs to take seriously; the whole of life is then a puppet play.

Christian And Non-Christian Psychology

Should we then conclude that no psychological explanation touches bottom and that we should stop shooting at one another with our X-ray pistols? Not at all. The only conclusion we should draw from our argument is that psychological explanations are not neutral. We do not in the least object when liberal theologians give a psychological explanation of us. In fact we like to have them do so. We welcome the fullest possible expression of non-Christian thought. What we do object to, however, is that liberals give such explanations and simply assume that they are right. Liberals assume that their non-Christian conceptions of right and wrong are true when they do not even think it necessary to show the foundation of their psychological foundations. Now as orthodox people we do nothing of the sort. We too explain our opponents psychologically. We

explain them by saying that all men are by nature spiritually blind and that only those that are regenerated by the Spirit of truth can truly see the truth. That a man's father has been a liberal is only a proximate or immediate explanation of his liberalism. We refer our explanations, in the last analysis, to the acts of a sovereign God. We believe that no psychological explanation not so referred explains anything at all. In other words we frankly admit and openly maintain that the conception of an absolute God underlies our explanations and gives them their meaning.

To be fair, our opponents ought plainly to show the foundation of their explanations.

Liberals ought frankly to admit that the foundation of their psychological explanations of us is the idea that this universe has come from somewhere and is going in some direction of which no one knows anything. In short, Irrationalism, underlies the "rational" explanation liberals give of us.

As an illustration of the common failure of liberal theologians to give a reason for their explanations, I point to the book of Stewart G. Cole on *The History of Fundamentalism* from which I have quoted above.

A Liberal's Explanation

Professor Cole apparently does not realize that when he gives his psychological explanation of the present-day fight between Modernism and Fundamentalism, he is all the while setting forth so much non-Christian or pagan philosophy. The whole question whether historic Christianity is true or not the author does not face. He simply assumes that it is not. He assumes this by taking for granted that Christianity is no more than a cultural force that appeared naturally in the course of history and that may be modified at will. He tells us that Christians who opened their eyes to the new culture of our day realized that, "Christianity must become one of many salutary forces with which men needed to reckon in order to live well."¹

Now Professor Cole ought to know that historic Christianity presents itself as an absolutely comprehensive philosophy of life. He ought therefore to give reasons for his disbelief in it. To say that certain people think that Christianity is one among many social forces is to say no more than that as a matter of fact there are so many people who call themselves Christians but do not believe in Christianity.

Yet the author states such things as though certain people have seen the great light of truth while others perversely choose to remain in darkness.

Once more, Professor Cole assumes that historic Christianity is wrong when he takes for granted that liberals use Christian terminology with the same meaning that the orthodox do. So, for instance, he says with respect to the charge made against liberals that they deny regeneration: "That liberals denied the potential spiritual experience of the new birth in their regard for human fights was contrary to fact."² Now it is surpassingly strange that one who explains the whole of fundamentalism psychologically should not know that though the liberal uses the term "regeneration" he does not mean by that term what the orthodox have always meant by it. The whole matter proves that for Professor

¹ Cole, S. *The History of Fundamentalism*. p. 29.

² Cole, S. *The History of Fundamentalism*. p. 49.

Cole Christianity is a changing something; it only proves that liberalism has drunk from the fountain of pragmatism, but nothing else.

The Poor Fundamentalists

The same assumption that his non-Christian psychological explanation is the only possible explanation appears most strikingly in his picture of the benighted fundamentalists. “Culturally perplexed, they fell back upon the Protestant Book to assure them of the reality of the Christian Messiah who would soon come to succor saints and destroy the faithless human order.”³ These poor people have been so hampered in their vision that as their pioneer fathers who fought the “stubborn forces of nature” were “deeply concerned to have their sins blotted out,” so they still think in terms of heaven and hell. All this is psychologically explained on the ground that men have thoughtlessly carried over the culture of an earlier day into the present time. These men have been unable to escape “the naive fear toward the universe, that Christianity had nurtured”⁴ because they have some, how lagged behind in the cultural stream.

Then too the recent activity among fundamentalists is explained on the basis of a post-war psychology. “When hostilities ceased in Europe the abnormal emotional set of American minds was not easily curbed. Especially was this true with illiterate people. Exploiters of the masses soon set themselves to sublimate war hates into organized bursts of social unrest, class passion and religious prejudice. The Ku Klux Klan, the anti-World Court crusade, ‘one hundred per cent Americanism,’ tirades against labor and bolshevism, sabbatarianism, fundamentalism, suggest the new cults.”⁵ Now here too we may point out that that Professor Cole must be aware of the fact that Christianity has from the beginning offered itself as a comprehensive philosophy of life and has defended itself as a comprehensive philosophy of life and has defended itself against all forms of attack. Granted the Church has been more awake to its controversial task at one time than at another, granted too that the war has had something to do with the present activity, and granted finally that match which is out of harmony with the genius of Christianity comes to the fore at such a time as the present, the fact remains that Christianity has been offering itself and is now offering itself to men for acceptance as a comprehensive view of life. If men disbelieve it they ought to give reason is for holding to some other view of life. They have no right to assume their own position to be right and then “explain” Christianity to death by an appeal to the bogus of modern psychology. We are too far “advanced” to believe in spooks.

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³ Cole, S. *The History of Fundamentalism*. p. 35.

⁴ Cole, S. *The History of Fundamentalism*. p. 20.

⁵ Cole, S. *The History of Fundamentalism*. p. 25.

¹³ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

But Ye Are Rich

The Banner

1933

Volume 68, Page 958

On this Thanksgiving Day we rejoice with fear and trembling. The depression is still on. The economical situation has improved, some say, a little; others say, none. At best we feel quite uncertain about the future.

Not only is it that we as individuals, ignorant to a large extent of government affairs, feel uncertain. The government itself seems to be uncertain. Outspoken and honest men tell us that the government is experimenting. It has embarked upon a new program. This new program is, moreover, quite different from any other it has ever embarked upon before. How can it help but be uncertain as to the outcome?

Even the wisest counsel of the wisest economical experts does not relieve the oppressive feeling of uncertainty. The forces with which these experts deal are unwieldy. The factors that enter into the situation are so numerous and so diversified that men hesitate any longer to speak of economic laws. The law of supply and demand seems to some to have failed.

On Prayer Day and at other times we have prayed for an abundance of crops. The Lord has answered our prayers. He has given us plenty. He seems even to have given us too much. At any rate the government has destroyed thousands of pigs. So we seem even to be uncertain what to pray for, and what to give thanks for. A poor crop seems to bring better prices. Yet a very poor crop would certainly bring a shortage. Uncertainty seems to be written on the whole economic situation. How then can we celebrate Thanksgiving Day?

Remedies Offered

Some would seek comfort for all our ills in the power of science. The economic experts called in by the present government are bringing the insight of science to bear upon the task of government. But they only reflect the general attitude of science today. That attitude itself is one of uncertainty. Scientists used to think that they dealt with irrevocable laws. They used to think that all man needed to do was to discover these laws and live in accordance with them. Today science scarcely dares to speak of laws at all. It tells us that it deals with "contingencies," that is, with uncertainties. The naive Marxian socialist, to be sure, exists, but he exists only because he has had no time to read what science says today. Science today says that it has "no pronouncement to make" since she does not know whether she is dealing with truth at all. Science professes to be working in a universe of chance. Uncertainty at best is the last word of science.

Others would search for a remedy in the field of philosophy. But philosophy can scarcely be distinguished from science today. Philosophy is so anxious to deal only with the "facts of science" that it does no more than make some generalizations on these facts. Philosophy has given up the "quest for certainty." It no longer looks for eternal laws. It,

too, deals with “contingencies.” It, too, deals only with chance. Uncertainty at best is the last word of non-Christian philosophy.

Still others would look for relief from uncertainty in religion. They think that religion somehow gives them the right to be certain where science and philosophy do not. But such comfort does not last long. It is bought at the price of inconsistency. If science actually teaches that there may or may not be a resurrection from the dead I cannot get rid of this uncertainty by an appeal to religion. If religion teaches something different from science both cannot be right. I must then ask which one is right.

Now modern religion, generally speaking, has taken for granted that what science teaches must be right. Accordingly it has also clothed itself in the garb of uncertainty. Modernists speak in beautiful language about “spiritual values” and “abiding principles.” But this is only because they have not yet had time to read as fully as they should what science says today. Modernism wants to build its religion upon “scientific fact.” But according to science all values and all principles have come by chance. According to science today, the “spiritual” is derived from the physical and the “eternal” from the temporal. That all things flow and all things change is the highest wisdom of Modernism. There is no more certainty for the man dying in the faith of Modernism than there was for Socrates when he drank the hemlock cup.

Even would-be orthodox movements in religion partake of the gospel of uncertainty that science and philosophy teach. Frank Buchman thought it fine when his friend prayed: “O God, if there be a God, change Bill Pickle, Mrs. Pickle and the little Pickles.”

Yesterday, Today And Forever The Same

Where then shall we go? And for what shall we give thanks? Or shall we give thanks at all? Indeed, we shall give thanks. If ever, we ought now to go directly to the root and source of our comfort and joy. If in prosperous times there was danger that we should rejoice in the gift without the giver, there ought to be no such danger now. If ever, we ought now to realize that the Giver is himself the greatest gift. “I, the Lord, change not,” said God to Israèl, and we are by his grace the Israèl of God. In the midst of all the uncertainty that surrounds us on every side comes the same word of comfort and joy to us: “I, the Lord, change not.”

Before we think upon the sunshine and the rain, before we think upon the health of body and of mind that we, our loved ones, and our nation have received this year, let us think upon the changeless God. All the waves and billows of uncertainty cannot overwhelm us; He is the anchor of our soul. All the winds of chance cannot sweep us away; we are planted upon the Rock. He keeps us in the hollow of his hand; only if He could change would we have to fear.

Our Creator-God

God changes not. Hence he has made this world of change. God has made the “facts” of science. God has made these facts to work in accordance with laws. The “contingency” of facts is only apparent. Even the winds obey the will of God. When they bring the summer drought they are yet the messengers of God. His purpose is wrought out by them.

What is your only comfort in life and in death? The beautiful answer to the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism tells us. That answer should mean more to the Church of God today than it has ever meant before. As Christians living in this age we have been more deeply immersed in what seems to be nothing but a universe of remorseless and meaningless chance than ever our forefathers have been. It is only God's changelessness that keeps life from being anything but a farce and a puppet dance. It is only God's changelessness that keeps life from being a shipwreck. All the powers of time and change are in his hand. Change is subordinate to the Changeless One. Thanks be to God, our Creator-God.

Our Provider-God

God changes not. Hence this world of change will change. This world will have a "new deal" yet. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Paradise lost will be more than regained. At present the earth is cursed because of the sin of man. It does not naturally bring forth thorns and thistles. The world is abnormal now. It will get "back to normalcy" one day. Mere man could not change the world so as to destroy forever the purpose of God for a good and beautiful universe. The "change" that man has wrought will be used by God to make a change for the better yet.

Naive Marxian socialists still build utopias. They speak of progress. Other types of socialists, disillusioned to some extent though they are, also build utopias. Hence they are still more naive. There can be no real change for the better in a world of chance. Modernist preachers tell us there will somehow be peace and prosperity in the future. Will the generations of men take to the "spirit of Jesus" by chance? Socialists and Modernists are like children who dream sweet dreams and feel that "somehow" as by magic their dreams will come true. But we have a changeless God. We have a God who will yet show us good. The future is ours because it is our God's. We are progressive. We lay plans for years to come. We lay plans for eternity. Our labors are not in vain in the Lord. The changeless God has a changeless purpose with the world, with us and with our children. He realizes his purpose through us. Will He not then provide? Thanks be to our Provider-God.

Our Savior-God

"For I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." God upholds the universe in spite of the sin of man. But for the eternal mercies of God a sinful world could not exist for an instant. We are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. The evil that man has wrought could not undo the eternal purposes of God's grace for his own. Our hearts adore his changeless grace. No one can erase our names from the book of life. Nothing separates us from the love of Christ. Thanks be to our Savior-God.

Our Creator-God, our Provider-God, our Savior-God, he is our God. We are the sheep of his pasture. He leads us beside the still water. He feeds us by day. He watches over us by night. "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: For thou, Lord, alone makest me dwell in safety."

Thanks Be To God

What more can we say? Nothing more. There is nothing more that we could desire. Instead of with anguish and fear our hearts are filled with confidence and joy. These things said the “first and the last” to the church at Smyrna, in the midst of its poverty, in the midst of its persecution, in the midst of its uncertainty. Did it appear to them as more theory? Did it seem to them that the ministers who brought this message that they were rich in God though poor in the world had no sense of the needs of men? It did not. It comforted them. It was the only message that really did comfort them. It gave them courage for the martyr’s death. It gave them strength to carry on with the daily task, disheartening as it would seem in itself.

That gospel of a changeless God we have been allowed to preach in our churches. That gospel of a changeless God we have been allowed to teach in our schools. That gospel has led our aged loved ones in comfort to the grave. That gospel has strengthened us for every task, upheld us in our every weakness, and prepared us for our every emergency. That gospel we have brought to others. That gospel we may still bring to others. It is the everlasting gospel. It is the gospel of the changeless God. Though our hearts should be tempted to enumerate the difficulties, the privations and visitations of these lean years, though we should look around and find that naught but the message of fear comes to us from every side, and though the “fact” should seem to indicate and the “experts” should seem to corroborate that all is uncertain ahead, yet will the Spirit testify to the truth of his Word and interject, subdue and control with the words, “But ye are rich.”

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¹⁴Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

E. Stanley Jones

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1934

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During the morning of December 14, 1933, Dr. E. Stanley Jones was the main speaker at one of the "United Foreign Missionary Conferences" held in Philadelphia. The large Arch Street Methodist Episcopal church was almost filled with ministers and other Christian workers. Every one seems to be anxious to hear what Stanley Jones has to say at this juncture about the whole missionary situation.

Jones began his address by pointing out that truth is universal. If truth is not universal it is not truth, he said. He warned us at once not to think that we know a solution for the present situation. He urged that we should humbly seek a solution. To this end he asked that we join in five minutes of "corporate silence." Evidently this "corporate silence" was one of the means by which we were supposed to forget all the differences that we have. All Christians of every shade of opinion are wonderfully harmonious when they are silent. It seems that Jones can even cover up much of the difference between Christians and non-Christians by these periods of "corporate silence." If one were to speculate on the prayers that actually arose from an audience such as was there present one might think of an orthodox Christian as praying that the evil intended by Satan through these meetings might be made of none effect. Others no doubt said in their hearts, "O God, if there be a God, bring unity to us all." Still others, no doubt, adjusted themselves to "that aspect of the universe which we call God," or somehow had a mysterious joy pervade their being as they felt the "all encompassing presence" or the void. But since the resulting tangle was wisely passed on to the recording angels for their ingenuity to be exercised upon we will only hope that all the petitions reached their proper destination.

The Jerusalem Council

Jones illustrated what he thought should be our attitude to the present missionary problem by explaining what the attitude of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 had been. He said that when Paul and Barnabas with certain others were sent to this council to ask whether it was necessary for the converts from the heathen to be circumcised, the council decided not to lay a "greater burden" upon these converts than to require them to "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." The whole missionary movement of Paul had gone beyond their ordinary doctrinal concepts. So they turned to prayer. Was it a "corporate silence?" After that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost" and to them to let the heathen make their own interpretation of the living Christ whom Paul had brought to them. So we too ought not to impose a system of interpretation that we have inherited, upon those who have never heard of Christ but we should only bring them Christ himself.

How often has not the church failed to follow the example of the Jerusalem Council? When Marco Polo spoke to Kublai Khan of Christianity the latter asked for one hundred

Christian teachers. Western Christendom sent two. They were too hotly engaged in doctrinal controversy to send more. These two asked Kublai Khan and his people to become ecclesiastically and politically attached to Rome. They had no message big and compelling enough to appeal to men. Naturally they met with disappointment. Let us then not again make the mistake so often made by the church in the past. Let us be, like the Council of Jerusalem, an “organism of the Spirit” anxious to bring the “personal, vital, contagious experience of God” to men.

This argument seemed to get across very well with the audience. Apparently they did not have enough doctrine in them to be aware of the fact that a new and non-Christian system of doctrine was offered them. After the “corporate silence” they seemed ready to receive anything and to defend nothing. There may have been a “Shorter Catechism Christian” here and there who realized that the Jerusalem Synod did not decide to do anything like substitute a living Christ for a system of doctrine. To say that it did would be to say that Paul had not taught the churches which he founded any doctrine but only given them a living Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth than that.

No Iconoclasm Or Syncretism But Fulfillment

After the first introductory remarks Jones made clear that he would like to have the audience ask questions in order that he might know what they would wish to have him discuss. He said that naturally there were many fields on which he could not speak. There were only two fields on which he could say anything. These fields dealt with those matters of which he had had experience. He emphasized the idea that no mere advice was any good to any one. It is only if one can speak from experience that his words help others. Here again the “shorter catechism Christian” may have been worried that this statement of Jones was directed against all doctrinal teaching and preaching.

The first field on which Jones said he would entertain questions was that of “personal, vital, contagious experience of God.” This too seemed to put him in contrast with those who give “mere doctrinal advice.” The second field was that of missions. When the church undertakes to do mission work it indicates that the church is “sufficiently sure of itself to share itself.” But does this certainty that the church has originate from experience only? Did the early church wait with obeying the command of Christ to preach the gospel on his authority till they had had an experience of certainty? Does Christ’s command come first and experience afterward or does experience come first? Plainly Jones is not anxious to distinguish his position clearly from that of the ordinary variety of modernist.

Among the many questions asked were some that pertained to the relation of Christianity to other faiths. Fortunately Jones made a reply to these questions. He said that in the first place our attitude as Christians could not be iconoclastic. If we were iconoclastic we would be flying in the face of facts. There are many beautiful things in other faiths. In the second place he said our attitude could not be syncretistic. If we are syncretistic we merely gather together into one whole what we consider to be the good elements in all faiths. The result of this is that we have nothing in the end but a collection of beautiful things.

Now when he said that Christian missionaries should not be syncretistic it would seem that he had answered the charge of syncretism which is often brought against him with a very definite denial. Unfortunately, however, it appeared, when he said what he

did think the relation of Christianity to other faiths should be, that his position is syncretistic after all. He only has another name for his particular brand of syncretism.

Jones said that Christianity should be presented as the fulfillment of the faith of other nations. He quoted the words of Jesus when He said that He came not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. He said that, though these words were spoken in connection with Jesus' discourse on his relation to the Old Testament, they had nevertheless a wider, that is, a cosmic application.

Here again ordinary but basic doctrinal distinctions were run over rough-shod. Orthodox theology has taught on the basis of Scripture that the Old and the New Testament together tell the one story of redemption and that this story of redemption was not known from any other source but from this Scripture itself. We may indeed speak of a cosmic significance of the gospel but the meaning of this cosmic significance will never be clear to us unless we see that Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets in order thus to become a blessing to those who had no desire for the living God.

The real reason, said Jones, why the attitude of syncretism will not do for the Christian missionary is that it would be to deny that Christ is creative. And here we note that we cannot really understand what Jones means by Christianity being the fulfillment of other faiths unless we see his further distinction between:

Christianity A Way And Christ The Way

When some one in the audience asked whether he would say that Christianity is a way of salvation or whether it is the way of salvation Jones answered that Christianity is a way but that Christ is the way. Christianity, by which he understood the doctrinal statements of the creeds of the Christian church, is after all only one interpretation of the living personality of Christ. Hence we must present to the nations that living Christ himself rather than doctrinal statements about him. If we do this we will find that the living Christ when thus planted on new soil will take to himself the elements that are akin to him in that new soil and create something quite new. As a plant that is set in a new soil takes the elements that are akin to itself and creates out of them a new and beautiful structure so we must plant the living Christ in India.

So here we note that Jones has fully embraced the modernist notion that there is no absolute truth. If Christ is the way then what He said about himself in the gospels and what the apostles said about him in the gospels is not merely one interpretation among others of the living Christ but is the only interpretation possible. That all men are sinners and subject to the wrath of God is not one interpretation among others that may perhaps be true but is the truth about the matter. Instead of this biblical position Jones has embraced the modern pragmatic notion that all reality is changed and that all intellectual interpretation can, in the nature of the case, be only partial at best. It is this that is back of his idea that Christ must be presented as creative. His whole distinction between Christianity as a way and Christ as the way is thoroughly modernist.

The Cross

One could wish that Jones had had a little more of the “advice” that he so greatly despises before he went to India. If he had learned some of the simple distinctions, such as that between common and special grace he would not be in such a muddle now. As it is he must think that there is no qualitative difference between the religions of the nations and Christianity. He says that God was in India before the missionaries. Now that will be granted in a general way by all those who hold to the doctrine of creation and providence and further by all those who in addition hold to the doctrine of common grace. But Jones means that God was in India in a saving way before Christian missionaries came there. He spoke with great piety of those who can so easily condemn people to hell when these people do not agree with them on certain doctrines. He says he believes that the cross was never off the heart of God. But humanity was enveloped in the sensuous and so it became necessary for Christ to reveal the redemptive heart of God more clearly and make men do self-consciously what they were already doing unconsciously. Jones said that it is a law of the human mind that you cannot understand anything that is entirely foreign to you. On this ground he rejects the doctrine of total depravity.

Now all this is nothing but a refined form of paganism. The “living creative Christ” which Jones wants to preach to India as the way turns out to be nothing more than an embodiment of an eternal idea. This accords exactly with what Plato taught but is the very reverse of what Paul and Jesus taught. There is no good reason at all for saying that Christ is the embodiment of an eternal principle. If He is no more than the embodiment of an idea He is also no more than an embodiment of an idea. No manipulation of any sort can get away from that. Then the cross has become no more than the Symbol of general suffering in a world that is somehow full of evil.

Sin

Jones said that he wondered sometimes how God could create such a world as this is and then live in it with his love. Here again one would wish that he had had a few of the elements of that system of doctrine which he despises. Scripture says that God did not create such a world as we now see but that He created a perfect world. Scripture says that sin came in as a willful disobedience on the part of man. Jones does not believe this creation story. He passes it over as one of the merely doctrinal interpretations. Incidentally he seems to forget that the whole of Christ’s claim that He was the way of redemption depends upon his acceptance of the facts of the Old Testament with respect to the creation and the fall of man. Jones is constantly afraid that the “living Christ” will step out of “our mere web of words” if we spend our time making doctrines about him.

The Christlike God

Perhaps the most obnoxious way in which the modernism of Jones appeared was in his answer to the question how he would preach God to the people of India. He said in reply that this was no doubt difficult but that it had become easier because of the fact that he was preaching nothing but a Christlike God. He said he was not interested in any other kind of God. He was not interested in a tyrant. Now it is in this way that modernism seems to be very pious while in reality it is blasphemous. First men reject the biblical interpretation of Christ and substitute their own. That is, they will not take the Christ of the Scriptures but make one in their own image. Then they add to this the idea that they create God in the image of Christ. They do not seem to see that this is the same as to say that they have made God in their own image. It is in this way that Russellites reject the idea of eternal punishment because they will not accept such a God. Thus it appears that modernist ministers have accepted the Kantian creativity theory of thought and on the ground of it reject the whole of Christianity while they seem not to be aware of what they have done.

The pity of it all is that audiences that have been nurtured in Christian lands seem to take all this at face value. What then can we expect that the heathen will do?

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¹⁵Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Recent Events In The Presbyterian Church

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The rapid and open deflection to modernism in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. began about 1924 when approximately 1,300 ministers signed the “Auburn Affirmation.” This affirmation in effect repudiates the system of doctrine of the Westminster confession as being the system of doctrine taught in Scripture. Yet those who signed the Affirmation claim that they are rightfully considered to be ministers in good and regular standing in the church.

It was natural that a consistently conservative group of people in the church should do all they could to defend the confession against the attack of these “Affirmationists.” At several of the annual meetings of the General Assembly the conservatives have tried to effect reforms—but, as it seemed, in vain.

The chief cause for this failure must be laid at the door of the pacifist-indifferentist party in the church. If this party had done its duty, if it had been consistently conservative and proceeded against Affirmationists at every turn, there is good reason to believe that the church would now be on its way to a thorough reform. This pacifist party, however, has in many ways protected and compromised with the Affirmationists.

When in 1929 Princeton Seminary was reorganized two Affirmationists were elected to its board. The president of the Seminary, Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, defended the presence of these men on the board. He went so far as to claim that the new board would be as fully faithful to Calvinism as the old boards had been.

The consistent conservatives, those who really loved the Reformed faith, could do nothing else but organize a new Seminary. Westminster Theological Seminary has now existed for five years. Its student body has increased in number annually from fifty the first year to eighty-four the fifth year. Last year more applications were received than could be accepted. Nearly all of the graduates have been placed, many of them in influential churches. Many of them have become a thorn in the flesh to the modernists and pacifists.

1933 Assembly

Modernism entrenched itself in the field of theological education; it also entrenched itself in the field of missions. In the spring of 1933, Dr. J. Gresham Machen wrote a 110 page pamphlet on: “Modernism and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.” In this pamphlet he showed that the Board of Foreign Missions has taken a compromising attitude with respect to the non-Christian book, *Rethinking Missions*. He showed that Pearl S. Buck, who holds that orthodox Christianity is a “superstition” from which China ought to “be protected” was for a long while retained by

the board as a missionary in good standing. He pointed to the fact that the candidate secretary, the Rev. Lindsay L. B. Hadley, was a signer of the Auburn Affirmation. He showed that modernist propaganda had been made by the board, among other things in its recommendation of Dr. Fosdick's books.

All this evidence, carefully documented, was presented in support of an overture introduced in the New Brunswick Presbytery, January 24, 1933, which overture, if adopted, would have requested the Assembly of 1933 to clear the Foreign Missions Board of modernism. When the overture was voted on in April, the modernists naturally voted against it. The pacifists also voted against it. In the counsels of the church the pacifists will almost always vote with the modernists.

Not only did the Presbytery of New Brunswick vote against Dr. Machen's overture but it passed a resolution commending the foreign Missions Board for all that it had done.

The Presbytery of Philadelphia then took over Dr. Machen's overture and sent it to the General Assembly. The Assembly, too, closed its eyes to facts and praised the Missions Board in general and Dr. Robert G. Speer in particular for all that they had done.

The Independent Board

It was at the conclusion of the 1933 Assembly, when all had been done that could be done to reform the old board, that the consistent conservatives announced that they would organize an independent board of foreign missions. During the course of the past winter the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions was organized and incorporated. Dr. J. Gresham Machen was elected president and the Rev. Charles J. Woodbridge, who was a missionary in Africa, was elected general secretary.

Since his arrival in Philadelphia from Africa in January, Mr. Woodbridge has been busily engaged in the new work. The response has been most gratifying. At least twenty-two persons have expressed their desire to serve as missionaries under the independent board. Money has been coming in freely. Mr. Woodbridge has been enthusiastically received at many places. Such papers as the *Moody Monthly* and the *SundaySchool Times* have heralded the movement and supported it. The Rev. Henry Coray will be the first missionary to go out under the independent board.

The Legality Of The Independent Board

The organizers of the independent board have from the outset made it clear that they have and claim no "formal connection with any judiciary of the church." Accordingly they are not under the supervision of the church. The work of the independent board is not a denominational enterprise.

Now if one should say that at any rate it does not show a great loyalty to one's denomination to organize an independent seminary and an independent mission board it should be recalled that these things were not done till all efforts to make the official institutions loyal to Scripture and the constitution of the church, had failed. It is the majority in the church that are disloyal; it is the minority in the church that are loyal. As

one cannot say, “My country right or wrong,” so one cannot say, “My denomination right or wrong.”

Opposition

Yet it is this that men are saying in effect today. The modernists-pacifist coalition in the church seem to think that the time for persecution has come. Under the banner of “loyalty to the church” they are now seeking to strike the death blow to both the Seminary and the independent board. Dr. Lewis S. Mudge, the stated clerk of the General Assembly, in answer to a letter from the clerk of the Presbytery of Baltimore, wrote in part as follows:

If and when any students from Westminster Seminary come before your Presbytery, they should be informed that the Presbytery will neither license nor ordain them until they have given a written pledge that they will support the official agencies of the Church as a part of their pledge of loyalty to the government and discipline of the church.

That letter of Dr. Mudge was a mighty challenge to the independent board and to Westminster Seminary. Dr. Machen answered that challenge in his address to the graduating class of Westminster on May 8. He spoke in part as follows:

I feel compelled to say to you, my brethren, with the utmost plainness, that if you sign the pledge demanded of you in that letter of Dr. Mudge and practically implied in that action of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, if you obtain your licensure or ordination in that way, then, quite irrespective of the question whether the boards and agencies are or are not worthy of trust at this moment or at any particular moment, you have become servants of men and not in the high biblical sense servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you promise to adapt your message to shifting majorities in church councils or to the mandates of church officials, if you promise to commend one kind of missions this year and an opposite kind next year, as the General Assembly, newly elected every year, may direct, if you thus take the Bible from your pulpits and place the Minutes of the General Assembly in its place, if you thus abandon the Reformation and do despite to all the blood and tears that it cost, if you thus abandon the high liberty guaranteed you by the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and if (as, alas, you do if you abandon that liberty) you abandon also your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ by putting fallible men into the place of authority that belongs only to Him, then the ministry has become, as far as you are concerned, merely a profession, and rather a contemptible profession too. You may, by taking such a step, obtain high ecclesiastical preferment; but never can you be ministers of the New Covenant, never can you be ambassadors of God.¹

Not satisfied with going thus far, the General Council, of which Dr. Mudge is a member, circulated a pamphlet to the commissioners of the General Assembly, too late to be answered fully, entitled, “Studies of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,” which is a long attack on the independent board. The Rev. H. McAllister Griffiths and Mr. Murray Forst Thompson, a member of the Pennsylvania Bar, prepared a four page pamphlet called, “Fallacies—and Facts” which was included in the May issue of *Christianity Today* and sent to all the commissioners. In this short pamphlet they defend the Independent Board against the attack of the General Council.

¹The entire address of Dr. Machen, together with a great deal of information about the various attacks upon the Independent Board is found in the May issue of *Christianity Today* which may be had upon request to its office, 501 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

What did the Assembly do? By a considerable majority it ordered the Independent Board to disband. After a long introduction the action of the Assembly reads in part: In view of the principles herein set forth, the General Assembly would issue the following directions to its officers and judicatories:

1. That the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions be and is hereby directed to desist forthwith from exercising any ecclesiastical or administrative functions including the soliciting of funds, within the synods, the presbyteries, the particular churches and the mission stations of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.”

2. That all ministers and laymen affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, who are officers, trustees or members of ‘The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions,’ be officially notified by this General Assembly through its stated clerk, that they must immediately upon receipt of such notification sever their connection with this board, and that refusal to do so and a continuance of their relationship to the said Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, exercising ecclesiastical and administrative functions in contravention of the authority of the General Assembly, will be considered a disorderly and disloyal act on their part and subject them to the discipline of the Church.

We may rest assured that the Independent Board will not disband. They are given ninety days at most. Then what will happen? No one knows. Will the only consistent conservatives be put out of the Church? Perhaps they will only be reprimanded. Perhaps all the noise of trumpets is only meant to terrify the faint of heart.

One thing seems certain. The issues are becoming clearer day by day. Men’s souls are tried. The faithful are knit together. Their courage grows with danger. They are at prayer. They are at work.²

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The following pamphlets may be obtained free of charge by requesting same from the Rev. Charles J. Woodbridge, Room 1531, 12 South Twelfth Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

a. “Modernism and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,” by Dr. Machen.

b. “The Independent Board for Prebyterian Foreign Missions—A Statement as to its Organization and Program,” by the Rev. Charles J. Woodbridge.

c. “Have the Organizers of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions Violated the Law of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.?” by Murray Forst Thompson, Esq., a member of the Pennsylvania Bar.

d. “Fallacies—and Facts.”

¹⁶Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Study Your Bible

A Self Study Course for Bible Believing Christians
by Edward J. Young
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Electronic Edition Copyright 1996 by Eric H. Sigward

Foreword by Dr. Cornelius Van Til

There is no need for me to say anything about the qualifications of Mr. Young. That the work is written in a scholarly and able manner must be apparent to any one who looks into it.

Any individual or any group of individuals studying the Bible with the help of Mr. Young's work will naturally become convinced of the absolute truth of the Word of God. Underlying and permeating the book is the Reformed conception of Apologetics, which holds that we can without fear even in our day hold to an absolute God, an absolute Christ, and an absolute Bible. There is no compromise or crouching fear. With full acquaintance with the work of negative criticism and modern philosophy, Mr. Young holds that unless we may take the Bible as true, human life is meaningless. Surely young people of Christian homes need the help of such a study.

With a true conception of Apologetics goes a true conception of history, especially sacred history. The truth of the creation story is maintained in opposition to the dogma of evolution. The fall of man not merely as "psychologically true," but as an historical event, is shown to be at the root of all the sin in this world. The far-reaching significance of the doctrine of total depravity as well as its Scriptural foundation is made clear.

I wish I could give something like an adequate expression to the conception of sacred history that the book of Mr. Young leaves with us. It is, in short the Reformed conception. Out of the race of sinful men the sovereign God forms for Himself a people. He speaks to them as to no other nation; the revelation to Israel is unique. The similarity of form of this revelation to other "revelations" does not detract from its uniqueness. Nowhere but in Scripture does an absolute God speak. Nowhere but in Scripture is redemption by pure grace alone. Nowhere but in Scripture is there a program of the destruction of all sin in evil. Nowhere but in Scripture is there the picture of absolute victory at last.

Thus sacred history becomes terrible and beautiful. It grips one in the inmost depths of his existence. There is no epic so sweeping, no drama so dramatic as the story of sacred history when told after the Reformed conception of it as has been done by Mr. Young.

Naturally Mr. Young does not tell the whole story. His book covers Genesis only. But the story of sacred history has its beginnings in Genesis. To tell the story of Genesis well is to help us on the right track. In American history the revolutionary period is of basic importance. In sacred history the period of Genesis is of basic importance.

The principle of God's sovereign grace is the constitutional principle of the people of God. Mr. Young has brought this out in admirable fashion. He helps us to read our Bibles aright. We see one people of God, with one constitution, governed by one King, namely Jesus Christ.

There is careful attention to detail but never at the expense of insight into plan of the whole story. The division of the book into convenient lessons, with suggestions for further study in the Bible and the Catechism, with references to the best literature on each topic under discussion, make the book eminently useful for class-work as well as for private study.

If Sunday school teachers and other teachers of the Bible would master the method of Bible study and the principle of sacred history as these appear in the short book of Mr. Young, I am persuaded that they would be better fitted to study and teach the Bible than they would be if they should read hundreds of pages of the ordinary material now available to them.

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¹⁷Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Christian Experience Of Life

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1934
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The board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America sent out Dr. J. Harry Cotton to the Orient during 1931–1932 on the Joseph Cook foundation. The book containing the lectures delivered by Dr. Cotton is entitled, *The Christian Experience of Life*. The lectures were delivered “in Syria, India, Siam, the Philippine Islands, China, Korea and Japan, before many varied groups—to theological colleges, students of Christian universities and groups of Christian workers and missionaries.” Naturally, we are interested to know what a lecturer, officially appointed by the Presbyterian Board, tells the people of the Orient about the nature of Christianity.

The Assumption Of The Book

The author tells us that the purpose of his book is to “present to the mind of the now Christian Oriental student the nature of the Christian experience.”¹ Evidently the author wants to convey the impression that he is speaking primarily of life rather than of doctrine because he must speak to people who do not understand Christianity. He wishes, therefore, to speak of the Christian experience as something with which he can more easily than by way of doctrine approach the now Christian mind. His argument as a whole seems to be that Christian experience ought to appeal to the Oriental people inasmuch as it has something that they lack in their own experience.

The objection that immediately occurs to any one who is nurtured in the Reformed position is that such an argument easily leads to the false notion that a person who is not a Christian can of himself really know what his most basic need is. This is fundamentally opposed to what the Heidelberg Catechism says when it teaches that we must even learn about the nature of sin from the law of God. It is not true that the “natural man” really knows what he lacks and that we only need to tell him that in Christ there is the remedy for his need. It is just because the “natural man” does not know of himself that he is a sinner worthy of the wrath of God that he does not seek escape from his sin. It is only after one has become a Christian that he can see what he really needs and that Christ has satisfied his need. Dr. Cotton has failed to observe this important distinction.

¹ p. 8.

The Standard Used

The standard that Dr. Cotton asks his hearers to apply when judging of the value of Christianity is one that deals chiefly with the life of man as lived on earth. To quote: “What is the content of the experience which Jesus brings to men? Once, in a moment of grand simplicity, Jesus interpreted his whole purpose for men: ‘I came,’ He said, ‘that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.’ Life to the full, a rich and satisfying experience, this Jesus sought to impart to all who would be his followers.”² To be sure, the author does later speak of “immortality.” Yet the main burden of his argument is that men should accept the “Christian experience” of life since it satisfies now, for the needs of this life in that it widens horizons, releases power, enables men to live with his fellows, and brings him to God.”³

Now if the “natural man” is to be appealed to as knowing quite clearly what he lacks, it must be done primarily, in terms that pertain to this life. It is in this way that modern apologists would fain bring Christianity very close to people and make it very real to them. Every one can see that there are evils in his own life and in the life of society. Every one can also see that, if certain of the teachings of Jesus were lived up to, these evils would be materially reduced. In this way modernists think they have been wiser and more practical in their methods than the traditional missionaries have been. Now we should, to be sure, teach men that Christianity is of the greatest possible benefit to them even for the things that pertain to this life. However, the greatest evil in their lives is, and remains, the fact that they are under the curse of God and will be lost, not only for this life, but for eternity unless saved by Christ. Dr. Cotton’s book does not tell the poor people to whom he lectures about this. It is as though a doctor were lecturing to a patient about the immediate soothing effects that his medicine will have, without confronting him with the fact that he needs a major operation if his life is to be spared.

Sin

But suppose that we, for a moment, should limit our consideration of the need of man to this life and ask what it is that Dr. Cotton thinks man needs most. Does he think that man is guilty before God? Does he think that in order to have that “abundant life” of which he speaks so much, man’s guilt must first be removed? Not at all. If he speaks of guilt at all it is casually.⁴ The term guilt does not enter into the picture as given of what is really wrong with man. This is a fatal omission. In describing the nature of sin, Dr. Cotton borrows largely from modern psychology and philosophy rather than from Scripture. The main trouble with man, according to the author, seems to be that he comes into the world with warring and clashing instincts. “What a complex being man is.” What a multitude of voices clamor within him. What a variety of forces play upon him from without! Man in his natural state is hardly man at all. He is simply a multitude of forces

² p. 15.

³ p. 15.

⁴ p. 139.

that pull him hither and yon.”⁵ What makes matters worse, he says, is that the “ordinary individual does not know how to make these conflicting interests serve one purpose.”⁶ It is in this way that modern psychologists speak of man as coming up from the lower levels of life. They speak of man as not having integrated his personality. They say he needs some one to show him how to gather himself together and make his life serve one supreme purpose. Dr. Cotton seems to agree with them. He nowhere brings in the creation of man in the image of God or the fall of man as a fact of great significance. All he says of the fall of man is that it is psychologically true. “Moreover, all sin grows out of a separation from God. The story of the first sin is psychologically true.”⁷ The controlling viewpoint from which Dr. Cotton sees the question of sin is the modern evolutionary one and not the biblical one.

Religion Versus Secularism

It is no wonder then that Dr. Cotton is thoroughly at one with *Rethinking Missions* in its notion that all religions should stand together and fight against secularism and irreligion. He tells us that he is not going to compare Christianity and other religions. “Let us be clear about one thing from the beginning. In these lectures we are not instituting a comparison between the religion of Jesus and the religions of the East. I do not know enough about Eastern religions to do that.”⁸ Then the author goes on to tell his Oriental listeners that, together with us, they may believe that man is something more than what science, concerned as it is with the external, can discover.⁹ It is the “inward look” which must supplement the teaching of science if we are to understand who and what we are.”¹⁰ Still further: “this inward look we are making reveals an experience of the divine. Men in every age have felt this influence. We are not here speaking of God, but the experience of the divine in man’s life.”¹¹ It is in this manner too that the idea of faith is explained. Faith, according to the author, must largely be explained in analogy with and as a continuation of scientific faith or hypothesis. By faith science has gone on to ever higher things. So we ought also to go with a true science in the penetration of still greater mysteries than of those things that we can handle.

Now there can be no doubt but that in this way the Christian message to the non-Christian world is obscured. We may be ever so tactful and ever so considerate but we must somehow bring to the consciousness of those to whom we come with the message of Christianity the fact that Christianity is the only true religion. Dr. Cotton seems to say to the East, “Come let us fight this terrible foe of secularism together” and forgets that it is in false religion that the greatest foe of Christianity is found.

⁵ p. 31.

⁶ p. 137.

⁷ p. 96.

⁸ p. 15.

⁹ p. 23.

¹⁰ p. 22.

¹¹ p. 26.

Christ And His Work

It is but to be expected that with the views of man and sin which we have described there goes an equally modernist view of the work that Christ came to do in the world. If we are to think of the book as presenting one consistent argument, we must look for the burden of what Dr. Cotton has to say on the nature of Christ's work in the chapter on "Jesus as Lord" and in the chapter on, "Jesus, the Liberator." In these chapters Dr. Cotton seems to say to the people of the East that he has come to offer them Christ as the commander-in-chief of the allied religious forces united in the common combat against secularism. It is Jesus who himself had his own personality well organized or integrated and who by that fact has shown us how we can do the same.

He will help us to bring our warring instincts captive to the obedience of one controlling principle of love. This supreme purpose is the will of God "to which a man may or may not surrender himself."¹² We all live, since we come into the world as a bundle of unorganized instincts, under the "illusion of selfishness" and only love will dispel the illusion of selfishness."¹³ Jesus helps us to develop religion and the "development of religion consists in moving from low, narrow interests, which in God's world can never be satisfied, to purer and nobler wishes, to a faith that bears God's approval."¹⁴

In all this the influence of Josiah Royce, the recent idealist philosopher, is clearly visible as the writer candidly admits. The whole position is similar to that of Prof. Ernest Hocking, joint author of *Rethinking Missions*. It is certainly a pity that idealist philosophy should thus be substituted for Christianity and offered in the name of the mission board of a Christian church to the peoples of the Orient. No doubt Dr. Cotton himself thinks that he has harmonized idealist philosophy and Christianity. At many points he uses definitely Christian terminology. There are some doctrines of the church which he believes. So, for example, he believes in the resurrection of Christ. "Jesus was not held by death. But on the third day He broke the bonds of the grave and came forth and was seen by his followers."¹⁵

Quoting such passages some one may say: "How can you call a man a modernist if he believes in the resurrection of Christ?" The answer to this is simple. We would not call a man a modernist if he believed the resurrection of Christ and what goes with it. On the other hand, if a man says he believes in the resurrection of Christ or in other doctrines of Christianity but isolates them from the system of Christian truth and sets them into an idealist system of philosophy, we can do nothing else but call such a man a modernist. That is the only fair thing to do. We must judge a man by the main thrust of his argument. No doubt Dr. Cotton sincerely believes that he has presented Christianity to the Orient since he sincerely believes that idealist philosophy and Christianity can be harmonized. In this we can only think him mistaken. For all the man's good points in the book as far as details and individual points are concerned it is in its main tendency subversive of orthodox Christianity.

¹² p. 68.

¹³ p. 77.

¹⁴ p. 37.

¹⁵ p. 157.

It is with men like Dr. Speer and others on the mission board that the chief responsibility lies for sending out such men as Dr. Cotton to lecture on the mission field. They should see, if they do not see, the difference between idealist philosophy and Christianity. They should know that, though it is possible to put some pages of each into the cover of the same book, the two can never be harmoniously joined in real life. The necessity of keeping them clearly apart at all times, and everywhere, appears ever more strikingly in our day.

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¹⁸Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

A Crushing Experience

The Banner

1936

Volume 71, Pages 1062f

It was at a summer camp for young people. The afternoon was given over to games of all sorts. The evening was to record the result of a contest in Bible knowledge and there was to be a prize.

One young girl came to me, as I was one of the teachers, for an answer to one of the many contest questions that had been given out in advance. She had been to several of the other teachers with the same question. There seemed to be considerable disagreement between the learned. How then was she to know and how were they to agree as to what pupil deserved the prize? The Digest poll seemed to indicate that the contest would be hot.

“What is the first miracle recorded in Scripture?” That was the question asked me. What would you answer to that question? I shall carefully avoid giving an answer to that question now because I am not now confronted by fine looking young ladies of fifteen or more. At the time, however, there was no escape and I had to concoct some sort of an answer. Seven fair young dames pressing for an answer as to what was the first miracle in the Bible. What would you do in such a predicament? I recommend the following:

The thing to do under such trying circumstances, is to sidetrack the questioners. When you cannot take Kuyper or Bavinck or Hodge or Warfield off your shelf the next best thing to do is to ask the questioners what they mean by their question. “What do you mean by a miracle? I boldly exclaimed after a certain uneasy feeling calmed down a little. “Is there any one here who can give a definition of miracle? There, how was that for getting out of a jam? Swinging that tomahawk fearfully about me I walked into the open. Soon I sat down on a culvert to think bow nice it would be at home. But the supper bell rang and after supper I again tried in vain to escape. The three doors were guarded; they seemed to be everywhere.

They had been ploughing with some of the faculty “calves,” these rascals. They were full of definitions now. These definitions they did “about me entwine.” To be or not to be, that was the question. But again I swung the tomahawk: What do you mean! You say a miracle is anything that God can do but man cannot do. But what do you mean to tell me now? Who sustains the laws of nature? Can man do that? No, God must do that, therefore the laws of nature are miracles? “Yes, it seems so,” was the reluctant reply. I was beginning to feel like that wild cat I had seen in the zoo, mercilessly shaking the life out of a rat. Yet miracles involve a contrast with natural law, do they not? The axe floated, in the Old Testament story. That was not according to natural law. Yet it is the floating of the axe that is recorded as the miracle. That which was exceptional to natural law is said to be miraculous. How then can natural law itself also be miraculous? There was the first defeated victim. Mortally wounded she was carried out. The blood of Spartacus the gladiator coursed through my veins. “If there be three in all your midst dare meet me on the bloody sand, let them come on.” Thus rang my challenge on their ears.

One after another came. One after another I felled them. Utter confusion reigned in their camp: they fled before me as the Philistines before Samson.

But once more they approached and with still greater confidence now. They had the answer now and it was irrefutable. The one who had set the questions had himself vouchsafed to give the answer. What was the first miracle recorded in the Bible? Why, it was really funny, they said. They had looked far into Genesis and spent hours reading the Bible and there it was in the very first verse of Genesis one. Creation itself was the first miracle. Can man create? Of course not! They had the full authority of several teachers in the camp for this answer. Would I still hold out in my objections?

Matters were decidedly getting worse. Back of the all too visible dames hovered the ghosts of my honorable colleagues. And they too might become flesh and blood at any time. The time for the contest was at hand. The whole camp sat still and was at rest but it was the quietness that precedes a storm. I thought of home.

Soon all that was great and noble in the camp was gathered together. The result of the contest was to be announced. You could have heard a pin drop on the grass. "Ladies and gentlemen—I am sorry but-but-but—we cannot decide on the winner at this time. The reason is that there seems to be a difference of opinion among the members of the faculty as to what a miracle is and so we cannot tell what is the first miracle recorded in the Bible."

Goliath of Gad had been victorious again. Not only were the pupils smitten hip and thigh but the whole faculty was discomfited as well.

Glutted and gorged with the flesh and blood of my foes, I at first thought to challenge the world of orthodox scholars. Were they not oftentimes as confused in their definitions of miracles as were these good people at the summer camp? And was there not a danger in such confusion? One of the commonest questions asked is whether science is favorable to Christianity today. Well, miracle is certainly one of the outstanding earmarks of Christianity. What then is the attitude of scientists toward miracle? Do they believe that Bible miracles actually happened? Do they at least allow for the possibility that miracles could have happened?

But suppose we get the wrong answer to these questions. Suppose we say that science is favorable to miracles while in reality it is not. In that case we have softened the offence of the cross. We have toned down the antithesis between the church and the world. No doubt we have done this to win young people to Christ. But with our best intentions we have frustrated our own efforts. And will not confusion on the concept of miracle tend to give us the wrong answer on the relation of science to Christianity? So then I was going to point out the confusion in thought on this subject as I seemed to see it.

But now I have lost all my courage. My bravado is gone completely. Like an empty sack that cannot stand I feel that I am crushed. To have fair young ladies opposed to you is one thing. To have ministers in a summer camp, many of them not well versed in Reformed theology, without Kuyper and Bavinck to fall back on, opposed to you is more serious but may still be borne. But to have Reformed theologians opposed to you is worse. I often wonder whether Goliath did not have a "sneaking suspicion" that he was going to be killed that day when David came. At any rate I feel that I must surely be defeated if now once more I follow my fiendish instinct of seeking to confuse people. At any rate I hope that some little good may come out of it. In this, I trust I differ from Goliath.

Taking my life in my teeth then I shall analyze a couple typical statements with respect to the relation of science to miracles that I have found in recent years. The individuals concerned will, I hope, not even remember them. At least I am not attacking them and therefore mention no names. Of course if they should wish me to mention their names I shall not refuse.

Speaking on the subject "Science and the Bible" one writer says:

The question of miracles lies outside the subject we propose to discuss in this paper, for the reason that modern science and the Bible are obviously and entirely in harmony on that subject. The only thing science can say about a real miracle, like the Virgin Birth or Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that it is impossible under the laws of nature: and this statement is made by the Christian with no less emphasis than by the scientist.

Now if I follow the same method that I followed when cornered by those young ladies I should first of all ask what you mean when you say that science and Christianity both say the same thing about miracles so that they cannot be in conflict with one another. The excited owner and the policeman argue as to whether there is a robber in the house. They have discovered none in the parlor but the parlor may not be the only room in the house. The policeman says it is but the owner says it is not. So also it may be that science holds that everything that happens happens according to natural law. Then if a scientist says that no miracle can happen according to natural law and the Christian also says that no miracle can happen according to natural law they would not at all be saying the same thing. The scientist would then say that miracles are impossible while the Christian would say that they are possible. A generation or more ago it was the general practice for scientists to say that all things happen according to law and they without hesitation concluded from this that miracles have not occurred.

But you say that maybe the writer means that more recent science which has introduced the principle of "indeterminacy" does no longer say that all things happen under natural law. I answer that if this is what the writer meant he gave us no inkling of it in what he said. He found science and the Bible in obvious and entire harmony with one another on the question of miracles because both say that miracles do not happen under natural law. But the extent of the reign of natural law would first have to be agreed upon before such a formal statement would mean anything. The owner of the house would not readily return to sleep after he was assured by the policeman that there was no, robber in the house when that policeman had searched one room and no more.

But, you tell me that I am beginning to feel too much like Goliath again. David will soon be here and my boasting will be over. Is it not true that recent science no longer holds that all things happen under natural law? And have they not thus given all the room for miracles that we as Christians need? So runs the argument against me now. And surely this is the stone of David. The argument comes from good, soundly Reformed sources. It is used frequently and by different people. I am sure I must be crushed. But since my life is now worth so little I am going to fight till the last ounce of strength is gone. But I must first give you a look at David and his sling. Here they are:

"We live in a changing world and occasionally there are changes for the better. Many of us well remember that some years ago science represented the world, including man, as one vast machine, everything operating in a fixed and mechanical order. Hence providence and miracles were impossible. There could be no virgin birth because this was contrary to the 'laws of nature.' Human freedom, involving human responsibility, was seriously questioned by many. Man was the product of all the forces that contributed to

his make-up. Even his moral acts were solely due to heredity and environment. Brilliant lawyers tried to defend this view in courts and secure acquittals or mild sentences on the basis of this philosophy. The doctrine of moral responsibility was almost discarded. The individual was no longer responsible for his deeds.

“But all this is changing. There has been a revolutionary change in the field of science, especially the field of physical science. Great scientists like Eddington in England, and Prof. Compton of the University of Chicago, winner of the Nobel prize, have abandoned the law of absolute causation. Prof. Compton, in his latest book, *The Freedom of Man*, says that ‘natural phenomena do not obey exact laws.’ And again he says that ‘psychic factors determine actions which from physical considerations alone would be a matter of chance.’ Prof. Compton makes room for the role of the mind, the will, the emotions in human conduct, and thus makes room for human responsibility. He also claims that as far as science is concerned there is no proof that there is no God and no proof that the soul is not immortal.

“While this does not prove that Christianity is true, it does prove that Christianity, including its miracles, is not in conflict with science, and that is a view that was denied some years ago.”

This made me stagger. I reeled like a drunken man. Yet I once more in desperation swung my mighty sword: What do you mean? Granted that science has abandoned the absoluteness or the absolute comprehensiveness of the law of causation has it therewith made room for miracles? Science has made nothing more than a negative admission. I am worried about robbers in the house. You say there are none in the barn. That does not reassure me about the house. Science, you say, no longer holds to the universal reign of law. So far so good. But science has not said that it believes in providence and creation and without these, miracle is impossible. You answer that you have contended for nothing more than that “Christianity, including its miracles, is not in conflict with science.” True, but I must humbly maintain that until science says that it agrees with Christianity on the doctrines of creation and providence it has not allowed for the possibility of miracles for without these, miracles are not possible. For natural law science, we are told, has substituted the notion of indeterminacy. That amounts to nothing more than Chance. Now miracles cannot happen in a world that is governed by Chance any more than in a world governed by natural law if this law operates independently of God. In a world of Chance many things may happen that are fit for Ripley’s column of “Believe it or Not,” but no Christian wants to put the resurrection of Christ on display at that counter. For miracles to be possible we must have a universe that operates according to natural law, which laws are under the control of God the Creator. Christianity, to be sure, is not in conflict with true science because true science ought to believe in creation and providence. As it is we can find few scientists, whose thought is not basically opposed to Christianity. Certainly the whole viewpoint of Eddington and Jeans and Compton is diametrically opposed to the Christian view.

In conclusion then, I shall not boastfully defy the hosts of Israel but simply say that I have so far not been convinced by the contention so frequently made by orthodox people that science is basically more favorable to Christianity today than it was some time ago. There may be less of cocksureness about the finality of scientific explanations and that is worth a great deal but so far I have not been able notice any positive approach.

But who will crowd upon me next? I prefer the fair young ladies to the stolid theologians. Yet if I must be crushed for such insolence I shall be happy indeed.

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¹⁹Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

What Shall We Feed Our Children?—A Plea For Christian Education

The Presbyterian Guardian

1936

Volume 3, Pages 23f

There may be said to be a two-fold aspect to the work that is before us as people of The Presbyterian Church of America. In the first place we shall have to continue to expose modern unbelief wherever it appears within or without the visible church. On the other hand there is the constructive work of building up our own people in an understanding of and love for a full-orbed Christianity.

In the work of education that is before us, for instance, we shall have to continue to point out the false policies and programs that are being adopted elsewhere but we shall also have to build an educational program of our own. It is to the need of such a constructive program that we wish to call attention now.

We know that the literature of the old Board of Christian Education was permeated with Modernism. But even if we are able to find literature that is sound, do we then have all that we need? Can we really believe that the only thing wrong with the old program was its Modernism? Our fathers had a far more comprehensive program of Christian education than we have now. Time was when the public school system of the country was virtually a Christian school system. That time is past and yet are we sure that there is no need for a real system of Christian education?

Perhaps we can best seek an answer to such questions as these by asking whether the educational influences that are Christian are stronger than the educational influences that are not Christian. Imagine with me, if you will, a child now six years old. Then think of this child some twenty years from now. Is it likely, considering the education this child will receive, that it will be an intelligent member of the church at that time? Is it likely that this child will be full of enthusiasm and zeal for the truth when it comes to manhood or womanhood?

In answering these questions we shall assume that the child we think of has the benefit of a truly Christian home. We shall also assume that the child's Sunday school teachers were fully equipped for their task. We shall assume that the child has actually attended preaching services that were truly Reformed in nature. Still further we shall assume that the child is taught the catechism. These are huge assumptions but we must make them now, and ask whether all these Christian influences can counteract the non-Christian influences to which our child will be subjected in the next twenty years.

College Education

Suppose then that our child goes to college. Many children eventually do. Will he go to a Christian college? This is not at all certain. There are not enough Christian colleges. A considerable percentage of our young people will continue to attend the public university or college. Besides, colleges that are not only Christian but truly Reformed are few in number. We think of our child, then, as eventually attending a modern university. Will he, upon graduation “join” or remain in the church? Will he be able to do either if he is honest with himself?

It was not difficult for young people to “join” or remain in a church when that church largely failed to bring out the contrast between the teaching of Scripture and the teaching of the modern university. Under those circumstances young people were not compelled to make an intelligent choice. They could continue in the church because of “hallowed associations” and “noble traditions” connected with fine old buildings. But if the full implication of Scripture teaching for doctrine and life is set forth clearly and forcibly, educated young people will have to choose between this teaching and what they have learned in the university. An intelligent choice for or against the truth will naturally replace decisions made on the basis of sentiment alone. We ask our young people to believe in Christ as their personal Saviour. Can they honestly say that they do, if they also believe what they have heard in the courses on science and philosophy?

The answer to this question ought not to be difficult. What does it mean to believe in Christ as my personal Saviour? Among other things it means that I am a creature of God who has sinned against God by “want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.” As a sinner I am under the wrath of God forever. No mere man can do anything for me. Only God can save me. Therefore Jesus must be God. Therefore He must, in His human nature, die in my room and stead. Therefore the Holy Spirit must regenerate me. But does university teaching agree with this? We trust that no one will argue that it does. That teaching denies, to begin with, the foundation fact of Christianity, the fact of creation. Modern philosophy and modern science are in perfect accord in rejecting the Scriptural notion of creation. If the word “creation” is employed by some philosophers it is not taken in the Biblical sense. Then, too, the Biblical idea of sin as defined by the Shorter Catechism is set aside by modern science in general and by psychology in particular. Freudianism, for example, may say many ugly things about human nature but it has no use for the idea of an originally perfect creation and for the idea that man is, since the fall, guilty before God. Thus, according to this point of view, man does not need to be saved in the Bible sense of the term; why then should he confess Christ as his personal Saviour? To do so would be to prevaricate.

But if it were granted that man needed to be saved there would be no Saviour to save him: Christ is, according to the “modern” teacher, like ourselves, the product of evolution. The virgin birth is “a biological miracle that the modern mind cannot accept.” But if Jesus is called divine, then we are all said to be divine; if He is called God, God then becomes no more than an aspect of Reality as a whole; we cannot be responsible to Him.

There is no need to go on. If our graduate thinks straight he must choose between two mutually exclusive views of life. In this choice the odds are, humanly speaking, overwhelmingly against the church. The university influence has been far more

comprehensive and impressive than that of the church. We have no moral right to expect that our child will stay with the church. If we jump off the Empire State building our prayers for a safe landing are but mockery in the sight of God. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

High School Education

But suppose our child does not go to college. Suppose he goes to high school only. This does not obviate the difficulty. The high school teachers have for the greater part been trained in the public universities and normal schools. We are, it would seem, quite safe in saying that the general influence on the high school pupils is largely the same as that brought to bear upon college students. Even if there are a number of high school teachers who are Christians they are not prepared, because of their lack of Christian training, to counteract the general non-Christian influences. Besides, they are forbidden by law to give anything but neutral instruction. Still further it should be remembered that boys and girls of high school age are less mature than those of college age. Then if we recall that though not all young people go to college practically all go to high school, and that though there are several Christian colleges there are practically no Christian high schools, we may well shudder at the results that are bound to follow. If we are unwilling to make use of the natural means of instruction that God has placed within our reach we cannot expect our children to become Christians—useful Christians—through sporadic efforts of our own. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Grade School Education

Finally comes the grade school. Our child will certainly attend the grade school for several years and that for five days a week. In Sunday school our child has learned the nineteenth psalm. As he goes to school those beautiful words, “The heavens declare the glory of God”; still reverberate through his mind. But when he enters the school room all this has suddenly changed. There the “starry universe above” somehow operates quite independently of God. And what is true of “the heavens above” is true of everything else. At home the child is taught that “whether we eat or drink or do anything else” we must do all to the glory of God because everything has been created by God and everything is sustained by God. In school the child is taught that everything come of itself and sustains itself. This much is involved in the idea of “neutrality” itself. At best this means that God need not be brought into the picture when we are teaching anything to our children. But is it not a great sin for Christian parents to have their children taught for five days a week by competent teachers that nature and history have nothing to do with God? We have no moral right to expect anything but that our children will accept that in which they have been most thoroughly instructed and will ignore that about which they hear only intermittently. And are not our children “born and conceived in sin”? Will they not naturally accept that which is false rather than that which is true? Nor is the instruction by any means always “neutral.” The influence of John Dewey on American primary education is proverbial; and John Dewey is a murderer of Christianity.

If we Christian parents think of all this is it not really amazing that we have so sadly neglected the Christian training of our children? We take excellent care of the bodies of our children. We are becoming “vitamin minded.” We do not buy cabbages and potatoes but we buy calories and vitamins. We ask how much of the valuable vitamin D content is in this food or in that. But the strange thing is that in the field of spiritual nurture we do not count the number of vitamin D’s our children get. No sensible parent will give his child food not of the best if the best is within his reach. No mother will allow her child to pick up what it may anywhere in the way of food and then when sickness comes suddenly feed that child nothing but cod-liver oil. Why then do we allow our children to have daily meals of spiritual food which has no vitamin D? Do we not care if they develop spiritual rickets? Do we not worry if they are spiritually underfed? “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Humanly speaking, then, one cannot honestly be enthusiastic about the future of The Presbyterian Church of America unless its people will realize that a new and far more intense policy will have to be adopted in the field of Christian education. The existing agencies, even when purged of all the non-Reformed elements, are woefully insufficient for the work that must be done. In obedience to our covenant God we shall have to bring up our children “in the fear and admonition of the Lord.”

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²⁰Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Karl Barth On Scripture

The Presbyterian Guardian

1937

Volume 3, Pages 137f

In order to appreciate the work of the great German theologian, Karl Barth, we must realize that he is seeking to burn the house of modern theology to the ground. For this we are very thankful. The house of Modernism must be burned; it gives no shelter for eternity.

But Barth is also seeking to burn the house of orthodox theology to the ground. He has not merely started a fire that has gotten out of control. He holds definitely that our house keeps the wind from blowing on the fire he has started in our neighbor's house. He holds that both houses must be burned or neither will be burned. We can see something of this in his attack on the orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

Barth's view of Scripture may be summed up in the following words taken from his book, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*:

"The Bible is a literary monument of an ancient racial religion and of a Hellenistic cultus religion of the Near East. A human document like any other, it can lay no *a priori* dogmatic claim to special attention or consideration. This judgment, being announced by every tongue and believed in every territory, we may take for granted today. We need not continue trying to break through an open door. And when now we turn our serious though somewhat dispassionate attention to the objective content of the Bible, we shall not do so in a way to provoke religious enthusiasm and scientific indignation to another battle against 'stark orthodoxy' and 'dead belief in the letter.' For it is too clear that intelligent and fruitful discussion of the Bible begins when the judgment as to its human, its historical and psychological character has been made and put behind us. Would that the teachers of our high and lower schools, and with them the progressive element among the clergy of our established churches, would forthwith resolve to have done with a battle that once had its time but has now had it."¹

Is The Bible The Word Of God?

Can one read this quotation and doubt whether Barth is seeking to burn down the orthodox doctrine of Scripture?

But someone will say: "I interviewed Barth myself and I know that he believes in the Bible as the Word of God. I asked him whether the Word of God is in the Bible as the Modernist says, or whether the Word of God is the Bible as the Orthodox say, and Barth said the Bible is the Word of God. What more can you ask?"

Our reply is that we need something more than the sound of words. If we are to think of Barth as a man who has reasonably thought through his position, his contention that he believes in the Bible as the Word of God must be viewed in the light of his wholehearted

¹ p. 60.

acceptance of the principles of modern negative criticism and reconstruction. Whatever Barth may mean by saying that the Bible is the Word of God it is plain that for him this means something quite different from what it means to the orthodox Christian.

Does Barth Hold The View Of Luther And Calvin?

A second objector may say: “You are right. The Fundamentalist cannot claim Barth as a friend. Barth is no servant of the letter. He believes no such foolish theories as those of verbal or plenary inspiration. Barth’s Fundamentalism is quite different from American Fundamentalism.”

“But, you see, Fundamentalism is a child of the scholastic era of Lutheran and Reformed theology. Luther and Calvin were no literalists, though they truly believed the Bible as the Word of God. And Barth’s views are ‘fundamentally in accord with early Reformation conceptions.’ ”²

In our reply to this contention we need not argue whether the “early Reformation conception” of Scripture involved the notion of plenary inspiration. Even if we grant, for argument’s sake, that Luther and Calvin held merely to the substantial correctness instead of the plenary inspiration of the Bible, Barth’s views would still be utterly opposed to theirs. For Barth no book that is in any sense a product of history and the human mind can be substantially correct as the Word of God. Such a book may be substantially correct as a record of what man has thought but the Word of God, according to Barth, can never appear in anything like permanent form among men. Barth’s activist conception of revelation makes anything like an orthodox view of Scripture impossible.

That Barth wants to ruin the orthodox house of Scripture completely may be seen still further if we think of what Protestant theology has often spoken of as the perfections of Scripture. Protestantism speaks of the authority, the necessity, the perspicuity and the sufficiency of Scripture. Does Barth hold to any one or all of these in the Protestant sense of the term? We believe not.

The Authority Of Scripture

But is not Barth the great prophet of the Word of God today? Is it not he that is calling men back from the word of man to the Word of God? And is not he asking unqualified obedience to the Word of God?

We answer that he is in a sense, but not in the orthodox Protestant sense. Barth has told us with a thousand voices at every period of his development that Scripture authority is not and cannot be that of a once-for-all revelation of God. At times he even identifies the Word of God with conscience. He speaks of conscience as “the perfect interpreter of life.”³ His views lend themselves readily to Buchmanism and other subjectivist movements. Nor does Barth feel the least bit of obligation to accept as history that which

² *The Presbyterian Student*, Nov., 1936, p. 8.

³ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 9.

Scripture presents as history.⁴ Barth's activist conception of revelation denies the Protestant doctrine of Scripture authority.

The Necessity Of Scripture

Next to the authority of Scripture the Protestant Reformers maintained the necessity of Scripture. "They considered Scripture to be necessary in virtue of the good pleasure of God to make the Word the seed of the Church."¹ This doctrine of the necessity of Scripture was opposed to the idea of the living voice of God as maintained by Rome and the Anabaptists.

Now on this point Barth's position is much closer to that of Rome, the Anabaptists and the views of Schleiermacher, than to that of the Protestant Reformers. Barth makes it as plain as he can that Christian preaching must be preaching not of a Word that is ready to hand in Scripture. To think of the Bible as anything like a complete expression of God's will for man is, according to Barth, to limit the sovereignty of God. Barth's enthusiastic defense of the "Sovereignty" or "free grace" of God makes him a bitter enemy of the Protestant doctrine of the necessity of Scripture.² If Barth is opposed to "the modern use of the Bible" he is far more bitterly opposed to the generic Protestant use of the Bible.

The Perspicuity Of Scripture

Protestant theology has in addition to the authority and the necessity of Scripture also maintained its perspicuity. The plain man can know what he needs to know by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If he compares Scripture with Scripture, and the less plain with the more plain he need not fear that he has missed the central meaning of it all. No living voice such as the Church of Rome is indispensable as an interpreter of Scripture.

On this point, too, Barth is opposed to the Protestant principle. Since for Barth no human language can possibly be the medium by which the Word of God may come to us directly, the Bible, written by human agents, presents a great heap of rubbish which must be removed before we find the Word of God. The actual words of Scriptures are but pointers indicating the direction in which the "Form" (*Gestalt*) of the Word of God may be found.³ "Only God understands Himself, also in His Word."⁴ Moreover, we cannot even recognize our own act of faith by which we accept the Scriptures as the Word of God for what it is.⁵ The prophets and the apostles are so many people pointing their fingers upward, urging us to look upward, too, so that perhaps we may hear something of God's Word in the distance. For Barth it is of the essence of pride to think that we possess any plain words in Scripture that come to us and are recognizable by us as the

⁴ *Credo*, p. 190.

¹ L. Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Introductory Volume, p. 175.

² *Dogmatik*, p. 37ff. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, p. 94.

³ *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, p. 182.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 170.

⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 234.

Word of God. Rome took the Bible away from the common man before the Reformation; Barth is trying to do this same thing after the Reformation.

The Sufficiency Of Scripture

Finally we observe that Protestantism has asserted the sufficiency of Scripture. “The Reformers merely intended to deny that there is alongside of Scripture an unwritten word of God.”⁶

With respect to this point, too, it cannot be denied that Barth has denied the Protestant doctrine. Speaking of the fact that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, Barth says: “The oracles of God, of which they are the possessors and guardians, are the comprehensible signs of the incomprehensible truth that, though the world is incapable of redemption, yet there is a redemption for the world. It is irrelevant whether they possess and are concerned to guard Moses or John the Baptist, Plato or Socialism, or that moral perception which dwells in all its simplicity in the midst of the rough and tumble of human life.”⁷ And if one should think that this does not really represent Barth he may turn to the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Barth’s most recent major work, and find essentially the same point of view. In this more recent work Barth is, to be sure, not so rash and outspoken in his rejection of the canon of Scripture. At points he even seems to plead for the necessity of a canon.⁸ Even so, the canon is after all nothing but the precipitate of the Christian consciousness. The Scripture must never be taken as a completed historical document. The canon is but the starting point of the revelation of God and the preaching is the continuation of that same revelation.⁹ The Reformers regarded the written word as the high-water-mark of the revelation of God; Barth regards the written Word as the unavoidable petrification of the living word.

Thus we see that Barth’s doctrine of Scripture cannot by any stretch of the imagination be made to appear similar to the generic Protestant view. Is this a small matter? Can we overlook this as a detail? Can Barth be essentially sound on other doctrines if he is essentially unsound on the doctrine of Scripture? This could be only if the doctrine of Scripture were a subordinate doctrine for Protestantism. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of Scripture is one of the most basic doctrines in Protestant and especially in Reformed theology.

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⁶ Berkhof, *op. cit.* p. 179.

⁷ *Romans*, p. 79.

⁸ p. 110.

⁹ p. 104.

²¹ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Karl Barth On Creation

The Presbyterian Guardian

1937

Volume 3, Pages 204f

We have seen in previous issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian* (Jan. 9, 1937), that though Karl Barth calls men back to the Word Of God, he does not call men back to the Bible as Protestants are wont to think of the Bible. In the present article we shall see that Barth cannot believe in the Bible as the completed revelation of God because he cannot fully believe the doctrine of creation.

The story has frequently been told how the philosophy of Hegel and the theology of Schleiermacher has largely controlled the modern church. The sovereign God of the Reformers was eclipsed by a God who is necessarily instead of freely related to the universe. God was well-nigh identified with ideal principles in the universe. The immanence of God within the universe was stressed at the expense of His transcendence above the universe.

Now Barth launched a fearless attack on this immanentistic theology which we usually speak of as Modernism. He set fire to the whole structure of modern theology. He called upon men to return to the transcendent God, to the sovereign Lord, to God as the “absolutely Other.” He called upon men to forget their pride, to cast away their schemes of interpretation, and to fall prostrate before the face of the “Lord of life and death.”

Shall we not rejoice in this work of Barth? We certainly shall. We do not seek to save even the least bit of the house of Modernism. Yet we are oncemore afraid that Barth thinks he cannot burn down the house of Modernism unless he also burns down the house of orthodoxy.

The Importance Of The Creation Doctrine

It requires little argument to show that without such a doctrine as creation the house of Protestant theology falls to the ground. Man is dependent upon and responsible to God just because God has created all things and by His providence controls all things. If there is any ultimate power or principle beside God, man’s final responsibility is no longer to God alone. If there is any ultimate power or principle beside God, the definition of sin can no longer be “any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.” If there is any ultimate power or principle beside God, Christ cannot execute His office as a prophet because in that case he does not know all things; He cannot execute His office of a priest because, even if He reconciled us to God, there would be other powers to be reconciled; and He cannot perform His office of a King because He does not control all things. In short, historic Christianity falls to the ground without the doctrine of creation.

What Barth Says About Creation

Yet Barth virtually rejects the Biblical doctrine of creation. In saying this we are aware of the fact that it is quite possible to quote Barth to the effect that he believes in creation. If we should go to Barth, notebook in hand, and ask him whether he believes in creation he might say, "Certainly I do." He could quote from one of his latest books saying: "Again heaven and earth are not God's work in the sense that God created them according to some ideas in themselves given and true, or out of some material already existing, or by means of some instrument apt in itself for that purpose. Creation in the Bible sense means: Creation solely on the basis of God's own wisdom. It means, *creatio ex nihilo*" (Rom 4:17). Or again: "The world having once been created by God (apart from sin!) cannot obviously cease to be determined by this decisive act."¹

Limitations On The Doctrine Of Creation

Now these quotations would seem to indicate plainly that Barth is thoroughly Biblical, as far as the creation doctrine is concerned. How then dare we say that Barth has virtually rejected the Biblical doctrine of creation? The answer is that we are compelled to do so because Barth, by certain qualifications that he makes, in effect takes back everything that we have just heard him say. "But," says Barth, "the doctrine of Creation has its definite limits which have got to be known if that doctrine is to be rightly understood."² A little further he adds: "There are definite and necessary questions of faith which are not to be answered from the doctrine of creation, or at least not unequivocally and completely."³ These "questions of faith" include "the possibility of" sin, evil and death. Barth concludes this section by saying: "In order to keep true to the facts, Dogmatics has here, as in other places, to be logically inconsequent. Therefore in spite of the omnipotence of God—or rather on the score of the rightly understood omnipotence of God, Dogmatics must not at this place carry the Creation-thought right to the end of the line. It must rather explain these possibilities as being such that we have indeed to reckon most definitely with their reality, but are unable better to describe their real nature and character than by forbearing to ask for their *raison d'être* either in the will of God the Creator or even with Marcion and the Manicheans in the will of a wicked Anti-God. These possibilities are to be taken seriously as the *mysterium iniquitatis*."¹ To this we must add Barth's words: "Projecting our thought 'consequently' along the line of the creation dogma, we should have in one way or another to deny the Incarnation, Miracle, prayer, the Church."²

¹ *Credo*, pp. 32, 33.

² *Credo*, p. 35.

³ *Credo*, p. 36.

¹ *Credo*, p. 37.

² *Credo*, p. 38.

The Significance Of These Limitations

From these quotations it appears that Barth, in order to protect God from being the author of sin, thinks it necessary to limit the creation doctrine. He says not merely that we, as human beings, cannot understand how a creature of God, wholly dependent upon God, can become a sinner, without God being involved in sin, but he says definitely that the idea of sin is in reality inconsistent with the idea of creation. So too he does not hesitate to say that the Incarnation is inconsistent with the idea of creation. Orthodox theology says that a creature became a sinner, without God becoming involved in sin. Barth says, in effect, that this is not possible and therefore we must hold that there is an original evil independent of God.

The Paradox-Concept

At this point some one may object by saying that though Barth considers “creation” and “incarnation” inconsistent with one another, he can and does believe both because he thinks it quite possible to believe the inconsistent as the “paradoxical.” But this escape, granted it were an escape, is not open to Barth since he himself says we must limit the creation doctrine in order to believe in the Incarnation. Often enough Barth says you can both have your cake, and eat it, but at this point he says you cannot have your cake and eat it. If you wish to believe in the Incarnation, says Barth, you must limit your creation doctrine. We are compelled to affirm therefore that Barth has virtually rejected the doctrine of creation.

Other Emphases In Barth

This interpretation of Barth is in accord with the fact that Barth constantly connects the “Lordship” of God with redemption. Apparently Barth thinks that God was not “Lord” of man by virtue of creation.

In accord with this interpretation, too, is Barth’s constant insistence, particularly in *Romans*, that the world as such is inherently evil. Barth refuses to take the Genesis account of an originally perfect creation and of the fall of man as being simple narration of fact.³ Orthodox theology holds that man as such, and the whole of the universe as such, was originally made perfect but that sin entered as the willful disobedience of man. In opposition to this Barth holds that no one historical event can be of basic importance for all following historical events, and therefore, in effect, denies the fall. For the fall he substitutes some original “mystery of iniquity.”

It will readily be seen now why Barth cannot accept the Protestant doctrine of Scripture. According to his philosophy man was not originally created perfect. Man and the universe that surrounds him are, for Barth, inherently evil. Accordingly, even God Himself, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, could not use the human mind as a medium for the expression of His truth. The “human factor” in the Bible must always and

³ *Credo*, p. 190.

of necessity indicate error and sin. There could never be a completed revelation of God to man.

And this leads us in conclusion to observe that with all of Barth's best intentions to call men back to the sovereign God of the Reformers he has in reality no "sovereign" God to offer us. Barth's "sovereign" God is severely limited by an original something that exists independently of Him, and works independently of Him. Barth frequently appeals to the Reformers and to such Reformation documents as the Heidelberg Catechism. But Barth could not preach, for example, on the first question of the Lord's day of that catechism without twisting it completely out of its natural and historical meaning. If his sermons do not flagrantly depart from the Reformed Faith, it is because, by a happy inconsistency, they do not reflect and apply Barth's theological principles fully. Only Reformed theology, based upon the doctrine of a really sovereign God, creator of heaven and earth, whose decrees include "whatsoever comes to pass," can bring men to a real *Entscheidung* (decision). Against Barth, as against modern theology which he seeks to oppose, we must once more raise the banner of a sovereign God and of His complete revelation in Scripture.

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²²Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Karl Barth And Historic Christianity

The Presbyterian Guardian

1937

Volume 4, Page 108f

In a previous article we have seen that Karl Barth rejects the Protestant doctrine of the Bible.¹ Together with Modernism Barth makes no objection of principle to the negative criticism of Scripture.

In another article we have pointed out that Barth virtually rejects the creation doctrine.² Together with Modernism Barth can make no objection of principle to evolutionism.

Keeping these two points in mind we cannot reasonably expect that Barth will stand squarely with orthodox theology against Modernism when the question of historic Christianity is at stake.

Yet here too Barth's first and main attack seems to be against Modernism. Against those who hold that it really makes no difference whether Jesus actually lived and died and rose again, Barth insists: "The name of the Roman procurator in whose term of office Jesus Christ was crucified, proclaims: at such and such a point of historical time this happened."³ Barth wants to burn down the house of modernist Christianity which is indifferent to historic facts.

Then too Barth wants to burn down the house of Modernism when it recognizes the "Jesus of history" but does not own Him as the unique and eternal Son of God. In this we rejoice.

The Sovereign God

But Barth thinks he cannot burn down the house of Modernism unless he also burns down the house of orthodox theology. And why does he think so?

The reason is that both Modernism and orthodox Christianity believe that in History we have the expression of God's plan. Modernism holds that man in his own power works out his own program in history; orthodox Christianity holds that God through man realizes His program in history. These two programs are radically opposed to each other. We feel that all men must naturally participate in the work of either the one or the other. We feel that men are for God if they oppose Modernism and against God if they favor it. Not so with Barth. He says we are against God if we hold to any sort of program or system, whether modernist or orthodox.

¹ *The Presbyterian Guardian*, Jan. 9, 1937.

² *Idem.*, Feb. 27, 1937.

³ *Credo*, p. 79.

Barth tells us that he is preaching the doctrine of a sovereign God. Now a sovereign God, he feels, cannot and does not bind Himself to any program. A sovereign God, Barth holds, cannot and does not bind Himself even to a program that He Himself might devise. God would not be truly free if He had to act in accord with a program in history.

Creed And System

Now if God has not expressed Himself by way of a program in history the Bible is not the story telling us of the program of God. Thus if the church seeks to set forth in a Confession of Faith the system of truth taught in the Bible it is seeking to do the impossible. The church, in its "I believe" in which it attempts to set forth the content of the Word of God, must always be mindful of the "frontier" of the Sacrament, "through which the Church is reminded that all its words, even those blessed and authenticated by God's Word and Spirit, can do no more than aim at that event itself, in which God in His reality has to do with man."⁴

This position of Barth would condemn the Westminster divines as they wrote the Shorter Catechism definition of God in dependence upon the Bible no less than the Hegelian philosophers who wrote their definitions of God independently of the Bible.

Christ Our Contemporary

That Barth does not accept historic Christianity as it is portrayed to us in Scripture may be seen from the fact that he constantly speaks of Christ as our contemporary. In his recent book, *Credo*, Barth tells us briefly what he means by the facts that Christ was born, that He suffered, was crucified, dead, buried, raised again and seated at the right hand of God. Did these events take place a certain number of years ago on our calendar? Not at all, says Barth. Something, no doubt, did take place, at a specific time on the calendar, when Christ was born, buried and raised again. Yet this something that did happen in history was not the real thing, the important thing. The historical event could only point to the real event. The real event took place in "revelation time" which is not measured by our calendar. "So far as the Church lives by revelation and in faith, it lives contemporaneously with the divine act depicted in these Perfects."⁵ By "these Perfects" Barth refers to "was crucified, dead, buried, raised again and seated at the right hand of God."

According to Barth, then, we, to the extent that we are true Christians, live contemporaneously with the virgin birth of Christ, with His passion, His death, His resurrection, His ascension and His session at the right hand of God.

On the other hand, we do not live contemporaneously with our neighbors to the extent that they are not true Christians.

⁴ *Credo*, p. 9.

⁵ *Credo*, p. 117.

The contemporaneousness in which the church lives with the mighty saving act accomplished in Christ, has its reverse side; its non-contemporaneousness with the man of disobedience and disorder overcome in Christ.⁶

Now it goes without saying that we do live in the year 1937 with all our neighbors, Christian and non-Christian. It also goes without saying that the events of Christ's humiliation and exaltation took place some nineteen hundred years ago. What Barth, means, then, by our living contemporaneously with Christ is something that is supposed to take place in some other realm than that of history. And it is in that other realm, according to Barth, that the real events of Christ's mediatorial work take place.

The Virgin Birth

As a specific illustration of what Barth thinks of the facts of Christ's life and death we mention his conception of the virgin birth. If a fundamentalist were to ask Barth, "Do you believe in the virgin birth of Christ?" he would no doubt answer promptly that he does. He might point to the fact that he has even defended this doctrine against his opponents.

But what does Barth mean by the virgin birth? He himself illustrates what he means by referring to the story of the healing of the man with the palsy. Jesus first said to this man: "Son, thy sins are forgiven," and thereupon performed the miracle of healing. What was the relation between the forgiveness of sins and the miracle? We quote from Barth: As a matter of fact, there is no knowing to what extent the doctrine of the Incarnation could not be understood as self-substantiated, or to what extent it should, so far as content is concerned, be in need of supplementing from the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. But it certainly could not be said that the truth and power of the forgiveness of sins pronounced by Jesus (Mk 2:5) on the sick of the palsy was based on or increased by His afterwards (Mk 2:10) bidding him with such effect take up his bed and go home. Yet this story can manifestly not be read and understood without this miracle of healing. That order to the sick of the palsy is made, according to Mk 2.10: 'That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins ...' This is exactly the relationship also between the mystery of the Incarnation and the miracle of the Virgin Birth. The miracle of the Virgin Birth has not ontic but noetic significance. It advertises what here takes place. As miracle in general, and now as just this special miracle, it is the watch before the door drawing our attention to the fact that we are here concerned with the mystery, with God's free grace.¹

According to Barth, then, the virgin birth which occurred in history is merely a signpost pointing to the incarnation which itself does not take place in history. On this point, as on the point of the authority of Scripture, Barth could readily sign the Auburn Affirmation.

Pontius Pilate

In this connection someone may point out that Barth militates against any sort of "Gnostic Christ-idealism." Does not Barth teach that what happened to Jesus Christ "happened at a definite and definitely assignable time within that time which is ours

⁶ *Credo*, p. 118.

¹ *Credo*, p. 69.

also”?² This is true, but the virgin birth also occurred at a definitely assignable date while yet it had, according to Barth, no ontic but only noetic significance. By this he means that the virgin birth has no significance in the field of reality or being, but only in the field of knowledge. All the events of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation took place in our history, but they were merely sign-posts of the mysterious realities that lie not in our history.

The Resurrection

Barth has not materially changed his views on these matters. In *Romans* he wrote of the resurrection as follows:

The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there ‘came to pass,’ was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the ‘coming to pass,’ or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all.³

The resurrection of Christ is in one sense an occurrence with an assignable date on our calendar, but this event merely points to the real event which takes place in “resurrection history.”⁴ in which there are no assignable dates, in which all “events” are contemporaneous. “What happens in the ‘raising’ of Christ in His resurrection from the dead is that He is now manifest in His supreme sovereignty.”⁵

The Ascension

That Barth really disposes of historic Christianity completely may be learned again from what he says about the ascension of Christ. We quote in full:

So much is certain, that it, too, is to be estimated first of all as the ‘sign and wonder’ that accompanies the secret of the Christian faith in the act of its revelation. Ascension as visible exaltation—i.e. exaltation that is perceptible as vertical elevation in space—of Jesus Christ before the bodily eyes of His disciples is obviously not the way to that ascension at the right hand of God. For the right hand of God is no place, least of all a place to be reached by some sort of natural or supernatural way through atmospheric astronomic space. As sign and wonder this exaltation is a pointer to the revelation, that occurred in His resurrection, of Jesus Christ as the bearer of all power in heaven and earth.⁶

We may compare this passage from Barth with the words of Charles Hodge, who, speaking of Acts 1.9–11, says:

From these accounts it appears, (1) That the ascension of Christ was of his whole person. It was the Theanthropos, the Son of God clothed in our nature, having a true body and a reasonable soul, who ascended. (2) That the ascension was visible. The disciples witnessed the whole transaction. They saw the person of Christ gradually rise from the earth, and ‘go up’ until a cloud hid him

² *Credo*, p. 79.

³ p. 30.

⁴ *Credo*, p. 98.

⁵ *Credo*, p. 108.

⁶ *Credo*, p. 113.

from their view. (3) It was a local transfer of his person from one place to another; from earth to heaven. Heaven is therefore a place.⁷

The Last Things

Barth's virtual rejection of historic Christianity appears perhaps most clearly of all in his doctrine of the last things. The question is sometimes asked whether Barth is premillennial, postmillennial or amillennial in his conception of the last things. The answer is quite plain. He is none of these. Speaking of the church and what it expects Barth says:

But what it looks forward to cannot be any sort of neutral future, nor yet the content of a present of world time that has not yet come to pass and that is either near at hand or still far off. In the Cross of Christ that time, with all its past, present and future possibilities, is in its totality concluded and become past. In it, that is, in the development of events that we call world history, the Church has nothing to expect except the 'signs of the time,' i.e. the indications of its being past and therefore the indications of the real future, distinguished from mere futurity. What this real future is and what therefore the object of the actual and earnest expectation of the Church is follows immediately and cogently from its present as that is constituted by the Lordship of Christ. This present, as we saw, means contemporaneity, the having of Jesus Christ as our contemporary. In this present the divine power is operative. In this present, therefore, the Church remembers revelation time. When it is really remembered, then it is also expected.⁸

This passage is self-explanatory. Real futurity has nothing to do with the years of our calendar. When the church looks "back" to the resurrection of Christ, and when it looks "forward" to His return it really does the same thing. It remembers and expects the same object. Such is Barth's contention.

But according to the belief of historic Christianity we can remember the resurrection of Christ and expect His return while we cannot expect the resurrection or remember His return. To speak as Barth speaks is to play fast and loose with the facts of redemption and thus to play into the hands of Modernism. And incidentally, the "sovereign" God in whose behalf this destruction of the real significance of history is made, would, we believe, be better served, if He were not contrasted with history, but if He were shown to work His sovereign plan within history.

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⁷ *Systematic Theology*, 2, p. 630.

⁸ *Credo*, p. 119.

²³ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Recent American Philosophy

Philosophia Reformata

1937

Volume 2, Pages 1–14

If one looks at the philosophical menu today one finds among others the following item of food: Absolutistic Personalism, A Search for a System, The Philosophy of a Meliorist, Philosophical Liberalism, In *Vestigii Veritatis*, The Way of Opinion, Logic and Pragmatism, Problematic Realism, A Tentative Realistic Metaphysics, Confessions of an Animistic Materialist; Empirical Idealism, Personal Realism, Empiricism, and An Unborn Idealism.¹

For tomorrow's menu we are offered some further additions, such as: The Humanization of Philosophy, The Gospel of Technology, Toward a Social Philosophy, The Socialization of Morality, Experimental Naturalism, Toward Radical Empiricism in Ethics, An Amateur's Search for Significance, Toward a Naturalistic Conception of Logic, and A Catholic's View.²

We see from this simple enumeration of various points of view that there is a great activity in the field of philosophy in this country. Some sixty philosophers give us a sample of their credo in the three volumes from which the titles above are given. These represent a large fraternity now teaching at the many universities and colleges of the land.

In the second place, there seems to be a great independence of thought manifest among American philosophers today. There was a time when American philosophy, as American literature in general, was largely a rehash of what Europe and particularly of what Great Britain, offered. That is no longer the case. Looking at the whole scene in 1930, George Herbert Palmer, then past eighty, said: "At present too little history is studied. Our young philosophers lack balance. Fifty years ago they lacked courage."³ A premature yearning for the niche and the palm seems to have induced a certain recklessness of spirit.

This leads us to think that the variety of foods that appear on the menu today is not so bewildering as it appears at first glance. When I eat at a "Child's Restaurant" for a considerable period of time, I become darkly suspicious that a comparatively small number of staple products compose all the host of dishes that are offered. There are many sandwiches for my choice: I seem to taste bread in them all. There are many salads alluring me; the royal lettuce appears in most of them. So too no new foods have really been discovered in America. We give men credit for the cleverness with which they make new combinations and give these combinations new names, but we cannot forsake our common sense that tells us that there is nothing new under the sun.

¹ *Contemporary American Philosophy, Personal Statements*, Edited by George P. Adams and Wm. Pepperell Montague. N. Y. 1930. Table of Contents.

² *American Philosophy Today and Tomorrow*. Edited by Horace M. Kallen and Sidney Hook.

³ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1 p. 30.

As to the ingredients from which all these combination-dishes are prepared, they are few indeed. For an appetizer we have the usual fruit-cup, now called experience. Plato no doubt relished biting into the eternal Ideas at the outset of the meal. As for us, we need to be introduced gradually to such high and lofty realms. "In the beginning is the given."⁴ The pre-critical datum is absolutely unincorporated.

It is upon this pre-critical, unincorporated datum that the human intelligence must begin its work.⁵ "The evidence which we can at present command compels the belief that man's life on this planet is a unique phenomenon in the universe, and that he will in vain consult the stars or the heavens above to chart his course."⁶ We consult no revelation of any sort.⁷

Does this declaration of autonomy mean that we think we can comprehend the whole of heaven and earth in our philosophy? Not at all. We have given up the search for absolutes and for universal validity.⁸ Mill, Spencer, and Darwin have taught us that the intellect is a late emergence in the evolutionary process.⁹ Bergson has not lived in vain.¹⁰ "No, the deeps of being are not to be charted by the lanterns, few and intermittent, that mark the frail coasts of human understandings, and the sum of all lights that men have found them is as a spark, kindled to fail."¹¹ Even when we are old we shall say, "Because each of us is but a fragmentary being we must content ourselves with fragmentary insights."¹² The "almightiness of thought is not so impressive as it was in the nineteenth century."¹³ "We never know finally what the real is."¹⁴

In fact, we know that the beginnings of things are utterly in the dark. "All cosmologies are figures of speech. To take them literally is to make nonsense of them."¹⁵ "The cosmos, viewed as a whole, does not come into being or pass away. It is self-sustaining."¹⁶ "Common to mankind is some myth of the Emergence.... But when, abandoning tales, we come home to life, then our single assurance is that the goddess Matuta first created light."¹⁷

But this common acceptance of the myth of Matuta may seem to indicate that we bring our individual tastes with us when we begin our meal. And this is quite true. F. H. Bradley has taught us that "Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe

⁴ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 61.

⁵ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 145.

⁶ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 342.

⁷ Heinemann, *Neue Wege der Philosophie*, p. 21.

⁸ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*.

⁹ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 182.

¹¹ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 105.

¹² *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 43.

¹³ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 151.

¹⁴ *Contemp. Am. Phil.* 1, p. 397.

¹⁵ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 419.

¹⁶ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 163.

¹⁷ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 397.

upon instinct.”¹⁸ John Dewey adds that: “Meaning is wider in scope as well as more precious in value than is truth, and philosophy is occupied with meaning rather than with truth.”¹⁹ Accordingly there are large areas of life over which the claims of truth have no jurisdiction. Truth is important in “records of events and descriptions of existences.” “Beyond this island of meanings which in their own nature are true or false lies the ocean of meanings to which truth and falsity are irrelevant. We do not inquire whether Greek civilization was true or false, but we are immensely concerned to penetrate its meaning.”²⁰

All of us have learned a great lesson from Kant. That lesson is that we must not seek to get back of experience as the ancients did. Kant has taught us to take time seriously. From him we have learned that the “principles which lie at the basis of our knowledge are synthetic.” These principles “have no intrinsic necessity, and cannot possess the absolute authority ascribed to them by the rationalists.”²¹

Having learned this lesson well, the “tenderhearted” among us tend to monistic interpretations and the “tough-minded” among us tend to pluralistic interpretations.²² In our conventions we get “warmed up” to our debates and reject one another’s interpretations vehemently. “*Statt der lebendigen Natur,*” we say, “*‘da Gott die Menschen schuf hinein,’*—that nebulous concoction, that wooden, that straight-laced thing, that crabbed artificiality, that musty school-room product, that sick man’s dream! Away with it. Away with all of them! Impossible! Impossible!”²³ But when the vision fades we know that we have dreamed dreams.²⁴ We know that none of us can interpret reality as a whole. *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

Yet there is one thing we cannot learn to like. None of us can bear the sight of consistent Christian-theism or Calvinism. Calvinism alone of all modern philosophies has refused to laugh with us at the conclusion of our “heated” debate. When a Calvinist in all seriousness maintains that philosophy is not merely a matter of taste we look at him in astonishment. Has he not read Kant? Is he still seeking the Holy Grail of Absolute Truth? Has he never heard of the “obsolescence of the eternal”? But really we cannot stop to argue with him. When he presents his claims of an absolute God as the creator of this world, of Christ as the judge of sinners and of the Scriptures as the source-book of true interpretation, we smile at him and say, “It is beautiful, beautiful indeed! Dante and Milton had wonderful imaginations!”

The net result is that though we have no use for the *Stand-punktlosigkeit* of Moritz Schlick and the “new positivism.”²⁵, and therefore hold that one point of view is at the outset as good as another, there is one point of view that we cannot even consider. Thus if

¹⁸ *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, Compiled by Daniel Sommer Robinson Ph.D., p. 13.

¹⁹ *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, p. 49.

²⁰ *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, p. 49.

²¹ Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*. Second Edition, 1923, p. 35.

²² *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, p. 9.

²³ *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, p. 9.

²⁴ *An Anthology of Recent Philosophy*, p. 18.

²⁵ *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 44, no. 3, p. 227 ff.

the Calvinist should insist, he might claim that we are implying a universal negative proposition in our starting-point. He might even insist that we should make clear to ourselves this uncriticised assumption of absolutism and then seek in dead earnest to defend it.

The second course of our meal is that of scientific method. All of us are equally agreed that our method must be scientific even though we are not altogether at one as to what scientific method means. In fact, here too we debate a great deal. The one rejects the other's method because he thinks it is not sufficiently scientific.

On one thing we are all pretty well agreed, and that is that we want no apriorism in our method. We all believe in the "open universe." Even though we class ourselves as idealists and insist that—we must presuppose a whole or Absolute in every judgement that we make, we must realize also that the categories of thought are not universally applicable and that the law of non-contradiction is itself an historical product. The program of life of the universe is "not deduced from a preformed purpose."²⁶

We may contend with F. H. Bradley that "no mere particulars can be counted."²⁷ , and with B. Bosanquet that "the hope of complete enumeration is the justification of counting."²⁸ , yet we realize that with Kant we must assume the ultimacy of time. Reality must be an 'eternal' novelty, but it is also an eternal 'novelty.' Our nature itself is time-conditioned. It cannot set itself over against the stream of experience; it floats along with the stream. "The thing to be accounted for is our certainty that the facts must always conform to logic and arithmetic. To say that logic and arithmetic are contributed by us does not account for this. Our nature is as much a fact of the existing world as anything, and there can be no certainty that will remain constant."²⁹

Some of us hold therefore that "it is vain for any philosophy to pretend to prove all of its material propositions."³⁰ In fact, "no existential propositions can be proved, for we have no indisputable existential propositions to use as premises."³¹ Sometimes some of us feel that the principle of induction "cannot be established by experience, because we must possess and apply it in order to prove anything by means of experience."³² If out of the grab-bag of experience "the first 'n' balls taken from the top of the bag were all black," there would be no appreciable probability that the next ball would be black. "To say that as the number of instances increases the probability increases, is to say, in effect, nothing at all. Similarly, it is idle to assert that with a 'sufficient' number of instances the probability closely approaches certainty, for there is nothing to indicate, even in the vaguest way, what a sufficient number may be."³³

Of course, we do not conclude from all this that the condition of science is intolerable. We conclude only that the ideals which the "philosophers of the grand style" had set for themselves were in the nature of the case impossible of realization. They had

²⁶ *Contemp. Am. Phil.* 1, p. 398.

²⁷ F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, Second Edition, Vol. 1, Bk 2. Note on p. 369.

²⁸ B. Bosanquet, *Logic, or, The Morphology of Knowledge*, Vol. 1, p. 176. Oxford 1888.

²⁹ B. Russel, *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 135.

³⁰ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 227.

³¹ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 284.

³² *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 407.

³³ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 408.

sought to organize science into a system of reason, starting from definite data in the form either of self-evident principles or of particular contents of sensation, and progressing step by step without logical circularity. For part of the system universal premises alone were to be used, and the procedure was to be rigidly deductive and certain. For the remaining part the particulars of sense were to be included, and the procedure was to be fundamentally inductive and to be confined to probabilities. So called rationalists and empiricists have differed as to the relative extent of the two parts of the system; but the general design is common to both.”³⁴ But this design, “so far at least as it is concerned with knowledge of real existence, is chimerical. The history of science gives it no support. Human reason is never simply constructive, but always reconstructive. Science, like common sense, is at all times a going concern.”³⁵

All these high and noble ideals of a system of rational truth were based on the assumption that truth has a nature of its own. But we hold now that “there is no property whatsoever that is common to, and peculiar to, true propositions. Truth ... is an expression which has meaning only, in use.”³⁶ There is “no room for a theory of truth.” But since we have absolutely no need for any such thing as a logically consistent system of truth, we do not worry about the future of science and of human knowledge in general. We seek by various sets of assumptions to explain experience as best we may. There may be other sets of assumptions that will also explain experience to a large degree.³⁷ Concrete things are not generated “by sublimated matings of abstract categories.” With Miquel De Unamuno we are disposed to “elevate into a metaphysical principle the concept of the real as paradoxical; and the only strictly rational beings are such things as typewriters and gasoline engines.”³⁸ “A philosophy is, therefore, in its core a program for a way of living from which emanate specific directional tendencies of thinking, feeling, and willing. We demand consistency and truth of philosophies merely because inconsistencies and untruths seem to be obstacles to the realization of what is peculiarly human in our potentialities as living beings.”³⁹

You may see then that our methodology is in accord with our starting-point. We assume with the scientists that some millions of years ago one of the cooling fragments of the sun “we know not how, when, or why,” gave birth to life. Now if the universe goes on for long enough “every conceivable accident is likely to happen in time.”⁴⁰ Our logic is the product of our psychology, and our psychology is the product of cosmical accident. Our starting-point is therefore largely a matter of taste and our method also is largely a matter of taste. One logic may fit reality about as well as another.

Yet as there was one starting-point that none of us can accept so there is one method that none of us can accept. We could not accept the Calvinistic starting-point and we cannot accept a Calvinistic methodology. That is, we cannot accept a consistently

³⁴ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 405.

³⁵ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 405.

³⁶ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 412.

³⁷ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 227.

³⁸ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 360.

³⁹ *Contemp. Am. Phil.*, 1, p. 193.

⁴⁰ James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 4.

Christian methodology. We should not much object to the method of neo-Scholasticism.

⁴¹ Nor are we much disturbed by the method of a Protestant philosophy that is built upon or consistent with Arminian theology. These methods agree with our own to a large extent in their assumptions. These methods agree with our own in assuming that the facts of experience that are to be interpreted and the mind of man that is to interpret them at the outset exist and operate independently of God. Their method can at best lead to a finite God and we do not seriously object to a man who has a finite God.

A consistent Christian methodology, however, one that is in agreement with Reformed theology, we must all reject. Such a method presupposes that God has preinterpreted "whatsoever comes to pass." This would, we hold, kill all interest in our quest because it would exclude all real novelty from the universe.

We do not mind the method of idealistic philosophy which also seems to say that the whole must be prior to the part if there is to be a fruitful methodology. These idealists are not in dead earnest about this. They realize full well that there must be a real novelty. For that reason they do not take their Absolute, or God, too seriously. They make His eternity correlative to time. This provides for real novelty. This also keeps God from being the only ultimate interpreter; it makes us at least co-laborers with God, on a par with Him.

But these Christian-theists of the Reformed stamp take their God seriously. Their God has made everything. He controls everything. This means that man is but the re-interpreter of God's interpretation of all facts. This means that, since error is here, man is responsible for it. Man is a sinner. His mind is abnormal as well as derivate. He needs the Bible now, to know facts truly.

With all this we can have nothing to do. We assume in our methodology the ultimacy and the normacy of the human mind and of the things it seeks to know. Our method, like our starting-point, assumes that Reality is just here somehow. We assume an ultimate Irrationalism in both method and starting-point. If then the Calvinist urges that we ought to justify our assumptions critically, and say why we are certain even in our starting-point and in our methodology that the God of Calvinism does not exist, we merely shrug our shoulders. We are really making a universal negative judgement in our methodology as well as in our starting-point, on the basis of a universe which, because it is "open," may reverse our judgements at any time. But we must hasten on to our main course, namely Metaphysics.

As to this main course of our philosophical dinner it must again be said that there is considerable variety of taste among us. The menu itself shows this. It would not offer as much variety as it does if our tastes did not differ. There are some of us who still like idealistic dishes, but most of us prefer some sort of realism or pragmatism. We have become pretty well convinced that Reality is a stream, and that whatever gods there be, swim with us in this stream. All the gods worth worshipping are finite.

It will be observed at once that this main course fits in well with our methodology and our starting-point. It is a foregone conclusion that if one assumes Irrationalism at the outset and if one's method is the so-called scientific method, that one's conclusion must be an ultimate temporalism.

Yet it is not very long ago that many of us seemed to have no use for temporalism at all. Idealism of the Hegelian type was dominant in Great Britain till the beginning of the

⁴¹ *American Philosophy Today and Tomorrow*, article on Neo-Scholasticism.

present century, and Josiah Royce, the great American idealist, himself influenced by British philosophy, in turn became a great power in our land. There were other influences, to be sure, such as that of German philosophy. Many of our university professors of philosophy have studied in Germany. Then there was Scottish Realism.⁴² Speaking generally, however, we may say that we have been greatly influenced by the British Hegelianism of such men as Thomas Hill Green⁴³, Francis Herbert Bradley⁴⁴, Bernard Bosanquet⁴⁵, Edward Caird⁴⁶, Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison⁴⁷ and James Ward.⁴⁸

But even these names themselves indicate a shift in recent British philosophy. Not to speak of Samuel Alexander, the very title of whose book, *Space-Time and Deity*, indicates a reaction against idealism, or of Charles Sanders Pierce,⁴⁹ who is often called the father of pragmatism; we observe in Pringle Pattison and Ward a deflection from the rigid idealism of Bradley and Bosanquet in the direction of greater personalism and temporalism. For both Bradley and Bosanquet logical consistency was the test of Reality. The “*wetenschaps-ideaal*” swept everything before itself. Bosanquet stoutly asserted that “the hunt of the psychologically primitive is the root of all evil.”⁵⁰ In their magnificent works on logic both Bradley and Bosanquet had developed a theory of judgement in which the human individual making the judgement, is but the mouthpiece of the Absolute speaking about itself.⁵¹ Human personalities were but “foci” or “connections of content” of the life of the Absolute.

There was a decided acosmic strain in this absolute Idealism. In their ethical writings Bradley and Bosanquet wanted man to be sublated (*aufgehoben*) into the life of the Absolute. “The unit makes no insistence on its finite or isolable character. It looks, as in religions, from itself and not to itself, and asks nothing better than to be lost in the whole which is at the same time its own best.”⁵² They spoke frequently of God or the Absolute

⁴² S. Volbeda, *De Intuïtieve Philosophie van James McCosh*.

⁴³ I. H. Green, *Works*, Vol. 1. Ed. by R. S. Nettleship, Lond. 1893.

⁴⁴ F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality; a Metaphysical Essay*, Lond., 1893.

⁴⁵ B. Bosanquet, 1. *Logic, or, Morphology of Knowledge*, 2 vol.; 2. *Essentials of Logic*; being ten lectures on judgment and inference, Lond. 1895.; 3. *Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy*, Lond. 1921.; 4. *Value and Destiny of the Individual*, Lond. 1913.; 5. *The Principle of Individuality and Value*.

⁴⁶ Edw. Caird, *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, 2 vol. N.Y. 1889.

⁴⁷ Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison, *Hegelianism and Personality*, Edinburg, 1893.

⁴⁸ J. Ward, 1. *Naturalism and, Agnosticism*, 2 v. N.Y. 1899.; 2. *Psychological Principles*, Ed. 2. Cambridge, 1920.; 3. *Realm of Ends, or Pluralism and Theism*, Cambridge, 1911.

⁴⁹ Charles Sanders Pierce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce*, Ed. by Chas. Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Harv. Univ. Press.

⁵⁰ B. Bosanquet in Review of B. Russel's Book on “Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy,” *Phil. Rev.*, 1915.

⁵¹ F. H. Bradley, *Logic* B. Bosanquet, *Logic*.

⁵² F. H. Bradley, *Mind*, N.S.V. 19. p. 154.

as the Beyond, and said, that the lower forms of existence must be interpreted in terms of the higher forms of existence. J. E. McTaggart boldly maintained the unreality of time.⁵³

Against this acosmic tendency of Absolute Idealism, Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison sounded the bugle call of rebellion. In his little book *Hegelianism and Personality* he insisted on the “imperviousness” of human personality. In a symposium before the Aristotelian Society he contended against Bosanquet that individuals have substantive rather than adjectival existence.⁵⁴ In his book *The Idea of God in Modern Philosophy* he worked out his position fully. Bosanquet reviewed this book, and said that its position would lead to Pluralism. To this Pringle Pattison replied that Bosanquet should not underestimate “the significance of numerical identity as the basal characteristic of concrete existence.”⁵⁵ To be sure, Pringle Pattison did not want to fall back into any sort of empiricism, since it forgets “the abstraction under which it apprehends the structure of experience.”⁵⁶ He is therefore willing to grant that individuals by themselves are abstractions, but he adds that the Absolute or Beyond of Bosanquet tends to become an abstraction as well. Bosanquet’s philosophy, he holds, tends “to reach a formal identity by abstracting from differences on which the very character of the universe as a spiritual cosmos depends.”⁵⁷

Thus we can clearly see that the “*persoonlijkheidsideaal*” is gaining on the “*wetenschapsideaal*.” The human individual is asserting its “rights.” The “Beyond” of Bosanquet is more and more clearly shown to be merely a correlative to man. For it should be noticed that Pringle Pattison holds to essentially the same theory of judgement as Bosanquet. He seeks to show that according to the basic principles of idealistic logic, so well stated by Bosanquet himself, we cannot believe in a God that is more than a correlative to man.

In a somewhat different way James Ward reacted against the Absolutism of Bradley and Bosanquet. He too, like Pringle Pattison, stressed the ultimacy of human personality. He did this particularly in the field of psychology.⁵⁸ But from psychology he went on to metaphysics.⁵⁹ In two books, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, and *The Realm of Ends*, he set forth his argument for an idealism that should begin with pluralism. He too feared that the Absolute would swallow up human personality. “In whatever sense you say Absolute, in that sense you cannot say many.”⁶⁰ For that reason he insisted that in our philosophical reasoning we cannot begin with God. “We cannot begin from God and construct the universe.”⁶¹ “If we attempt to conceive of God apart from the world there is nothing to

⁵³ *The Nature of Existenz*, 2 vol., Esp. *Mind*, N.S., 1893, p. 490.; *Mind*, N.S., 1894, p. 190.; *Mind*, N.S., 1908, p. 457. See A. E. Taylor’s criticism of this view in his *The Faith of a Moralist*, Vol 1, p. 112ff.

⁵⁴ *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1917–18, p. 511.

⁵⁵ *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1917–18, p. 512.

⁵⁶ *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1917–18, p. 484.

⁵⁷ *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1917–18, p. 522.

⁵⁸ J. Ward, *Psychological Principles*.

⁵⁹ Muirhead, “The Last Phase of Professor Ward’s Philosophy,” *Mind*, 1913.

⁶⁰ *The Realm of Ends*, p. 37.

⁶¹ *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, 2 p. 120.

lead us on to creation.”⁶² It is rather “from the reality of the world that we start.”⁶³ If we conclude to the existence of God, such a God must live in accordance with the conditions of this universe. “As immanent in this world, God must, it would seem, so far be conceived as subject to its fundamental conditions.”⁶⁴ In fact, much of the talk of God’s transcendence is based upon a violation of the categories of our experience. “If the categories of substance and cause are only valid within experience they cannot be applied to experience as a whole. Whatever implications experience may involve, it surely cannot involve that of transcending itself. Such misled transcendence, if it have any validity, must really be immanence at bottom.”⁶⁵

Now this criticism on absolute idealism made by Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison and by James Ward is typical of the criticism made by many others. It represents a tendency to reduce the God of idealism from a Beyond to a universal principle within mankind. The contention is made by these critics that according to the logic of idealism itself, we are not entitled to a really transcendent God. The God of Idealism when conceived of as Beyond can be no more than an hypostatization. Such was the criticism made in Great Britain. Such was also the criticism made in America.

The first great American idealist was Josiah Royce. He taught at Harvard where he influenced many men who are now professors of philosophy in the various universities of the land. He constructed his system of philosophy under the critical eye of William James, the great pragmatist, who taught with him at Harvard.

Now Royce’s philosophy is an idealism which tries desperately to do “justice” to the human individual, while yet the doctrine of God as a Beyond is maintained. He himself engaged in a detailed criticism of Bradley. Bradley had contended that if we rigidly apply the test of logical consistency to experience—and that is, he thinks, exactly what we are bound to do—the concept of the self, whether human or divine, is self-contradictory. For that reason he felt that the contradictions which he found all through experience would “somehow” be solved in the Absolute. Royce disliked this lapse into the Irrational. He set out to prove that God, a transcendent God, can sustain a rational relation to us, while neither He nor we lose any of our individuality.

Speaking of Bradley’s Absolute, Royce says, “The Absolute, then, is above the Self, above any mere form of selfhood. The fact that it is thus above selfhood is something ‘not other than experience,’ but it is wholly experience, and is the Absolute Experience itself. In fine, then, the Absolute, in Mr. Bradley’s view, knows itself so well—experiences so fully its own nature—that it sees itself to be no self, but a self-absorber, ‘self-pervading,’ to be sure, and ‘self-existent,’ but aware of itself in the end as something on which there is no real self to be aware of. Or in other words, the Absolute is really aware of itself as being not Reality, but Appearance, just in so far as it is a self.”⁶⁶

Now Royce argues that we need not, as Bradley did, destroy both the human and the divine Self in order to have a logically consistent interpretation of Reality. For him Reality, including God and man, is a self-representative system. “The Universe, as

⁶² *The Realm of Ends*, p. 309.

⁶³ *The Realm of Ends*, p. 245.

⁶⁴ *The Realm of Ends*, p. 194.

⁶⁵ *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, 2 p. 129.

⁶⁶ Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual*, First Series, p. 552.

Subject-Object, contains a complete and perfect image or view of itself. Hence it is, in structure, at once One, as a single system, and also an endless *Kette*. Its form is that of a Self... The logic of Being has, as a central theorem, the assertion, 'Whatever is, is a part of a self-imaged system,' of the type herein discussed. This truth is a common property for all, whether realists or idealists, whether sceptics or dogmatists.... I am obliged to regard this result as of the greatest weight in any metaphysical enterprise. No philosophy that wholly ignores this elementary fact can be called rational. And hereby we have indeed found a sense in which the 'endless fission' of Mr. Bradley's expresses not mere Appearance but Being. Here is a law not only of Thought but also of Reality. Here is the true union of the One and the Many. Here is a multiplicity that is not 'absorbed' or 'transmuted' but retained by the Absolute. And it is a multiplicity of individual facts that are still One in the Absolute."⁶⁷

We begin to see something of the drift of American idealism from these typical statements of Royce. The human individual must stand in his own rights next to God. It works out its own theory of judgement in consonance with its own assumed ultimacy, and then adjusts its God-concept accordingly. If this process is carried out, as it was carried out, more and more consistently, God will grow smaller and smaller. We must now see how the God of idealism gradually became immersed in the temporal stream of the universe.

One of the editors of *The Philosophical Review*, G. Watts Cunningham, traces the course of events very lucidly in his book, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*. The gist of the argument against absolute idealism, says Cunningham, is, in effect, that it does not live up to its own view of experience. To quote: "The whole matter may perhaps be put briefly. If the Absolute is to grow logically out of what is 'within our own experience,' then it must be conceived so as to leave room for finite centers of experience standing in their integrity. If it is not so conceived it is, so far, arbitrarily conceived, and must remain for us unintelligible, unexplained in detail, as any general view must, but in the further and objectionable sense that one (apparently basal) character of experience is left standing outside as a negative instance. On this point, then, the case of the personalist against the absolutist is essentially sound."⁶⁸

The Absolute "is to grow logically out of what is within our own experience." This was very definitely, says Cunningham, the claim of Bradley and Bosanquet themselves. If the Absolute is to stand "it must serve as a principle of explanation of experience—that is, it must grow out of experience as a necessary implication of it. So much the Absolutist admits, at least verbally. But his procedure seems to belie his profession; for he is apparently willing to truncate experience in order to fit it in with the conception of the Absolute. Herein lies the basis of justification for the accusation frequently advanced against him that he dares not, as he professes, derive the conception of the Absolute from an analysis and interpretation of experience, but rather, forcibly bends experience at those

⁶⁷ Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual, First Series*, p. 553.

⁶⁸ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 536.

points where it does not readily accommodate itself to the menaces of the conception of the Absolute as more or less arbitrarily defined.”⁶⁹

Now we can readily understand, says Cunningham, how it was that the Absolutists fell into the temptation of believing in an Absolute into whom we as human beings are “somehow” to be transmuted. This Absolute must “somehow” explain what we cannot explain. Any “general view” of reality must allow for “the negative instance.” There is a novelty to life that refuses to be fitted into our logical schematism. This fact we must all admit. But this fact presents us with a clear-cut alternative. We can be consistent with our own basic starting-point or we can be inconsistent. If we are consistent, the God or Absolute in whom we believe must be a “necessary implication” of our experience. He must be intelligible to us as we must be intelligible to Him. There must be a clear-cut logical or rational relation between Him and us. On the other hand if we are inconsistent we define our Absolute independently of our experience. In that case He will have a non-rational relation to us; he will be “somehow” related to us and we “somehow” related to Him. God is then not intelligible to us and we are not intelligible to Him.

The whole point may be stated differently by saying that we must either make God surround that which is irrational to us, or we must make that which is irrational to us surround God as well as ourselves. God either includes the “negative instance,” or the “negative instance” includes God. God either controls the devil or the devil, in some measure at least, controls God. Reality is either such that there is novelty for us but no novelty for God, or such that there is novelty for God as well for us.

Now the Absolute Idealists, says Cunningham, have chosen the inconsistent position. If they had been consistent with their own theory of judgement, they should have thought of an Absolute who is intelligible to us. An Absolute who is not intelligible to us must, since he is by definition absolute and we are by definition something less than absolute, “sublate” or “transmute” us. Such an Absolute explains us by explaining us away.

That the criticism thus offered against absolutism is to the point, may be seen from the fact the absolutist is himself quite willing to have his conception of the Absolute tested by the ordinary tests of logical procedure. The Absolute is offered very definitely as a help to the logical understanding of experience. This point needs to be emphasized “since some of the critics of absolutism have at sometimes written as if they supposed the absolutist to assume that his conception of the Absolute was somehow logically privileged and not subject to the ordinary rules of logical procedure. It is clear that the absolutist assumes nothing of the sort, at least it should be clear to anyone who has taken the trouble to become acquainted with his argument. He is perfectly willing to subject the conception to the ordinary tests of intelligibility; and, in the main, he is in agreement with the preceding statement of what those tests concretely are. What he contends is that his conception is required by any adequate analysis of experience, and he is willing to have his conception tried by any such analysis.”⁷⁰ Both thinkers, Bradley and Bosanquet,

⁶⁹ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 534.

⁷⁰ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 523.

“persist in holding also that the conception of the Absolute may in some meaningful sense be said to satisfy the intellect.”⁷¹

But now the difficulty is that Bradley and Bosanquet will either have to give up their own theory of judgement, or they will have to give up thinking of the Absolute as not intelligible to us. “What I venture to urge is that this position will have to be abandoned, or the theory of judgement with which we started will have to be disavowed. For the position is equivalent to holding that the ‘real reality’ which ultimately satisfies is not such that it can significantly function as the subject which the judgement seeks in seeking its satisfaction.”⁷²

We may observe here in passing how intricately logic and methodology are interwoven with metaphysics in the minds of idealistic thinkers. A certain view of judgement, so runs the argument, invariably brings with it a certain view of reality. Is there then perhaps some truth to the claims made by Calvinists, that the assumed irrationality of our starting-point and of our methodology must inevitably lead us into the camp of those who openly avow their belief in an ultimately unrelated or open universe?

But let us forget these misgivings for the present. Perhaps we can still retain something of our own idealism even while we consistently follow out the logic of our own theory of judgement. After all, why should the Absolute need to be so “absolutely other” as Bradley and Bosanquet seemed at some times to picture Him? Did these men themselves in their best moments really believe in a God not logically or necessarily related to us?

As for Bosanquet we may say that in his best moments he forgot his acosmic longings. Often he defines the Absolute as the “Whole.” Paraphrasing his thought we may say that the Absolute “is all that is.” Accordingly, “a basal characteristic of the Absolute is ‘negativity.’ ”⁷³ When first we look at experience contradiction seems to characterize it. But this contradiction is emended until it becomes frictionless in the form of negativity. Quoting from Bosanquet we observe that friction “is the same characteristic which has been described as the fact that experience is always beyond itself—the character, indeed, which we have described from the beginning as that of which the universal, or, in other words, the tendency of every datum to transcend itself as a fragment and complete itself in the whole.”⁷⁴ This contradiction turns into negativity and negativity “is really affirmation—affirmation of differences, with contradiction removed ... ” When we say, then, that negativity is a characteristic of the Absolute, what is to be understood is that, in the Absolute, contradiction has entirely disappeared, while the spirit of difference survives in its highest form. The Absolute negates conflict and confusion, it

⁷¹ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 553.

⁷² G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 553.

⁷³ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 141.

⁷⁴ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 417—quoted from Bosanquet, *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 228.

affirms system and significant opposition; and to put the matter paradoxically, its negation and its affirmation are one and the same.”⁷⁵

All this indicates that we as human beings are, according to Bosanquet, not to be entirely “transmuted” beyond recognition after all. The contradiction of our finitude will at least abide as a permanent “difference” within the Absolute. This much we know since it follows from our theory of judgement. To this extent the Absolute is not unintelligible to us; we have trimmed Him down to some extent to the needs of our intelligibility. And to this extent we are also pushing the remnants of the irrational beyond God as well as beyond ourselves.

There is encouragement for us in all this to think that we as human beings make a real contribution to the life of the Absolute. We have spoken of the Absolute as “Beyond.” But by this thinking of the Absolute as “beyond” we have never meant what Christian theology means when it thinks of God as self-sufficient. On the contrary, “The perfection of the Absolute ... must not be conceived as excluding the process through which these finite systems are completed. For its own self-completion the Absolute presupposes the temporal order, the hazards and hardships of finite selfhood; apart from this order and the content it furnishes the Absolute would be nothing at all. Its very perfection is dependent upon the temporal instruments through which that perfection is achieved; its negativity belongs as much to them as to itself.”⁷⁶ Thus Bosanquet speaks of the Absolute as “simply the high-water mark of fluctuations in experience, of which, in general, we are daily and normally aware.”⁷⁷

It appears that the Absolute of Bosanquet is, when his argument is most consistent with itself, first demoted from a “Beyond to the Whole,” and then from the “Whole” to the “Universal” within human experience. Reality for Bosanquet seems to be like a string of beads. God is the string, the universal, while temporal plurality furnishes the beads. Without either you do not have a string-of-beads.

In his book *The Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy*, Bosanquet divided philosophies into two classes. On the one hand there is the class of the “progressists.” They demand that there shall be “absolute and ultimate progression in the real.” On the other hand there is the class which we may call “perfectionists.” For them the temporal series is “only an adumbration” of a “deeper totality which in its perfection knows no change.”⁷⁸ The former wish to put “the Absolute in time,” while the latter wish to put “time in the Absolute.” Now the question is whether these “extremes” are really as far apart as Bosanquet would have them appear.

Cunningham thinks they are not. If the Absolute must really depend for its content on the time-series, as Bosanquet says it must, it follows that wholly new content may appear for the Absolute. Thus the “negative instance” is really beyond God, as well as beyond

⁷⁵ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 142.

⁷⁶ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 143.

⁷⁷ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 140.

⁷⁸ G. Watts Cunningham, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, p. 417.

man. Reality answers to the demand of our logical theory that the analytic and the synthetic aspects of judgement must be equally basic.⁷⁹ We are consistent with our basic theory of judgement and give up the notion that God is not Himself surrounded by the Irrational.

As a compromise between the alternative “time in the Absolute” or “the Absolute in time,” Cunningham suggests a third possibility, namely “the Absolute through time,” and adds, “If the conciliatory position here suggested is accepted, of course the non-temporal character of the Absolute is forthwith surrendered, and a qualification of its character of all-inclusiveness is called for.”⁸⁰

This, Cunningham holds, would really be in accord with the idealistic theory of judgement and with the scientific method. On the one hand we must posit a unity in experience or we could ask no questions about it. On the other hand there must be the wholly new, or our questions would be answered in advance of the asking. Bradley was right in speaking of this two-fold nature of reality as being ultimately mysterious. “This two-fold nature of reality by which it slides away from itself in our distinction, so as there to become a predicate while all the time it retains in itself, as an ultimate subject, every quality we loosen from and relate to it, is, if you please, inexplicable.”⁸¹ But Bradley and Bosanquet did not always bring out clearly that God and man together form Reality, which reality has a novelty as well as a permanent aspect. They sometimes made it appear that the Absolute was wholly beyond time, and therefore beyond the difficulties that meet those who are in some sense subject to the limitations of time. But now we see clearly that God or the Absolute Himself is faced with novelty; He has now no advantages over us.

We have discussed Cunningham’s views somewhat fully because his criticism of absolute idealism may be regarded as typical of the criticism of several others. A considerable number of essays appeared in *The Philosophical Review* dealing with the philosophy of Bradley and Bosanquet.⁸² These essays follow an argument similar to that of Cunningham.

Such idealism then, as the American scene presents today, is of a much milder variety than that of the absolute idealism of a generation ago. The idealism of Ernest Hocking e.g., as set forth in his book *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, may well be spoken of as an “Empirical Development of Absolutism.”⁸³ Men still speak of interpreting the lower in terms of the higher, and of striving for the ideal, but scarcely anyone thinks seriously of giving metaphysical status to a non-temporal God.

It is no wonder then that the philosophical menu today offers little besides neo-realism, critical realism, and pragmatism in various forms. All of these schools and the varieties among them believe in the “open universe.” To them reality is a flux. The human mind must seek as best it can to help the human organism make its necessary adjustments to its environment. The *a priori* element within experience has itself been

⁷⁹ Bosanquet, *Phil. Rev.*, 5 32, 1923, p. 596.

⁸⁰ G. W. Cunningham, *op. cit.* p. 422.

⁸¹ F. H. Bradley, *Logic*, Vol. 2, p. 620.

⁸² See especially *Philosophical Review* for 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923.

⁸³ “D. C. Macintosh On Hocking,” *Phil. Rev.*, 1914, p. 27 ff.

generated in the course of the evolutionary process, and can never claim to furnish the foundation for universal judgements.

Thus we see that the main course of metaphysics has again offered a great variety, which variety can be reduced to a few simple ingredients. The idealistic dishes are ordered by a very few, and when brought in are covered with a coating of empiricism. They remind one of turkey-hash served in good hotels about three days after Thanksgiving. Most men go for the plainer forms of temporalism.

Naturally if some Calvinist should slip into the room and look over the menu he would find nothing to suit his taste. The head-waiter and all the guests would look at him in amazement. "Do you wish for idealism?" the waiter will ask. "Oh yes, we still carry idealism; this is what Hocking usually takes, and many 'church-people' seem to like the same dish." But the Calvinist shakes his head. He says he would like to have plain Calvinism in which God is self-sufficient, and the temporal world is created and sustained by Him. The head-waiter offers him Neo-Scholasticism, hid away somewhere at the bottom corner of the menu. The Calvinist again shakes his head. He says he prefers simple Calvinism which really puts God back of "whatsoever comes to pass." The guests all look at him again. Can anyone really be in earnest demanding Calvinism? Can anyone today still hold that reality is a closed system for God? No one with any intelligence believes in such a God today.

If then the Calvinist should humbly but persistently reply that without such a God no one has a right to believe in intelligence, and in the intelligibility of anything, he will again be met with a smile. "It is beautiful! it is beautiful!" they will say, and continue to eat their ultimate temporalisms.

Nothing daunted they will call for the waitress to bring in the dessert. The dessert is something very light. It consists of a transparent gelatin of various colors, called "Follow the Gleam." Let Hocking tell us why it is given this name. Merlin the magician, he tells us, counselor at the court of King Arthur, suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. "Many years later a wanderer lost in the mountains fell exhausted to the ground, and was startled to hear a voice coming as it seemed from the depths of the earth, and speaking in an ancient and uncouth form. He understood that the voice purported to be the voice of Merlin, and that a spell was being told, which, if spoken from above, would break the prison and set Merlin free.

But he could distinguish only a few syllables.... Now every seventh year a traveler is lured to that spot and another fragment of the spell is recovered and another song is made. But Merlin cannot be released until the travelers meet and join their fragments into a complete saying.

We philosophers, the travelers of the myth, are taking part in an age-long labour of release. The meanings we find are actual possibilities buried in the heart of the world. Our different reports are, in part, our own creations, wrought by imagination and added to the wealth of racial poetry. But they are, first of all, our debt to the infinite imprisoned meaning of the world. Our differences cannot be regarded as mere personal accidents; for it is because of these differences that the whole spell may be recovered. If we learn how our thoughts belong together, Merlin may yet walk the earth again."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ E. Hocking, in *Anthology of Recent Philosophy*.

To which, as Calvinists, we must beg to reply that on the suppositions of modern philosophy taken as a whole, Merlin will never walk the earth again. Hocking is not entitled to the optimism which his parable would convey. Given a reality including God, which is by definition gradually emerging from the void, and which still brings forth the wholly new, and the intellect of man is as a derelict adrift on a shoreless sea. The island of intelligibility is then floating upon and surrounded by the unintelligible, the unintelligible to God as well as to man. The starting-point, the method, and the conclusion of modern philosophy are in accord with one another; they all with one voice speak one word, Irrationalism. This is the night in which all cows are black; non-Christian thought has demonstrated again, that without the God of Calvinism intelligent predication becomes a myth.

Thus modern philosophy adds its voice to the voice of modern science, saying that it has really “no pronouncement to make” since “the river of knowledge has too often turned back upon itself.”⁸⁵ The need for a Calvinistic philosophy setting forth and defending the “pronouncement” of God faithfully in accord with Reformed conviction, would seem to be highly necessary.

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⁸⁵ J. Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 160.

²⁴ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Reflections On Dr. A. Kuyper, Sr.

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It has been a hundred years since Abraham Kuyper was born. That fact has been celebrated by *The Calvin Forum*, *The Banner*, *De Heraut*, *De Reformatie*, *Gereformeerde Theologisch Tydschrift*, and *Credo*. *De Reformatie* had a special Kuyper number which in point of size equalled a book of three hundred pages. Every one of the articles that appeared in these journals has been highly appreciative of the great work Kuyper has done. All of them, some more than others, have sought to estimate in how far we should follow Kuyper and in how far we should depart from him or go beyond him. This article intends merely to give some reflections that came to me by the reading of this literature. In giving these reflections I have in mind not only the Christian Reformed Church but also others who seek to be Reformed. The question I wish to ask is whether we have benefited as fully as we might by the heritage Kuyper has left us. That heritage, I take it, is a modern full-fledged expression of the Reformed Faith. Note well, I do not say a perfect expression of the Reformed Faith. Yet, I believe Kuyper's was well-rounded and as well-grounded an expression of the Reformed Faith as we have had. To benefit fully by that heritage would be, I take it, to appreciate it and then go beyond it. To go beyond it may mean correction at some points but always means building further upon the basic principles set forth.

Experts And Laymen

One point brought forward in the discussion was that Kuyper stood up for the rights of the layman. Is this point worth mentioning? Are not we democratic Americans rather in danger of overestimating rather than underestimating the layman? Is it not our danger that we underestimate the expert? A couple experiences may give the reply. Dr. Machen once showed me an article written by one who claimed that he, Dr. Machen, really had no right to express himself on questions that pertained to education since he was not an expert in the field. At another time some one told me that Dr. Machen really had no right to express himself on matters of political economy because he was not a trained expert in the field. Then, too, I have rather frequently heard remarks to the effect that ministers really have no right to express themselves on philosophical questions in much as they are no experts in the field.

Now, surely, we are all glad to listen patiently to what the "expert" has to say on matters of education, or politics or philosophy but since what they say may affect the eternal welfare of ourselves and of our children we cannot, as Protestants, give our lives in their hands. The layman has a perfect right to speak.

The Bible

But I must hasten on to matters that pertain to the content of Christian teaching. In one of the articles on Kuyper there was an appreciation of Kuyper as a systematic theologian. The contention was made that Kuyper vitalized and developed every Christian dogma but that he in particular advanced the statement of dogma on the questions of Scripture and the church. Let us take the question of Scripture first. Have we on this point fully entered upon the heritage left us by Kuyper?

In asking this I am thinking at once of our estimate of Karl Barth. I take it that Kuyper's greatest contribution to the doctrine of Scripture has been that he has shown more fully than anyone how the doctrine about Scripture itself is organically related to the whole body of Scripture teaching about other matters. Now comes Barth. He rejects the Bible as the once-for-all revelation of God. Still some Reformed men in this country seem to think that this rejection of Scripture does not seriously affect the Reformed character of Barth's teaching. One may as well say that you can take the lungs out of a person without damaging the rest of his bodily organs too seriously.

A second point must be mentioned here. Kuyper had to fight all his life against the peace-at-any-price men called the "*irenischen*." A fine article on this fight is found in *De Reformatie*. These "irenical" people substituted "what has happened" for "what is written" as their standard of action. What had become tradition in the state church was taken as the norm for future policy.

Against this attitude Kuyper was all aflame. For him even the most honored traditions had to be tested over and over by the Word. Do we follow him in this respect? I fear that we must confess to a lukewarmness on this point. Last year the Presbyterian Church of America was engaged in a life and death struggle on this very point. Dr. Buswell and others took the position of the irenicals. To them the tradition of total abstinence was sacred. In the name of that tradition they attacked those who wished to live strictly by the Word. Yet this struggle was minimized by some as being about small matters. Others, however, did see the importance of this struggle and called attention to it.

Princeton Seminary has entirely capitulated to this irenical or peace-at-any-price position. In fact some of the professors at Princeton have combined the Barthian and the irenical view of Scripture. All this takes place before our eyes. Yet we seem scarcely to notice it. Or if we notice it we do very little to criticize it. Has the spirit of Kuyper frozen in our veins? I do not think so. Yet I fear that it runs rather slowly on this point.

The Church

Kuyper was a great Reformer of the Church. He visualized the Church as the "mother of believers." The "common people," nay, all alike ought to be enveloped by the church from the cradle to the grave. Beware then of "wolves in sheep's clothing!"

Have we entered upon the heritage of Kuyper in this respect? The Christian Reformed Church has certainly shown a laudable zeal in seeking to keep heresy out of its midst. Yet even here one cannot but be anxious. Have all the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church and have other ministers, of other Reformed churches, been as alert as they should be to note and warn against the heresy that surrounds them?

Dr. Hepp made a remark in a recent issue of *Credo* that the Reformed churches of the Netherlands have shown that they are still alive to the spirit of Kuyper by rejecting Barthianism in a vigorous fashion. Have we in America done likewise? I do not think so. We are playing with Barthianism. We sometimes hear men speak of being truly progressive. They want to build upon the foundations laid by Kuyper and Bavinck and Warfield. It is well. If they wish to do so let them not quote Barth along with men like those just mentioned as though they all stand for essentially the same thing. It is well to praise Barth for his destructive criticism of the Modernist program for the Church of Christ but it is not well to forget Barth's equally destructive criticism of the orthodox program for the church of Christ. If Barth could have been present at the last synod of the Christian Reformed Church or at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America he would have laughed them to scorn for their insistence on any sort of program at all.

Similarly, speaking now of the church as an organism instead of as an institute, it is well to praise Barth for his opposition to Hitler and his regime but it is not well to forget that Barth is equally opposed to Colyn and his regime. Barth would destroy any such thing as a Christian labor party, a Christian school, a Christian sanatorium or anything else with a Christian program of action.

Another man to whose theology, I feel, we have been too sympathetic is Karl Heim. Karl Heim may be much more orthodox than Barth on many points of doctrine but he shares with Barth his aversion to a system of doctrine. Both make the fatal contrast Modernism makes between Christianity as a program and Christianity as following the person of Christ who has no program. I do not think we can afford to overlook this basically modernist position just because Heim says many fine things. All these fine things are permeated by this basically false contrast that he makes.

In the midst of the battle with the irenicals Kuyper wrote a pamphlet which he gave the title "Three Little Foxes." These "three little foxes" were false intellectualism, false mysticism and false practiciness. Kuyper warned ministers lest they should let these three little foxes destroy the vineyard of the Lord.

Two of these foxes are very much abroad in our country. False mysticism speaks with its siren voice through Barth. Barth's is anything but a theology of the Word. It is the reverse. False mysticism also speaks through the voice of Frank Buchman. Still further it speaks through the voice of Stanley. Have we stood at the borderline of the Lord's vineyard and driven away this fox with the whip of the Word? I fear that we have allowed it to snatch away some of the lambs of the flock.

The second little fox that is very much abroad seeking entrance into the fold is false practiciness, or activism. It speaks in general in the Arminian Methodism with which the religious programs on the radio are charged. It spoke very vigorously through the voice of Kagawa not long ago. Have we in the spirit of Kuyper driven out this little fox? In some cases Reformed men have defended and furthered its work to the danger of the flock.

In conclusion we should surely be thankful to almighty God for the influence Kuyper has had on America. He was a master mind with a really unified conception of life. The Dutch expresses this thought so well by saying "*hij was een man uit één stuk.*" Another man of Kuyper's stature may not appear again. But if we all labor in his spirit, we can by the grace of God, at least keep the three little foxes from too greatly damaging the fold of

the Reformed Faith. We shall plant and sow in vain through sound preaching, through Christian schools, etc. If at the same time we do not warn the flock against these three foxes. If we would go further than Kuyper we must first catch up with him.

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²⁵Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Seeking For Similarities

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It cannot well be denied that modern thought is as a whole more self-conscious than ancient thought. This is especially the case in the field of philosophy. The assumptions that underlay Greek thought have either been adopted as first principles or have been rejected. Modern thought is as a full-grown man who has put away childish things.

This fact of the greater self-consciousness of modern thought has great apologetical significance. He who today seeks to defend the Christian-theistic philosophy of life has great advantages over his predecessors. There is not as much shrubbery and underbrush in which anti-christian thought can seek its lair as there formerly was. The foes of Christianity are more easily driven into the open than they were in earlier days. Antitheists have themselves devoured the foliage that formerly hid them from view. Kant's theory of the essential creativity of human thought has acted as a searchlight that has penetrated many a hiding place.

Then, in addition to the glare of publicity that anti-christian thought has cast about itself in modern times, Christian thought is itself far more self-conscious than it has ever been. Calvin removed the last vestige of subordination from Christology. In so doing he brought the doctrine of the Trinity to the point where the personal relationship within it is thought of as being completely exhaustive. Thus there was given to Christian Apologetics the conception of a God in whom the problem of the one and the many has been solved. In this conception of God as the highest category by which we are to interpret human experience the Christian apologist has an unfailling standard by which to "test the spirits whether they be of God." This standard postulates the equal ultimacy of plurality and unity within the Godhead. Any system of thought that seeks for an ultimate plurality beyond God cannot but be hostile to Christianity.

I do not mean to suggest that matters are altogether simple now. Keeping pace with the development into this greater self-consciousness that characterizes modern thought there is a development in the direction of greater complexity. Many non-christian philosophers have been in close contact with Christianity. Many philosophers and theologians have tried to effect combinations of Christian and non-christian elements of thought. One of the results of these efforts has been an ambiguous use of words. And by this ambiguity of language many of the higher forms of non-christian thought are made to appear very similar to Christian thought itself. Accordingly it is still easy to change the heavy perpendicular line that separates non-christian thought from Christian thought into an ascending diagonal. There are after all many similarities between Christian and non-christian thinking.

Yet because of the greater self-consciousness of modern thought spoken of before, Christian theologians should never regard these similarities as identities. These similarities constantly appear against a background of difference. And nothing is more important in the sphere of Apologetics today than to point out clearly the fundamental differences that underlie the similarities between Christian and non-christian thought.

Satan appears as an angel of light. It is in his interest to point out similarities without noting differences.

This does not mean that we would deprecate all seeking of similarities between Christian and non-Christian thought. The doctrine of common grace teaches us to look for similarities. It has taught us to look for relatively good elements in the hearts and lives of those who are in principle absolutely evil. Some forms of non-Christian thought are far more valuable to us than others. We would even see corroborative value for the truth of Christianity in the fact that many non-Christian thinkers have seen something of the bankruptcy of the lower forms of non-Christian thought and have therefore turned to some higher form of non-Christian thought. Yet we should not forget that to miss a train by a minute is to miss it just as effectually and disastrously as to miss it by an hour. And it is this last fact that seems to be forgotten by those who are constantly seeking for similarities between Christian and non-Christian thought but who do not point out the underlying difference in connection with which these similarities appear.

One of the reasons why Christian theologians have tended to elevate similarities into identities would seem to be that there has been in the history of Christian Apologetics a great deal of what we may call blockhouse thinking. We may illustrate what we mean by the familiar distinction made between theism, pantheism and deism. We are accustomed to say that pantheism holds to the immanence of God but denies the transcendence of God and that deism holds to the transcendence of God but denies the immanence of God, while theism is distinguished from pantheism and deism in that it holds to both the immanence and the transcendence of God. When the distinction is thus made it is taken for granted that the terms "God," "transcendence" and "immanence" are invariable "blocks" that we can arrange or rearrange at will in building our systems just as a child arranges and rearranges his blocks according to the picture that he has before him. Now a moment's thought will make us realize that the pantheist's conception of God is quite different from ours. He himself would be the first to disown the service of our God. How then can we say that he believes in the immanence of our God in the universe? So too the deist does not believe in our God and cannot be said to believe in the transcendence of our God. We see then how utterly impossible it is, if we are interested in careful thought, to start our comparison of systems with an empirical enumeration of certain similarities and differences.

What we need to become more conscious is that Christian-theism is an organic whole. What we mean by God determines what we mean by transcendence and what we mean by immanence. What we mean by God determines what we mean by our whole vocabulary. Christ said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." That was but logical. An absolute God and an absolute Christ go hand in hand. We cannot separate our theism from our Christianity. For that reason we speak of Christian-theism. Again we cannot separate Christ as the fact-revelation from the Scripture as the word-revelation. An absolute God, an absolute Christ and an absolute Scripture go hand in hand. So, too, to mention only this, we cannot separate the body of Scripture miracles into independent entities in order to accept some and reject others. No miracle recorded in Scripture has any meaning apart from the central miracle of Christ. What we must get men to see is that when they reject a "part" of Christian-theism they reject it *in toto*. On the other hand men cannot consistently accept a "part" of Christian-theism unless they accept the whole of the system.

It is only by keeping this organic character of Christian-theism in mind that we can judge aright of the similarities between Christian and non-christian thought. We must never forget to look at these similarities in their setting. When an anatomist shows us the similarity in structure and function between the eye of an animal and the eye of man we must not forget that for all the similarity the one eye remains the eye of an animal and the other eye remains the eye of a man. Similarly when non-christians show us the similarities between their teachings and ours we must not forget that these can in the nature of the case be no more than surface similarities.

In spite of this all important distinction we observe that Christian apologists are constantly falling into the error of elevating similarities into identities. Sometimes we see a tendency to mention similarities without mentioning differences. Or even if differences are mentioned this is done in such a way as though the whole matter could be settled by the method of percentages. Let us note some instances in recent theological literature where these things seem to have occurred.¹

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¹ This is the first of a series of five articles on a subject of vital importance. It will not be understood by all our readers but our theologians will be grateful for it.—Editor

²⁶ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Seeking For Similarities In Theology

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We believe that a hasty elevation of similarities into identities has taken place in the appraisal commonly given to the transcendence idea in Karl Barth's theology. In our eagerness to welcome any reaction from the exclusively immanentistic theology that surrounds us we have too hastily identified the Barthian conception of transcendence with the Reformed conception of transcendence. We cannot discuss this point in detail. We may note, however, that the very heart of a Barthian theology, that is, its conception of the paradoxical character of human thought, is radically opposed to Reformed theology. Reformed theology has taught that man is made in the image of God. Man, because finite, cannot comprehensively know God. Yet the knowledge that man has of God is true. The absence of the power of complete comprehension does not make human thought self-contradictory. It only means that man must point to God for complete comprehension. The very reason then why men conclude that human thought is self-contradictory is that they have set before it the impossible goal of complete comprehension. To conceive of human thought as self-contradictory is fundamentally antitheistic. Barth holds to the paradoxical character of human thought while Reformed theology holds to the analogical character of human thought.

Barth's theory of knowledge is essentially Kantian. Because of his false ideal of absolute comprehension Barth holds with Kant that the "antinomies" of human thought are evidence of its self-contradictory character. The logical conclusion of this position is that human thought is encompassed by absolute Irrationality. It is this absolute irrationality, commonly embraced by modern philosophy, that stands squarely opposed to the Christian idea of God as absolute Rationality. This irrationality furnishes the basis for the thorough scepticism of modern theology. Barth shares its fundamental and ultimate scepticism.

Now if we keep in mind the essentially Kantian character of Barth's theory of knowledge we see at once that his transcendence concept must be basically antitheistic. Kantian epistemology can allow for no real transcendence. Its very genius is to exclude everything that has not come from within. It is difficult to see, for example, how Professor Haitjema can admit that Barth's theology of knowledge is Kantian and nevertheless be hopeful that Barth will develop in the direction of Reformed theology. (1) Barth does, it is true, speak of God as the "absolutely Other" and men have found in this a striking similarity to Calvin's high exaltation of God. But Plato did also sometimes speak of the ideal world as absolutely other than the sense world. To speak of God as the absolutely Other is no certain sign that one is speaking of the God of Christianity at all. All too often, both in ancient and in modern thought, men speak of God as the absolutely Other for no other reason than that they wish to deny that He is the creator of the

universe. A denial of temporal creation is characteristic of all non-Christian philosophy. And on this point Barth is very unsatisfactory to say the least. Barth has no real Christian transcendence concept. We might criticize his position by saying that he stresses transcendence too much but it would be more correct to say that he does not really have a transcendent God at all.

The danger involved in the hasty identification of the Reformed and the Barthian trans-cendence ideas is very great. Prof. Louis Imre has tried to make the Barthian conception of theology fruitful for the field of pedagogics. He says: "If we recognize Revelation as the only condition for our educational work, we find that this fact does not remove the difficulties and does not solve the hopeless contradiction we saw in each problem of education. These contradictions can never disappear, for in the depth of these lies hidden the solitary and fundamental contradiction: the contrast between God and man." (2) But Reformed theology does not allow that the relation between God and man is that of a contradiction. Man's thoughts are not contradictory of God's thoughts but are analogical of God's thoughts. This is involved in the idea that man is made in God's image. Only when man becomes a sinner does his thought contradict God's thought and even this ethical opposition presupposes an analogical relationship of man to God in the sphere of knowledge. Barth has constantly confused finitude with sin and Imre has followed him in this respect.

We shall not stop to discuss the Barthian similarities at length. Suffice it to note that Barth is thoroughly unreformed in his conception of the church. He does not believe in the historical origination of the church in any truly Reformed sense. Then too for Barth the believer is still an unbeliever as long as he is temporal. Here Barth seems at first glance to out-Calvin Calvin. It might seem as though he had a deeper conception of sin than Calvin had. In reality the voice is Plato's voice. There is here as elsewhere a mixture of metaphysical and ethical categories. He has once more confused the sin of man with his finitude.

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²⁷Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Seeking For Similarities In Physics

The Banner

1937

Volume 72, Pages 132 and 147

Turning now from some of the similarities that recent theology has to offer us we find that modern Physics too seems anxious to come to terms with the evangelical believer.

The whole question here hinges on the recent emphasis upon the concepts of “contingency” and “indeterminacy.” In the field of physics the day of mechanism and materialism seems to be past. Charles Harris, the Anglo Catholic apologist, says: “Since 1905 the contingency of the universe (upon which the possibility of miracles depends) has become an accepted philosophic doctrine. It is maintained with emphasis by Henri Bergson (born 1859), whose philosophy is at present more influential than any other” (4) Now we do not wonder that an Anglo Catholic theologian should assert between parentheses that the possibility of miracles depends upon the contingency of the universe, has always had in its theology certain remnants of the Greek idea of a universe that is independent of God, and Anglo-Catholicism resembles Rome in this respect. But it will be granted by all genuinely Protestant theologians that only those who have given up the biblical ideas of creation and providence can speak of the possibility of miracles depending upon certain characteristics that scientists find in the physical world. The heart of the theistic doctrine with respect to the physical universe is that all its “facts” and “laws” came into existence by the creation of God and are sustained by the providence of God. Grant this conception of the relation of God to the physical universe and the possibility of miracles is assured whatever the prevailing conceptions of scientists may be with respect to the mode of operation of the space-time facts. If the recent physical theories are right and the older physical theories were wrong it only shows that God does as a matter of fact work differently from the way in which physicists formerly thought He did. Physical theories deal with the mode of operation of the space-time facts which form the universe and cannot affect the question of the relation of God to the universe.

It follows then that if we hold to the theistic conception of God’s relation to the universe there can be a theistic conception of mechanism and there can be a theistic conception of contingency. But the scientists of a generation ago held to an anti-theistic conception of mechanism. Instead of thinking of God as the Creator of mechanical law they thought of Him as subject to mechanical law. In short, their conception of mechanism included God. And so the scientists of today hold to anti-theistic conception of contingency. The contingency scientists of today do not believe in the theistic doctrine of creation any more than the mechanistic scientists of a generation ago. Both think of the universe as ultimate. Harris should have been warned of this fact by quotation we have given. He speaks of Bergson as a protagonist of the contingency idea. Now it would certainly seem to require a “miracle” for miracles to find a place in the philosophy of Bergson. Bergson’s philosophy includes God in the general stream of temporal reality.

The whole of the Christian conception of transcendence has been thrown overboard by Bergson even more effectively, if possible, than by Kant. How then could miracles occur if there is no God to cause them to occur? And what is true of Bergson is true of the whole of the philosophical atmosphere in which the contingency idea of modern physics flourishes. For Sir James Jeans the whole universe is a product of Chance. Speaking of the word accident he says: "The use of such a word need not imply any surprise that our earth exists, for accidents will happen, and if the universe goes on for long enough, every conceivable accident is likely to happen in time. It was, I think, Huxley who said that six monkeys, set to strumming unintelligently on typewriters for millions of millions of years, would be bound in time to write all the books in the British Museum. If we examined the last page which a particular monkey had typed, and we found that it had chanced in its blind strumming, to type a Shakespeare sonnet, we should rightly regard the occurrence as a remarkable accident, but if we looked through all the millions of pages the monkeys had turned off in untold millions of years, we might be sure of finding somewhere among them, the product of the blind play of chance." (5) Surely God is out and "whirl" is king in modern physical speculation. "Becoming" has taken the priority over "being" in modern philosophy as a whole and recent scientific philosophy makes no exception to this.

From these considerations it follows that we cannot uncritically take over the "contingency" idea of modern physics and say that it is favorable to the Christian concept of miracle. This contingency idea was born of a philosophy of chance. It has no meaning apart from that philosophy of chance in which it had its inception. Yet we find that not only Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic apologists seek to offer us the modern contingency idea without any effort to give this contingency idea a Christian-theistic setting. Prof. John E. Kuizenga in speaking of the present day outlook for Christian Apologetics tells us: "Indeterminacy at the very heart of the atom opens up anew the reasonableness of freedom, moral order, the supernatural, and the miracle. The hastily impaneled coroner's jury has been premature in its findings, the corpse persists in setting up at the inquiry." (6) And a little further on he adds: "The law of continuity has broken down, it is time to admit discontinuity. The Christ is cosmic, 'whirl' is not king, 'Becoming' is but the servant of 'being,' and the True Being transcends us. These naturalisms shall never frighten the believer any more: their day is done.

Humpty, Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty, Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Can never put Humpty-Dumpty together again.

We see from this quotation that according to Prof. Kuizenga not only miracles but the entire system of Christian-theistic thought has a great deal of gain to expect from the contingency idea in modern physics. But surely the assertion that he himself makes in an earlier part of the address ought to have put him on his guard. Speaking of the contingency idea as the argument from "gaps" he says: "Nor let any one suppose that the argument from 'gaps' is the argument particularly of Theism. It is the argument of Theism only incidentally; it is primarily the argument against inadequate *a priori* hypotheses." (7) Here Zuizenga tells us that the relation between the contingency idea of modern physics and theism is only incidental. He might have added that there is no connection at all. If formerly the Christian, left to the mercy of the mechanists, was in

danger of being ground to powder by them, now, if left to the mercy of the contingency physicists, he will drown in the seething depths of the unrelated and the meaningless. According to modern physics Christ has nothing to do with the physical universe. Miracles, the moral order as thought of by Christians and the supernatural are as unreasonable to the contingency scientist as these things were to the mechanist. Prof. George C. Steward brings out this point well when he says: "The feeling would appear to be that matter has become attenuated and spirit is 'thin' and therefore the universe now calls for a spiritual interpretation; but the danger of such a view is very evident, for it lies open to immediate and easy refutation. Not by such arguments shall we do aught but disservice to the cause of religion." (8)

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²⁸Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Seeking For Similarities In Psychology

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1937

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The similarity seekers seem to have a peculiarly happy time in the field of psychology.

In the first place we are told that “the soul is back.” If we could make ourselves believe that this is true it would make us very happy indeed. For that would mean that the Creator of the soul would be back too. The soul, as Christians think of it, is created by God and cannot be thought of intelligently otherwise than in relation to God. More than that, the soul as thought of by Christians, is an integral part of the whole system of Christian thought so that if the soul were really back the whole of Christianity would be back.

That the soul must be taken as a part of the Christian doctrine as a whole is clear from a reference to this matter made by Prof. Kuizenga. He too relates the soul to the rest of Christian truth when he says: “In the present day Athens of psychology it becomes possible once more for Dionysius the Areopagite to cleave unto the Lord with a substantial soul, richly endowed for that very purpose, even though some mock and others say, ‘We will hear thee again of this matter.’ ”¹

Yet it is definitely clear from the writings of some of the men to whom appeal is made in proof of the contention that modern psychology is favorable to the idea of the soul that they are hostile to Christianity. Moreover these psychologists do not mean by the term “soul” what Christians mean by that term at all. No one would claim, I suppose, that James Bissett Pratt is an orthodox Christian. His psychology is dualistic, to be sure, but his dualism is no Christian dualism. Yet his dualism is cited as evidence in proof of the contention that modern psychology is favorable to the Christian conception of the soul. Then too William McDougal must dislike being dragged about by Christian theologians and made to say things that he himself most cordially disbelieves. He tells us definitely that his theory of “hormic” psychology does not in the least indicate belief in the “extrinsic supernatural teleology of the theologians.” He is most anxious to distinguish his intrinsic teleology from this extrinsic teleology of the theologians. He bewails the fact that those interested in ateleological explanations should not be able to distinguish his inoffensive variety of teleology from the offensive variety of orthodox Christianity. Speaking of those who hold to mechanistical theories he says: “Any proposal to take seriously the teleological causation which seems to be revealed in human activities, to regard such causation as real and effective, they repudiate as trafficking in supernatural causes, for, in learning to repudiate the external supernatural teleology of theology, they have come to regard as also supernatural the internal teleological causation

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of the human organism.”² We see then that whatever McDougal means by the term “soul” it must fit in with his exclusively immanentistic conception of teleology. His conception of the soul is quite the reverse of the conception held to by Christianity.

McDougal discusses the same question elsewhere in an article entitled, “Psychology and the Thought of God,” contributed to the symposium of modern scientific opinion edited by Edward H. Cotton under the title, *Has Science Discovered God?* In this article McDougal tells us that all that his psychology has established is “the reality and efficacy of Mind in Nature.” Summing up the significance of his psychological views for the problem of theism he says: “Psychology, then, in my view, affords convincing evidence of the reality and the efficacy of Mind in Nature; and it affords strong, though not conclusive, evidence that mental organization is notwholly dependent upon the physical structure of the human organism. Suppose these indications to be confirmed, leaving no room for doubt:—What, if any, would be their bearing upon the problem of theism? So far as I can see, the bearing would be what I would call permissive only.”³ If one adds to this that the theism McDougal has in mind is a vague sort of *anima mundi* theism which forms one of the most dangerous enemies of Christianity, it becomes clear that if his psychology is favorable to any sort of philosophy it is favorable to an anti-Christian philosophy.

This conclusion is still further established by the fact that McDougal accepts the evolution theory as no longer debatable. He tells us: “I accept organic evolution as established fact; but I hold that we have no adequate theory or explanation of the way in which it has been effected.”⁴ The human “soul” then is, according to McDougal a derivative from the lower forms of animal life and the whole of animal life may have come into existence, as far as McDougal knows, without God’s intervention altogether. It is difficult to see how any one could appeal to McDougal’s psychology to prove that modern psychology has a concept of the soul that is similar to the Christian concept of the soul.

Finally we would point out that it is also useless to appeal to the psychology of the unconscious if one is looking for the return of the soul. Kuizenga seems to be willing to base his whole contention on this point alone. He tells us: “The psychology of the unconscious has shattered the actualistic consciousness, and the soul is back.”⁵ Yet it is well known that the philosophy of the unconscious is the source of the psychology of the unconscious. The psychology of the unconscious is but a subterranean passageway to the bottomless irrationality of the whole of modern thought. Out of such a background the soul, as Christians believe in it, could not possibly come. To argue that modern psychology is favorable to the concept of the soul because of the prevalence of the psychology of the unconscious is “to fall victim to the compelling force of words” without considering carefully their connotation.

There is a great danger involved in thus carelessly speaking of the “soul” without distinguishing between the Christian and the non-Christian use of the term. This appears from the fact that such a colorless conception of the soul is easily made into the first and

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main presupposition of “religious education.” Kuizenga, in speaking of the presuppositions of religious education says: “What are these values fundamental to religious education? Surely one of these is that there is in every human a unique value.”⁶ A second presupposition is, according to Kuizenga, the idea that the value in each human may be realized.

We note in this article of Kuizenga the same tendency to sacrifice the distinctiveness of the Christian position that we observed in his argument with respect to the soul. This tendency manifests itself first of all in the very title of the article. Kuizenga prefers to speak of religious education rather than of Christian education. Christian education is, of course, distinguished from other types of religious education but the similarities are stressed first of all. More important than the title, however, is the type of argument used. Kuizenga starts with the perfectly colorless notion of “every human” being. This corresponds to his colorless conception of the “soul.” Now it goes without saying that according to the orthodox Christian position not every “human” is equally valuable ethically in the sight of God. A Reformed theologian who believes in the doctrine of election cannot begin a course of argument in this way if he would be consistent. After the fall of man such equally valuable “humans” are for the Reformed theologian nonexistent. And since there is no neutral soul one cannot speak of values inherent in this soul and to be realized by it as Kuizenga does.

Now all this, far from helping to clear the apologetical atmosphere, rather helps to make confusion worse confounded. What we should surely be most concerned to bring out clearly is that though man was originally created perfect it is not true that all men have now an equal value in the sight of God. It is inconsistent for one who believes in a clear distinction between those who are in Christ and those who are not in Christ to speak in the general vague terminology that Modernism loves to use. How shall anyone who occupies the place of the unlearned distinguish our position from the position of the Modernist if we speak in this manner?

It will now also be understood that there is indeed a very good reason why orthodox people do not look with favor upon the introduction of courses in religious education into the curricula of conservative seminaries. With respect to this Kuizenga says: “To intimate, as has been done, that for a conservative theological seminary to establish a department of religious education is the first evidence of departure from conservatism, is about as sensible as to suggest that for Paul to try to be all things to all men was in itself an evidence that Paul was heretical.”⁷ This analogy is clever but unfair. Paul did all he could to make it unmistakable to all that his doctrine was the opposite of that desired by the natural man. Even an angel from heaven was not to change that doctrine. But the religious rather than Christian education is usually the concern of those who hold that Christianity is after all so similar to other religions that the natural man does not need to undergo any great change in order to accept it. Those who speak of religious education rather than of Christian education do indeed speak of Christianity as a religion that places man very high above the level of mechanism. But this is not sufficient. Christianity must be spoken of as the true religion and other religions must be spoken of as false religions. And it is this that men dislike to do. If then we wish to use the term “religious education”

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in preference to Christian education we should surely be most careful to indicate that we do not mean by religious education what is usually meant by that term in our day. The whole question is not as innocent as Kuizenga would have us believe.

A second, and if possible even more dangerous similarity, that theologians have discovered between the concepts of recent psychology and the concepts of Christianity concerns the question of sin or more particularly the question of total depravity. It is said that recent psychology is favorable to this doctrine while the older psychology was opposed to it. Great emphasis is laid upon the fact that the more superficial view of the inherent goodness of man in which the eighteenth century psychologists believed has been replaced by a deeper view which recognizes many evil tendencies in man. Kuizenga goes so far as to say that the orthodox view of sin seems greatly to resemble the views of evil held by psychologists in our time. "Psychologically it seems the old conception can be shown to be reasonable by the thought of the day."⁸ In proof of this contention he calls particular attention to Freudian psychology. The reading of a few pages of Freud is enough he says, "to shame even the decent brute." And on this basis the conclusion is drawn that: "The view of total depravity never read as severe an indictment against human nature."⁹

What must we say with respect to this great similarity between Freudianism and Calvinism? We concede that if the real test were as to which can say the filthier things about human nature the palm should go to Freudianism. Freudianism brings man up from the beast while Christianity brings man down from God. The test, however, is not the present quantity of filthiness: the real test is man's responsibility for his present condition. Why is man such as he is? Freudianism says that it is because man has come out of a terrible background and has not yet got very far out of it. Christianity says that man has rebelled against God who had created him perfect. Accordingly modern psychology in general and Freudianism in particular have not only left out of consideration but have flatly denied what Christianity considers most fundamental in the whole problem of evil, namely, the guilt of man before God. Can even so much as a trace of the idea of man's guilt before God be found in Freudianism? It is certainly far nearer the truth to say that Freudianism is at the farthest possible remove from Christianity than to say that it is similar to Christianity.

It is not without significance that Kuizenga, in order to make the similarity between Freudianism and Christianity acceptable to us puts the element of guilt in the background when he describes the Christian doctrine of sin. Summarizing the Christian doctrine of sin he says: "Let us look therefore first at Christianity and the sense of misery. The biblical and orthodox conception of sin may be stated clearly and simply. To begin with, sin is an inherited tendency which prevents a man from being what he ought to be, and so sin is intimately related to the sense of ill-being and ill-desert. This inherited taint is in all men by virtue of their birth from human parents. Further, this inherited tendency results in the perversion of man's inborn capacities and instincts or drives, so that every instant tends more and more to function wrongly, and each individual instinct tends to usurp power to itself, so that we have anarchism or civil war within. According to the same view, biblical and orthodox, sin is folly, the worst lack of wisdom; sin is also acquired

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power, acquired in the life-time of the individual himself, an acquired perversity which each has built up within himself until he is shackled by it. But the Bible never makes the mistake of suggesting that the essential being of man itself is wrong. The springs of his being are themselves intact, but they have been somehow poisoned.”¹⁰ From this quotation it may be seen that the nearest Kuizenga comes to an incorporation of the biblical idea of guilt in his description of sin is to say that sin is intimately connected with the sense of ill-desert. One might conclude that the biblical idea of guilt is entirely absent from Kuizenga’s description of sin. Ill-desert is the only word that suggests guilt and it is not even said that man is according to the Scripture actually ill-deserving, let alone deserving of eternal punishment; it is only said that man has a sense of ill-desert. Even Schleiermacher could make no complaint when the matter is put in this purely subjective way. Certainly the cause of orthodoxy is not served if we thus omit all specific reference to actual objective matters of fact in the history of the race. But it is not our purpose now to stress this point. We are only concerned to indicate that the forensic element is left in the background to say the least and it is for this reason only that the Freudian conception of evil can be made to look similar to the Christian doctrine of sin. It is patent that Kuizenga has not followed his own exhortation that: “It is necessary and inevitable that we should sharpen the antithesis between naturalism and supernaturalism, and to say that Christianity has a supernaturalism of its own that refuses to bow the knee.”¹¹ If Kuizenga had followed his own admonition on this score he would have stressed the biblical idea of guilt since it is most specifically in that the biblical doctrine is distinct from all other doctrines. The biblical doctrine of guilt points to a difference that makes all similarities well nigh dwindle into insignificance. There may be a great similarity between the fore leg of a horse and the arm of a man; but through the one flows the blood of a beast and through the other flows the blood of a man.

We have considered only a few instances in which Christian theologians have sought for similarities between Christian and non-Christian thought without sufficiently noting the background of difference against which these similarities appear. These instances are apparently symptomatic of a general tendency that is dangerous to orthodox theology, the tendency is to ignore the distinctiveness of the Christian message. Yet it is the distinctiveness of the Christian message that needs to be emphasized in our day. The tendency we have spoken of gives aid and comfort to the enemy.

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²⁹ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Brunner Comes To Princeton

The Banner
1938
Volume 73, Page 699

Princeton Theological Seminary has for many years been a bulwark of the Reformed Faith. Today Princeton is virtually a bulwark of dialectical theology. The president, Dr. John A. Mackay, is a vigorous propagandist of this new faith. He brought Dr. Homrighausen and Dr. Piper to Princeton. Both of these men are favorably disposed to dialectic theology. Neither of these men hold to the Bible as the infallible Word of God. Dr. Piper openly expressed his hope that all denominational differences in Protestantism might be wiped out. He maintains that orthodox believers should not seek to remove Modernists from their places in the church of Christ.

In a few weeks Emil Brunner will begin his work at Princeton. He has been called to the chair of Systematic or dogmatic theology left vacant by the death of Dr. C. W. Hodge. Brunner has accepted the appointment on condition that he may be released after a year if he should so desire.

What is the significance of Brunner's coming to Princeton? It means the substitution of a new and radically different theology for the Reformed Faith in the chair of systematic theology at that institution. To this should be added the disconcerting fact that Brunner does not offer his theology as a substitute for the Reformed Faith. If that were the case the students would at least know the true state of affairs. But Brunner offers his theology as a continuation of the theology of the Reformation and even as a continuation of the Reformed Faith itself.

But is Brunner's theology then so different from the Reformed Faith? Has not Brunner, together with Barth, called men back to the sovereignty of God? Has not Brunner, together with Barth, called men from a trust in human reason to the revelation of the living God?

Our answer to all this can be brief. Relatively speaking there is much good in the theology of Brunner as there is in the theology of Barth. In his latest book, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, Brunner has many a page, which, if we could take it by itself, would read like Kuyper or Bavinck. But alas, we must take the "good" things of Brunner and bring them into relation with the basic principles of his thought. And these basic principles undermine the very foundations of the Reformed Faith. They undermine the foundations of all orthodox faith.

Brunner does not accept Scripture as the infallible Word of God. More than that he does not even accept Scripture as a trustworthy record of history. We are accustomed to think that if the Bible tells us about Adam and Eve in paradise it means just what it says. We think of a real man and a real woman as walking upon a certain spot of this world at a specific period of time. But Brunner says in effect that we are entirely mistaken in so doing. He says we cannot take Bible history and think of it as dealing with past events, in the usual sense of the word. Something entirely different is meant.

To make plain what he means Brunner introduces a distinction. What we speak of as nature and history he speaks of as the realm or dimension of Becoming. This dimension

of Becoming, he says, must be contrasted with another realm or dimension, the dimension of history in the truest sense of the term. What we call nature really has no history, says Brunner. Nature changes and develops while it passes through the years, but strictly speaking it has no history. Animals do not belong to history. We may speak of the "history of the mammal" but this is no more than a figure of speech. Only man has history.¹

No, not even man as such has history. The external aspect of man, in particular his bodily life, falls within the dimension of Becoming. It too, has no history strictly speaking. Real history deals with the deeds of men, not with their physical and psychological growth.

Broadly speaking science deals with the dimension of Becoming while Scripture deals with History. Thus there should be no warfare between them. The biblical doctrine of creation, says Brunner, does not compete with the scientific notion of evolution. Science deals with origins in so far as they are open to visible research. Science deals with that which can be repeated. But the story of creation, as told in Scripture, lies in an altogether different dimension.

Failure to make the distinction between the dimension of Becoming and the dimension of History has been the source of much misunderstanding. The church has often made itself ridiculous by entering upon the field of science.² The church has been too greatly worried about the calendar. It has asked when Adam lived. But there never was an Adam as an actual specimen of the human race upon this earth. We are all Adam. "Not a certain man, who has lived in the dark past, is Adam, who is created in the image of God, but you are it (Adam), I am it, every man is it."³ In the whole field of empirical research no facts remain to support the traditional notion of original man as a being of higher order than the animal.⁴

To what has been given of Brunner's position we must add this further point. Brunner does not unwillingly grant a victory to science over Scripture. He is not a "Fundamentalist" who feels he must yield to stubborn facts. Nor is he a modernist whose religion is limited to a fair pattern of ideas. No, not at all. Brunner wants to hold to Scripture. He wants to save Christianity as a real historical religion. He is opposed, utterly opposed to all sorts of mere idealism. He wants a personal God. He wants creation. He wants providence. He wants the fall of man. He wants God's sovereignty in redemption.

Brunner's argument is that if we are to have all this we simply must discard the traditional notion of history. He reasons that if we are to have true Christianity we are driven to make the distinction between the Dimension of Becoming and that of History, as he made it.

His argument on this point appears at various places in his book. The main point of it seems to be this. Christianity teaches every man's utter responsibility to God. God is revealed in the Word, in Christ. Every man must make his choice for or against Christ. All this is involved in the German word "*Entscheidung*."

¹ *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, p. 411.

² *Idem*. p. 76.

³ *Idem*. p. 102.

⁴ *Idem*. p. 75.

But says Brunner, the traditional view of Adam and Eve in paradise tones down man's responsibility to God. We must keep the whole matter of man's responsibility to God on an absolutely personal level. Traditional Christianity has failed to do this. It has given us the opportunity to shift the blame for our sins upon some one else, namely upon a certain individual named Adam.

The traditional view of the Genesis account, says Brunner, has given us the wrong conception of origins. The creation doctrine was meant to teach us our momentary dependence upon God. But our physical descent from Adam would put Adam between God and us. The Adam of traditional Christianity has acted as a shock-absorber between the individual man and his God.

In a similar fashion, says Brunner, the traditional notion of Adam in paradise has obscured the biblical doctrine of the image of God in man. That doctrine too was meant to stress each man's constant responsibility to God. But the church has reduced this doctrine of an actualistic and personalistic relation to God to the level of mere sedimentary possession. Man was supposed to have in his very being a certain God-likeness.⁵ His "original righteousness" was thought of as a quality that Adam and Eve carried about with them.⁶ Even the natural man is supposed to have certain remnants of this quality. We tend to trust in this quality much as we might trust in a good bank account. Brunner wants to teach us that we must work each day for our ration of spiritual bread.

Finally the traditional notion of Adam in paradise has, according to Brunner, obscured the true biblical doctrine of the fall of man. And here especially, says Brunner, we see the evil effects of the traditional view. We have charged Adam in paradise instead of Adam in us for the sin we commit.⁷ The traditional notion has played into the hands of a naturalistic-deterministic philosophy.⁸ As with the question of Creation so with that of the Fall we ask in vain where or when it took place. The church should have known better. "Creation and Fall both lie behind the historical-visible reality ..."⁹

Much more might be said about each of the points mentioned. Brunner's attack on the traditional or orthodox position is open and violent. He expects to give no quarter. A new and radically different theology has been introduced at Princeton.

Let no one be mistaken by the false flag which Princeton flies. The new president, Dr. John A. Mackay, insists that Princeton is today, as it has always been, for the Reformed Faith. He claims that Brunner's theology will be in line with that of Charles Hodge. The facts in the case do not bear out such a claim. The former president, Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, sought to steer Princeton away from the Reformed Faith into the broad stream of common denominator Christianity; Dr. Mackay now seeks to steer Princeton into the shoreless ocean of mere ideational philosophy.

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⁵ *Idem.* p. 86.

⁶ *Idem.* p. 95.

⁷ *Idem.* p. 112.

⁸ *Idem.* p. 281.

⁹ *Idem.*, p. 136.

³⁰ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Recent Developments At Princeton—An Editorial

The Presbyterian Guardian

1938

Volume 5, Pages 41ff

Since the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929 several new professors have been appointed at that institution. Only two of the old faculty remain.

The first men to be appointed under the new regime were Drs. Kuizenga, Zwemer and Mackenzie. It became apparent, especially from the writings of Dr. Mackenzie, that a new and different theology had been introduced at Princeton. In the articles that he contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* Dr. Mackenzie substituted human experience for the Bible as the last court of appeal for sound doctrine. We quote one typical sentence: “The defect of Augustinianism and Calvinism is that they start from a knowledge of God’s absoluteness above experience, deduce logically from this his eternal decrees, and so explain individual experience. We must start from experience, however, and, doing so, the problem is to reconcile God’s absoluteness in grace with man’s freedom.”¹

Starting from experience as the final seat of authority Dr. Mackenzie feels free to wipe out the distinction between the Reformed Faith and Arminianism. He rejects both unconditional election and limited atonement. He says that the synergist was right in rejecting the doctrine which holds that God made “remedial provision only for some.”²

But Dr. Mackenzie did not stop short with indifference to specifically Reformed truths. His inclusivism extended itself even to non-Christian views. He sought to bring evolution and creation into harmony with one another, as the following words indicate: “Perhaps the day may come also when the scientific view of natural selection and the New Testament doctrine of an election by grace may be seen to be both sides of God’s activity, and not the horns of an inescapable dilemma. Not ‘either-or,’ but ‘both-and.’”³ He even employed the concept of chance in order to answer the problem of the relation of a changeless God to human responsibility.

It appears then that the experience starting-point has in the case of Dr. Mackenzie, as in the case of so many others, bred an indifference to the uniqueness of the Reformed Faith and even an indifference to the uniqueness of Christianity. This theological indifference expresses itself in the church by a tolerance of Arminianism and of Modernism. The theology of Dr. Mackenzie fits in admirably with the inclusivist policy introduced into Princeton Seminary by its former president, Dr. J. Ross Stevenson.

¹ Vol. 6, p. 126.

² *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, p. 164.

³ *Christianity—The Paradox of God*, p. 80.

The New President

The new president, Dr. John A. Mackay, is following in the footsteps of his predecessor. During Dr. Stevenson's regime Auburn Affirmationists were elected to the governing board of the seminary, and during Dr. Mackay's regime an Auburn Affirmationist has been added to the faculty. Dr. William Robertson Farmer, an Auburn Affirmationist, is now teaching as "visiting Professor of Homiletics."¹ Dr. Mackay was a leader in the recent Oxford conference where the "orthodox" and the Modernists sought for a common platform in theology. He has also openly expressed his sympathies with the Buchmanite movement.

Reformed men have sometimes rejoiced in the fact that Dr. Mackay is emphasizing the need of having a theology. But the theology Dr. Mackay is seeking to introduce is of the Barthian sort, as his article in *The Journal of Religion* for January, 1937, shows. We shall not now speak of Barthianism in general. It has been pointed out in previous issues of *The Presbyterian Guardian* that Barthianism, like Modernism, is indifferent to the Bible as the finished revelation of God. And this is, in effect, the same as substituting human experience for the Bible as the final court of appeal in all questions of truth and practice.

Otto Piper

It must be said to the credit of Dr. Mackay that he is bringing men of scholarship and attainment to Princeton. One of these is Dr. Otto Piper, of Germany. Dr. Piper is "Guest Professor of Systematic Theology" for the year 1937–1938. Let us look at some points in his theology.

As in the case of Dr. Mackenzie, Dr. Piper begins his theology with the experience approach. He draws the line of orthodoxy straight from Luther to Schleiermacher. He tells us that the experience-theory of Schleiermacher is essentially the same as that of Luther. He adds that Emil Brunner's criticism of Schleiermacher, as set forth in *Die Mystik und das Wort*, rests chiefly upon misunderstanding.² Now if it be remembered that Schleiermacher is the "father of modern theology," that is, the father of modernist theology which has broken with the Bible as the sole source and seat of authority, the far-reaching significance of virtually identifying Luther's conception of Christian experience with Schleiermacher's conception of Christian experience, becomes clear.

In this pamphlet on *Erlösung als Erfahrung* it is once more human experience that is set before us as the standard of truth. The same is true of his large two volume work on, *Die Grundlagen der evangelischen Ethik*.³

As in the case of Dr. Mackenzie the experience-approach led to an indifference with respect to Reformed doctrines so, in the case of Dr. Piper, there is a marked indifference to denominational distinctions. We quote: "Nothing would please the writer more than a removal of all Confessional differences in Protestantism. However, though the author is

¹ *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Nov. 1937, p. 24.

² *Gottes Wahrheit und die Wahrheit der Kirche*, 1933, p. 57.

³ see p. 6 ff.

exerting himself in every way to further this cause, he does not hide from himself his fundamentally Lutheran attitude.”⁴ This is indeed remarkable. Princeton Seminary is by its charter solemnly committed to the Reformed Faith. Dr. Piper has committed himself to the wiping out of all denominational differences and therewith to the destruction of the Reformed Faith. And if in his accepted program he should be hindered by his tradition that tradition would draw him toward Lutheranism rather than toward the Reformed Faith.

In his pamphlet, *Vom Machtwillen der Kirche*, Dr. Piper argues that truth must not be thought of as coming to the church in a given and finished revelation. Truth, he says, is not static but dynamic. And because truth is dynamic we can easily come to an understanding with those who hold views opposite to our own. We should not say that their views are false and our views are true. Accordingly, no one group in the church should presume to possess the truth and to represent the true doctrine of the church. “For that reason,” he says, “it should never be our goal to have one point of view dominate over other points of view either in the church or in theology.”⁵ It is not proper, he holds, to seek to replace the common orthodoxy in the church by liberalism or to replace liberalism by orthodoxy.

Thus we see again that when men substitute experience for the Bible as the seat of authority they cannot stop short at indifference to denominational distinctions. They are bound in the end to wipe out the distinction between Modernism and Christianity as well.

Emil Brunner

The last man to be appointed to the faculty at Princeton is Dr. Emil Brunner. Dr. Brunner, as is well known, was formerly associated with Karl Barth. He is one of the chief exponents of “dialectical theology.” We have no space to follow Brunner in the intricacies of his theology. It may suffice to mention the fact that Brunner, like the other men discussed in this article, and like Dr. Homrighausen whose book was reviewed in the February issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian*, substitutes human experience for the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth and for that reason does not maintain the uniqueness of the Reformed or even of the Christian Faith.

That Brunner begins with experience as something that must interpret the Bible, instead of starting from the Bible which must interpret human experience, can be seen from the fact that he has no hesitation in accepting the principles of “higher criticism.” He even feels that it is our business to engage in “higher criticism.” The human element in the Scripture, he thinks, is inherently wrong and we must separate it from the divine. In several of his books Brunner speaks in this vein. We quote from his recent book, *Our Faith*. It was published in 1936. In this book, as well as in his earlier books, he continues to give to the human mind the right to find the Word of God in the Bible rather than to accept the Bible as such as the Word of God. He asks the question: “Is the whole Bible God’s Word then?” He answers with a proviso: “Yes, in so far as it speaks of that which is ‘here’ in Christ.”⁶

⁴ *Ethik*, Vol. 1, p. 23.

⁵ p. 34.

⁶ p. 9.

Brunner gives us an interesting analogy from which we can learn his conception of Scripture. "Is everything true that is to be found in the Bible?" he asks. In reply he says: "Let me draw a somewhat modern analogy by way of answering this question. Every one has seen the trade slogan 'His Master's Voice.' If you buy a gramophone record you are told that you will hear the Master Caruso. Is that true? Of course. But really his voice? Certainly! And yet—there are some noises made by the machine which are not the master's voice, but the scratching of the steel needle upon the hard disk. But do not become impatient with the hard disk! For only by means of the record can you hear 'the master's voice.' So, too, is it with the Bible. It makes the real Master's voice audible—really his voice, his words, what he wants to say. But there are incidental noises accompanying, just because God speaks His Word through the voice of man."⁷ It is, in Brunner's latest as well as in his earlier writings, the business of man himself to pick out of the Bible that which he thinks of as his "Master's Voice."

Dr. Mackay is anxious to assure us that Brunner is now more orthodox than he used to be. However, in the very letter from Brunner which Dr. Mackay publishes to prove his point, we have once more the fatal proviso that we noted above to the effect that we must distinguish the human from the divine in the Bible. Brunner says: "It is, however, my conviction that faith in the inspiration of the Bible does not exclude, but include, the distinction between the Word of God and the earthly, temporal vessel which carries it."⁸ There is, then, no noticeable difference between Brunner's earlier and later writings on the point of the relation of human experience to Scripture. Brunner continues to make experience the final seat of truth.

We note in conclusion that as Brunner accepts the negative criticism of the Bible so he also accepts the evolution theory of the origin of man as probably true. Through he speaks frequently of the creation doctrine and its importance it is evident that he does not hold the Genesis narrative to be an historical record. In his large work on ethics, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, he says we have nothing to do with primitive man as a subject of ethics.⁹ The fall of man in paradise and original sin have no determining significance in Brunner's theology. He holds that the whole question of man's animal origin has no important bearing upon the Christian Faith. "Whether or not God has employed an evolution of millions of years for the purpose of creating man is the critical concern of the natural scientist; it is not a critical question for Faith."¹⁰

What the recent developments at Princeton mean ought now to be plain. Princeton once was a bulwark of the Reformed Faith. Who can, in the light of such facts as we have enumerated, call it such today? But can we at least look to Princeton for a defense of the evangelical faith? It seems not. When men are called to its faculty who, it is known, accept negative Bible criticism and evolution, no great defense of the Bible and of the truths of the Bible can reasonably be expected. Those who are sincerely concerned for the eternal welfare of men's souls in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. cannot afford to ignore these facts.

⁷ p. 10.

⁸ *The Presbyterian*, February 17, 1938.

⁹ p. 4.

¹⁰ *Our Faith*, p. 36.

A Strange Debate About Brunner

The Presbyterian Guardian
1938
Volume 5, Pages 106f

In *The Presbyterian* of May 5, 1938, we find what amounts to a debate about Emil Brunner. Emil Brunner is to be guest professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary for the year 1938–1939. In view of this fact Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse asks certain questions of Brunner. But as Dr. Brunner is in Switzerland at this time Dr. John A. Mackay, the president of Princeton Seminary, undertakes to answer for him.

The questions asked by Dr. Barnhouse pertain chiefly to man's original estate. Were Adam and Eve real historical figures? Is paradise a describable state? Was there a real fall of man in the sense that the historical Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and were driven forth from paradise? Barnhouse quotes from Brunner to show that he rejects the Genesis narrative as an historical account of these matters. We give one of the quotations made by Dr. Barnhouse from Brunner's latest book, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. "The Fall is not an event in the evolutionary history of mankind; it is, just as little as the Creation as such, an empirical event; it lies behind or above the plane of empiricism. The contrast of 'created good' and 'fallen' has nothing whatsoever to do with the difference between 'earlier—later.' Abraham, just because he lived in an earlier age than I, is for this reason not nearer the good creation and event of the Fall than I am. The history of the evolution of mankind does not lead us as we trace back, to a Fall and a Creation ..."¹

On the basis of this and other utterances of Brunner, Dr. Barnhouse remarks: "In fact, his latest book, not yet translated into English, appearing in the autumn of 1937, contains major denials of Christian doctrine, and places Dr. Brunner in a position absolutely at variance with the Word of God and the Presbyterian Standards."

We can only rejoice in the fact that Dr. Barnhouse has raised a voice of protest against the introduction of such theology as Brunner holds into Princeton Seminary. There has been very little protest indeed against the new theology that is being introduced at Princeton. But why does Dr. Barnhouse do nothing but raise a protest of this nature? There are many Modernists in the church of which Dr. Barnhouse is a minister. These Modernists must certainly be charged with "major denials of Christian doctrine." Why does not Dr. Barnhouse protest against their presence in the church? Or rather, why does not Dr. Barnhouse start proceedings against them? After all, to make a protest now and then helps very little. It produces at most a momentary stir. The "authorities" frown—and

³¹Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

¹p. 413, translation by Dr. Barnhouse.

all is over. When the children are a bit unruly mother raises her finger and all is quiet again. Will the “fundamentalists” in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. continue to do nothing but grumble now and then? Are they not responsible for Christ’s little ones who are being led astray? We sincerely hope and pray that they may undertake to bear the reproach of Christ in the courts of the church.

Barnhouse On Barth

We proceed now to note an inconsistency in the theological criticism of Dr. Barnhouse. Brunner rejects the Genesis account of the origin and fall of man. That is, he rejects this account as a simple historical narrative. He most emphatically claims not to reject the Genesis account as a symbolical picture of what is true of every man. For this substitution of symbol for historical fact Barnhouse rightly takes him to task. Dr. Barnhouse questions whether Brunner can have “a proper concept of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ after denying the Biblical concept of man in his original state, in his Fall and consequent necessity of redemption from original sin.”

On the other hand, Dr. Barnhouse has very little criticism to offer on the position of Karl Barth. He makes a contrast between Barth and Brunner and thinks that the theology of the former is far better than that of the latter. After quoting a passage from Barth he says: “That Karl Barth should consider Dr. Brunner a greater danger than the avowed Modernists is striking. Barth traveled the long road away from Modernism back to the simple Christian position, and while he still has some distance to go in certain lines, he sees clearly in all the great points involving man’s complete ruin in sin and God’s perfect remedy in Christ.” This is strange indeed! Dr. Mackay quite rightly points out that the category of the “supra-historical” is as fundamental to the thinking of Barth as it is to the thinking of Brunner. This is true of Barth’s recent writings no less than of his earlier writings. It has been pointed out fully in previous issues of *The Presbyterian Guardian* (Jan. 9, Feb. 27, July, 1937; Feb., Mar., May, 1938). We merely recall one or two matters. When Barth gave his lectures on the Apostles’ Creed he was asked about the speaking serpent in paradise. He was asked whether he took the Genesis narrative literally or symbolically. In reply Barth said: “I would decidedly oppose characterising this incident as ‘myth.’ No more can I, on the other hand, characterise it, in the sense of historical science, as ‘historical,’ for a speaking serpent—now, indeed, I am as little able to imagine that (apart from everything else!) as anyone. But I should like to ask the dear friends of the speaking serpent whether it would not be better to hold fast to the fact that this ‘is written’ and to go on and interest themselves in what the serpent spoke?”² Barth does not believe in the historicity of the Genesis account any more than Brunner does. How then can Dr. Barnhouse say of Barth that he has come back to “the simple Christian position?” Obviously, he has not.

² *Credo*, p. 190.

Dr. Mackay's Reply

But while we note these inconsistencies in the questions of Dr. Barnhouse his point is in itself well taken. If anything is plain from the writings of Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield and C. W. Hodge it is that they believed in Christianity as an historical religion. Following the examples of Christ and the Apostles they accepted the Genesis narrative at its face value. Now the chair of Systematic Theology at Princeton is going to be occupied by a man who feels free to substitute a symbolical for an historical interpretation of Genesis. More than that, for Brunner as for Barth the facts of history as spoken of in Scripture are nothing but "pointers" to some vague suprahistorical realm. With their notion of history it makes little difference whether they do or do not take the Scripture narratives as historical. If they believe in the historical resurrection of Christ this historical resurrection is not the "real" resurrection. The "real" resurrection is suprahistorical. There is, according to Barth and Brunner, no saving power in any of the historical events of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Herewith historical Christianity falls to the ground.

Yet in his reply to Dr. Barnhouse, Dr. Mackay ignores this basic fact. He is simply amazed that Dr. Barnhouse can ask such questions as he does. We quote a sentence from his article: "If Dr. Barnhouse had paid attention to the important category of the supra-historical, which is basic to the thought of Dr. Brunner, as it is to that of Barth, and plays a great part in the thought of Kierkegaard, the great master of both, as also in Julius Müller's 'Doctrine of Sin,' he would not have so easily succumbed to an unwitting travesty of Dr. Brunner's position."

There might be some point to this reply if Dr. Mackay could make plain to us what this "category of the supra-historical" means. He has not done so. We do not think he can do so. We do not think Barth and Brunner have done so. In short, we do not think it can be done even by the most brilliant of men.

There is one point, however, that seems to be sufficiently clear. The "category of the supra-historical" is offered as a substitute for the category of the historical. "Real" events, according to Dr. Mackay, do not take place in the realm of history but in the realm of the suprahistorical.

Orthodox Christians have constantly been amazed at the signers of the "Auburn Affirmation." Affirmationists have stoutly maintained that they hold to the "facts" of the Christian religion. They claim to oppose merely the "interpretation" of those who take the facts of redemptive history as having a significance in themselves. Dr. Mackay does a similar sort of thing in his defense of Brunner. We quote one instance. "Man fell from his first estate; he is as we know him, a fallen creature, a lost soul, utterly incapable of saving himself. This Biblical truth is never absent from Dr. Brunner's thought and is affirmed constantly in his writings. He insists, however, that in the story of the Fall, the ineffable mystery itself is clothed in symbolical language, as is the story of Creation, and is, moreover, supra-historical in character."

When Modernists argue in this fashion we think of them as having unwittingly substituted a pagan ideational system of philosophy for the Christian faith. The burden of proof rests with Dr. Mackay that he has not fallen into the same error. By historical facts Christianity has meant historical facts and nothing else.

Dr. Mackay claims, to be sure, that Brunner is but following the method of interpretation employed by Charles Hodge. Hodge did not feel that he was doing injustice to Scripture when he accepted the Copernican instead of the Ptolemaic conception of the universe. So Brunner feels he is doing no injustice to Scripture when he introduces his “category of the supra-historical” in explanation of it. So runs the argument of Dr. Mackay.

This argument has no real validity.

One man may look at a tree and call it an elm. Later he learns that it was a beech. But he always thinks of the tree he looks at as a real tree. Another man looks at the same tree and says it is but a “pointer to” or a “symbol of” a “real” tree in the “supra-historical” realm. For him the tree he looks at is not a real tree. Hodge may be compared to the first man and Brunner to the second. Hodge accepted historical Christianity; Brunner rejects it.

It were better if Dr. Mackay did not follow the Modernist policy of covering up basic issues, but told us simply that he means to have Princeton Seminary depart still further from its former adherence to historic Christianity and the Reformed Faith.

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³²Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Changes In Barth's Theology

The Presbyterian Guardian

1938

Volume 5, Pages 221ff

During the course of recent years the theology of Karl Barth has undergone considerable change. We naturally ask in what direction it has changed. The Rev. Professor William Childs Robinson of Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, a Reformed scholar whom we delight to honor for his great work in the interest of the Reformed Faith, answers our question by speaking of "Barth's movement in the Reformed direction." In *The Presbyterian* of October 27, 1938, he publishes an account of an interview he has had with Barth. His conclusion, based upon the interview, may be summed up by saying that for him the difference between Barthian theology and the Reformed Faith is largely one of emphasis. With this conclusion of Dr. Robinson we find it impossible to agree.

We do not deny that there is some plausibility in Dr. Robinson's conclusion. Barth lays more stress upon history now than he did in his earlier works. In his book on *Romans* he compared the incarnation of Christ to a tangent that merely touches a circle, but now he criticizes that comparison and finds it deficient. Again, in his *Dogmatics* of 1927, he to a large extent worked out an existential philosophy apart from the Scriptures, but now he wishes to find no other basis for his theology than Scripture alone. We are not indifferent to, or unappreciative of, these changes, but we see no evidence in them of an approach to the Reformed Faith.

Time

Barth, we are told, is willing to say that he accepts the virgin birth, the death and the resurrection of Christ "as actual and an significant facts." This would seem to point to his full acceptance of historic Christianity. However, Barth has his reservations when he accepts such "facts" as the virgin birth and the resurrection. These reservations are largely based upon his conception of time. We therefore turn to a brief analysis of his conception of time.

Barth speaks of three kinds of time. In the first place, there is creation-time. That time is now "hidden and withdrawn" from us.¹ In the second place there is the time we as sinners know. "Time, after the fall, is a different, a new time."² As sinners we have time, not in virtue of our being created, but by the special goodness of God.³ In the third place there is revelation-time. It is called revelation-time because God has revealed Himself in it. In fact, God has created this third time for the very purpose of revelation.⁴

¹ *Kirchliche Dogmatik* 1 2, p. 52.

² *Idem.*, p. 52.

³ *Idem.*, p. 53.

⁴ *Idem.*, p. 54.

But why should a special time have to be created for purposes of revelation? Barth's answer to this question is a simple one. Revelation could not enter into "our" time as such without losing its character as revelation. A revelation that entered into "our" time as such would be subject to human manipulation. We should be able to apply our judgements of value to it. Thus God would not be "free" with respect to us. Barth stresses this point over and over again in his discussion of revelation.

It follows that if we are to understand what revelation means to us, we must not impose upon it our notions of past, present and future. When the New Testament speaks of any present time, we should remember that over and beyond any calendar-time it refers to revelation-time. In this revelation-time there is a genuine past and a genuine future just because the present to which they stand related is a real present not dependent upon the calendar. Speaking of revelation-time, Barth says:

This is characteristic of the time of Jesus Christ: it is the time of the Lord of time. It is, in distinction from our time, controlled, and for that very reason, real, fulfilled time. Here we have no dilemma between a present that fades away into past and future, and a past and future that in turn disappear in the present. Here we have a genuine present ... and for that very reason also a genuine past and a genuine future. The Word of God is. It is never "not yet" or "no more." It is not subject to becoming and for that reason it is not subject to passing away or change. All this may also be said with respect to the Word that became flesh and therefore temporal. Jesus Christ is the same in each moment of His temporal existence, in every Before and After, in which He is revealed as true God and man. The Word spoken from all eternity lifts time, into which it is spoken (without destroying it as time), as now being His time into His own eternity, and causes it to participate in the only real Being of God which moves itself, rests in itself, and is sufficient unto itself. It is spoken by God, a Perfect without comparison (not in "our" time, but in God's time, created by the incarnate Word, we find a genuine, real, never to be resolved Perfect!), and for that reason it is coming in the world, a Future without comparison (because again it is not in "our" time, but in God's time, created by the incarnate Word, that we find a genuine, real, not to be resolved, archetypal Future!).¹

The Incarnation

It is in the light of Barth's conception of time that we are to understand what he says about such matters as the incarnation, the virgin birth, the resurrection and the return of Christ. As far as the incarnation is concerned, we observe that Barth virtually identifies it with revelation. The incarnation therefore takes place in revelation-time. In fact, it is the incarnation that makes revelation-time what it is. Thus the incarnation does not take place in "our" time as such.

This is, we believe, the most charitable construction that can be placed upon Barth's discussion of the incarnation. If Barth in some places speaks as though the incarnation has something to do with "our" time, he adds in the same breath that "our" time must be lifted into God's time. Thus he comes very near to the borderline of pantheism. But we ignore this for the present to emphasize the fact that for Barth the incarnation does not occur in "our" time.

¹ *Idem.*, p. 57.

The Virgin Birth

That our interpretation of Barth's conception of the incarnation is essentially correct may also be noted from what Barth says about the virgin birth of Christ. Barth accepts the "fact" of the virgin birth. He even writes at length in its defense against Brunner and others who do not accept it. But Barth accepts the virgin birth only as a sign which points to something that takes place in revelation-time.² Barth illustrates what he means by the virgin birth by comparing it with what happened when Jesus was baptized. When the dove descended upon Jesus it did not mean that Jesus then and there became the Son of God. The sign of the dove merely pointed to the Son of God who existed quite apart from the sign. "The sign at the Jordan baptism, like the sign of the Virgin Birth, points back to that which is, even without this sign, the Mystery of the Being of this man ..."³ Thus the virgin birth is certainly not, according to Barth, the point at which the incarnation really takes place in "our" time. When Barth says he accepts the virgin birth as a significant fact, he means a signifying fact. But the sign and the reality, Barth warns us, must never be identified. If I wish to visit President Roosevelt, I may see a sign that points me to the White House. The sign may be a genuine sign and I may defend it as such. But the sign is not the White House.

The Resurrection

Our interpretation of Barth's conceptions of the incarnation and the virgin birth is corroborated by his conception of the resurrection of Christ. Barth is far from clear in telling us what he thinks actually took place in "our" time when Christ rose from the tomb, but he is very clear in telling us that the real resurrection did not take place on any day dateable by our calendar. To be sure, Barth does speak of a dateable time with respect to the resurrection of Christ, but his date refers to an eternal present. Speaking of actual dates in relation to the resurrection he says:

The resurrection of Jesus is not a fact that belongs to the past. What happened here, according to the witness of the New Testament, can in accordance with its nature not be 'no more,' as little as it can be 'not yet.' This witness refers to a reality which is not subject to passing away and needs no becoming.⁴

A little further on Barth discusses the nature of the memory that fixes itself upon the resurrection of Christ. He tells us that such a memory in the nature of the case can have only one object. It is a memory that is itself lifted out of "our" time by virtue of the object upon which it fixes itself. Then Barth returns to the uniqueness of the object of the memory of which the New Testament speaks, in the following words:

Memory of an eternal time, such as we have in the memory of the risen one, is of necessity a memory of such a time as transcends "our" time, and therefore cannot be limited to a dateable time to which it has proximate reference. Memory of this time must also be expectation of this

² *Idem.*, p. 200ff.

³ *Idem.*, p. 218.

⁴ *Idem.*, p. 127.

same time. Our whole time must, if it is true that God has time for us, be surrounded by the reality of the divine time.¹

It appears that, in his doctrine of the resurrection of Christ no less than in his doctrines of the incarnation and the virgin birth, Barth still denies historic Christianity. Historic Christianity cannot be maintained by one who takes the facts of redemptive history out of “our” time as Barth does.

Eschatology

From the quotations given above we may also learn what sort of eschatology to expect in Barth. We need waste no words on the question whether Barth is pre-, post-, or amillennial in his view of the return of Christ. The adherents of these positions, however much they may differ among themselves, fully agree in expecting the return of Christ in “our” time. They all take the calendar seriously. Barth, on the other hand, in his latest major work no less than in the Credo, undermines the conception of time that underlies all these views. To say that you expect and remember the same event is to make nonsense of the calendar. Barth’s position is destructive of all true eschatology.

The Bible

In conclusion we call attention to what Barth thinks of Scripture. Has Barth a higher conception of the Scriptures now than he formerly had? We do not think so. Barth feels free now, as he has felt free from the first of his published writings, to engage in negative criticism of the Bible. Does he show any more reverence for the Scriptures on this point than the Auburn Affirmationists do? It does not seem so. When Barth discusses the doctrine of the virgin birth does he believe in it—if he may be said to believe in it at—because Scripture tells us of it as an event that actually took place? No, he does not! He accepts it on the basis of its propriety, on the basis of the fact that it fits in with his conception of revelation. In other words, the Bible or a part of the Bible, becomes to Barth the revelation of God.

Barth is, as we should expect, very much in arms against the Bible as a once-for-all revelation of God.² To hold to the Westminster Confession’s conception of Scripture would be, for Barth, to destroy the very notion of revelation. It would be to bind God to something that has come into existence in “our” time. Thus Christ’s real revelation and Christ’s real presence would be taken from us.

All in all, then, we do not wonder that Barth himself speaks of mutual hostility between the followers of the late Abraham Kuyper and himself.³ The followers of Abraham Kuyper hold fast to simple historic Christianity as expressed in the Reformed Faith. They believe in the facts of the virgin birth, the resurrection and the return of Christ as events that have taken place or will take place in “our” time. They do not play fast and loose with the calendar. They believe, moreover, in the Scriptures as the very

¹ *Idem.*, p. 128.

² *Idem.*, pp. 78, 110, 112, 113.

³ *Idem.*, p. 931.

Word of God which has come once for all in “our” time. They believe that it is possible to build a system of doctrine upon the basis of Scripture, which system of doctrine is essentially correct in its statement of Scripture truth. In all this they find Barth to be their foe and not their friend.

Those who seek to preserve and develop the Reformed heritage in our day can ill afford to reduce the difference between Barthian theology and the Reformed Faith to one of mere emphasis. If they do, they have no further right to oppose subjectivism in general.

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³³Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Old Testament Ethical Ideal

The Banner

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The Old Testament is frequently attacked because of its ethical requirements. People think that the ethical ideal of the Old Testament is far lower than that of the New Testament. It is my purpose in this article to point out briefly that the ethical ideal of the New and the ethical ideal of the Old Testament are the same.

The Absoluteness Of The Ideal

Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Jesus demanded complete perfection. Did he on this point raise the ethical ideal of the Old Testament to a higher level? No, he did not. Moses placed this same requirement of absolute perfection before Israel when he gave the law. "The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves." Jesus himself reiterated this requirement. He asked nothing more. He could ask nothing more.

Did God make this demand of perfection in the Old Testament quite seriously? We sometimes speak of high ideals that we never expect to realize. We "hitch our wagon to a star." We know we cannot reach a star. We are not expected to reach a star. All non-Christian thought believes in something of this sort. It may speak of an absolute ideal but it does not take this ideal seriously. The Old and the New Testament stand as a unit and together they stand against all other statements of the ethical ideal. They presuppose the creation of man by God. They presuppose the fall of man into sin. God, who created a perfect man, continues to require perfection of the sinner. Non-Christian thought does not take creation seriously. It takes for granted that the universe, man included, is just there somehow. It does not take the fall of man seriously. It takes for granted that evil is just there somehow. Consequently it cannot take the ethical ideal of perfection seriously. How could God require perfection of man if man were not created perfect and if he had not himself brought sin into the world?

Thus the whole Bible, the Old Testament no less than the New, appears in its uniqueness. And if possible the uniqueness of the Old Testament appears even more strongly than that of the New Testament. The Old Testament ideal was given much earlier than the New Testament ideal. In that early time ethical ideals and practices were very low indeed. But here, at one spot in the world, in contrast to all other ethical ideals, stood the Old Testament with its requirement of absolute perfection.

That God took the ethical ideal of perfection quite seriously appears from his dealing with individuals and with Israel as a nation. He required of Abraham, the father of the faithful, an absolute implicit obedience. Modernists today criticize the story of the

“sacrifice of Isaac.” What sort of god is it, they say, who would require human sacrifice. And what sort of ethics is it that places a premium on blind obedience rather than on love. Such ethics may fit in with the Calvinistic genius but not with a true spiritual Christianity.

As against this we glory in the story of Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his son. He so loved and trusted God that for him whatever God said was right. He subjected his own notions about right and wrong to God’s commands. Contrast this position with that of the Greeks. For Plato the good existed in itself apart from God. God and man looked up to this good as something to which both were subject. This impersonal good was a sort of umpire between god and man. Man could appeal from God’s commands to that abstract impersonal good that existed independently of both. It was as a “daysman betwixt them.” Thus man was really independent as God. For Plato the good was good in itself and therefore God wanted it; for Abraham the good is good because God says it is.

What is true of an individual like Abraham is also true of the nation as a whole. Israel as a theocracy was under the direct command of God their king. During the first part of Israel’s national existence God forbade them to have any earthly king at all. Then when He did allow them to have a king he gave them to understand that their king was not to be like other kings but was to be a king under God. Then too the prophets always stood next to the kings to tell them what to do. There was to be no political diplomacy in the usual sense of the term. The kings were simply to carry out the behests of God.

The severities of the Old Testament, so often made an object of criticism, also testify to the absoluteness of the Old Testament ideal. When Israel sinned the sin with the golden calf God threatened to destroy the whole nation. How then could God’s promises be fulfilled? Did not God contradict himself if He promised one thing and then would carry out its opposite? Moses and the people were sorely tried, but one thing they must learn. It was the lesson that Abraham had learned. It was the lesson of absolute and implicit obedience to God. God’s absolute holiness must be maintained at all costs.

What of the concessions of the Old Testament? Was not God lenient about matters of divorce? Could Abraham, the father of believers, be a member of the Christian Reformed Church? The answer is given in the words of Jesus. It was for the hardness of their hearts’ sake that God made these concessions. God did not lower his absolute requirements for man. He merely used wise pedagogical measures in bringing man to live in accordance with that absolute requirement. From the beginning it was not so, says Jesus. By virtue of creation man must be perfect. As a sinner he cannot be perfect. If God should immediately press his alternative of perfection or death, the sinner would surely die. Suppose you are sick. You are on the brink of death. You need a blood transfusion. Will the doctors expect to make you well in a day? Will they drain you of your blood completely and then refill you with new, much as you drain your car of oil to put in new? No, they do not deal with you as with a machine. They treat you as an organism. You would die if they treated you as a machine. So God makes concessions in the Old Testament. These concessions are means by which He brings to men the absolute ideal. They are stepping-stones toward that absolute ideal.

The Ideal To Be Realized By Grace Alone

The analogy of the preceding paragraph should not mislead us. The sinner is not merely sick. He is spiritually dead. His blood has all been drained out of him. Or rather

he has drained himself of all his blood. He must first be made alive. Of what use is it to give a blood transfusion to a dead body? Back of the Old Testament concessions lies the Old Testament doctrine of election by grace. How beautifully and fully Dr. Vos brings this out in his Notes on Old Testament Biblical Theology. Abraham is dead as other men are dead. He lives in Ur of the Chaldees. He serves gods of wood and stone. He is without God in the world. But God chooses him. God takes him out of Ur of the Chaldees. God gives him great and glorious promises. God works miracles for him; Isaac is a child of miracle. Abraham trusts in the miracle-working God when he lifts his hand to slay his son. He believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham was miracle conscious. Sometimes he was weak in the faith. He would have used natural means for the fulfillment of the promises. Then speaks the heavenly voice to him: "Fear not Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Whatever the appearances, whatever "the laws of science," God will work a biological miracle. Abraham must be still more miracle conscious. Miracles are gifts of God's grace for the redemption of His people.

Without the electing grace of God, Abraham knew not God. He knew not the absolute requirement of God. Even to be aware of the absolute ideal, man must be elected by the grace of God; but being made aware of the absolute ideal, he is also enabled to walk toward that ideal. He can now take his first blood transfusion. After a while he can take more; but always he must look to the substitute. God provided a substitute for Isaac. That substitute pointed forward to the great substitute that was to come.

How then could the law make grace of none effect? The giving of the law presupposed the giving of grace. Without grace the law could never be known as the absolute law. By obscuring this point dispensationalism brings down the law to a pagan level of pious advice. Thus the uniqueness of Scripture is ignored.

The tabernacle and its sacrifices brings out all this most clearly. No one can approach unto God unless blood is shed for him. There is no remission without the shedding of blood. It is only when the high priest has taken blood from the altar in the court that he may enter into the holy of holies on the day of atonement. Not till then can he see the ark that contains the tables of the law. Then, too, he need not fear the law's demands. "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God," but his sins have been removed. By grace the law is given; by grace the law's demands are fulfilled. This is the teaching of the Old no less than the teaching of the New Testament.

Thus the uniqueness of the Bible as a whole and of the Old Testament in particular is brought out afresh. Non-Christian thought knows of no absolute ethical ideal; non-Christian thought knows of no grace. It knows of no absolute ethical ideal because it knows of no grace. The Bible sets before man the requirement of being absolutely perfect. Then it adds that man is absolutely sinful and cannot of himself take the first step toward the ideal of perfection. Over against this all non-Christian thought, ancient and modern, has a low ethical ideal. Even when as is the case in modern idealist philosophy, men speak of perfection as a "limit" or goal toward which man ought to direct his eyes, this ideal is not absolute. Man is not to be punished with death if he does not reach it. He is merely a "little worse off" than he would otherwise be. Then as to walking toward the ideal, non-Christian thought says man can very well of his own accord and in his own strength begin the journey. There is no place for a substitute in non-Christian ethical theory. There is no place for miracle; there is no place for grace.

Practical Consequences

Let us note for a moment something of the practical significance of all this for our own day. We have observed that dispensationalism un-wittingly obscures the distinctive character of Bible teaching on the question of man's duty when it falsely sets law over against grace. A good deal of the orthodox Sunday school literature of this country is written by dispensationalists. Much of the orthodox preaching in this country is done by dispensationalists. The radio brings this sort of thing into our homes.

Dispensationalism after all believes in Scripture as the infallible Word of God. Modernism on the other hand does not. It insinuates a non-Christian conception of the duty of man into the minds and hearts of children by means of preaching and particularly by means of Sunday school literature. It speaks of Jesus as the perfect man. It says we must be like Jesus. But all this is only idealist philosophy in the words of Christianity. The creation doctrine is not taken seriously. Neither is the fall of man. Man is not thought of as dead in trespasses and sins. He is thought of as able of himself, without grace, to walk toward the ideal he sees. He needs no miracle of saving grace. He can become like Jesus if he only tries.

And now Barthianism appears upon the scene. It fits in perfectly with the current scheme. It too is indifferent to the creation of man in the image of God as a real historical event. It too is indifferent to the fall of man as a real historical event. Dr. Mackay, president of Princeton Seminary, says in effect that it is foolish to think we must hold to a real Adam and Eve in paradise. Shall we then expect that men trained under such influence will counteract the influence of modernism?

Suppose a young man wants to study for the ministry. He has studied in a fundamentalist college. His background is dispensationalist. As he is opposed to modernism he goes to an "orthodox" seminary. Here he is duly instructed in Barthianism. He begins to preach. "Some people divide things by the calendar and others divide them by Christ." Thus he begins. He cares not at all whether a certain number of years ago there lived a man called Adam. Adam is for him but a symbol. He thinks he can do justice to the message of salvation through Christ without the facts of history. Accordingly he has no real difference with his modernist session. In his Sunday school he finds the usual literature. It is of the ordinary modernist variety. Will this young preacher seek with all his might to change matters here? No, here too our erstwhile fundamentalist is ready to work hand in glove with his modernist Sunday school superintendent. It is this Fundamentalist-Barthian-Modernist coalition that faces us today. This coalition is operating within the churches. Because of this coalition the uniqueness of the message of salvation is obscured if not denied. In the field of practical life of which we have been speaking it spells the most immediate and tremendous danger. To teach and preach and live the consistent biblical position of an absolute God with an absolute law, which law can only be seen and obeyed by grace is a matter of life and death.

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³⁴Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Resurrection As A Part Of Christian Truth

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It is not my purpose in this article to set forth with any fulness the significance of the resurrection of Christ. It is rather my purpose to dwell on the necessity of relating the fact of the resurrection to the system of Christian truth as a whole. The resurrection of Christ is a fact, the meaning of which will be unintelligible to us unless we think of it as related to the system of Christian truth as a unit.

The resurrection follows sharply upon and is immediately connected with the death of Christ. No one will try to think of a resurrection without a preceding death. But we must go further than merely to assert this general truth. If Christ is the second Adam, His resurrection follows upon the death of the first Adam. The death of the first Adam followed upon his sin. Thus we have a series of facts that stand or fall together; that is, the significance of the last of them depends upon the reality and significance of the preceding ones. All of them would be without meaning if the first fact, the sin of man, were not a fact.

But how should we know about these facts and about the relation between them if we had no Bible? In the Bible we have God's infallible interpretation of all facts. Not as though the Bible tells us all about all facts. But it does tell us that all facts in this universe are under God's control. A great deal of what the Bible tells us concerns the facts by which redemption is accomplished. The work of redemption forms a unified whole. For instance, the Bible connects Christ's resurrection with His death for the sins of man. It also connects the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, the work of the regeneration of the elect, with the work of Christ. What Christ did for us as sinners when He was on earth and what He does within us through His Spirit, now that He has gone to heaven, is part of one program of redemption.

All of this should seem to need no emphasis for those who adhere to the Reformed Faith. It is of the essence of the Reformed Faith to see things whole and to see them through. Yet we are constantly tempted to separate the work of Christ into small bits and thus lose its full significance.

Arminianism And The Resurrection

We are tempted to tear apart the work of Christ in the first place because in our hearts we all tend toward Arminianism. In Arminianism we can find comfort for our selfish desire to be independent of God in the matter of the acceptance of salvation. For the Arminian there is no irresistible grace. Note the effect of this Arminianism on the doctrine of the resurrection. Suppose that all men everywhere should decide not to accept the salvation of Christ as accomplished on the cross and by the resurrection. On Arminian

assumptions this could easily take place. As a result, Christ's work would be in vain. The resurrection of Christ would stand in history as some strange event that had taken place without any real purpose in the world.

If logically carried through, Arminianism is destructive of the very foundation of Christianity. It is not merely on the so-called "five points of Calvinism" that people of the Reformed persuasion are to be distinguished from those who hold to Arminian teaching. The difference goes, in the last analysis, to the foundation of all Christian belief. Happily, however, Arminians are usually inconsistent. They separate the work Christ does within us from the work He has done "without" us, but they do not separate the facts of Bible history from one another. It does not occur to them to separate the resurrection of Christ from the fact that Adam sinned in paradise. Nor do they separate the Bible itself from the facts of which it speaks. It does not occur to them to think of the Bible otherwise than as the infallible Word of God.

Infallibility And The Resurrection

It may be said, therefore, that though orthodox Arminians seriously misinterpret the significance of the resurrection, there are others who misinterpret the resurrection still more seriously. We have in mind those who think of the Bible as something less than infallibly inspired. There are those who speak of the Bible as being "essentially true." They imply that it is not infallibly inspired. By taking this lower view of Scripture they feel they have not sacrificed anything of great importance. This, we believe, is a mistake. If the little boy at the dike had thought that the first little stream of water was not important, he could not have stopped the ocean from covering the land. Those who hold to the "essential truthfulness" of the Bible instead of to the infallible inspiration of the Bible have in principle exchanged an objective for a subjective view of Scripture. For the time being their house may stand but when the floods come it will surely fall.

But, it will be said, "you have wandered from your subject. What does this question of the infallibility of Scripture have to do with the resurrection? Do those who hold to the "essential truthfulness" of the Bible ever think of denying the resurrection? We rejoice that they do not. Yet what argument, we ask in turn, will they offer against those who do? Or what argument will they offer against those who, though they do not reject the resurrection, accept it merely by the grace of their own opinion as to what Christianity is?"

There are those who reject the resurrection forthwith. For them miracles do not happen. How shall we reason with them if we do not hold Scripture to be infallibly inspired? We can still reason with them on the basis of historical evidence," you say. We can tell them that they really have gone to extremes in denying the evidence there is for the resurrection. All this is true, no doubt. Suppose then that you have convinced a friend who denied the resurrection that he can no longer maintain his position. What have you gained? He now believes the resurrection, you reply. To be sure he does, but he believes it merely as an isolated event. He is still free to determine the meaning of the resurrection for himself apart from the infallible interpretation the Bible gives of it. You have trained your friend into thinking that it is altogether his own opinion, apart from the prior interpretation of the Bible, that may legitimately be taken as the foundation for acceptance or rejection of the fact of the resurrection. How then can you object if he follows your implied advice and determines the meaning of the resurrection quite apart,

for instance, from the story of Adam and Eve in paradise? And if the meaning of the resurrection is thus to be determined by man apart from the Bible as God's infallible Word, the fact itself is insecure. The fact, without the meaning Scripture gives to it, is empty. Strictly speaking, to affirm the resurrection is no better than to deny the resurrection, unless one takes the resurrection in the fulness of its meaning given it by God in His Word.

Science And The Resurrection

We have frequently been told that many scientists today are ready to believe in miracles. A former generation of scientists, we are told, thought of all nature as mechanically bound together, whereas the present generation of scientists believes in the "principle of indeterminacy." They can therefore accept miracles such as the resurrection.

Is this contention with respect to modern scientists in accord with the facts? I do not think so. It has not been established, so far as I know, that any of the leading scientists, such as Einstein, Bavinck, Jeans, or Eddington, accept the notion of miracle as the Bible presents miracle. The only "miracles" leading scientists accept, I believe, are "strange events" that have not yet been explained. Suppose then for a moment that Sir James Jeans should actually accept the "fact" of the resurrection of Christ. Would it prove anything with respect to his attitude toward Christianity? It would not seem so. He could still disbelieve in Christ as the Son of God. He could think of Christ as a strange man to whom something very strange happened. He could still think of the resurrection as something that had nothing to do with the redemptive work of Christ.

It appears then that unless we take the Bible as the infallibly inspired Word of God, we have no valid argument against those who deny the resurrection outright or against those who separate one fact of the Bible from other facts of the Bible. Perhaps we can appreciate this point more readily if we think of the political situation in Germany. In Germany men live by the grace of Hitler. If a person does not fit into Hitler's program, such a person is removed. No one knows when a "purge" will come and when he will be the victim of that purge. A great general may think himself exempt from the wrath of the "*Führer*." Yet even he may fall if his fall advances the "welfare" of the state in the *Führer's* mind.

Outspoken modernists deal with the facts recorded in Scripture as the *Führer* deals with the German people. It is in this way too that Barth and Brunner deal with the facts of Scripture. They have no scruples in assigning to the realm of legend that which they feel does not comport with the principle of Christianity. They differ between themselves on the question which "facts" shall be thrown out. Brunner feels that the virgin birth of Christ ought to be discarded; Barth feels it ought to be maintained. But for neither of them is it really a question of biblical evidence. For both of them it is in the last analysis a question whether a fact fits in with their idea of Christianity. They are both on subjective ground with respect to Scripture. They accept what they please and reject what they please.

It is no wonder then that both Barth and Brunner separate the resurrection of Christ from the facts of Adam and Eve and their fall into sin. To be sure they bring in some sort of connection between what they call the "fall of man" and the resurrection of Christ. But for them the fall of man is not a fact of ordinary history. It is for them a fact in the realm

of “super history.” Even if they may be said to believe in the resurrection of Christ, as a fact in ordinary history—which is doubtful at best—they have shattered the relation of the resurrection to the chief facts in relation with which the resurrection has its meaning.

Summing up the situation as a whole it would seem that there is enough work to do. (A) We should pray without ceasing that we ourselves may not be pharisaic and self-righteous, thinking that we have reached the goal in our apprehension of the doctrine of the resurrection. (B) We should seek to persuade our Fundamentalist Arminian friends no longer to do grave injustice to the resurrection of Christ. (C) We should plead with those who hold to an “essentially truthful” Bible instead of to an infallibly inspired Bible (and yet claim to be Reformed) not to open the way for heresies worse than Arminianism. (D) We should not beguile ourselves into thinking that science today, though it should claim to be ready to accept a miracle such as the resurrection, is fundamentally any more favorably disposed to Christianity than it was before “free will” entered the atom. (E) We should open our eyes to the fact that Barthianism no less than Modernism cuts the heart out of the resurrection message.

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³⁵Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

A Calvin University

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There has been a good deal of discussion recently about Calvin College. That is as it should be. Calvin College has great importance for the Christian Reformed Church and for other churches as well.

One point that has come to the foreground in the recent discussion about Calvin College is its possible development into a university. The idea of a Calvin University has often been mentioned. But the question now is whether we should at this time take practical steps toward the realization of that ideal by way of the expansion of Calvin College.

In asking that question I am not thinking of financial matters. Suppose Mr. Scattergold should come and offer enough money for the building and maintenance of a Calvin University, should we begin to build one without delay? "Of course not," I hear some one say. "We should first make certain that we can find a faculty whose members have the necessary academic training and who are personally committed to the Reformed faith. Without such a faculty it would be a waste of money to build a university."

But granted that we had the necessary money and a faculty whose members would be adequately equipped for university instruction, should we proceed at once like a pair of newlyweds to buy the furniture? I do not think so.

Method

There is one point, I believe, on which there should be agreement among us before we press forward to our goal much further. That point is the question of our attitude toward the current scientific method. If we had a Calvin University would we wish the faculty of that institution to engage in their research and teaching in accordance with current scientific methodology?

No doubt there are those among us who are quite surprised to find that any one can ask such a question. Is there not perfect agreement on this point, they will ask. We would wish the instruction in a Calvin University to be scientific would we not?

My answer is that we surely would wish the instruction at a Calvin University to be scientific but that this does not necessarily imply that we must adopt the current scientific method.

In fact I believe that if we should use the current scientific method we should have to come to the conclusion that the Reformed faith is not true. In my humble judgment the current scientific method is based upon the assumption of the truth of a non-Christian conception of reality and can in consequence never conclude that Christianity is true unless it is prepared to deny its own principles. I shall try to make this point clear.

Eve's "Neutrality"

No one doubts, I trust, that the current scientific method insists that we must, in our study of the facts that we meet, begin with an "open mind." That is, we are at the outset not to be prejudiced in favor of any one interpretation. Is it possible for a Christian to be thus "open-minded" without at the same time denying his Christian faith? I do not think so.

Perhaps I can best make clear what I mean by referring to the story of Adam and Eve. As Adam and Eve walked in the garden there were a number of facts that they were bound to interpret. Among these facts there was a certain fruit tree. About this fruit tree there were two interpretations afloat. God's interpretation was that if Adam and Eve ate of that tree they would surely die; Satan's interpretation was that if they ate of that tree they would be like God. Eve, to be truly scientific in the current sense of the term, had to be neutral with respect to these interpretations. And she was. Hence all the tears. Her "neutrality" was her sin. God brought death upon her and upon us all for her "neutrality."

There can be no doubt as to how Eve should have reasoned. It should have been immediately apparent to her that God was right and that Satan was wrong. She should have been "prejudiced" in favor of God's interpretation not only but she should have rejected any other interpretation immediately. She knew that God was the Creator of the particular tree in question. As the Creator of the tree God was in a position to know what would happen to her if she ate of it. Satan was not the creator of the tree; he was not in a position to know what God knew about the tree; his interpretation was bound to be wrong to the extent that it differed from God's interpretation. Therefore Eve should have said at once: "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

Our "Neutrality"

We weep every day because Eve was "neutral" at that fateful hour. Eve's "neutrality" implied the negation of God as God. We can readily see this, can we not? Yet the scientist today assumes essentially the same attitude toward God that Eve did. Perhaps you smile at this. Yet it is, if we think on it, the simple truth of the matter. Our situation is, in a fundamental sense, similar to that of Eve.

Here are facts that we are to interpret. It matters not in what field they may be. The Bible, which if we are Christians we take to be the Word of God, tells us that these facts are created and preserved by God and are meant to serve a certain purpose in the world. God has, in other words, interpreted the facts before and behind, within and without; God has interpreted them exhaustively. That is a most important bit of information for us about any fact we may choose to examine. Every fact belongs to God and we must deal with it as such. Whether we eat or drink or do anything else we are to do it all to the glory of God.

Now comes the evolutionist. He urges upon you his hypothesis about the origin of the universe. His hypothesis is that it has sprung into being of itself. According to his hypothesis man is not made in the image of God and the story of paradise is a myth. He asks you to be neutral as between what the Bible says and what he says. He asks you to

look at the facts for yourself and then judge. You will lose your standing as a scientist if you are not neutral on the two interpretations.

What will you do? If you accept his proposition and therewith admit that the idea of evolution, as the direct opposite of creation, is a perfectly legitimate hypothesis for you to consider, you have once for all and completely rejected your Christian faith. Here is a married man. His stenographer asks him simply to be neutral as between her and his wife. If he accepts her proposition he has been unfaithful to his wife.

Three Fatal Steps

Thus the first step that the current scientific method is asking you to take is to assume that the facts that you meet are brute, that is, uninterpreted facts. I say you are asked to assume the existence of brute facts. If you did not assume this you could not be neutral with respect to various interpretations given of the facts. If God exists there are no brute facts; if God exists our study of facts must be the effort to know them as God wants them to be known by us. We must then seek to think God's thoughts after him. To assume that there are brute facts is therefore to assume that God does not exist.

The second step that the current scientific method is asking you to take is to accept the position that theoretically any hypothesis is as good as any other. Satan first assumed and asked Eve to assume that facts are brute facts. On the basis of this assumption he then asked Eve to accept his hypothesis as being no less relevant than God's hypothesis. He said in effect that he did not ask Eve to be unfair to God; he wanted her to consider God's hypothesis no less than his own, and his own no less than God's. In a similar way the current scientific method wants us to grant the theoretical relevancy of any hypothesis.

The third step which the current scientific method is asking you to take is to test the truth of any hypothesis by experience. Here, too, the temptation is the same in principle as that which came to Eve. Let us again begin Satan's argument from the start. First, he asks Eve in effect to assume that the fruit of the tree in question is a brute fact. He insinuates that to hold anything different would be to degrade the originality of the human mind. To take for granted that all is interpreted in advance is to make science live by authority and that is to kill science. Secondly, he asks her to place the two mutually exclusive interpretations on a par with one another. Satan argues in effect that the question of being has no significance for the question of interpretation. That God claims to be the "Creator-being" and that He also claims Satan to be a mere "creature-being" should not influence Eve in the least. Therefore, in the third place, Satan argues that Eve ought to test the truth of the two hypotheses by experience. Surely that is fair. We must test all our theories by the facts of experience, must we not? What other way have you, Eve, of testing between two hypotheses that are at variance with one another? You cannot go back to the authority of God's Word. That would be to go back on your first step. It would be to set one hypothesis above another at the outset. To be consistent you must take all three steps if you take one.

A Finite God

In all this, the human mind is thought of as acting in complete independence of God. There is thought to be no incomprehensible God who in his being is impenetrable to the mind of man. Man is quite sufficient to himself. Even if he is not able to find out all he would like to know about the facts about him, God cannot be of basic service to him. God faces brute fact no less than he.

If one begins (a) with the assumption of brute fact, (b) with the relevancy of any hypothesis and (c) with the test of truth by brute fact, as the current scientific method does, one may discover that there is a god; but such a god will always be at best a finite god. It will be a god who together with man is surrounded by facts that are not fully known to him.

It will now be clear why I cannot believe that at a truly Calvinistic University we should wish to accept the current scientific method without basic criticism. I do not say that there is nothing in a secondary way that can be learned from the current scientific method. I merely say that if we are to have a method of research that is to be consistent with our position as Christians and particularly as Reformed Christians, we cannot without basic reconstruction accept the current scientific method. Its basic assumptions are false. If it is applied with rigor it will, I believe, at best lead to a belief in a finite God and therewith to the rejection of Christianity.

Naturally, Mr. Editor, what would apply to a Calvinistic University applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to a Calvinistic College. The teachers at a Calvinistic college, should, I believe, be self-consciously committed to a definitely Christian methodology. Unless some one show me where I am mistaken I cannot help but feel that he who accepts the current scientific methodology without basic criticism of its assumptions should not accept a teaching position at Calvin College.

In saying this I am neither openly nor covertly criticizing any one. I take for granted that all of us together are seriously seeking to set forth and propagate the Reformed faith. But perhaps not all of us have had time to look into this question of methodology carefully. Or perhaps some of us have looked into it but do not agree with what I have said. My only point is that I believe that now, in connection with the investigation that is to be made of Calvin College by order of the last synod, and in connection with the discussion about a Calvinistic university, is a good time to look into this matter. Perhaps some one better fitted than I can give us light on the whole subject.

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³⁶Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

Plato

The Proceedings of the Calvinistic Philosophy Club, Edited by T. Hoogstra, Pages 31–44
(Englewood, N.J.), 1939.

In a brief study of Plato such as this we shall have to limit our discussion to matters of essential importance. We cannot enter more than casually into such questions as the date and order of the Platonic writings, the life of Plato and the relation of Plato to Socrates. The point of chief interest for us lies in the relation of non-Christian to Christian thought. Plato has given expression to non-Christian thought. It should be possible to learn something of the nature and course of all non-Christian thought. This in turn ought to help us to know how we should relate our own thinking to that of the age in which we live.

Plato was the first great systematic thinker of Greece. In his writings we have the first major form of systematic non-Christian speculation. He has gathered up the threads of previous Greek thought in order to present, if possible, a consistent whole. He speaks of arithmetic, of geometry, of spacial relations, of biology, of ethics, of logic and of theology. It would be instructive to take what he says on these various subjects and compare it with Calvinistic philosophy as set forth in the writings of Drs. Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd of The Free University of Amsterdam. It will not be possible for us to do this. We shall therefore take what seem to be the central ideas of Plato on the subjects in which he was most interested in order to analyze them as best we may.

It is quite common with Plato scholars to distinguish between an earlier and a later Plato. Though there is no agreement on details it seems at present fairly safe to say that the earlier or Socratic Plato dealt chiefly with matters of ethics and the later Plato dealt chiefly with matters of being and knowledge. On all three of these questions Plato took what has come to be called an idealistic position. In ethics he stood for the “objective” existence of the good. In ontology he taught that real being or at least the most real being is found beyond the world of sense. In epistemology he held that the “lower” aspects of life must be interpreted in terms of the “higher.” The question that we are bound to ask then, is, what our relation must be to an idealist philosophy of this sort.

Modern philosophers, and more specifically Plato Scholars, have frequently taken the position that Platonism and Christianity are virtually identical in their views of God and the universe. A. E. Taylor, in his book on *Plato* says:

I make no apology for having drawn freely on the characteristic language of Christian mysticism in expounding this argument. Under all the real differences due to the Christian’s belief in the historical reality of the God-man, the ideal of Socrates and the Christian idea are fundamentally identical. The central thought in both cases is that man is born a creature of temporality and mutability into a temporal and mutable environment. But, in virtue of the fact that there is something ‘divine’ in him, he cannot but aspire to a good which is above time and mutability, and thus the right life is from first to last, a process by which the merely secular and temporal self is re-made in the likeness of the eternal.¹

Over against this position of Taylor must be set the fact that the Roman Catholic church has taken Aristotelianism rather than Platonism in order to use it for the construction of its natural theology.

¹ *Plato, the Man and His Work*, 1936, p. 192.

It is not our purpose to enter upon a detailed comparison of Plato and Aristotle in order to judge which of the two, if either can more easily be conjoined with Christian thought. We would rather call attention to the fact that Plato and Aristotle have frequently been thought of as together representing one type of thought, namely idealist thought, and that what is then spoken of as Platonic-Aristotelian thought is introduced as a suitable foundation for the Christian religion. Platonic-Aristotelian thought is frequently presented to us as offering a natural theology on which the church in the course of its history has quite properly built its revealed theology. So Dr. William G. T. Shedd in his *History of Christian Doctrine* speaks constantly of Greek theism.² By it he signifies the thought of Plato and Aristotle.³ This Greek theism of which Shedd speaks is, according to him, essentially correct and may with little modification be taken as the foundation for the Christian religion. It is not from the philosophy of these men themselves, according to Shedd, that Christianity has suffered but only from excrescences that have grown out of this philosophy. "For we shall find that the evil which Christianity has suffered from these philosophical systems has originated from an exaggeration of one particular element in each, and its sole employment in philosophizing upon Christianity, to the neglect of the remaining elements of the system."⁴ When Greek theism was taken over by the Christian theologians it needed simply to be purified of some of the details that were not in harmony with the genius of the system. Speaking about nineteenth century developments of German theology Dr. Shedd says: "One thing, however, it is certain, that so far as it is a truthful and really scientific method of theologizing, it is due greatly to the influence of the Grecian masters in philosophy, and their successors."⁵ Or again: "For although Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant differ from each other, and upon important points, their systems are all theistic, and therefore favorable to the principles of ethics and natural religion."⁶

We naturally ask how it is that Shedd is able to think of Greek theism as a good foundation for Christianity. The answer is that according to Shedd Greek theism has been formulated by "right reason." By "right reason" Shedd intends us to think of the reason of mankind in general apart from the question of regeneration. He calls it right reason because it has not allowed itself to run into extremes. He speaks with evident approval when he says that such men as Tertullian, Athanasius and Augustine did not reject the "common reason of mankind." We quote: "But against the common reason of mankind, the unbiased spontaneous convictions of the race, no such remarks (critical remarks) are aimed. On the contrary a confidential appeal is made to them by these very Apologists; while those systems of philosophy, and those intellectual methods that flow most legitimately and purely from them, are employed by the Christian Mind in developing and establishing the truths of revelation."⁷

The position here taken by Shedd may be said to be that taken quite generally in the history of Protestant apologetics. The position is that the natural reason of man, quite

² 1, p. 68.

³ 1, p. 67.

⁴ 1, p. 59.

⁵ 1, p. 95.

⁶ 1, p. 96.

⁷ 1, p. 153.

apart from regeneration, can come and has come to a true teleological interpretation of reality, to an interpretation which needs addition but no radical alteration by the Christian theologian. Thus Protestants would have a large measure of agreement with Roman Catholics in the field of Apologetics; with Roman Catholics they could unitedly build a natural theology and offer it to the natural man as something that ought to be unobjectionable to him.

What then, we ask, is this Grecian theism or this natural theology that is involved in it so far as Plato has spoken of it? Let us, in seeking an answer to our question first turn to the earlier Platonic dialogues. In them the question is chiefly that of the moral ideal.

It is apparent even from the earlier dialogues that Plato has brought together in his thinking several strands of previous Greek thought. It is well to note this point here in order to obtain a true understanding of Plato's method of research. On this point of the relation of Plato to his predecessors we quote Zeller: "Plato is the first of the Greek philosophers who not merely knew and made use of his predecessors, but consciously completed their principles by means of each other, and bound them all together in one higher principle. What Socrates had taught with regard to the concept of knowledge; Parmenides and Heraclitus, the Megarians and the Cynics, on the difference between knowledge and opinion; Heraclitus, Zeno, and the Sophists, on the subjectivity of sense experience—all this he built up into a developed theory of knowledge." The Eleatic principle of Being, and the Heraclitean of Becoming, the doctrine of the unity and that of the multiplicity of things, he has, in his doctrine of Ideas, quite as much blended as opposed; while at the same time he has perfected both by means of the Anaxagorean conception of the Spirit, the Megaro-Socratic conception of the Good, and the idealised Pythagorean numbers.⁸

In seeking to blend the thought of his predecessors Plato is evidently looking for a new solution of the problems of life. There was a general scepticism and hopelessness abroad inasmuch as it seemed to men to be impossible to find the true meaning of existence. Men had, generally speaking, come to the conclusion either with Parmenides that all reality is blank identity or with Heraclitus that all reality is hopelessly unrelated plurality. This scepticism underlay the Sophists' attitude when they claimed that one could equally well say that every statement is true as that every statement is false.

Socrates had in part seemed to overcome this scepticism. He worked on the principle that there is ultimate truth and that it is possible for the mind of man to know it. And in this his admiring disciple Plato follows him as is apparent throughout the earlier dialogues. It is very difficult if not impossible in many cases to distinguish Socratic from Platonic thought. For our purposes it is not necessary to do so. It is quite apparent that we are on the road to an understanding of Plato if we start with the notion that the human mind has within itself the powers to get into significant contact with ultimate reality.

It is for this reason that the Platonic Socrates constantly seeks for the universal element in the particulars of sense-experience. By seeking that which is common to various phenomena, he feels, you have caught the essence of the phenomena. Let us illustrate this point from his dialogues.

⁸ Eduard Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, tr. S. F. Alleyne and A. Goodwin, London, 1876, p. 148.

In *The Greater Hippias* the question of the beautiful is up for discussion, among the wits. Says Taylor: “The precise problem is this. We call an act of remarkable courage a ‘fine’ act, and we say the same thing about an act of outstanding and remarkable justice. The use of the word ‘fine’ in both cases implies that there is a something (a certain *eidos*, form, or character—the word is little more than a synonym for a ‘something’) common to both cases, or why do we give the same name, ‘fine?’ What is the ‘fine itself,’ ‘the just fine’ (*auto to kalon*), i.e. what is it which is exactly and precisely named when we use the word ‘fine?’ ”⁹ When Socrates asks Hippias what he means by the word fine Hippias constantly turns to examples. He is unable to define the thing itself. A true definition, such is the point we are to learn from this dialogue, “must be rigidly universal.”¹⁰ Is it then impossible to obtain a universal definition by a study of the things of the sensible world in which we dwell? That does not seem to be the conclusion we ought to draw; it ought somehow to be possible for us to learn the true definition of a thing; yet we have so far not been very successful in doing so.

The method followed in the dialogue we have just discussed is the method generally followed in “the minor Socratic dialogues.” The *Charmides* deals with temperance and the *Laches* deals with valour or fortitude. We are given to understand that if we are to know what any of these virtues or qualities mean we must know what virtue as such is. “The problem of finding a definition of ‘virtue’ is at bottom the problem of formulating a moral ideal.”¹¹

From this point we are led into broader considerations. Where shall we learn to know about the true nature of virtue? We turn again to examples. The doctor practises medicine and by his art heals a man of his disease. But was it really best for this man to be healed and was it really best for the physician to earn the money he received? Perhaps not. To know whether it is best for you to be healed or to die is to know yourself. We ought then to know ourselves and in order to know ourselves we must know those who have power over us. We must know our relation to gods and men and to all things about us. Thus we are led by simple questions into the most basic considerations of ontology and epistemology.

But now we are in a great danger. So far we have been stressing the fact that knowledge requires an *a priori* element. We must have a universal in order to understand particulars. But we seem to have come to the point where self knowledge itself is thought of as being sufficient. We have come upon the danger of thinking that we can dispense with the observation of facts and turn to introspection merely. In the *Charmides*, Critias defends the startling notion that self knowledge is really a knowledge which is turned upon itself and is sufficient to itself. Against this Socrates argues that in all other forms of knowledge there is an object as well as a subject. Socrates contends that knowledge is always relative to something. It would indeed be a singular thing if there were a knowing which is not the knowing of some objects but “the knowing of itself and the other knowings.”¹²

⁹ Taylor, *Plato*, p. 30.

¹⁰ Taylor, *Plato* p. 31.

¹¹ Taylor, *Plato* p. 47.

¹² Taylor, p. 54.

To prove the absurdity of exclusively *a priori* knowledge Socrates goes on to point out that such knowledge would lead to practical difficulties. A physician needs to know whether a certain proposition which he knows to be true is applicable to his patients. We may say that a certain number of grains of arsenic are fatal. Such a proposition would be true but the truth of this proposition would hang in the air if it were not proved in practice.

So here we have the difficulty. We seem to need an *a priori* element in our knowledge; without it we cannot act scientifically, i.e. with good judgment. When we then turn to the *a priori* that we seem to need it is as a Frankenstein monster that swallows up all individual things. It may for a moment appear as an attractive ideal that prophecy itself should become scientific, that we should know all the future and all the past by a simple insight into ourselves but this is all too fantastic.

Thus we seem to have come face to face with a fundamental paradox. We need an absolute comprehensive universal in order that there may be unity in our practical living but when we seek for that unity and seem to find it we have departed so far from practical life as to find that unity to be a pure abstraction.

In this situation we need the services of an expert. We seem to find a specialist in each branch of practical knowledge. Is there also an expert “metaphysician” who can instruct us in the art of asking and answering final questions? It does not seem so. Every man must, in the end, be his own expert.

A particularly instructive instance of earlier Platonic thought is found in the *Euthyphro*. Here the effort is made to establish the nature of (*h*)*osiotés*, piety, or religion. Euthyphro says that his father has committed an act of sacrilege. He is afraid to live in the same house with such a person. Thinking of himself as an expert in religious matters, a “doctor of theology,” he brings his father to trial. So Socrates, who is shortly to be charged with impiety, inquires of this “doctor of theology” what then the nature of religion is. “There must be some one character which belongs to all action which is ‘religiously right’ (*h*)*osion*.” What is the idea,¹ the *eidos*² or the *ousia*,³ of religion? Euthyphro answers that religion “is what is pleasing to the gods, the irreligious what is not pleasing to them.”⁴ But are there then no differences of opinion among the gods? To this Euthyphro replies by suggesting that the truly religious is that on which there is unanimous agreement between the gods. But how then can we know that some of the gods might not think well and others evil of the act of Euthyphro in arraigning his father? So the suggestion comes to us that the gods have above them an ideal or idea of the religious to which they look up and by which they try to determine what is true and what is false in the religious deeds of men. Since there is assumed to be a plurality of gods there is not one of them that has final authority. The question is asked: “Is a religious act religious because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is religious?”⁵ Plato clearly wants us to hold that “the religious” is religious intrinsically apart from the attitude of the gods toward it. As Taylor puts it: “That is, it is no answer to the question

¹ *Euthyphro* 5d.

² 6d.

³ 11a.

⁴ 6e.

⁵ 8b-10a. Taylor, p. 151.

what something is, to be told what some one or something else does about it.”⁶ The Scholastics would say that an extrinsic denomination “throws no light on the quiddity of the *definiendum*.” Thus again it appears that every man must be his own expert.

The Soul

In everything that has been brought forward of Plato’s thought up to this point and in particular in what was said about the “expert” there has been the assumption that by looking within himself man can find an adequate principle of interpretation for all the problems that face him. Plato was willing to recognize that he had not succeeded in finding an adequate interpretation of life. We have seen that he saw the paradox that faced him in the notions of the abstract universal and the abstract particular. Yet he always returned to a further search for a better union of the universal and the particular to man himself. That this is true and that it is of basic significance may appear somewhat more fully from a brief consideration of his doctrine of the soul.

The philosopher, reasons Plato in the *Phaedo*, has all his life been trying to escape from the body. In the body, i.e., by sensation he cannot obtain true knowledge. Therefore his life is a “rehearsal of death.” He is happy to complete the process of life by entering upon death. In arguing thus Socrates has been taking for granted that there is a life after death. How does he know this to be true?

To this Socrates makes reply by referring to the Orphic doctrine of the rebirth of all things. Opposites, he says, produce opposites. If this were not so the whole process of generation and decay would cease and all would soon enter into death. But this argument is not conclusive. There is uncertainty about it all and the argument gives no guarantee that Socrates will at the time of his death enter upon a “better life.” So the appeal is next made to the doctrine of reminiscence. In the *Meno* this argument had been discussed. There Meno’s slave boy was able to solve problems in mathematics by the aid of mere suggestions from the things of sense. The conclusion was drawn that he must have had the truth of these things in him from a previous existence. The validity of this argument, therefore, depended upon truth of the doctrine of Forms. But suppose we did exist before we came into this world, does this prove that we shall exist after we leave this world? Even if we could accept the two arguments so far considered as valid “the child in us,” which is afraid in the dark, is not fully satisfied.⁷ Simmias fears that the soul may gradually dissolve at death. But what is it that can and does dissolve? It is only that which is composed and therefore mutable. Does the soul belong to this realm of the mutable? Socrates does not think so. When the soul deals with mutable things she walks warily and uncertainly but when she turns to the realm of thought as such she walks with steady foot. She is apparently at home there. She seems herself to be a part of that realm. In short she belongs to the realm of the divine. And belonging to the realm of the divine she is immutable as the divine is immutable.

But even so Simmias and Cebes are worried. Simmias feels that the argument of Socrates is not sufficient. Suppose we take a lyre, and play upon it. The melody is invisible to be sure and may be called “divine” yet when the visible frame of the lyre falls

⁶ *Plato*, p. 151.

⁷ *Taylor*, p. 189.

to pieces the melody will fail. May not the soul gradually disappear as the body disintegrates? Taylor calls this the epiphenomenalist objection. Cebes argues that a tailor may weave many suits of clothes for himself and outwear them but the last suit that he weaves and wears will outlast him. The soul may outwear many bodies but be outworn by its last body just the same.

Those objections, Phaedo tells us, struck consternation into camp. Socrates alone remains calm. Yet even he has no convincing reply. To Simmias' epiphenomenalist objection, illustrated by the lyre, he replies that if its validity be granted all moral distinctions would fall to the ground. We are bound to interpret the lower in terms of the higher. The very fact that man lives by these distinctions presupposes the reality of the eternal or unchangeable aspect of man. Says Taylor in paraphrasing the argument of Socrates: "If man were merely a creature of time, or again if he were simply eternal, the struggle could not arise; its tremendous reality is proof that man's soul is the meeting-place of the two orders, the temporal and the eternal, and this, of itself, disposes of the *simpliciste* theory of human personality as a simple function of the passing state of the organism or the nervous system."⁸

The "scientific" objection of Cebes leads Socrates to say that we shall, in order to answer it, consider the whole question, of "the causes of coming into being and passing out of being." Socrates himself was once upon a time inclined to give a purely mechanical interpretation of nature. But by so doing he had been unable to understand the cause of even the simplest thing of nature. Then he became acquainted with the works of Anaxagoras who explained all things by the help of *Nous*. Yet Anaxagoras was not fully consistent. The result was that Socrates found himself driven to reliance upon himself. He found he had to work out a method for himself. This method was that employed in mathematics. We investigate things by asking what significant statements we can make about them.⁹

With this question we are not for the moment concerned. Our main interest at this juncture is to point out that for Plato the soul is immortal because it is divine, i.e. it is of a piece with whatever of divinity exists. We may again use the words of Taylor to sum up this point: "Thus, in the end, the imperishability of the soul is accepted as a consequence of the standing conviction of all Greek religion that *to athanaton* equals *to theion* equals *to aptharton*. It is the soul's 'divinity' which is, in the last resort, the ground for the hope of immortality, and the divinity of the soul is a postulate of a reasonable faith which the dialogue never attempts to 'demonstrate.' The last word of Socrates himself on the value of his demonstration is that its 'primary postulates' (i.e. the 'forms' and the divinity of the soul) really demand further examination (107 b 5)."¹⁰ The final argument in the Phaedo for the immortality of the soul rests upon the conviction that the Forms do exist and that the soul participates in the Form of life. Now the Forms do not permit of their opposites. So the soul participating in the Form of life cannot be touched with death which is the opposite of life.

In the Symposium we strike upon similar ideas. Here the soul is on its journey from temporality to eternity. When man has finally put off temporality and put on eternity he

⁸ Taylor, p. 198.

⁹ Taylor, p. 201.

¹⁰ Taylor, p. 26.

will see with a direct vision. What will he see? Will he see God? We believe that Burnet and Taylor are right when they contend that the soul of man in Plato does not finally expect to see God but the supreme Form of the Good. It is in accord with the whole of Plato's approach to the problems of philosophy to say that for him ultimate reality was the impersonal Form. It is only if we take a Christian position in which God is really thought of as the Creator of the world that God can consistently be taken as the supreme reality. Now Plato has sometimes been taken to believe in creation. Even Taylor says that the idea of an actual creation was not foreign to Plato. But if this is true we feel compelled to maintain that this is a remnant of an interpretation of life that he is definitely keeping under. In Plato we note an interesting and highly important phenomenon. Everything that has to do with the origin of things is left in obscurity. Plato simply takes for granted that the soul is uncreated. In the *Timaeus* we can see clearly that for Plato the soul of man is part of the world-soul. The "tendance of the soul" for each individual man is therefore not a struggle between sin and grace but is a slow journey from temporality to eternity.¹¹ If man does not strive to attain he falls back into mere mutability and temporality.¹² If he does strive to attain and strive consistently he may expect to reach complete identification with supreme reality. His knowledge and service of the good in this world has been piecemeal and will give place to immediate vision by identification with its object. Thus the soul returns to its eternal home.

It is important to note that Taylor identifies this conception of the soul and its tendance with true Christian mysticism.¹³ To this we are compelled to reply that when the difference between God and the universe is ignored, when the creation doctrine is not taken as one of the constitutive elements of theology, we have cut the nerve of true Christian mysticism. True Christian mysticism presupposes creation, fall and the historical atonement through the blood of Christ.

We are now in a position to deal very briefly with Plato's more mature conceptions of being and knowledge. The Platonic Socrates tended to separate sharply between the forms and the objects of sense. Sensation did not offer true knowledge because it did not offer universal knowledge. Says Dr. Gordon Clark: "Before Plato's time, no one, apparently not even Parmenides, doubted the reality of sense objects. Yet it was this very natural assumption that the objects of sense are the objects of knowledge which blocked the progress of thought. Resumption of progress awaited the suggestion that interest should be shifted to a new world of reality."¹⁴ Thus we watch the birth of Greek theism, the product of right reason. When the suggestion of the existence of a higher world is not only made but accepted as true in the earlier dialogues it seems at first to necessitate the denial of the existence of the sense world altogether. Plato seemed at first to be ready to walk in the footsteps of Parmenides and others who were ready to follow what seemed to be the requirements of human logic at the expense of common sense. Thus there was in his earlier thought a tendency to hypostatise the Forms. On the other hand there was a tendency to stress the unrelated particularity of the things of sense and their subjection to a general flux. But gradually Plato seemed to realize that the form and the things of sense

¹¹ Taylor, p. 225.

¹² Taylor, p. 226.

¹³ *Op. cit.* p. 281.

¹⁴ *Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics*, Syllabus, 1937.

must not be too rigidly separated. Accordingly there is in the later dialogues a constant recurrence to the question of the relation of the Forms to the things of sense. The things of sense are no longer said to participate in the Forms. The Soul, that is the world Soul, is introduced in order to mediate between the abstract world of Forms and the world of Becoming. The world of Becoming, in so far as it may be said to be a product, is the combination or meeting-point of Ideal principles on the one hand and “necessity” on the other hand.

As the complete separation of Forms from the world of Becoming led to dualism in ontology so it had also led to dualism in epistemology. The assumption of the earlier dialogues had been that man, being in essence divine, must really participate in absolute knowledge. But this is obviously impossible. We shall therefore have to drop to a lower plane. We shall have to maintain that knowledge is not universal. Thus only can we avoid a dualism between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man. God would not understand us as we would not understand God unless we bring the whole question of being and knowledge down to a more common sense level. Speaking of this matter Constantin Ritter says: “But if any one is supposed to possess such absolute knowledge, which would be much more exact than our human knowledge, we would have to ascribe it to a god. However, this would be followed by a much worse conclusion, viz; this god with all his knowledge of the Ideas would not know anything about us and about the things which we human beings know, since absolute knowledge has no relation to realities of the human world, just as the absolute rule which God exercises has no relation to the individual man. Or conversely, our knowledge and our authority do not extend to the absolute, divine essences. ‘Surely,’ replies Socrates, ‘it would be a most astonishing conclusion to deny that God has knowledge.’”¹⁵

We appear thus to be compelled to save the possibility and actuality to knowledge bringing the Form and the things of sense in the relation of juxtaposition to one another. At least such is the opinion of Natorp when he contrasts the position of Plato with that of Christianity. He holds that Christianity with its doctrine of the self-sufficient God can bring no relationship between man’s knowledge and God’s knowledge. Natorp says that Plato does not have an “*über den Wasser Schwebenden Gott-Schöpfer*.” Plato’s god is “*gebunden an einen von Haus aus ihm äusserlichen, äusserlich bleibenden Stoff*.”¹⁶ In this respect, then, Natorp reasons, Platonism is superior to Christianity.

Grote argues that Plato has never at any time meant to hold to the existence of an absolute knowledge.¹⁷ We may ignore the differences between Plato scholars on this question. Whether as in the case of Taylor and others the Platonic theory of being and knowledge be said to be virtually identical with the Christian conception of being and knowledge or whether with Grote, Natorp and others the Platonic theory be said to be opposed to the Christian conception, there is a large measure of agreement that in any case Plato was on the right road to true knowledge. Plato did no more, we are told than recognize that in every judgment about any part of reality there is an *a priori* and *a posteriori* aspect. Aristotle, to be sure, related the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* elements still more closely to one another than Plato did but Plato no less than Aristotle, knew that

¹⁵ *The Essence of Plato’s Philosophy*, tr. by Adam Alles, p. 151.

¹⁶ Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre*, Leipzig, 1921, p. 471.

¹⁷ George Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates*, in 3 Vols., 1867.

they implied one another. In our intellectual interpretation of the universe we are on the one hand bound to follow the law of non-contradiction and on the other hand to recognize “facts” as they are. The question then is as to the extent to which we can think of our logical categories as giving us a true picture of the facts with which we deal. It would seem, we are told, that on the one hand we must presuppose that our logic and reality fit one another so that we may think of our knowledge as being true to fact while on the other hand we know that our logic can never cover the whole of reality so that there is always uncertain element in our knowledge. Our knowledge can be no more than a probable knowledge.

We cannot take time to set forth the Platonic theory in greater detail. Nor is it necessary for our purposes to do so. We are chiefly concerned to evaluate this “Greek theism” from a Christian point of view.

We would maintain that “Greek theism” cannot with any fairness be presented as offering us a good theistic foundation on which Christianity may be built as a superstructure.

In the first place we would point out that the starting-point of Plato’s philosophical method does not permit him to come to genuinely theistic conclusions. That starting-point in itself, we believe, presupposes the rejection of a genuine theism. That starting-point is based upon the assumption that there is no creation out of nothing. Let us look at this matter carefully.

We can do this best, perhaps, if we reason back from the Christian doctrine of God to see what sort of starting-point for human reasoning is involved in it.

The Christian doctrine of God tells us that God is a completely self-interpreted being. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. This implies that in God being and consciousness are coterminous. If there were any being in God not coterminous with His consciousness His consciousness would not be self-sufficient. There would then be a not-yet-interpreted being over against the consciousness of God, and God’s consciousness would therewith be subjected to the time-process.

This doctrine of God is the foundation of a truly theistic or Christian ontology. Arguing from it we note that it leads us to a very definite notion of non-being. If God is self-explanatory and self-existent non-being is truly non-being. God is then in no sense defined in terms of non-being. Non-being is not “otherness” to being which then would be “otherness” to non-being. It short there is no sort of correlativity between being and non-being. Of God we may say that His being is determinative of His knowledge and His knowledge determinative of His being.

It is this notion of God’s being and this notion of non-being that is presupposed in the Christian doctrine of creation. Creation by God is creation out of, or perhaps better, into nothing. Thus the created universe can in no sense serve as a correlative to God.

This simple but basic notion of ontology involves an equally simple but basic notion with respect to human knowledge. Man with the universe has been created into nothing. His being is derived. His intellect therefore, as an aspect of a derived being must constantly attune itself in its interpretation of all it meets to the interpretation of God. It is God’s interpretation that determines the nature of all created being. Consequently if man’s interpretation of any created being is to be a true interpretation its truth lies primarily in its analogical correspondence with God’s interpretation.

Let us illustrate this pivotal point by an analysis of the question of the future. Let us think of Adam after he received the commandment of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here was God's pre-interpretation of the future. Suppose now that this interpretation of the future by God had not come to Adam till after a number of years had passed. And suppose further that during that time Adam had observed "the course and constitution of nature," without constantly being attuned to God's interpretation of it. Would he not have concluded that there could be harm in his eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? He had perhaps eaten many times of that tree without harm befalling him. Could he now believe that after God had spoken death would follow upon his eating of this tree? After God forbade the eating of the tree God's interpretation of the future and his own interpretation of that future upon the basis of the "observed course and constitution of nature" would stand opposed to one another. The only solution would be for man, the creature of God, to accept without hesitation God's interpretation of the future. And this teaches us that from the outset it was the proper thing for man not to make any absolutely independent observations on the course and constitution of nature. That is, man should at once from the outset set his own interpretations of the universe in self-conscious subordination to God's interpretation of the universe.

It was this that Adam and Eve failed to do in the hour of temptation. When the negation of Satan was placed before them over against the affirmation of God man had to choose whether or no he would self-consciously submit his own interpretation to God's interpretation. Here were God as absolute being and Satan as a derivative being, offering opposing interpretations of the course and constitution of nature to Adam and Eve. Here was Eve, herself a derived being to decide between the two interpretations. As the absolute being, who had created the universe into nothing God controlled the future. He only was in a position to know what would happen in the future. But Eve decided that the question of being had no bearing on the question of interpretation. She therefore concluded that it was perfectly legitimate for her to think that Satan's interpretation might possibly be right. She admitted the theoretical relevancy of any hypothesis with respect to the problem she faced. She assumed that in the course and constitution of nature, conceived of as an entity not yet interpreted, that is, in the appeal to brute fact lay the final test of the truth of hypotheses.

Suppose now that she had been right in all this. That would have proved God wrong. It would have proved that God's interpretation had no control over the course and constitution of events in this world. It would have proved that God as well as man is face to face with facts that are beyond His control. It would have proved that God Himself would have to employ the empirical method of research. Thus God and man might become joint companions in a common scientific enterprise.

We are now in a position to understand the significance of Plato's philosophy as compared to a really theistic position. Ever after the entrance of sin into the world man has assumed that there is no God in whom being and interpretation of being are identical. Applied to the universe this means that men have assumed that they can reasonably ask the question, What is it? before and independently of the question, Whence is it? Accordingly man took for granted that his thinking needed not to be attuned to the thinking of his creator in the sense above discussed, but may run its own course.

That human thought did seek to run its own course independently of God is apparently from the history of Greek philosophy. It is a commonly reported fact in the histories of philosophy that for early Greek philosophy qualities were not distinguished from the facts or particulars to which they were applied. This is a most interesting and arresting fact. In it we are confronted, it would seem, with the petrification of the rebellious attitude assumed by Adam and Eve when they declared their independence from God. When man declared his independence of God he in effect denied that in God being and meaning are identical. He denied that in God, the I Am, that is, with respect to His own being, subject and predicate are the same. He denied the self-sufficiency of God's self-affirmation and affirmed the "otherness" of non-being over against God. In all this he, by implication, asserted the complete separation of logic and fact. Yet it was reserved for the Pragmatism of our time to work out the implication of this original assumption. Early man assumed that thought could control fact and should control fact. In this he was right. But he was wrong in the further assumption, included in the first, that the identification of thought and being, of logic and fact can be found if one speaks of thought *per se* and of being *per se*, without introducing the distinction between divine thought and divine being. Without the assumption that thought and being are coterminous somewhere human thought could not have gotten under way. With the assumption that human thought together with divine thought is legislative for being thought was bound to be led on the wrong way. Thus we observe in the course of Greek philosophy a development of most marvelous complexity in which we can only adore the wisdom of God that in spite of basic wrong it brought forth so much good, and that in spite of the good it is also so basically wrong. Let us seek to appreciate both the good and the false but always without separating the one from the other.

It was soon to become apparent that human thought cannot legislate for the whole of reality. Only the absolute I Am can say, "I Am," and say no more. The absolute subject and only He need have and can have no correlative diversity beyond Himself. Only God cannot be classified. If there were to be something more than mere judgments of identity for man there would have to be a distinction between subject and predicate. This brought to the fore the problem of diversity in unity, the problem of the One and the Many.

The interesting and important point to note here is that when the inevitable distinction between subject and predicate came in the course of Greek philosophy it came by way of abstraction. Abstraction was the only way in which the Greek philosopher could distinguish between universals and particulars, granted his assumptions, and this abstraction amounted to a contrast. There was for the Greek no God in terms of whose presupposed identity of being and interpretation he could approach the diversity of the created world. If he could not himself preinterpret the diversity of the universe he would have to conclude that the diversity is utterly uninterpreted. Hence brute fact on the one hand and impersonal and abstract universal law on the other hand proved to be the naturally emerging correlatives, when once Greek thought was started on its way.

By way of illustration of what has just been said let us take Anaximander's concept of the *apeiron*.

"The interest attaching to this notion of the *apeiron* is," says Robert Adamson, "I think, that it marks the first step in the progress, which the Greek mind took with remarkable rapidity, of abstraction from the concrete reality. For though the *apeiron* is still held as something existing *in rerum natura*, yet, in the conception of it, all the

features which characterise concrete objects are removed; the first opposition is made between the real which is not directly apprehended but is held on grounds of logical necessity, and the apparent world of multiform concrete existences which is apprehended through the senses.”¹⁸

Adamson, like many other historians of philosophy assumes that it was quite natural for the Greeks to turn to abstraction when they faced the uncontrollable manifold of sense-experience. From the Christian point of view we should say that this course was natural, to be sure, but natural in the sense that it had become natural for fallen man to keep not God in his thoughts. The method of abstraction as employed by the Greeks, and as employed by the “scientific method” today, is the only method that a sinner, who has declared his independence from God, could follow in his thinking.

The fruit of this method of abstraction was an artificial separation of various aspects of the created world. In Anaximander’s philosophy we observe the first major effort to save the universal control of human thought over assumed brute fact by setting a qualityless *apeiron* over against the world of sense. For some time Greek speculation continued on this track. In the case of the Pythagoreans and the Eleatics this process had developed into a strong contrast between the world of sense and the world of thought. And note that the world of abstract thought, so dear was the desire for legislative control to the sinful human heart, was said to be the real and the world of sense was said to be unreal.

This sharp and artificial contrast between the world of sense and the world of thought is but indicative of the general inability of the Greeks to recognize true dimensionality in the created universe. Because they recognized not the true dimension of God, because they assumed that the question of His being had no bearing upon what He said, because they therefore to all intents and purposes wiped out the distinction between God and man they were not able to observe and honor the differences that God had created in the universe. So, for instance, they reduced all relations in the universe to relations of numbers. The Pythagoreans said that things are numbers. It was an attempt to subject the higher as well as the lower aspects of the universe, man included, to arithmetical manipulation. Thus there could be for them no recognition of the uniqueness of the higher dimensions of created existence.

On the other hand when the higher dimensions of created existence in spite of all efforts to keep them down clamored for recognition, and finally won recognition, this recognition was won at the expense of the rightful place of the lower dimensions of existence. Thus the sense world for a time had all reality denied to it and sensation was not given its rightful place in the knowledge process.

Now Plato comes into the picture when the process of abstraction and the consequent separation of the world of sense from the world of thought had reached its first major impasse. We do not say that the process of separation had gone as far as it could go. It had not. Purely abstract systems of logic such as we know in the modern day were unknown to the Greeks; they had not wandered far enough away from the father’s home for that. Nevertheless it was apparent that the process of abstraction led into a blind alley. Zeno’s paradoxes may be thought of as the first tower of Babel that intellectual speculation sought to build. In them we have the first major expression of man’s

¹⁸ *The Development of Greek Philosophy*, Edinburgh, 1908.

stupefaction when he begins to face something of the abyss of the irrational which he has created for himself. As a boy who believes in ghosts most vehemently denies their existence so human speculation which insisted by assumption on its universally legislative powers faces the endless realm of brute fact which is the correlative of these assumed legislative powers and turns to a violent denial of the existence of not yet exhaustively interpreted fact. Zeno denied genuine reality to the facts of the sense world because he could not comprehensively understand them.

Plato saw that all this was leading thought into a blind alley. We have noted how the Platonic Socrates looked for the "fine in itself." We need not debate the point to what extent the earlier Platonic dialogues represent the thought of Plato or the thought of Socrates. It is certain that Plato struggled with the stage of Greek speculation presented to us in the Platonic Socrates. It was with the purpose of saving knowledge that Socrates separated the universals from the world of sense and looked for the "common." Thus because man failed to recognize the "common" i.e. the plan of God that underlay the world of sense experience he turned to a "common" that should be really universal and legislative while yet not dependent upon God. Thus the early realism of Plato was the result of a process of thought which in its fundamental assumption implies the non-existence of God. There was a fundamental error in Plato's reading of the book of nature as well as in his reading of the book of conscience. A natural theology based upon the early realism of Plato can no more serve as a foundation for the superstructure of historic Christianity than the Hudson River could serve as a foundation for the Empire State Building. To affirm that the good is good in itself and therefore to affirm the existence of Ideas in themselves is at the same time to deny that God exists in and by Himself. It is to affirm that the laws of logic rest in a universe independently of God. To give logic no better foundation than this is to prepare the way for the frank avowal that A may at any time be B.

But if all this is plain what then of the moderate realism of Plato's maturer thought? We have observed that in the later dialogues Plato sought to bring the world of sense and the world of thought together by thinking of the former as participating in the latter. It is this moderate realism, this realism that avoids the extremes of denying "common sense" and yet elevates the world of thought above the material world, that is spoken of as Greek theism and that is offered to us as a foundation for the Christian edifice, even by orthodox theologians.

We believe, however, that the moderate realism of Plato's later days is not basically different from the more extreme realism of his earlier days. In his later days no less than in his earlier days Plato made the reach of human knowledge a test of the fully real. What lay beyond this reach he gave over to irrational forces. In fact we may not unfairly sum up the difference between Plato's earlier and his later thought by saying that his later thought allows more room for the irrational than did his earlier thought. When the manifold of experience proved refractory to the manipulation of human thought and yet insisted on being recognized it had to be recognized, given the assumption that there is no such God as Christianity contemplates, as something utterly uninterrupted. When it became ever increasingly apparent that the individual fact did not permit of exhaustive classification by the intellect of man, man took for granted that such facts must find their partial explanation in dark chance. Thus the teleology that we find in Plato is only a partial teleology and a partial teleology is a poor teleology indeed.

Of both extreme and moderate realism we may no doubt assert that they are, from the Christian's point of view preferable to nominalism. To maintain the "objective" character of truth is indeed worth much. It has no doubt restrained men from deeds of despair and led them on to earnest endeavor in the various fields of human research. Thus Platonism has no doubt contributed its positive bit to the preparation of the world for the coming of Christ. But this relative good that we may find in Platonism should not blind us to the fact that Platonic realism or modern idealism is basically opposed to the Christian scheme of things. Platonism itself, and not merely the excrescences that have grown out of it, is an enemy of Christianity. Its chief service in preparing the world for the coming of Christ was, we firmly believe, a negative one. Platonism affords one of the greatest, if not the greatest historical example of what St. Paul speaks of in 1 Cor 1:20–21. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe" (1 Cor 1:20–21). Plato in all phases of his thought, assumes the ultimacy of man. He takes for granted that man's capacity for knowledge is the test of true reality. Christianity offers to the world the conception that only God is ultimate. Between these two conceptions of a starting-point one will have to choose. Plato follows the method of abstraction, the only method that would fit with his starting-point. Christian philosophy should follow the method of concretion, the method of implication into God's interpretation. Platonism at the conclusion of its process of philosophical speculation at last reaches the notion of some vague principle of the Good to which God must look as He manipulates the essentially refractory elements of an independently existing something. Christianity believes in creation. Fully recognizing the historical service tendered by Platonism we nevertheless maintain that there can be no peace between Platonism and Christianity, not even a truce, but only war.

The "threat of peace" to Christian thinkers comes more persistently from Platonic Aristotelian sources than from any other. Rome, to be sure, takes its philosophical instruction from the Lyceum rather than from the Academy; yet in Aristotle there was so much of Plato that Plato, almost as much as Aristotle, speaks to us in Roman Catholic theology. The natural theology of Rome is little else than Platonico-Aristotelian philosophy in theological garb.¹⁹ It is this "natural theology" as taken over by not a few Protestants, even by some Reformed theologians, that still lurks in our apologetical and systematic literature. Add to this that a refined idealistic tradition is carried on in many universities and colleges in which Christian young men are trained for various professions and we can see that we face a large task. That task would seem to require of us that we wholeheartedly recognize and praise God for the relative good in the idealistic thought that derives from Plato while at the same time we remember at all times and everywhere that as for us and for our house we shall serve the Lord.

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¹⁹ The argument presented by E. Gilson in his "The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy" does not, we believe, disprove our contention on this point.

³⁷ Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.

The Theism Of A. E. Taylor

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A number of recent British philosophers have made a particularly attractive offer of peace and cooperation to orthodox believers. We refer to such men as A. Seth Pringle Pattison, James Ward, Hastings Rashdall and Clement C. J. Webb. These men have reacted against what they regarded as a Spinozistic interpretation of Hegel given by F. H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet and others. The theism that these men offer to us seems to resemble the theism taught in Scripture so much that one may easily be led to identify them.

Perhaps the most comprehensive presentation of this type of theism has been given by A. E. Taylor. He has written the article on "Theism" in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. He has written a large work on Plato in which he constantly speaks of the theism of Plato. His views on theism have had their fullest expression, however, in the Gifford Lectures given in the years 1926–27 and 1927–28 and published under the title *The Faith of a Moralist*.

That Taylor's philosophy has a direct bearing upon modern theology appears from the fact that he is an active member of the Anglican communion. To the volume *Essays Catholic and Critical*, edited by Edward Gordon Selwyn, Taylor contributed an article on "The Vindication of Religion." The purpose of the volume as a whole, and of Taylor's article in particular, is to maintain the place of authority in religion without doing injustice to reason.

The influence of Taylor's philosophy seems to be very great. Wilfred L. Knox and Alec R. Vidler have published a book on *The Development of Modern Catholicism*. In this book they discuss the question of the relation between faith and reason. They seek to give a history of the debate on this subject during the various decades of the nineteenth century. They contend that although it may have been doubtful in the nineteenth century, in our day we may be certain that the real issue lies within the field of philosophy.¹ We need a philosophy, they feel, that can do justice to Christianity "as embodying a direct revelation of God on the stage of history," and "which can legitimately claim the free assent of human reason."² Where shall we look for such a philosophy? The authors make reply as follows: "The most important achievement of Anglo-Catholic theology since the War in this field is undoubtedly to be found in *The Faith of a Moralist* (The Gifford Lectures for 1926–28), by Professor A. E. Taylor (Macmillan, 1930)."³ They devote an entire chapter to the exposition of Taylor's philosophy as set forth in the book mentioned above.

It will be observed that the problem of faith and reason, or, more specifically, the problem of a unique historical revelation as the object of faith and the universal validity

¹ Taylor, A. E. *The Development of Modern Catholicism*. Knox and Vidler, 1933, p. 269.

² Taylor, A. E., *The Development of Modern Catholicism*. Knox and Vidler, 1933, p. 268.

³ Taylor, A. E., *The Development of Modern Catholicism*. Knox and Vidler, 1933, p. 271.

claimed for the pronouncements of reason, is the problem with which the dialectic theologians, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, busy themselves again and again. Emil Brunner, in his book on *The Mediator* has given an extensive discussion of this question. The solution offered to this question by Brunner has been regarded with favor by certain Reformed theologians. The solution of this problem offered by Taylor may possibly be regarded with favor by other Reformed theologians.

As for modern theologians in this country, we may say that both solutions have found favorable consideration. By way of illustration we mention the two books recently written by Walter Marshall Horton. In his *Contemporary English Theology* he feels that we in America ought to look for a solution of our theological problems along the lines offered by "the leading figures in contemporary English theology" chiefly for the reason that in England reason has free play. In his book on *Contemporary Continental Theology* he expresses himself as having a great sympathy for certain developments in theology on the continent. Continental theology, he feels, has a keen eye for the unique, for that which comes to us from the "fourth dimension."

It is our business, then, as Reformed theologians, who hold to historic Christianity, to analyze as carefully as we may the claims of dialectic theology on the one hand and the claims of idealistic philosophy on the other hand. In this article we consider the claims of idealist philosophy as represented by Taylor.

As over against materialism and mechanism, Taylor, like the idealists in general, wants to interpret "the lower in the terms of the higher." He has no sympathy with humanism or with naturalism. In the pages of Taylor we do not hear much about Russell or about Dewey except by way of negative criticism. On the other hand we are led into an acquaintance with such men as Pascal and Augustine. Our enemies seem to be his enemies and our friends seem to be his friends. Taylor sets his face resolutely against some of the patent heresies of the day. He is utterly opposed to all forms of anti-intellectualism and individualism.

Still further, he seems to spend his energies freely for the defence of the historical in religion. A religion "within the limits of pure reason" finds no favor with him. Taylor is very critical of those who would extend the powers of reason to such an extent as to make impossible the appearance of the absolutely new in the course of history. He has some fine things to say about those ministers who are, so to speak, constantly hanging on the skirts of Eddington and Jeans. He wishes historical religion to stand on its own feet.⁴ The Gifford lectureship requires men to deal with natural theology only but Taylor seems to have found a natural theology that can allow for revelation. His natural theology even allows for the fact of sin. It allows for the "initiative of the eternal," for otherworldliness, for the supernatural and the miraculous. It gives place to authority, to institutions, and to sacraments.

It is well then that we consider Taylor's philosophy with care and sympathy. Taylor apparently wishes to be our friend. More than that, he desires to dwell with us in the same institution and to partake of the same sacramental meal. Must we refuse to eat with him? Must we refuse to live under the same roof with him? Must we even refuse to call him our friend?

⁴ A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, London, 1931, Series 2, p. 226.

In the fifth chapter of the second volume of *The Faith of a Moralist* Taylor makes a plea for the recognition of authority in religion. He argues that whenever the church has depended exclusively or almost exclusively upon reason it has fallen into evil ways. This was the case with the “English Church of two hundred years ago,” he tells us. But the “ardent Methodist,” “the eager Evangelical,” and “the earnest Anglo-Catholic” came to recall men to the rights of authority in religion and brought new vitality to the church. To be sure, these movements were one-sided but on the whole their influence was beneficial. After expressing himself in this manner about the church of England he turns to America with these words:

We see the same thing, in a highly grotesque form, in the curious contemporary American movement which calls itself Fundamentalism. That the Fundamentalists, being for the most part extremely ill-educated, should be violently obscurantist in their attitude to natural and historical science is only what might be expected, though I doubt whether their *caeca fides* is really more obscurantist at heart than the equally blind confidence of the aggressive ‘rationalist’ in the competence of scientific methods, of which he most commonly knows next to nothing, to answer all questions ‘in the earth, or out of it.’ But it is, I should say, a mere mistake to see nothing in the Fundamentalist movement but its hostility to Darwin and Huxley and the ‘higher critics’ of Biblical documents. What is really back of the movement, and supplies it with its driving force, is the conviction that any attempt to eliminate absolute supernatural ‘authority’ from Christianity, or any other great positive religion, is destructive of its character as religion....

The real issue is not whether the opening chapters of *Genesis* are ‘fundamental,’ but whether there is anywhere a genuine *fundamentum*, a ‘sure corner-stone,’ on which positive religion can build.⁵

We have here, it might appear, a recognition of the rightful place of authority in religion. At the same time we have a firm rejection of any form of authority which binds men to an implicit acceptance of what the Scriptures teach on such matters as nature and history. Taylor is definitely of the opinion that there can be no confession of faith which contains the system of doctrine contained in the Scripture. No historically produced document, he feels, can contain a system of truth.

It is imperative that we look carefully into the reasons for Taylor’s opinion on this point. In the space-time world, says Taylor, we deal with the individual entities. These individual entities can never be fully known by us. In our attempt to know these entities we must employ universals or laws. But in relating individual entities to laws we can never do more than speak of the qualities that these entities have in common with other entities. Accordingly, we can never, in any given finite period of time, have an adequate knowledge of any individual entity. There is always something that eludes us.

According to this point of view, then, we may say that no system of truth could be expressed that would fully fit the facts of the world. To understand this point we may think of the physicist. Such men as Eddington, Jeans and Bavnick have all made us familiar with the fact, says Taylor, that in physics we deal with abstractions. The scientist’s table is not really our table. There must, says Taylor, be a connection between the two tables, but that connection is really a matter of faith. The scientist can, in the nature of the case, deal with abstractions only. He cannot deal with individual tables. And what is true of the physicist is true of the theologian, as Taylor tells us in the following words:

Now, a physicist like Professor Eddington really stands to you and me, in his utterances about human bodies, tables, suns, stars, precisely as the scientific theologian stands to the simple believer, Simon the fisherman, or another. The physicist is the systematic theologian of the

⁵ *Idem.*, 2, p. 207.

natural world, that Θεοῖ ἐυδαίμων of Plato's *Timaeus*. The *viri Galilaei* and their lived religion set the Christian theologian his problems, as the sense-experiences of the common man normally equipped with eyes, ears, nostrils, tongue, skin, set the physicist his. There is no legitimate physical speculation which has not its point of departure in common pre-scientific sense-experience, and there is similarly, I take it, no legitimate theological problem which has not its point of departure in the actual life of contact with God. In this sense, the whole of legitimate theology is implicit and given once for all in the life of the man practising his religion, as the whole of physical science is implicit and, in a way, given once for all, in the actuality of the sensible.⁶

The position of the theologian is, according to Taylor, even more difficult than the position of the physicist. The theologian deals with matters that are more remote from us than the things of the physical world.⁷

We see that we are dealing here with a most fundamental question in epistemology. Taylor wants us to have the house of orthodox theology remodeled in accordance with his own fundamental principle of epistemology. According to his epistemology we deal in the facts of the universe with utterly uninterpreted facts. It is we as human beings who must by ourselves, without reference to God, interpret these facts for ourselves. But inasmuch as we cannot interpret the facts exhaustively we have to that extent no assurance that individual facts may not be quite different from what we think them to be. We may quote a passage that brings out Taylor's views on this point fully:

There always are, and always will be, loose ends, 'bare' conjunctions not understood, in all our actual natural knowledge, just because it all starts from and refers to the historical and individual, which analysis cannot exhaust. To say the same thing again in different language, it is never a conclusive argument against the reality of a fact to say that it cannot be harmonized with a known 'law of nature,' since the law, if asserted as having objective reference, only embodies our partial divination of a pattern which we never grasp in its concrete entirety. Though our formulated 'laws' are never merely 'subjective,' yet, as the history of natural science proves only too abundantly, they always contain a subjective constituent which affects them to a not precisely definable extent. Hence the fact we find so stubbornly recalcitrant may provide the very suggestion we need for introducing an illuminating correction into our 'law'.⁸

Is there then at no point an escape from uncertainty in knowledge? Suppose we turn away from the page of history entirely. Can we not find in mathematics a field where there is absolute certainty? Could we not turn to the *Principia Mathematica* of Whitehead and Russell and show that we there have a body of timeless truth? Have we not in the language of symbolic logic a universal language unaffected by differences of time and race? Taylor's answer is as follows:

For one thing, even in *Principia Mathematica*, the stereotyping of thought is not, and could not have been, complete. There are intrinsic limits to the capabilities of a 'universal symbolism.' Its not innumerable symbols for primary 'indefinables' have to be accurately apprehended before their combinations can be understood, and thus presuppose preliminary explanation in an idiom which is not dead and impersonal, but personal and living. Here is, at the outset, an opening for what may prove to be serious misunderstandings. And again, in every such symbolic system, there must be some supreme principle or principles, governing all its inferences, and these obviously cannot be expressed in the symbolism itself. Thus, every symbolically expressed demonstration in *Principia Mathematica* depends on the principle that 'what is implied by true premises is itself true,' but neither this proposition nor the meaning of the terms 'implication' and

⁶ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 104 f.

⁷ *Idem.*, 2, p. 106.

⁸ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 172 f.

'truth' can be expressed in the symbolism of the authors, or any other. Explanations on such points have to be given in ordinary language, and this makes it possible that the explanations may, from the first, have been confused or ambiguous, and again that they may cease to convey the sense intended, as the words employed shift their meaning 'in use.' Thus, the most rigorous system of symbolically expressed mathematical truths would not wholly escape the criticism of a resolute denier of permanence.⁹

Personal, historical revelation implies uncertainty. That seems to be the point of Taylor's contention. If we should insist on absolutely certain and absolutely authoritative revelation we should have to have an impersonal revelation. But an impersonal revelation is no revelation.

Taylor feels that his point has a direct bearing upon the Christian religion. Christianity is anything but an impersonal religion. The revelation idea in Christianity is anything but unhistorical. Christianity is anything but a system of metaphysics for which history is a matter of indifference. And this is as it should be:

The metaphysician trying to make a fact out of categories is only repeating the task of twisting ropes out of sand imposed by Michael Scot on his friends. However cunningly you complicate category with category, the process always leaves you with something which may be, or should be, or ought to be, and, as Baron von Hugel was fond of saying, 'No amount of Ought-ness can be made to take the place of Is-ness.'¹⁰

From what has been said of Taylor's position so far, it is clear that he has been largely influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. It will help us to understand Taylor's position more fully if we note what he thinks has been the most valuable contribution made to philosophy by Kant. Taylor speaks of Kant in these words:

Whatever our agreements or disagreements with Kant, there is one lesson which we have all learned from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that logic, functioning *in vacuo*, can tell us nothing of the course of events. No assertion about the actual course of events can be shown to be unreasonable, apart from an appeal to specific experiences, unless it is found on analysis to be internally self-contradictory, and then only, if we accept the Law of Contradiction, as a real Irrationalist in metaphysics would not, as an ontological truth.¹¹

Any truth that may be offered to us is, therefore, according to Taylor, an empty concept till it is tried in actual experience. But the experience of a number of generations is history. And if we are to judge of the truth as it comes to us in history we are bound to contribute a subjective element. There is and can be no objective knowledge in the sense in which the rationalists before Kant's day thought of it.

Kant's philosophy has had a far-reaching significance for the course of Christianity in the modern world. Through his influence modern philosophers have virtually given up hope of finding a fully rational interpretation of the universe. Kant maintains that man himself supplies the universalizing element in his thinking. Accordingly, he holds, there can be no such thing as universal validity. Only that which admits of a test by experiment can be said to be binding upon all men. And even that which is now binding upon all men may be modified when new facts appear upon the horizon of knowledge. Thus the knowledge of the world beyond the possibility of testing by experiment, that is the *noumenal* world, is a world about which we can have no intellectual contact with our neighbor; it is our own individual world concerning which we can prove nothing. And as

⁹ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 73 f.

¹⁰ *Idem.*, 2, p. 136.

¹¹ *Idem.* 2, pp. 152 f.

for the world which does admit of testing by experiment, that is the *phenomenal* world, though the validity that is in it is a validity for all men, it is nevertheless merely a validity for us. That is, it is a validity which we postulate or assume in order to be able to speak together about the matters which we seem to have in common. Thus even in the phenomenal world, the only world in which there seems to be universal validity or certainty, each man really stands by himself with his knowledge. Each of us finds himself as much alone as Mr. Byrd found himself alone at “Advance Base” in the silence and darkness of the polar wastes. Our contact with our fellowmen, situated somewhere else in the same wastes, depends upon our own effort to keep our “gasoline-driven radio generators” going. Absolutely unique experiences come to us from utterly uncharted areas of existence but as we seek to communicate these experiences to others, we can do no more than give a few faint signals. Others may with great difficulty patch together these intermittent signals, but only if their “receiving sets” are in good condition.

In some such way we may sum up Kant’s conception of human knowledge. Taylor’s position is to all intents and purposes similar to that of Kant. He returns again and again to the notion of concrete historical fact as that which cannot be exhausted in its meaning and to the notion that we cannot fully transmit the meaning which we individually attribute to our experiences of concrete historical fact to other men. History may for Taylor be compared to the polar wastes of Mr. Byrd, and our communication of our experience of historical fact to his feeble efforts to speak with the men of “Little America.” Thus we are dealing with the subjective element in the knowledge situation. This subjective element, Taylor is deeply convinced, cannot be eliminated.

There is, according to Taylor, no escape from the subjective element in all historical appreciation even by an appeal to the person of Christ. Are we not, he reasons, to think of Christ as having a true body and a reasonable soul? If Christ was a real human being he was subject to the same limitations as other human beings. Taylor expresses his view on this point as follows: Both the soul and body of Christ are held to be, in the fullest sense of the word, ‘creatures’; the historical, human experience of Christ is thus a creaturely experience, though an absolutely unique creaturely experience, of the divine; hence the strictest traditional orthodoxy has found itself confronted with the problem of the limitation of the human knowledge of the incarnate Christ, a problem raised from the first by the simple statement of an Evangelist that, as he advanced from childhood to manhood, he ‘grew in wisdom and grace with God and man,’ by the record of his frank admission of ignorance of the day and hour of the final triumph of the divine purpose, and still more impressively by the narrative of his devastating experience of sheer dereliction at the crisis of his history, the prayer of passionate prostration in the garden, and the dying quotation from the most heart-broken of the Psalms. It is only the creaturely that can pray, and when a Christian speaks of the adequacy of the Lord’s human experience of the supernatural, he must not, I take it, forget that the adequacy meant is still relative to the conditions of creatureliness inseparable from genuine humanity. The human experience even of a humanity ‘personally united with the Word,’ being human, is still temporal experience of the supra-temporal, and of it, too, it must hold true that *quidquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis*. If it were not so, Christian theology would have no obstinate Christological problem to wrestle with.¹²

We would seem here to have come to the bottom of the matter as far as the question of the actuality and possibility of an absolutely authoritative revelation in history is concerned. Even Christ, the Son of God, says Taylor, inasmuch as He was truly man, could not give us such a revelation.

¹² *Idem.*, 2, pp. 229 f.

Taylor would advise orthodox believers to put the matter of revelation on a somewhat lower basis. If we would only realize that in the question of revelation we are dealing with concrete historical facts which can never be fully interpreted, we would not try the impossible and make ourselves the laughing-stock of the world. Says he:

The words of Scripture are inerrant, but we may disagree about the canon, or allow for unlimited corruption in transcription, or may take strange liberties of interpretation. The actual words of the Lord are beyond question, but He may be credited with a double meaning, or a recorded utterance may be shown to have suffered from imperfect rendering out of Aramaic into Greek, or to have been misunderstood from unfamiliarity with Galilean tradition, or to have undergone 'development,' whenever it suits our convenience. All transparent subterfuges by which our absolute authority is nominally respected, while in fact we trim its deliverances to suit our changing fancy. It is an old story over which the world has made merry until it is ashamed of its own jest.¹³

If we should adopt a lower position, says Taylor, we should remove the great "scandalum" from the notion of revelation and make it acceptable to reason. The notion of an absolute revelation would be tantamount to the notion of a mystery essentially insoluble to the mind of man. But the mind of man can not allow that; there are matters that are in principle mysterious to it. We quote his words again:

Now, I own that it is just this recognition of the principle of absolute authority, in one form or another, which is, in the end, the *scandalum* offered by all positive and historical religions to the philosophical mind, honestly bent on the understanding of things. The mysterious always presents a problem to intelligence, and the intellect would be playing the traitor to itself if it merely sat down idly in the presence of the problem without any serious effort to grapple with it.¹⁴

Here Taylor is applying the "scientific method" to the question of revelation. In fact he is using the "scientific method" throughout his work. With all of Taylor's emphasis upon the necessity of allowing for the mysterious he plainly says that he can allow for nothing that is not in principle penetrable to the human mind. The "scientific method" implies the notion of absolute comprehension in knowledge. Following Kant's advice it holds to this notion merely as a limiting concept. It admits that it never expects, in any given finite period of time, to give an exhaustive interpretation of the facts of life. This, however, does not alter the fact that for the "scientific method" no fact can really be allowed as a fact that has significance unless it is essentially penetrable to the human mind.

This idea of the essential penetrability to the human mind of any reality that we are to admit as having determinative significance for our lives implies that we, as human beings, are to be our own ultimate judges. Not as though each individual man must directly be his own judge with respect to what he will accept and with respect to what he will reject by way of religious belief. Each individual man may listen to the "experts" in religion and ask them for their judgement as to what they think is best for him. To this notion of the expert in religious matters Taylor accords great prominence. Only such a concept of revelation as the expert in religion will allow is acceptable.

Taylor's expert has had a great deal of experience with religious matters. He himself, says Taylor, must be a religious man. He cannot be an expert in religion if he has no more than a mere intellectual interest in religion. If he had nothing but a mere intellectual

¹³ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 210 f.

¹⁴ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 208 f.

interest in religion he would be like a blind man circularizing his seeing friends.¹⁵ He must, therefore, be a man of genuine religious intuition.¹⁶ He must have a native ability for the appreciation of religious matters as an artist must have a native ability for the appreciation of artistic matters. A true expert does not, however, depend too largely upon his own individual intuition but goes to school with the great men of religion in the past. Thus he really has the benefit of the consensus of the great multitude of the spiritually minded.¹⁷ The expert in religion has an even more responsible task to perform than the expert in other fields. In other fields the common man seems to be quite normal, but in religion, as in art, we need a good deal of training before we are able to appreciate fully that which is highest and noblest. There are the spiritually blind, the myopic and the clear-sighted. The clear-sighted ought to lead the rest of us to a true appreciation of that which is spiritual.

But the expert, after all, serves us only at the outset of our investigation. It is we ourselves who must finally decide whether a religion is acceptable. How can we do this? From history we may learn whether or not a religion has been spiritually beneficial. In the same way, it is reasonable to recognize that if the great religious tradition has ennobled and purified human life, over a wide range of space and time and circumstance, by bringing the supernatural down into it, and is actually, so far as we have been able to assimilate its content, doing the same thing for our own lives, what has been intensely perceived and lived by the chosen spirits who have shaped the tradition, even where we have not been personally able to assimilate it and build it into the substance of our own lives, is no mere 'subjective' illusion, but embodies real apprehension of a real supernatural.¹⁸

Thus by following expert advice but finally by using our own judgement as to what is spiritually profitable to us we are to judge of the truth of various religions. Their truth depends upon the spiritual value we think they have for us.

When we apply this standard we may find that there is no religion that can be called absolutely true. In fact this is bound to be the case. No historical religion can legitimately claim absolute truth for itself because, as noted before, it is based upon the apprehension of historical facts, which, in the nature of the case, do not admit of exhaustive analysis. We are compelled, therefore, to put the claim for Christianity as a whole on a somewhat lower but more truthful level. These views Taylor expresses as follows: The real antithesis is not between one religion which is true and a plurality of others which are simply false, but between a religion—if there is one—which is the whole truth, *ad modum recipientis*, about man's relations with God, and others which are partial and infected with error, because they do not, in the poet's phrase, look at the Lord 'all at once.'¹⁹

We have now seen that Taylor's concept of "concrete historical fact," which, as he contends, can never be fully analyzed and can therefore never have its full meaning communicated, together with his notion of the essential penetrability of all significant reality to the mind of man, implies, as he rightly insists, a modification of the orthodox notion of revelation and even of Christianity as a whole. Taylor sets forth in great detail the changes that would have to be made in orthodox theology, if his principles were to be

¹⁵ *Idem.*, I, p. 18.

¹⁶ *Idem.*, 2, p. 147.

¹⁷ *Idem.*, 2, p. 145.

¹⁸ *Idem.*, 2, p. 223.

¹⁹ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 95 f.

accepted. It will not be feasible to follow him in all this. There is one point, however, in which the significance of his view stands forth with striking clarity. It is in his discussion of miracle. We limit ourselves therefore, to a brief discussion of Taylor's views on this subject.

Taylor seems, at first glance, to be very sympathetic to the notion of miracle. He argues that there is no *a priori* objection against the possibility of miracle. There is, he thinks, even a presumption in favor of the idea of miracle as there is a presumption in favor of the idea of revelation. This temporal world seems not to have a full principle of interpretation within itself. It seems to need a supra-temporal world in relation to which it may be explained. It is therefore unlikely that the eternal world should leave itself without a witness in the temporal world. There is likely to be a "pervasion of the sensible by the supra-sensible." And this pervasion may be irruptive as well as constant.²⁰ Wellington is said to have been surprised that Napoleon had no "surprises" for him at Waterloo. So we should be surprised if there were no irruptive influences from the eternal into the temporal. "There is a real element of the 'irruptive' and incalculable about the relation of human purpose and intelligence to the 'routine' of events, and by analogy, we might expect the divine purpose behind history, if it really exists, to display the same quality."²¹ Something uncomfortably like miracle confronts us everywhere. Emergent evolutionists really admit this. We cannot determine the course of the future by any analysis of the present.²² And if it is hard for us to understand natural miracles we all recognize moral miracles. "Yet when all is said, familiar routine is not more intrusively broken by the surprising events recorded, for example, in the Gospels than by the abrupt appearance of high poetical genius in the youthful Shelley with his antecedent record of commonplace ancestry and particularly worthless adolescent verses, or the youthful Keats ..."²³ And if we are bound to recognize such moral miracles we should be ready to recognize the idea of nature miracles. There are no two watertight compartments of existence, one mental and the other physical. In all our knowledge of the physical, the mental has a part. Thus there is good analogy for nature miracles.²⁴

This "defence" of the idea of miracles offered by Taylor is really a thorough rejection of miracles in the Biblical sense of the term. For Taylor, miracle is simply a strange event which the mind of man has so far been unable to explain. Taylor's concept of miracle is implied in, and is an expression of, his concept of reality as consisting ultimately of brute facts that are utterly uninterpreted till the mind of man begins its work. Taylor would no doubt agree with the views of William Adams Brown on the subject. For Brown the idea of miracle is a correlate of the idea of personality. Within an essentially personalistic interpretation of the universe one must leave room for surprise. But this does not mean that one must leave room for the orthodox concept of miracle. The orthodox concept of miracle, argues Brown, implies that reality is not essentially penetrable to the mind of man. Even if we granted that the gospel records are to be taken as reporting nothing but what really took place in the phenomenal world, it would not follow that a miracle, as

²⁰ *Idem.*, 2, p. 162.

²¹ *Idem.*, 2, p. 165.

²² *Idem.*, 2, p. 166.

²³ *Idem.*, 2, p. 168.

²⁴ *Idem.*, 2, p. 169.

Calvin or Aquinas thought of miracle, took place. Says Brown: “But the one thing which you have not shown, which indeed you cannot show, is that a miracle has happened; for that is to confess that these problems are inherently insoluble, which cannot be determined until all possible tests have been made.”²⁵ On the one hand, the idea of miracle for Taylor, as for Brown, implies that we as human beings face reality as something that is not yet fully interpreted. We face concrete facts which can never be fully rationalized. And this means that we really face brute facts. On the other hand for Taylor, as for Brown, the idea of any reality that is not essentially penetrable to the human mind cannot be allowed. To the section in which Taylor vindicates the notion of miracle as he understands it, he adds the following words:

To admit this is not to say that reality is ultimately irrational, nor to blink the fact that, on any theory, the great majority of narratives of alleged miracles are thoroughly untrustworthy. When we say that the world of the historical is rational and that its rationality is a postulate of sane philosophy, all that we have a right to mean is that this world has a definite pattern which connects its parts in a thoroughgoing unity.²⁶

At a later point in the argument of his book he speaks of the same question of the relation of fact to rationality in the following words:

But the point on which I am personally most concerned to insist is a different one. It is that in immediate apprehension of the supernatural, as in immediate apprehension of the natural, we are dealing with concrete, individual, historical, experiences which resist complete intellectual analysis at the same time that they demand it.²⁷

In an effort to evaluate Taylor’s philosophy as a whole in its relation to Christian theism we must ask Taylor to justify to us his theory of knowledge and his theory of reality as it has come to expression in the question of the relation of brute facts to the principle of interpretation. It is his conception of fact as utterly uninterpreted fact and his conception of the essential penetrability to the mind of man of all the reality with which we need be concerned, that lies at the bottom of his rejection of the orthodox Christian conception of religion. We have watched Taylor’s expert architect remodel the house of orthodox theology beyond recognition. He has not left one stone unturned. This was only natural. Grant Taylor’s notion of brute fact and the notion that man must be his own ultimate interpreter, involved as it is in the notion of brute fact, and nothing could remain of the teachings of orthodox Christianity. Orthodox Christianity begins the formulation of its doctrines upon the presupposition that all facts in the universe have been from all eternity interpreted by God. When man faces the facts of this universe he does not face absolutely brute facts. To be sure, facts may be, and many of them are, unknown to him. Accordingly he may and must, in his scientific investigation, posit various hypotheses with respect to these facts. But his does not mean that at the outset of his investigation any hypothesis is theoretically as good as any other. No hypothesis is admissible that would introvert the basic presupposition of God as the complete and original interpreter of the universe. Nor is any hypothesis admissible that presupposes the essential penetrability of God to the mind of man.

Taylor’s notion of the rationality of history as being a limiting concept based only upon the practical reason is thus seen to be radically opposed to the Christian notion of

²⁵ William Adams Brown, *God at Work*, 1933, p. 170.

²⁶ Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, 2, p. 170.

²⁷ *Idem.*, 2, pp. 223 f.

the absolute rationality of all that exists. The orthodox Christian takes the notion of the rationality of the real as a constitutive concept. For him the notion of the absolute rationality of all being is the presupposition of all his efforts at interpretation. For Taylor the notion of rationality for man must be adjusted to the notion of an ultimate irrationality. Ultimate irrationality is involved in his notion of brute fact.

To put the matter somewhat differently, we may say that for Christian theism, the theism of the Scriptures, mystery surrounds man only, whereas for the theism of Taylor mystery surrounds both God and man. Taylor's God faces brute facts which he must gradually interpret to Himself. In this respect Taylor's God has no advantage over man. Both God and man, according to Taylor, face a situation that is independent of themselves. This has become apparent from the quotations we have given. In them the notion of absolutely brute fact appears again and again. If Taylor really meant to make a basic difference between the knowledge God has of facts and the knowledge man has of facts he could not have spoken of man's knowledge of facts as he does. If the facts which face man are already interpreted by God man need not and cannot face them as brute facts. If the facts which man faces are really God-interpreted facts, man's interpretation will have to be, in the last analysis, a re-interpretation of God's interpretation. Thus we find that for Taylor God is really in no better position than man; both face the ultimately mysterious.

Taylor has shown himself to be committed to the idealistic theory of judgement. He has repeatedly insisted that the interpretive function of the knower is presupposed even for the recognition of any fact, not to speak of a related group of facts. In this way he has sought to oppose all naturalistic and humanistic theories of religion based on a pragmatist philosophy. We may appreciate the effort but are compelled to note its failure. The God of Taylor is not radically different from the God of John Dewey. Both Gods face brute facts. Both Gods are therefore finite.

The idealist theory of judgement, as noted, brings God face to face with brute facts, as it brings man face to face with brute facts. Accordingly, man's knowledge cannot be thought of as analogical of God's knowledge. Taylor does, to be sure, speak of "the great Aristotelian conception of the 'analogous' use of predicates."²⁸ He warns us against introducing "the distinction between the possible and the actual into that which we also recognize as the foundation of both possibility and actuality."²⁹ Thus it might appear as though Taylor really holds to the doctrine of a self-sufficient God. And thus it might appear that for Taylor man's knowledge would have to be analogical of God's knowledge. Yet this is not really the case. Man's knowledge of facts is, for Taylor, not basically dependent upon God's knowledge of these facts, Man is not really thought of as a creature of God. The idea of creation is regarded at most as a limiting concept. Thus, in the final analysis, God Himself is reduced to a principle of rationality within the universe.

The important question to be answered finally is whether Taylor's objection to historic Christianity with its claim to absolute finality is basically valid. Taylor's theism and Taylor's Christianity may be different from the theism and Christianity of the orthodox faith and yet be the only theism and the only Christianity that intelligent men, particularly men of science, can accept.

²⁸ *Idem.*, I, p. 52.

²⁹ *Idem.*, I, p. 245.

The question at issue here is not, in the final analysis, one of certain facts only but is one of the philosophy of fact itself. The question is whether upon Taylor's presuppositions human speech and behavior have meaning. The question is as to the presuppositions which are to make human predication possible. On this point we would urge that upon the presuppositions of Taylor's philosophy human intelligence itself becomes meaningless. If the human mind is ultimately face to face with brute fact and if God Himself is ultimately face to face with brute fact, as He must be if we are to admit the force of Taylor's main argument, there cannot be any knowledge of any fact. If rationality does not come into the knowledge picture at the lowest level of cognizance it cannot come in afterwards. It would be impossible to recognize any one fact and distinguish it from other facts unless we may presuppose a universal relationship between them. Taylor has not made provision in his thought for a genuine union between the "one" and the "many."

Put in somewhat different fashion, our criticism of Taylor's position is that if we accept his philosophy we should all be in a position similar to that in which Mr. Byrd found himself at "Advance Base." Even so we should have to think of him without such radio facilities as he had. Or rather, we should even have to think away Mr. Byrd himself and think of dark wastes by themselves. We should then have the night in which all cows are black.

Thus we feel compelled to urge that Taylor has been unable to reach the goal he has set for himself. Taylor has tried nobly to bring "actuality and value" into harmony with one another. Yet he has not been able to do so. He who allows for brute fact has adopted into his thinking an eternal dualism between the universals and particulars of our experience. That which Taylor, and the idealists in general, are most anxious to reach, namely, a "concrete universal" which shall furnish a genuine unity between particulars and universals, they are, we are compelled to maintain, unable to reach. Such a concrete universal cannot be reached; it must be presupposed.

What Taylor has been striving to reach a consistent orthodox Christianity has constantly possessed. A consistent orthodox Christianity teaches that God is a self-sufficient Being. In God actuality and value are identical. He does not need a "non-being" over against Himself in terms of which He may learn to know Himself. Neither beyond Him nor within His being is there a "given" element. He is pure affirmation without correlative negation. The triune God speaks to Himself; the three persons of the Trinity are eternally exhaustive of one another. Accordingly man, when freely made by God's creative will, is dependent, for his interpretation of all facts that he meets, upon the prior interpretation of these facts by the triune God. Man may thus rest assured that his researches in the realm of fact will not be in vain; God has pre-interpreted "whatsoever comes to pass." God exists; therefore man can know and live. The Christian theism of the Scriptures thus appears to be the only position that does not reduce intelligence and action to an absurdity.

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³⁸Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.