

1920's – 1930's

Reviews

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Reviews from 1920–1929

GUIDE NUMBER: 1927.B

Religion in the Making

Religion in the Making Lowell Lectures, 1926. By Alfred North Whitehead, F. R. S, Sc. D. (Cambridge), Hon. D. Sc. (Manchester), Hon. LL. D. (St. Andrews), Hon. D. Sc. (Univ. of Wisconsin), Hon. Sc. D. (Harvard), Fellow of Trinity College in the University of Cambridge and Professor of Philosophy in Harvard University. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926. Pp. 160.

In this little book we have the reflections on religion of a man of deserved reputation in science and philosophy. Naturally, he seeks to apply the scientific method to religion. Experience and the history of experience is his starting point. In this case it is our religious experience that is important. Tracing the religious experience from its origination in ritual through its development in motion and belief, Dr. Whitehead finds that rationalized religion consists in an intuitive insight into mental rightness as an aspect of the universe. We see a unified purpose or harmony in the whole of reality that at once demands our ethical approval. Religion itself is not necessarily good; morality is the test of religion, and aesthetics the test of morality.

The universe itself is a moving whole. “In analogy with Spinoza, his one substance is for me the one underlying activity of realisation individuating itself in an interlocked plurality of modes. This concrete fact is process.”¹ This “actual world passing in time,” needs for its explanation “those elements which go to its formation.” It is these formative elements that are important for it is from them that we can learn about our author’s conception of God. The first of these elements is a “creativity whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty.”² Professor Whitehead here shows his close affinity to such thinkers as L. Alexander, and even Lloyd Morgan and Bergson. Time is taken as a necessary aspect of reality as a whole. This at one stroke dethrones the theistic conception of a God in no way subject to the time process. Nor is there room for a temporal creation; the great line of distinction between God and man is effaced.

Secondly, there is “the realm of ideal entities, or forms, which are in themselves not actual, but are such that they are exemplified in everything that is actual according to some proportion of relevance.”³ In this formative element we have a further delimitation of Dr. Whitehead’s idea of God. There is a world of ideal possibilities or patterns which God must take into account in fashioning the world. This conception is essentially Platonic. Not as though our author would attribute to these “ideal entities” an ontological status. None the less, God is dependent upon them in the sense that He can create

¹ *Lowell Lectures for 1925*, p. 102.

² p. 90.

³ p. 90.

according to their pattern, but in no other way. The Good is higher than God; principle more important than personality. This accords strictly with his starting point which regards the moral consciousness as the judge of religion. The moral consciousness ejects its conception of the Good, and then inquires what remains for God to do in order that the universe may present an aesthetic whole.

We find that God has to transmute the “indetermination of mere creativity” into a “determinate freedom.” The protean character of abstract possibility forbids us to regard creativity as such as being actuality. God is one of the three elements that must be brought into unity in order that there may be a real temporal world as we know it. The other two are “creativity” and “the other creatures.” These three elements are mutually indispensable. God can even be said to be the ground of the world since He accounts for the order in it. The world could not be without order. Plato appealed to his God when he wanted to bring his world of Ideas closer to the moving and seething reality of time; this appeal to God was a “second best,” a confession of failure to rationalize. Essentially the same thing happens in Dr. Whitehead’s thinking. In his case it is not movement that must be accounted for, since that has been assumed to be ultimate, but it is “determination,” and “purpose” that need explanation. Pythagoras himself would feel justified in raising his philosophy of the “tuned string” to the dignity of a religious cult if he could see this modern philosopher thus making aesthetics the basis of morality and religion. Philosophy such as this forms an admirable “scientific” and even “mathematical” basis for the type of preaching that makes its appeal to young men to live a beautiful life rather than a good life. God is the source of harmony and symmetry in the world. Do not seek beauty in holiness but rather holiness in beauty!

But there is another point that is noteworthy here. The picture our author begins with is a moving whole. This moving whole implies the possibility of new beginnings and unlimited developments in every direction. To get order and system out of this moving whole is no easy task; it is above human power. Hence it is given to God to perform. But God, if He is to accomplish the task assigned to Him must Himself be above time; He is called a “non-temporal actual entity.”⁴ The transcendence of God is felt to be a necessity and is sincerely sought. But we have before noted that in his first formative element Dr. Whitehead made time an aspect of all reality. This implies that God is subject to the conditions of the world, and a genuine transcendence is then impossible.

We have then in Whitehead’s thinking what we find in much of modern philosophy, namely, an ambiguity in the conception of God. In so far as He is conceived to be transcendent He may be personal but is finite; in so far as He is immanent He becomes the depersonalized universal realized in the historic particulars. Among idealistic thinkers this ambiguity is so persistent and so carefully concealed that at one time the Absolute or God is portrayed as a Moloch who devours both space and time, reducing all our experience to “appearances”; while at another time He is represented as needing the space-time world, and being subject to its conditions. More realistic thinkers such as Dr. Whitehead, who hate all acosmism cannot consistently hold that God is a “non-temporal actual entity.” The logic of their position must bring down the transcendent God till He

⁴ p. 90.

becomes a “function” in the world, an “element” in life. “He is the binding element in the world.”⁵

For Theism it is important that God be not thus conceived as a universal realising Himself in historic particulars; Theism’s God is the self-sufficient creator of the “epochal occasions,” or historic particulars. Our conclusion is that Dr. Whitehead’s thought underneath its scintillating and even cryptical expression, conceals a strongly antitheistic tendency. When he made time and change a necessary aspect of all reality he gave possibility an independent metaphysical status; God could be no more than an aspect, an “element” or a “function” in reality as a whole. Theism makes God the source of possibility; only thus can the transcendence as well as the immanence of God be maintained; only thus is God qualitatively distinct from man; only thus is He personal; only thus is He God.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1929.A

Practical Theology

Paedagogische Beginselen. Door Dr. H. Bavinck. Derde Druk. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1928.
Pp. 184

De Nieuwe Opvoeding. Door Dr. H. Bavinck. Tweede Druk. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1928.
Pp. 106

These two volumes from the pen of the late Dr. H. Bavinck can conveniently be reviewed together; the latter is an amplification of the former. Dr. Bavinck’s contention is that modern pedagogy is the handmaid of modern philosophy. Herein lies the great value of his writings in the field of pedagogy. He enables us to observe clearly the operation of principles in a mass of details.

Even the strongest advocate of Empiricism, Dr. Bavinck shows, must admit that he has a definite starting-point and a definite goal in his educational program. Having shown this to be the case, Dr. Bavinck proceeds to discuss the presuppositions and aims of modern education. Many a method and many an improvement of detail receive from him unstinted praise. Yet, he does not hesitate to assert that the underlying principle of modern pedagogy is humanistic. The starting-point is evolution; man has descended from a lower type of organisms. Hence moral evil is not sin, but a disfiguring detritus of the seaweeds of the deep. It is clearly pointed out how difficult it is, on the basis of such an assumption, to inculcate respect for the law. Law is but a man-made idea possessing no sanction that may be called divine; expediency displaces authority, while the sacred and the secular are merged into one. As to the goal of education, modern pedagogy frankly asserts that it is man. Man being already autonomous in philosophy, in religion, in art and even in morality, it remains only that this autonomy be recognized the moment you see him in the cradle. Let the child, the babe even, proceed to educate himself.

This may seem a strong statement, but it would be hard to prove that Dr. Bavinck has overstated the case. Most modern educators are frankly humanistic. Only they think, or profess to think, that humanism and Christianity are identical. And exactly there lies the

⁵ p. 158.

mistake. Christian pedagogy has always maintained as its starting-point the creation of man in the image of God, and its goal is not man for the sake of man, but man for the sake of God. Humanism goes back to Greece; barring exceptions, Athens, not Calvary, controls the educational policy of the present day.

Education is perhaps the deadliest weapon employed in the struggle between Christianity and humanism. Many Christians seem not to be aware of this fact; at least many of them apparently think it possible that the school should be neutral territory, neither definitely Christian nor distinctly anti-Christian. A change of opinion on this subject has, Dr. Bavinck believes, come about in the last few years. Many Christians are beginning to realize that we must have Christian education from the grade-school to the university if we would truly employ all the means given us for the propagation and defense of the faith.

Reviews from 1930–1939

GUIDE NUMBER: 1930.D

The Doctrine Of God

By Albert C. Knudson, Dean of Boston University School of Theology, and Professor of Systematic Theology. pp. 434. The Abingdon Press, New York, 1930.

The book before us presents “the first of two independent volumes that together will cover the field of Christian theology.” There are reasons for thinking of this book as of more than usual importance. The doctrine of God is of perennial significance. Yet many recent writers have so completely changed the idea of God that the term as used by them means nothing at all. One can scarcely enter a bookstore without noticing that some new deity is born. Usually these gods are born into the pragmatic family. As the space-time continuum advances in age she becomes the fruitful mother of gods. The immanence-idea is so overworked that it has turned into identity. Any “value” or “ideal,” that strikes some one’s fancy is promptly impersonated and deified. If the author of such a deity is a prominent scientist it becomes forthwith a sure token of bigotry to say that such an author is not a Christian or a theist.

In the book of Professor Knudson we meet on the contrary with a serious attempt to take God seriously. Knudson would have transcendence be more than a word. He does not sympathize with the extreme pragmatic tendency of the day. Moreover, he does not wish to build up his theology on just one aspect of human experience. He stresses the equal or perhaps superior value of the volitional as compared to the intellectual aspect of personality but by no means wishes to set the intellectual categories aside in order to find room for faith. His is to be a theology based upon the “logic of the whole personality.” In connection with this it should be said that the author does not fear metaphysics. All of us have some metaphysics or other. The only question is what kind of metaphysics we have. We cannot base our religion on an “as if.” Thus we see that Knudson seeks to give us a

well-rounded and metaphysically grounded doctrine of God. As such it is worthy of our serious consideration.

In consonance with the philosophical seriousness of the author is the high religious tone that pervades the book. When one turns, for example, from Bruce Barton or Roy Wood Sellars to Knudson one emerges from a stifling secularism to the mountain air of religion. Such things as these we value highly.

Moreover, the author is a leading representative and exponent of a movement in theology and philosophy that has considerable influence on the Christian church in America. An unpublished doctor's thesis in the University of Chicago Divinity library by Bernhardt on *Borden Parker Bowne and the Methodist Episcopal Church*, proves that the philosophy of Bowne has a controlling influence on the Seminaries of the denomination referred to. The writer of this thesis sees a great difference between the old method of instruction and the new method of instruction in these seminaries. The chief difference he finds to be the fact that the new method begins from human experience while the old method began with an assumed authoritarianism of the Scripture. We cannot but agree with Bernhardt that if this difference exists between the old method and the new, it is not a matter of detail or of emphasis. It becomes a question of which method is proper and which is improper for the subject of theology. More than that it becomes a question of which is true and which is false. Knudson maintains that his position in theology, based as it admittedly is upon Bowne's philosophy, is the logical development of true Christian thought. "Personalism is par excellence the Christian philosophy of our day."¹ It is this claim of Knudson that we would call in question. Or if it be granted that personalism is "the most prevalent Christian philosophy of our day" our interest will be to show that this prevalent philosophy is not identical with nor a logical development of Biblical Christianity or, more broadly, traditional theism. And secondly, our criticism may suggest some reasons why traditional theism and the "overcome position" of orthodox Christianity may still be the more defensible philosophy or theology of the two.

In developing our claim that Knudson's position is a radical departure from instead of a logical development of Christian theism, we are in a very fortunate position for two reasons. In the first place, Knudson himself offers us a definite and to us an entirely acceptable criterion by which to judge a genuine theism. This gives us the advantage of judging the author by his own standard. In the second place, we have the good fortune of being able to refer to the author's book on *The Philosophy of Personalism*, for a more definite statement of Knudson's theory of reality and theory of knowledge than could well be given in the book now under discussion. This is especially valuable since we believe that the chief weakness of the book is an antitheistic theory of knowledge.

Beginning with the first point we find that in the chapter our author devotes to the Absoluteness of God, he is very insistent on the necessity of an absolute God. The fundamental demand for unity that marks human thought can be satisfied with nothing less. More than that, the unity that we seek must be a concrete unity. If God is not to be a " 'spectral wof of impalpable abstractions or an unearthly ballet of bloodless categories,' " He must be personal. An absolute, personal God is the most urgent requirement of rational thought. Of such pivotal significance does Knudson consider this point that he considers belief in such a God the only alternative to skepticism. "Either a

¹ *Doctrine of God*, p. 80.

theistic Absolute or completely philosophical skepticism would seem to be the alternatives that confront us; and as between the two a healthy reason ought to have no difficulty in making its choice.”²

We are quite ready to subscribe to Knudson’s alternative. The only alternative to a theory of reality of which God as absolute personality forms the controlling concept is a metaphysical relativism. Of course it is easy to find intellectual difficulties in traditional theism. It is quite customary to reject Biblical theism for no better reason than that we cannot fathom how an absolute God could create the universe or become actually incarnate. To purchase relief from intellectual difficulties in this fashion is too expensive a procedure. Where is the system that has no intellectual difficulties? We do not hold to Christian theism because it has no, or even in the first place because it has less of intellectual difficulty in it than other systems but because we hold that on the basis of a metaphysical relativism no knowledge whatsoever is possible. Parmenides was quite right when he said of Heraclitus’s flux that if opposites do change into one another completely, there is no abiding subject about which we can say anything. For the Christian theist God is the ultimate subject of all predication. It is not as though we could sacrifice God and retain ourselves. If we sacrifice God we also sacrifice ourselves.

Corresponding to and involved in this theory of reality is an equally theistic theory of knowledge. If God is absolute personality He is completely self-conscious. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. There are no hidden depths of troubled possibility within or beyond Him. He knoweth the end from the beginning. It is this absolute self-consciousness of God that forms the basis of certainty for our knowledge. Possibility for us is deeper than the deepest sea. If it were so also for God the whole of our coherent experience would be adrift on a shoreless, bottomless void. Our thought would be operating in a vacuum. If there is to be any rationality or coherence anywhere there must be absolute rationality somewhere. Our rationality rests upon God’s rationality.

It is this that Christian theism has expressed in its conception of authority. Its view of authority has never been that of mere tradition. If prophets or apostles, if Christ or the Scriptures are said to speak with absolute authority this is said because it is believed that an absolute God speaks in them. If the Scriptures are claimed to be inspired in a unique sense, this doctrine of inspiration is logically connected with the claim of an absolute God. How seldom does one meet with a critic of Christian theism who will even attempt to state fairly the various implications of the conception of an absolute God, as they appear for example in the doctrines of Christ and of the Scriptures and thereupon assume manfully the epistemological consequences of rejecting all. It is much easier to isolate, for example, the inspiration theory, present it as something mechanical and cast it aside as of no religious significance.

According to the theistic theory of knowledge then, God is the one who interprets the meaning of reality to man. Man’s mind must be receptive to this interpretation if he is to have any knowledge at all. Man cannot begin his speculation upon facts and thereupon ask whether God exists. If the facts do not exist apart from God, they are the product of His plan. That is it is then God’s interpretation that is prior to the facts. How then could man separate the facts from that interpretation of God? As well could you separate a drop of ink from the ocean. Professor Hocking has given expression to this thought by saying

² p. 250.

that our God-consciousness must be basic to our experience. If the God consciousness does not enter at the level of our lowest sensations, says he, it will never enter at all.

If these considerations are true it is an error to suppose that the chief contribution of Christianity to the advancement of speculative thought is the concept of personality as such. Christianity reintroduced the conception of God as Absolute personality primarily and therefore the concept of finite personality; secondarily, Christianity is restorative and supplementative of an original theism; Christianity and theism stand or fall together.

With this brief explanation of the theory of reality and the theory of knowledge of Christian theism we may now ask to what extent Knudson's contention that his theology is a genuine development of traditional theism can receive our assent. To do this we inquire not about details but only about his theory of reality and his theory of knowledge.

Knudson is keenly aware of the fact that not every type of personalism can furnish the basis of a Christian theistic theology. In order to make it as clear as possible that his personalism is genuinely theistic, he distinguishes it from several other types of personalism. There is first of all the atheistic personalism of men like J. M. E. McTaggart. Then there is the pantheistic personalism of Wm. Stern. These two are clearly antitheistic. But even of the theistic personalisms there are some varieties that are contrary to a true typical theistic personalism. Of these he mentions the absolutistic personalism of the Hegelian school, the relativistic personalism of Charles Renouvier and the purely ethical or teleological personalism of George H. Howison. The absolutistic personalism does injustice to the reality of human personality. Relativistic personalism might better be called finitism because it will have no absolute at all. Purely ethical or teleological personalism denies the creation of man by God.

These exclusions on the part of Knudson would seem to bring him very near to Biblical theism. He rejects finitism and absolutism because they fail to distinguish between the personality of God and the personality of man. Thus Knudson very clearly means business with the conception of personality. Moreover he rejects any view that wipes out the creation idea. Thus Knudson wants God to be a higher personality than man. But does our author really take seriously the conception of an absolute personality? We are persuaded that he does not.

The author writes a good deal about the prolegomena to theology. Naturally in such a discussion the question of method is important. As to this he tells us that "authoritarianism" is an "overcome stand-point." The infallible inspiration of the Scripture is, he thinks, easily shown untenable by evident errors in the Scripture. Here we could have wished that an eminent systematic theologian should at least not have descended to this easy method. As suggested above we have a right to expect that such doctrines as inspiration shall first be shown in their correlation to the central doctrine of an absolute God before they are lightly cast aside. But let that pass. The main point is that Knudson resolutely sets himself to an empirical investigation of the facts of the religious consciousness of man in order to determine what religion is before he goes to God. The assumption of this method is that the religious consciousness exists and functions or at least can function normally even if no absolute God exists. It is taken as a matter of course that this is the only scientific procedure. But what then of Hocking's demand that the God consciousness must come in at the very beginning of our experience lest it do not come in at all? A true theist must make God the highest interpretative category of experience and he cannot do so unless God interprets at the beginning as well as at the

end of experience. To say this is not a way “of completely escaping subjectivity,”³ as Knudson would have us believe. To have a truly empirical theology it is not necessary first to study religious experience apart from God. The truly theistic position is also the truly empirical position. We may say that Knudson has untheistically isolated human experience from God.

The so-called experiential method is definitely based upon “the autonomous validity of our religious nature.”⁴ Criticizing the view of theology that teaches it as a “*doctrine de deo et rebus divinis*,” he tells us that, “It fails to see that in our day theology must be anthropocentric in its starting-point.”⁵ So also when the question of the origin of religion is discussed the author finds it a matter of total indifference what the origin of religion may have been. “One might, like the sage of whom Van Hugel tells us, trace the origin of religion back to ‘the scratching by a cow of an itch on her back,’ and yet not undermine the religious belief of the day; or, on the other hand, one might find the ultimate source of religion in a primitive revelation and yet leave it with as little rational justification as ever.”⁶ But surely this is most too strange for words. Only upon the assumption of a complete metaphysical relativism could one make such a statement consistently. If the universe has been created by God, man’s religion is dependent upon and even defined by that fact, while if religion might have originated in independence of God its definition cannot, even eventually, be formed by a reference to God.

We would not be understood as saying that for Knudson religion needs no objective reference at all. On the contrary, he tells us that religion “involves a personal attitude toward an objective realm of values.”⁷ Again he says, “A submissive, trustful, conciliatory feeling toward the powers that be in the universe is primary in religion.”⁸ And once more, “Religion in its essential nature means faith in the rationality and purposiveness of the world.”⁹ The point of importance is that for Knudson the “realm of values” need not necessarily be personal. Religion “is unequivocal in attributing supreme worth to the spiritual realm, but whether the transcendent Reality is to be conceived as personal or not is left undecided.”¹⁰ Very definitely then the conception of an absolute God is not a *sine qua non* of true religion for Knudson. It is desirable but not indispensable.

We have now seen that the root of the antitheistic tendency in Knudson’s book is his uncritical assumption of the ultimacy of finite personality. When in his work on *The Philosophy of Personalism*, he seeks to tell us what the distinguishing characteristics of a true “typical theistic personalism” are, he defines personality in general and afterwards makes his distinctions between human and divine personality. It follows that this method precludes the possibility of ever deriving at the conception of an absolute God. God is

³ p. 104.

⁴ p. 225.

⁵ p. 192.

⁶ p. 217.

⁷ p. 48.

⁸ p. 40.

⁹ p. 42.

¹⁰ p. 51.

then a species of a genus. If there are limitations in the genus they will also be in the species.

It is this fact that God's personality can be no more than a species of the genus of personality that comes most definitely to the foreground when God's relation to time is discussed. About this our author says little and we wish he had said much. Yet he says something directly and more indirectly which enables us to conclude that for Knudson, as for all other non-theists, the Universe is a more inclusive conception than God. We have already seen that for Knudson religion consists of an attitude toward an ideal realm which is an aspect of the Universe. We may now note that for Knudson man partakes of the essential nature of eternity and on the other hand God partakes of the essential nature of time. As to the former it is involved in the contention that in personality as such, therefore human as well as divine, is contained the final unity that our experience needs.

¹¹ In the last analysis the finite personality does not need God for knowledge. "The reality of the soul or self or 'I' is the fundamental presupposition of personalism; it is even a more characteristic doctrine than the existence of a personal God."¹²

But more important, if possible, is the second point that God partakes of the essential nature of time. That this is the case can best be realized if we study Knudson's conceptions of creation and of incarnation.

As to creation he makes no very definite statement. He realizes that an eternally necessary creation would lead readily to pantheism. But he thinks that perhaps all the purposes of religion may be served by conceiving of creation as "eternal, yet free and actuated by love."¹³ What this may mean I cannot fathom. More definitely, however, does he tell us that just as it was true that in man as well as in God, one can find the final principle of unity so it is equally true that in God's being as well as in man the rationale of change must be found. "If God be thought of as a changeless substance, there would be no way of accounting for the advancing cosmic movement. Changes in the world must be due to changes in underlying cause. An unchanging cause could produce only an unchanging effect."¹⁴ It is difficult to distinguish such a view from an outspoken metaphysical relativism. Time is made an ingredient element in God as well as in man; the absoluteness of God has disappeared.

In more direct connection with Christianity, the same inherent temporalism appears in the author's view of the incarnation. He tells us that no religious purpose is served by the Chalcedonian creed which endeavored to keep from intermixture the temporal and the eternal. The "impersonal manhood" of Christ by which the Church sought to safeguard the transfusion of God and man has for Knudson no significance. "We find it simpler and more satisfactory to think of him as 'a human personality completely and abidingly interpenetrated by God's indwelling.'" ¹⁵ If now in this connection it be realized that Christ is considered to be no less divine for His being a "human personality," it becomes still more difficult to call Knudson's position Christian or theistic, and to distinguish it from metaphysical finitism.

¹¹ *Philosophy of Personalism*, p. 83.

¹² *Philosophy of Personalism*, p. 67.

¹³ *Doctrine of God*, p. 369.

¹⁴ *Doctrine of God*, p. 316.

¹⁵ *Doctrine of God*, p. 421.

It is upon the basis of this metaphysical relativism that Christianity is regarded as standing in no more than a climactic relation to other religions.¹⁶ Christ is no longer the incarnate Son of God suffering in His assumed human nature for the sins of man, but God Himself in the human person of Christ is the “chief of burdenbearers.”¹⁷ If this is not to mean that God is responsible for evil it must mean that evil is at least as original as God in which case one has a finite god. And this accords with the author’s statement that the “unsurpassability” of Christianity has no more religious significance for us.¹⁸ This is true if God as well as we are brethren fighting side by side against all evil that exists independently of both in a Universe that is greater than both.

Finally in the last chapter, on the Trinity, the author once more reveals to us that, to him, God is brought down into the temporal flux. He says, and we believe rightly so, that the Christian church has in its doctrine of the Trinity not a useless super-additum, but that it forms the foundation of philosophy and theology. In the Trinity unity and plurality live in eternal harmony. But now note that according to Knudson one of the members of the Trinity is or may be a “human personality.” Thus the diversity factor consists of a temporal element. The unity is no more than a unity within a Universe that is inclusive of both time and eternity, of both God and man. Knudson has thought to make the Trinity do genuine philosophic service by bringing it very close to us, but he has brought it so close to us that it does us no service at all. Worse than that, Knudson has brought the Trinity into the flux with the result that no unity of any sort can ever be obtained.

In conclusion, let us note again that the author’s doctrines about the Incarnation and the Trinity followed necessarily from his experiential starting-point. If you begin your investigation of religion by assuming that finite personality has within itself sufficient unifying power so that it need make no reference to an absolute God at the outset, the reference made at the conclusion will be no more than a polite bow to a name. For Knudson, man is the standard of truth while for Christian theism, God is the standard of truth.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1931.A

The Karl Barth Theology Or The New Transcendentalism

By Alvin Sylvester Zerbe, Ph.D., D.D. Professor Emeritus, Central Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. Central Publishing House, Cleveland, Ohio. Price, \$2.25.

Readers of *Christianity Today*, particularly in North America, will be interested in this volume since it is perhaps the only work in English dealing exhaustively with the much discussed theology of Karl Barth. As such it is to be commended as a clear and readable aid to the understanding of a significant modern movement.

¹⁶ p. 109.

¹⁷ p. 413.

¹⁸ p. 114.

Karl Barth's theology is based upon an antitheistic theory of reality. Barth has made God and man to be correlatives of one another. Barth has no genuine transcendence theory. At first blush it would seem as though the opposite were the case. His whole theology is heralded as a reaction against the modern emphasis upon God's immanence in the universe. And his reaction is extreme. He even denies the real significance of the temporal world. The whole of history is to be condemned as worthless. The eternal is said to be everything and the temporal is said to be nothing. Does not this seem as though Barth holds to a genuine transcendence of God? Does it not seem as though transcendence means everything for Barth? It does seem so—but it is not truly so. Barth holds that "the only real history takes place in eternity." If then man and the temporal universe in general are to have any significance at all they must be an aspect of God and as such be really as eternal as God. Anything to be real, says Barth, must transcend time. Man is real only in so far as he transcends time. We are true personalities only in so far as we are experiences of God. We are not to say with Descartes, I think therefore I am, or even with Hocking, I think God therefore I am, but we are to say, I am thought by God therefore I am.¹ Abraham's faith takes place in eternity. Resurrection means eternity. The entire epistle of Paul to the Romans is said to bring this one message that we must be eternalized. To be saved means to be conscious of one's eternity.

Barth has made God to be highly exalted above time. For this we would be sincerely grateful. Only thus is God seen to be qualitatively distinct from man. Only thus can we stand strong against Modernism. But Barth has also made man to be highly exalted above time. For this we are sincerely sorry. By doing this Barth has completely neutralized the exaltation of God. By doing this God is no longer qualitatively distinct from man. Modern theology holds that both God and man are temporal. Barth holds that both God and man are eternal. The results are identical. Whether I travel in style with the *Graf Zeppelin* or plod along laboriously with my old "Model T" is only a difference of pleasure while on the trip. We have stared at the *Graf Zeppelin* till we thought that it really was above space and time. Whether God and man are regarded as correlatives in the thick, heavy atmosphere of time or in the rarified realms of eternity makes no difference. In both cases man is as necessary to God as God is to man. In both cases the Universe is greater than man not only but also greater than God. In both cases God is reduced to a universal principle that is manifest in equally original particulars. In both cases the transcendence of God, without which there is no God, has disappeared. Karl Barth's theory of reality is as antitheistic as that of Pragmatism.

In the second place Karl Barth's theology is based upon an antitheistic theory of knowledge. He has basically denied the complete self-consciousness of God as absolute personality. He has no room for revelation. At first blush it would seem as though the very opposite were the case. He says that only in the eternal is true knowledge. He says that all knowledge comes by revelation. But again Barth has overworked his principle. Pragmatism says that all knowledge, for God as well as for man, is based upon synthesis, upon investigation of the facts as they are somehow spurted forth from chaos unto the void. For neither God nor man can the ideal of knowledge be that of complete comprehension because there is no telling how many more facts will appear. On the other hand Karl Barth says that all knowledge for man as well as for God is based upon

¹ *Dogmatik*, pp. 50–60.

analysis of the eternal truths that exist apart from time. The ideal of knowledge for man as well as for God is complete comprehension. Knowledge is no knowledge unless it is completely comprehensive. Thus Barth seems to be very theistic in comparison with Pragmatism because he flatly denies that the temporal world produces anything new. But the illusion that Barth is atheist in his theory of knowledge quickly disappears when it is observed that man is once more put on the level with God by being placed with God above the temporal order. God and man are engaged in a common analysis of principles that exist independently of both. Knowledge is made a cooperative enterprise between God and man so that man may "reveal" his findings to God as well as God "reveal" his findings to man. And thus there is no real knowledge of comprehension ever for God since the Universe is higher than He, and analysis is reduced to synthesis for both God and man. There is only one step between Karl Barth and Pragmatism; theism is equally opposed to both.

It is upon the basis of these antitheistic theories of reality and of knowledge that Barth's system of doctrine is built. His system of doctrine does not present to us an essentially Reformed or Christian viewpoint with divergencies here and there. His system of doctrine springs from an antitheistic root and presents some external similarities to the Reformed point of view but never on any point agrees with Reformed theology. This can readily be seen in his conception of creation. Barth denies that creation as it came forth from the hand of God was good, and was to have a genuine significance. Instead, Barth's doctrine resembles that of paganism which held that the spatial-temporal world was somehow existing independently of God and was evil in itself. Accordingly Barth has a very low conception of sin. Man is not really responsible for sin and is not really guilty inasmuch as sin or evil was already in the world. Hence Barth has a very low view of redemption. The whole of objective redemption is reduced to the prosaic level of setting the ideal of the eternal before man. The incarnation is not historical nor is the cross. In so far as they are absolute and have significance Barth says they are above history. Historic Christianity is destroyed and a philosophy of ideals put in its place. Subjective redemption too, is no longer the victory of God's grace over sin in man but is reduced to the pagan principle of elevation in the scale of being. Christian ethics is no more. Heaven offers release from time, not release from sin. Paul's teaching that death has entered into the world because of sin must be replaced by the doctrine that death is natural because a constitutive element of the Universe. There is thus no real difference between Christianity and other religions because all of them are historical and the historical is as the night in which all cows are black. All "Bibles" are in this respect alike. No preacher needs be bound by the authority of any sacred book because the Word may come through him apart from it. Thus the acceptance of the "results" of higher criticism are not merely an inconsistent concession to the spirit of the times on the part of an otherwise Reformed theologian. On the contrary rationalism in this sense is founded upon the more basic rationalism of all non-theistic thought which makes man autonomous and sets him up as the source and standard of truth. Barth knows no absolute God. His theology is a "sport" and will soon revert to type. Professor McGiffert of Chicago predicted last summer that Barthianism would not last because it was really a recrudescence of Calvinism. If we might venture a prediction it would be that Barthianism may last a long time because it is really Modernism, but that neither Barthianism nor Modernism will last in the end because they are not Calvinism, that is, consistent Christianity.

It seems that the author of the book under review agrees in the main with the position all too briefly outlined above. The author has studied widely and carefully in the literature of Barthian theology. What is more, the author came to the study of Barthianism with a true historic sense and a knowledge of his Reformation theology. Accordingly he will have nothing of the hasty identification of Calvinism and Barthianism. The author shows by many telling criticisms that the two spring from different roots. For Barth he says: "Creatureness, sin and death go together. Scripture, however, says that God saw everything that he had made, and behold it 'was very good.'"² More important still our author says of Barth: "He is weakest at the point where weakness means failure, his doctrine of God."³ And as to the hope of some that Barthianism is an effective cure for Modernism our author sees right well that it based upon an illusion. Says he, "Unless it be remedied, we fear that Barthianism is a poorly disguised agnosticism and unfitted to confront this God-defying age."⁴ Barth is a captive to his death-enemy, Modernism. "We are almost at the point at which, if charity did not forbid, we could charge Brother Brunner with himself starting with and accepting a 'religion of immanence,' for like the rest of mankind he must start with an Ego."⁵ We believe therefore that the author's book will be conducive to the highly desirable end that every branch of the Reformed churches will resolutely disown Barthianism as an offshoot of Reformed theology. We are very thankful for its reaction against the prevalent emphasis upon God's immanence but this does not lead us to accept its transcendence doctrine as Christian or theistic.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1931.B1

Morals Of Tomorrow

By Ralph W. Sockman, Ph.D., LL.D. Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York and London. Price, \$2.50.

Freedom And Restraint. The James Sprunt Lectures, 1930, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA. By Robert F. Campbell, A.M., D.D., Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, NC. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, Chicago. Price, \$1.75.

From the well-written book of Dr. Sockman it appears anew that Liberalism has determined upon the destruction of historic Christianity and theism. The God of Dr. Sockman is an immanent principle within the universe instead of the Creator and Sustainer of it. The Christ of Dr. Sockman is an exceptionally wise man but not the Son of God. The Scriptures are for Dr. Sockman the precipitate of past experience but not the word of God. Accordingly God no longer judges men.

Now it will at once be said that on such views of God, Christ and the Scriptures, there is no longer any authority for moral law. And this is true. Moral chaos is the logical result

² p. 70.

³ p. 253.

⁴ p. 261.

⁵ p. 215.

if Christian theism is relinquished. It is pathetic to see the author grasp in vain for some sort of authority. What he finds is the “authority of the expert.” As one calls upon the doctor so one may still call on God, on Christ and on Scripture till nature takes its course in us.

That is “moral authority for free minds.” The “democratic temper of our time” can allow no other authority. Thus the church’s business is to help men outgrow their “growing pains.” And in doing this the church must make no mention of eternity. “When the children of the psychological era cry for the bread of happiness here and now, it will scarcely do to offer them the stone of a promised bliss hereafter.”¹ Such is said to have been the view of Christ himself.

Now against such a position it is useless to fight unless one uproots the foundations upon which it is built. Or rather, one must show that such a position has no foundations. Its foundations are the shoreless and bottomless waters of human experience. Whence has human experience come? The answer must be, “From the void.” Whither is human experience going? The answer must be, “To the void.” Upon what is human experience resting? The answer must be, “Upon the void.” The whole of human experience then, is meaningless. And expert advice on moral questions too, is meaningless. Granted there were experts there would be no patients but corpses. Modernism is as the jackdaw pluming itself with feathers stolen from Christian theism.

In Dr. Campbell’s book the question of authority comes to the foreground again. But if one expects to find in this book a good refutation of the position maintained by Sockman and Liberals in general, he will be disappointed. Dr. Campbell halts between two opinions. We would expect to be shown that except man moves in the medium of implicit obedience to God, and therefore to Christ and the Scriptures, he is as a fish on dry land. We would expect to be shown that tyranny and chaos are the twin monsters that face us if we do not face God. We would expect to be shown that we are slaves to sin if not slaves to Christ. We would expect to be shown that we are slaves to the word of the spirit of man if we are not obedient to the Spirit of the Word of God.

Instead of all this we have what looks very much like “authority for free minds.” We are once more told that the authority of the Bible is that of the expert and not that of the judge.² Now this way of putting the matter is misleading. It implies that orthodox theology has been accustomed to think of God as a sort of judge who merely administers law that exists beyond Himself. It is thus misconceived and then caricatured that Sockman presents the matter. It is thus that Campbell misconceives the matter. As though the words of Abraham, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” have not found their echo in every believer’s heart! Yes, we believe God’s authority is expert. God is the expert not an expert. Therefore too, He has the authority not of a judge but of “the Judge of all the earth.” It is for this reason too, that both guilt and pollution are involved in sin. Dr. Campbell has omitted guilt. But if one omits guilt and thinks almost exclusively of pollution it is only a matter of time before one lands at the “growing pains” of Liberalism.

Dr. Campbell has sought to prove his view of the authority of Scripture by showing that Scripture itself appeals to us as judges as, for example in Isaiah 1:18. “Come ... and

¹ p. 128.

² p. 17.

let us reason together.” But this appeal so far from proving rather disproves the author’s point. There is in the first place a great difference between the Scripture’s approach to covenant people and its approach to others. But, waiving this, we hold it evident that Scripture consistently speaks to the sinner as the sinner’s judge. If sin is what the Shorter Catechism says it is, “want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God,” God must always and everywhere be the sinner’s judge. But the marvel of God’s grace is this that the Judge offers pardon and even persuades men by His spirit to accept it. And this is quite the opposite from the words of Coleridge, “the Bible finds me.” Yet Dr. Campbell quotes these words with approval.³ Coleridge meant that the Bible finds us at our greatest depth, as though our sinful nature were at bottom in harmony with instead of at enmity against God. So one cannot accept Coleridge’s view of the Bible without giving up the Bible’s view of itself. Modernism, we may be sure, is much pleased when orthodox writers waver on this pivotal point and send forth an uncertain sound.

A deflection at this point will soon lead to further and greater deflections. First the authority of the Scriptures is reduced to that of an expert. Thereupon the authority of Scripture is limited to certain fields. Experts should not presume to speak on all matters. They are experts by virtue of Specialization. Now Scripture is, on this view, a specialist on religious and moral concerns. Hence we do well to listen to it on these matters, but we would be misinterpreting Scripture itself if we claimed its authority for positions held with respect to non-religious and non-moral questions. This view of inspiration as held by Dr. Campbell is historically known as the dualistic view of inspiration. It has been held by others and is held by Dr. Campbell because it seems to safeguard all that is necessary to believe concerning inspiration without making one an unnecessary target of higher criticism.

With respect to this theory it should be said that it involves a concession that is fatal to belief in the self-testimony of Scripture. Scripture testimony about its inspiration is unqualified and allows for no dualism. Least of all does Scripture allow a dualism of which man is to be the judge. Moreover, even if man were to be the judge he could not possibly extract the religious-ethical content of Scripture from its historical garb. And this is true not only because there would be endless diversity of opinion as to what should or should not be accepted but especially because redemption itself is historically mediated. One would first have to reduce special revelation to the mere communication of information before such a dualistic theory of inspiration could be countenanced. Jesus and the Apostles did not so conceive of the Old Testament.

Or if the author should complain that our interpretation of his view of inspiration charges him with an intellectualism that he does not want, we are glad to give him the benefit of the doubt between the theory just described and the dynamic view of inspiration as held by Schleiermacher the “father of modern theology.” In either case the consciousness of man must decide what it will accept and what it will not accept of the Scripture. This view is not at all to be identified with that of those who hold to unreduced and unlimited inspiration but who allow for the possibility of minor errors in the text of Scripture. The author claims the authority of such writers for his views but it is a simple case of the jackdaw’s stealing peacock feathers once more.

³ p. 14.

The whole issue is beclouded by the author in his second chapter on, The Letter and the Spirit. Paul's words from 2 Cor 3.6, "for the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life," are wrought upon till they are made to tell against those who believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture. But even a cursory reading of the context reveals that Paul is contrasting those who ministered under the old covenant with those who, like himself ministered under the new covenant. Paul glories in "the glory that surpasseth." What person is there among those who believe in verbal inspiration who does not believe what Paul says in Rom 7.4–6, that we are made "dead to the law by the body of Christ"; and therefore "we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter?" The words of Paul about the letter and the spirit have no connection with the question of verbal inspiration. The author's argument here is Quixotic indeed.

Again the author spreads confusion when he holds that the theory of verbal inspiration militates against the Protestant view that each Christian must interpret the principles of Scripture for himself. But the author should have said that verbal inspiration militates against the modernist view of "interpretation" but is in complete harmony with the Protestant view of interpretation. The modernist means by "interpretation" that each person picks out what he wants of the Bible. The Protestant view of "interpretation" is that each person seeks to find out what exactly the Bible wants of him. Interpretation according to the spirit of the Holy Spirit is in consonance with and demanded by the theory of verbal inspiration but interpretation according to the spirit of the sinner's evil spirit, to be sure, agrees with the theory of verbal inspiration as fire agrees with water.

Even this is not enough. According to Dr. Campbell, believers in verbal inspiration cannot observe the need "of discrimination in drawing lessons from the inspired record ..."⁴ But must we really follow the "sons of thunder" in praying down fire from heaven upon our adversaries because we believe in verbal inspiration? What person, believing in verbal inspiration is there that does not seek to condemn what God condemns and approve what God approves? And what believer in verbal inspiration is there who does not make the difference, made by Scripture itself, between the externalism and nationalism of the old covenant and the internalism, individualism and therefore universalism of the new. The author is beating the air once more.

Finally, to mention no more, literalism, if we may believe the author, is also a child of verbal inspiration. In this case it would be necessary for those holding to verbal inspiration to think the disciples were wiser than Jesus when they thought the "leaven of the Pharisees" meant some species of baker's bread. But does verbal inspiration have anything to do with figures of speech? What does the whole question of symbolic or literal interpretation have to do with verbal inspiration? Premillenarians, Amillenarians and Postmillenarians often agree heartily on verbal inspiration but differ heartily on symbolism.

Such a confusing of the main issue produces troubled waters in which the Modernist will find his fish.

One more point we would note. After observing the author's first major deflection on the matter of reducing the authority of Scripture by virtually qualifying the "natural man" as the judge of its truth, and after noting the author's second deflection of limiting whatever authority the first deflection left untouched, to matters of religion and morals,

⁴ p. 50.

we do not expect that the author will thereafter be very much concerned about what the Bible says on such subjects as the home, the state and the church. In no case does the author determine what these institutions should be according to the Scripture in order thereupon to test in how far they have lived up to the Scriptural idea of them. On the contrary, the author argues chiefly from the basis of history as its own standard. Thus his method is scarcely open to the charge made by Dr. Sockman of being traditional in the sense of having neglected the empirical method. Dr. Campbell's method is scarcely distinguishable from the method of Dr. Sockman. This, we believe, is hobnobbing with the enemy.

We hope and trust that the compromising attitude revealed by Dr. Campbell is not symptomatic of the condition of affairs in the South. If it is we fear greatly that the waters of the Auburn Affirmation will meet with little resistance as they come rushing down toward the Gulf of Mexico.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1931.B2

Freedom And Restraint

The Editors of *Christianity Today* are glad to publish this letter from the pen of the Rev. Neal L. Anderson, D.D. Dr. Anderson takes vigorous exception to a book review appearing in our columns. The editors considered it only right, since his conclusions were disputed, to allow the reviewer, the Rev. Cornelius Van Til, Ph.D., to reply to Dr. Anderson. It is the aim of *Christianity Today* to be just and fair to all.

Dr. Anderson Protests

To the Editor of *Christianity Today*:

Sir: Under the heading "Books of Religious Significance," your issue of March 1931 contains a lengthy article signed "C. Van Til," concerning "Freedom and Restraint" from the pen of the Rev. Robert F. Campbell, D.D, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, N.C.

Three circumstances make this volume indeed a book of genuine religious significance:

It contains the lectures delivered by the author, in the second oldest Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America, and on the Sprunt Foundation, whose lecturers have all been foremost representatives of the Reformed Faith on both sides of the sea.

Second, the lectures on "Freedom and Restraint" in a fascinating and vigorous style deal with subjects of vital importance in the religious world today.

Third, the volume has special significance because its author, an ex-Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, is himself an outstanding champion of The Reformed Faith in America, and has been for more than a quarter of a century a defender of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints," in a great metropolitan centre, the Mecca of tens of thousands from all over the world, who seek there, health, rest, and refreshment of spirit. Recent events have made the author also a spokesman to the nation for the authority of God in the home, the church, and the state.

The reviewer has the following interesting things to say about Dr. Campbell: He is one “who halts between two opinions”; “misconceives God;” “holds the dualistic view of inspiration”; “makes concessions fatal to a belief in the self-testimony of Scripture”; “beclouds the whole issue of inspiration”; “spreads confusion,” and “beats the air in his argument”; “hob-nobs with the enemy” of conservative theology; and reveals a “compromising attitude,” which the reviewer reverently hopes is “not symptomatic of affairs in the South.” In a word, Dr. Campbell is relegated to the camp of the enemy, who overthrows the faith of many.

This is all startling information to the Ministers and members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and to a host of Dr. Campbell’s admirers throughout the country. It is convincing proof that the days of miracles are not over. “Saul among the prophets” is not so surprising as Robert F. Campbell in the camp of the Modernists! If it be true indeed, or only partially true, one can understand the minor chord that runs through the review, “I alone am left.”

Since you have given such widespread publicity to the above statements, permit me to call the attention of your readers to certain matters dealt with in the article:

It is not a review of “Freedom and Restraint,” but of one, or at most two chapters, of a volume consisting of eight chapters. The other chapters are cursorily dismissed with the statement that “—we do not expect that the author will be very much concerned thereafter about what the Bible sayson such subjects as the home, the state, and the Church.” And this concerning a man, who, by pen and in the pulpit, has been a strong tower for the defence of the integrity and authority of the Word of God, for over a third of a century, even in the “Bible Belt of the South.”

Again, the reviewer gives no proof of his charges concerning the author of “Freedom and Restraint,” and his affirmations are spun out of his own imagination, and find no justification in the text of the volume, or in the well known theological position of its author.

To reply to such a “review” in detail is manifestly impossible, as it is concerned, not with answering Dr. Campbell’s position, so clearly and brilliantly stated, but in replying to views that the reviewer supposes he holds.

There are only four citations in the lengthy article from “Freedom and Restraint,” and three of these by page numbers only. The only direct quotation from the book consists of eight words, which are torn bodily out of the context: “According to Doctor Campbell believers in verbal inspiration”¹ “cannot observe the need of ‘discrimination in drawing lessons from the inspired record.’ ”² What Dr. Campbell wrote was this, “The need of discrimination in drawing lessons from the inspired record might be illustrated from many passages. Take for instance the Song of Deborah and Barak—.”

There is direct misrepresentation of the position of the author in the pages cited only by their number:

(1) “We are once more told,” writes the reviewer “that the authority of the Bible is that of the expert, and not that of a judge.”³

¹ italics mine [emphasis removed—editor.]

² p. 50.

³ p. 17.

It is not strange that the reviewer immediately adds “this way of putting the matter is misleading,” for neither on page 17, nor on any other page does Dr. Campbell say one word about the Bible “being the authority of the expert.” Indeed he says nothing whatever about “the expert.”

(2) Because Dr. Campbell, p. 14, quotes the famous aphorism of Coleridge, that “the Bible finds me,” the reviewer proceeds to accuse him of holding Coleridge’s view of inspiration, which view he proceeds to demolish. Yet the author of “Freedom and Restraint” was not discussing Coleridge’s view of inspiration, but merely refers to him as having compressed into a line, what the Scriptures have to say of themselves as “a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

(3) The review continues, “The whole issue of inspiration is beclouded by the author in his second chapter on ‘The Letter and the Spirit.’ Paul’s words from 2 Cor 3.6, ‘for the letter killeth, and the spirit giveth life’ are wrought upon till they are made to tell against those who believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture” (2 Cor 3:6).

It is interesting to note that Chapter 2 does not deal directly with the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scripture, but with the matter of the interpretation of the inspired records; and particularly that the author of the chapter, beyond a paraphrase of 2 Cor 3.6 in the opening paragraph, makes no further reference to it, but does treat in detail twenty-eight other passages of Scripture, most of them from the very words of Jesus.

(4) Lastly the reviewer notes that “the author’s first major deflection is on the matter of reducing the authority of the Scripture by virtually qualifying the ‘natural man’ as the judge of its truth.”

It is difficult for one, with “Freedom and Restraint” open before him, to reply dispassionately to such a statement, for there is not a word in the book that justifies it. On the contrary, in passages of exceptional clarity and force, Dr. Campbell says directly the opposite:

“Those who exalt experience as the criterion of truth in religion seem to forget that there are diseases of experience, inherent in man’s fallen nature, corrupting both reason and conscience.”¹ “The material of Christian experience is the Word of God, or more particularly Jesus Christ, as He is presented in the Scriptures to the soul renewed by the Spirit.”² “It is evident again that the validity of the authority does not depend on its recognition as such.”³ Quoting Jeremiah’s statement that God will write his “law in the inwards parts, and in the hearts” of His people, Doctor Campbell says “The ideal of Christian freedom is not realized therefore at Mt. Sinai, but only when we come to Mt. Zion—‘for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’”⁴

That the reviewer did not understand the brilliant dialectics, which unmask the subtle fallacies of Liberalism, is unfortunate. That he should misrepresent the argument is unfair.

If to believe that “The Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice,” while at the same time frankly admitting the difficulties in the interpretation of many Scripture passages, dealing

¹ p. 12.

² p. 14.

³ p. 15.

⁴ pp. 19, 20.

with scientific phenomena, historic data, and chronology, is to be disloyal to The Reformed Faith, Doctor Campbell is found in the goodly company of Drs. Charles Hodge, Francis L. Patton, James Denny, Clarence E. Macartney, and the authors of the great symbols of the Faith.

The present writer knows no volume where the reader will be more richly repaid for careful study of its pages, than "Freedom and Restraint." It is not a treatise on Theology, but does much to strengthen the faith of its readers in the authority of The Word of God, through a practical treatment of some of the most interesting themes of present day discussion, such as "The Freedom and Authority of the Scriptures"; "The Spirit and the Letter"; "Individualism and the Institution"; "Freedom and the Law of the State"; "Sunday Laws and Liberty"; "The Ideal and the Practical"; "The Law of Liberty and Restraint"; "Whose Man?"

Any one of these chapters is well worth the price of the book to the reverent, scholarly student of the Word of God, who devoutly believes that we may know the Truth, and that the Truth will make us free.

Neal L. Anderson.

Winston-Salem, N.C.

Dr. Van Til Replies

My dear Dr. Anderson:

Dr. Samuel G. Craig has suggested that I reply to the letter sent him containing reflections on my review of Dr. Robert F. Campbell's book, "Freedom and Restraint," in the March issue of *Christianity Today*. I gladly do so in the hope of coming to a better understanding on the matter.

If I understand your point at all it is not that I have been mistaken on details or misrepresented Dr. Campbell on matters of detail, but that I have missed the mark altogether. Now after rereading the first two chapters of Dr. Campbell's book I must still hold to the view expressed in *Christianity Today*. What I said there was not that Dr. Campbell was a Modernist, or "in the camp of the Modernists," as you say I said. Surely if one "hobnobs with the enemy," he is not that enemy himself. My whole point was that Dr. Campbell's book is a poor defense of the orthodox or Presbyterian system of doctrine against the attack of Modernism.

I may perhaps follow your letter in the course of its argument and seek to make some explanation on the points you mention.

1. I have made no distinction between "the author, and the volume from his pen." I dealt only with the volume. I do not know Dr. Campbell and am glad to believe all the good said about him. I could not be prejudiced if I wanted to be.

2. I appreciate the good there is in the volume in form and content, but the good seemed to me to be made of none effect by the compromising attitude I find in the volume and it was this that I sought to bring out.

3. Whether the "information" about Dr. Campbell's book is startling or not is of secondary importance. "Is it true or not," that is the question. Besides, it is quite a common thing today to find people with orthodox convictions "hobnob with the enemy." We are accustomed to that in the North.

4. I hold it to be the privilege of any reviewer to call special attention to one or two chapters of a book without reviewing the other chapters in detail. Nor do I dismiss the other chapters with the single quotation you give on page two. Besides, a review is in the nature of the case more of a statement of opinion than a detailed argument. And finally, the reference to the other six chapters concerned the question of method; only an extensive discussion could bring out the point in detail, and the review was too long as it was.

5. Proof does not depend upon lengthy quotations cited by page number. Proof depends first of all upon a correct representation of an author's main line of argument. The two chapters I criticized are not so long but that any one could easily check up on my argument. Besides, I have given, as you say, four citations.

Coming now to the more definite items, I would remark:

1. The quotation from page 50, is not "torn bodily out of its context." On page 49, Dr. Campbell tells about a Minister troubled in his conscience because he thought his ministerial vows bound him to teach that Scriptures are inerrant not only on religious but as well on secular matters. The "brother Minister" relieves him by revealing to him that what he had really sworn to was no more than an acceptance of the inerrancy of Scripture with respect to matters of "religious faith or moral conduct." Thus the exact point in dispute was the inerrancy of Scripture on all matters of which it speaks. Now Dr. Campbell approves the "brother Minister" of page 48 by his argument on page 50. His argument is that the evident need of "discrimination in drawing lessons" proves the truth of the position of the "brother Minister" who does not feel that he needs to hold to the Scripture's inerrancy when it speaks of secular matters. The implication is plain that if one does feel that he needs to hold to Scripture's inerrancy on all matters of which it speaks one cannot make discrimination in drawing lessons. I cannot see, applying the ordinary canons of logic, where I have in the least misrepresented Dr. Campbell on this point.

In the same paragraph you seem to find a direct contradiction of what I wrote, in the quotation you give. But I did not deny that Dr. Campbell holds to the necessity of drawing discriminating lessons. I said that he claimed that I, believing in the inerrancy of Scripture on all matters of which it speaks, could not do the same. I did not deny that he could do a certain thing, but I denied his implication that I could not also do this same thing. If you say you can play ball I do not object but if you use that as a proof that I cannot play ball I must naturally rebel.

2. You maintain that I have misrepresented Dr. Campbell by my statement about the authority of the judge and the authority of the expert. You say that "neither on page 17, nor on any other page does Dr. Campbell say one word about the Bible "being the authority of the expert."

Here, too, I have not been convinced by your reasoning. On page 16 Dr. Campbell illustrates two meanings of "authority," by contrasting the authority of a judge as judge, and this same judge as the author of a standard treatise on Court Procedure. Of the latter he says, page 16, "It is not an authority that commands obedience by external compulsion, but an authority that commends itself by internal appeal." Any one failing to "follow the prescription of this authority" does so at his own peril. Is the author not plainly contrasting the authority of the judge and the authority of an "expert" who advises

but does not compel? The word “expert” is not used but the thing is clearly signified and that is all one need be concerned about to be fair to an author.

Then further in the last paragraph on page 16, the author says with respect to the illustration used, “Though the parallel is not perfect, it may serve to illustrate in some measure the authority of Scripture. Scripture is first of all Jehovah’s appeal to reason.” Then on page 17, the author, with patent allusion to his statement on page 16 about the lawyer who might fail to follow the prescription of this authority, says to those who should respect the similar authority of Scripture, “It is true that serious consequences follow rejection or neglect of authority in this case as inevitably as in the case of a law of Nature—.”

In view of the course of the argument on these two pages and also on page 18, I feel fully warranted to use the phrase “authority of an expert,” with respect to the author’s view of Scriptural authority. Moreover on page 17, after the quotation from Dr. Denney, which quotation Dr. Campbell used in order to prove further his own conception of the Bible as illustrated by the judge who wrote the “standard treatise” the author says definitely, “The authority of the Bible is of this kind.” For that reason I referred to page 17.

In addition to this the reasoning on pp. 12–13 fully corroborates the “expert” idea of Scripture. The author says, p. 12, “that there are diseases of experience inherent in man’s fallen nature, corrupting both reason and conscience, and that there is also such a thing as an immature or undernourished experience. The Bible is medicine for the diseased experience and food for the experience that is immature or undernourished.” Again on page 13, “We see therefore that experience begins as an infant and must be fed; that conscience must be exercised and nourished if it is to be quick and active to discern good and evil.” In all this I find not a word about the forensic side of the matter. There where the author gives his profoundest reasons for differing from those who “make personal insight and experience the only criterion of truth” he has nothing to say about man’s guilt before God. He speaks of experience being diseased and of that only. It is no wonder then that the judge has to give way to the expert, when the question of Bible authority is broached. The author is quite consistent on this point. Thus you will realize that I must still hold the whole matter quite “misleading,” if we remember that the author’s views are supposed to be in consonance with those of the Westminster standards in which the forensic element is primary and controlling. You will also understand why I hold that the author “misconceives the matter.”

2. As to the quotation from Coleridge I may remark: (a) I did not “proceed to accuse him [Dr. Campbell] of holding Coleridge’s view of inspiration.” I do not mention inspiration nor discuss the matter without mentioning it by name in this connection. The first chapter of Dr. Campbell’s book deals with “authority.” (b) What I said was that Coleridge was quite wrong. Coleridge thought of experience as it is today, regardless of what sin has done to experience, when he made his famous aphorism. This experience he takes as his standard and finds that the Scriptures correspond with it, and therefore accepts the Scriptures. Thus experience is made the judge of Scripture instead of Scripture the judge of experience. (c) What I said further was that Dr. Campbell quoted Coleridge with approval. Did he not? “On the contrary, when we say that the Bible is an infallible authority, we base its infallibility on its harmony with right reason. Between the

teachings of Scripture and the reason and conscience of man there is a correspondence as between pure air and the lungs. As Coleridge expressed it, 'The Bible finds me.' "

I would ask Dr. Campbell here what he means when he speaks of "right reason." Is it regenerated reason or non-regenerated reason to which he refers? Of course the Scriptures and regenerated reason agree as fresh air and lungs but the Scriptures and the non-regenerated reason agree as fire and water. Surely the author "spreads confusion" when he passes from the one to the other type of experience without making the least distinction between the two. I must still hold that the author "wavers on this pivotal point and sends forth an uncertain sound."

4. As to the second chapter of Dr. Campbell's book, the subject directly under discussion is that of interpretation, but what Dr. Campbell says about interpretation definitely involves a certain view of inspiration. And it is Dr. Campbell's view of inspiration that I hold to be dangerous because unreformed. Why may I not say so?

A very disappointing feature about the second chapter is that the issues of verbal inspiration, of the old and new dispensations, of literalism and symbolism are discussed without distinction. For that reason the poor man who still believes in the inerrancy of Scripture in all matters of which it speaks, is made to bear the burden of a mechanical instead of an organic view of revelation and inspiration, and the burden of a crass and absurd literalism of interpretation. Thus the author has been altogether unfair to the believer in plenary inspiration and has "spread confusion," and "beclouded" the whole issue between the orthodox and the Modernist. The argument is quixotic indeed.

5. Lastly you mention my main criticism that the author virtually qualifies the "natural man" as the judge of Scripture. I trust I have already made it clear above that this is exactly what the author does. And the strange part is that I have quoted in proof of my charge parts of those portions which you quote in disproof of my charge.

(a) That there are "diseases of experience" does not in itself prove that man is guilty and cannot be a judge. In fact, Dr. Campbell contends that though diseased, man nevertheless possesses "right reason" by which he can judge the Scripture. Dr. Campbell nowhere clearly distinguishes between regenerate and non-regenerate experience. Surely when Jehovah says to his covenant people, "Come let us reason together," that proves nothing about those that are not covenant people. Or when Paul writes to the Christian Church at Corinth, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say," Dr. Campbell is not justified in generalizing this statement so that it includes all men, non-regenerate as well as regenerate (p. 16). Were not the covenant people supposed to understand things others did not understand? Does not Paul agree with John that Christians if they be Christians indeed, have an unction of the Holy one by which they understand and respond to truths which are obnoxious to the unbeliever? The author has been—such is my definite conviction—"hobnobbing with the enemy" on this point. The other quotations you give have no connection with the subject and may be omitted.

Your appeal to authorities, too, may pass unnoticed. It is not a matter of "frankly admitting difficulties in the interpretation of many Scripture passages . . ." Every reformed person will gladly do that. The question is about the inerrancy of Scripture on all matters of which it speaks, secular as well as religious. The limitation of Scripture's

inerrancy to religious truth in distinction from secular matters, as introduced by Dr. Campbell finds no support from reformed theologians.⁵

You will now realize that instead of regarding Dr. Campbell's book as a piece of "brilliant dialectics which unmask the subtle fallacies of Liberalism," I must continue to regard it as a book concessive to Liberalism, and one that does more harm to the cause of the Reformed Faith than an outspoken liberal book could do.

Sincerely yours,
C. Van Til

GUIDE NUMBER: 1931.C

The Christian Life: A Handbook of Christian Ethics

By Joseph Stump, D.D., L.L.D, L.H.D., President of Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary. New York, The MacMillian Company, 1930. \$2.50.

By presenting Christianity as an ideal way of life and Jesus as the most perfect man while neglecting to show the supernatural foundation of these facts Modernism gains many an easy convert. The "natural man" does not object to having a beautiful ideal of life placed before him any more than he objects to visiting an art gallery. As long as you recognize his as essentially sound in heart and mind you may say anything to the "natural man." As soon, however, as you place the cross of Christ with its implication of man's complete corruption in heart and mind before the eyes of men they will turn away in disgust. Modernism's popularity is due to the fact that it is based upon the evolution hypothesis which holds to man's essential and inherent goodness. Thus the "offense of the cross" is removed and anybody whether truly regenerated or not can call himself a Christian. It follows that the term "Christian" has thus lost or changed its meaning. Modernism loves to speak of regeneration, but by regeneration it does no longer signify the implanting of new life into the heart of the sinner by the Holy Spirit but a new resolve on the part of man to live better. And thus one might mention other terms to show that Modernism continues to use all the old terms so dear to the heart of Christians but changes their meaning completely. Now add to this the fact that most churches have sadly neglected the thorough catechetical instruction of its young people and it is no marvel that Modernism makes so many converts. When people have lost their power of discrimination between the true and false the mere use of the old terms will make a modernist preacher acceptable to an orthodox congregation.

For these reasons we are happy to welcome the book of President Stump. He does not hesitate to make it plain that a truly Christian life must spring from a regenerated heart in the old sense of the term. There is no true purity of motive unless man truly loves God and man cannot truly love God unless he be regenerated. Accordingly we are not to think of the Christian life and of the Christian virtues as a superstructure based upon the

⁵ Cf. H. Bavinck, *Dogmatiek*, Vol. 1; A. Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, Vol. 4; B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*.

foundation laid by the Greeks. This is the way Modernism construes the matter. We are to realize however with respect to paganism that, "While in form this teaching approaches that of Christianity, in content it is different."¹ The conclusion is inevitable that the "Christian life" of the Modernist only outwardly resembles the "Christian life" of the Christian while in content the two are radically different.

In consonance with the author's insistence upon the need of regeneration is his discussion of man's original state. He has not been frightened by the scarecrow of evolution. He does not menially apologize for believing that, "The original state of man was one of harmony and fellowship with God; but through sin it was replaced with one of enmity and alienation from God by wicked works (Col 1.21)."² We rejoice in this bold uncompromising stand. That man lived originally in a state of perfection has not been and cannot be disproved by evolution and the various sciences based upon it. That man was created perfect is a doctrine which stands or falls with theism and Christianity. On the other hand Christianity and theism stand or fall with the doctrine of man's original goodness. If God is God he created a world that was "good."

In the second place our author makes clear that the standard by which we are to measure the Christian life is the will of God as expressed in the Scripture. Also on this point President Stump has taken sides against the Modernist. The Modernist's standard of life is his own feeling of right and wrong. Newman Smyth, for instance, in his book on *Christian Ethics*, attempts to place the Bible and the "Christian Consciousness" on the same level but does not succeed in doing so. The Christian consciousness always has the determining vote. The Russellite tells us that because "you would not send a dog to hell," the Scripture teaching of eternal punishment must be wrong. All this teaching of Modernism is based once more upon the assumed truth of the evolution hypothesis which says that all law, human and divine, has somehow evolved from sheer emptiness. Laws are, upon this basis, useful expedients for a complicated society and it was a happy idea of our pious forefathers to call those laws divine in order to gain more respect for them. Even now Modernism speaks of the "sacredness" of law though it believes in no God that could make law sacred. Do we wonder at the amount of disrespect for law in our day even among church people? We ought to marvel that there is not more disrespect for law since Modernism has robbed law of its genuine "sacredness."

We do not agree with the author's Arminianism. His free will doctrine we believe to be inconsistent with his emphasis upon the need of regeneration. Moreover Arminianism affords a back-door entrance to Modernism in as much as it gives man an independence of God that is flatly contradictory to the doctrine of creation. Still further we are convinced that Reformed Ethics are more fortunate than Lutheran ethics in as much as with the Reformed doctrine of common grace we can appreciate as good for this life the deeds of men that are not regenerate without saying that they are qualitatively the same as the deeds of regenerate men. We have no desire to cover up these differences. But this enables us the better to appreciate the value of books on the Christian life such as we have before us. As orthodox believers we stand side by side against a common foe.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1931.D

¹ p. 21.

² p. 41.

The Bondage Of The Will

By Martin Luther. Translated by Henry Cole, M.A., with slight alteration from Edward T. Vaughan, M.A. Corrected by Henry Atherton. Great Britain: The Sovereign Grace Union, 98 Camberwell Grove, London, S.E. 5, 10/6. United States: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 234 Pearl St., N.W., Grand Rapids, Mich., \$3.50.

The Sovereign Grace Union is doing a valuable service to orthodox Christians by reprinting books of the type now under consideration. Luther's book will remain a classic on the subject of man's free will. It should be remembered that Luther deals with the subject chiefly from an ethical point of view. Accordingly he brings out very forcibly the Scripture doctrine of the "natural man's" total inability to do anything that is good in the sight of God. And what could be more useful for the church today than a reemphasis of this very point? The "wisdom of the world" rebels against this doctrine constantly. This wisdom seeks to insinuate itself into the church again and again. It is such a hard doctrine to believe that we can do nothing meritorious in the sight of God unless He by His grace operates in our hearts.

The method employed by Luther is that of detailed Scripture explanation. For this reason the book should be very useful for those who are troubled with certain Scripture passages which they think seems to allow some power to the "natural man." Moreover the book is very readable. The fact that it was written long ago should not keep any one from reading it.

Incidentally one may gather many interesting bits of information about the ways and methods of Modernism in this book of Luther. Luther was writing against the famous Modernist of his day, the great Erasmus. Luther shows how Erasmus counseled men from the investigation of deep doctrines. Such investigations could lead to nothing but disharmony and strife according to Erasmus. At the same time the real result of such a policy and the real intent of Erasmus who advised its adoption was that men should turn to an agnostic position. "You call us off, and forbid our endeavouring to know the prescience of God—and counsel us to leave such things, and to avoid and disregard them; and in so doing you at the same time teach us your rash sentiments; that we should seek after an ignorance of God—" ¹ We may well ask "Shall a leopard change his spots?" Modernism in the Reformation period sought to insinuate a far-reaching agnosticism into the church in the name of peace and harmony. Is Modernism today doing anything different?

Luther takes pains to call attention to this policy of Erasmus again and again. Nothing seems to him to be so dangerous as the systematic cultivation of ignorance in the name of peace as Modernism engages in it without let or hindrance. Accordingly he wrote his catechisms with which to instruct the youth of the church in the essentials of the Christian faith. Would not the church do well to follow Luther's example in this respect? Orthodox Christians have themselves to blame most of all for the rapid inroads of Modernism in the Church. Modernism thrives wherever ignorance of the church's teachings prevails.

¹ p. 46.

Another point of interest is the confidence with which Luther meets his opponent. He gives Erasmus credit for great learning and culture but does not in the least fear to meet him in the arena of religious debate. In this respect too, it would seem, we can well afford to follow Luther's example. All too often we crouch like "a belabouredhound beneath his master's lash" when Modernism hurls the dread name of science rather than produce argument. We need to be humbly bold in our fight with Modernism because we have the fullest confidence that truth is on our side.

Many other matters might be mentioned which would prove that the book of Luther makes very profitable reading for any one interested in the progress of the old gospel. We have mentioned only two or three items in order to give an illustration of the great value of the book.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1932.A

Pathways To The Reality Of God

By Rufus M. Jones, Litt.D., LL.D. Professor of Philosophy in Haverford College. Author of "Studies in Mystical Religion"; "New Studies in Mystical Religion"; "Spiritual Energies," etc. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931. \$2.00.

Among the many things of interest that might be mentioned in connection with this book of Professor Jones we shall limit ourselves to two that seem to be of most importance. The title of the book leads us to ask what the pathways are that according to Jones lead to God, and to what sort of a God Professor Jones would lead us.

In a sense it may be said that Jones wishes to lead us along the beaten pathways that all the saints of God have trod. He speaks of such pathways as faith, revelation, inspiration, Christ and prayer. But there are different ways of traveling on these pathways. There is the old familiar way, the way of Augustine, Luther and Calvin. Then there is the way of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Kant and Hegel.

Jones has chosen the second of these two ways. He would have us think of the inspiration of the prophets and the apostles as at most a heightened form of the inspiration of the poets. In opposition to the "dogmatic bibliolotry" of orthodox theology he sets the position of Coleridge. "The ultimate test, now as in Coleridge's day, will be whether a passage, or a book finds us, and finds us moreover at our deepest levels."¹ All revelation literature must be tested by this standard that Coleridge has set.² If there is to be any redemption it is not to be effected through the God-man Christ Jesus but through man as such. Christ Himself is one of the "peak-moments" that have appeared somehow on the long course of the "spiritual adventure" which we call the universe.³

By such ways as these Jones leads us to his God. That God we must now learn to find not so much beyond us as within us.

¹ Cf. p. 162.

² Cf. p. 150.

³ Cf. p. 145.

All the “pathways” have led to be sure to a “Beyond” but to a “Beyond within us” as Boutroux taught us.⁴

Summing up the entire position of Professor Jones we may say negatively that it is opposed to historic Christianity and Biblical theism and positively that it seeks to substitute for these a broad philosophy that is idealistic rather than naturalistic in its emphasis.

The argument for this broad idealistic philosophy that underlies so much of the current Modernism of the pulpit remains unconvincing here as elsewhere. The criticism that Jones and his fellow Idealists bring to bear upon the many forms of naturalism tells with equal force against their own position. Jones feels that we need some form of self-transcendence. Unless we did we would “forever remain victims of the ‘egocentric predicament.’”⁵ “We could never have dealings and commerce with a real world beyond our inward seemings.” But the self-transcendence of Jones cannot accomplish the task it is given to perform. The self-transcendence to which Jones holds is not only thought of as in analogy with the self-transcendence that we meet with in our every act of sense-perception but is actually thought of as an extension of the self-transcendence of our every mental act. Such a self-transcendence cannot lead us to a God who is anything more than quantitatively distinct from us. With all his efforts to overcome the quantitative concepts of science when speaking of God the author of this book does not succeed in doing so. Jones speaks of the Indian fakir throwing his coil of rope into the air and then climbing up hand over hand on the rope. We must continue to hold this as a fair illustration of the prevailing argument of the general idealistic philosophy that underlies Modernism till something radically different appears. “Like the tower of Babel, it fails to reach all the way up.”⁶

GUIDE NUMBER: 1933.B1

Is God A Person

By Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Borden Parker Bowne Professor of Philosophy in Boston University. Association Press, 1932. New York: 347 Madison Avenue.

In this small book of Professor Brightman we are on a much higher intellectual plane than we were in the book of Dr. Vance. There is close reasoning in this book. And the reasoning is in the interest of the same sort of God as the one Dr. Vance believes in. Both men are opposed to the traditional view of God. Both men speak of the traditional idea of God as being the idea of a “static” God. Says Brightman, “There are at least two possible ways of looking at the divine perfection. It may be regarded as absolutely complete and so as incapable of being improved in any way whatever. While this is the traditional and hence ‘natural’ view of most Christians, it has serious consequences. If the divine perfection is absolutely complete and static, then there is no motive for God’s ever doing anything, for he could not become better and any change from perfection would

⁴ Cf. p. 208.

⁵ Cf. p. 212.

⁶ Cf. p. 50.

inevitably make him worse.”¹ Because of this difficulty Brightman believes in a God “whose perfection consists in his eternal perfectibility.”²

We notice then that the God of Brightman as well as the God of Vance is the God of ordinary philosophical pragmatism. It is well to remember this in view of the fact that there seem to be not a few Christian theologians who think that in the Boston school of personalism one can find a fairly good foundation for orthodox Christianity. The plausibility of this contention is due to the fact that the Boston personalists make a great deal of the distinction of their position from that of pragmatism and other types of philosophy. Yet it is not difficult to see that any philosophy that does away with the qualitative difference between God and man by bringing God into the temporal flux stands by virtue of that fact in radical opposition to Christianity.

Yet strange to say Brightman thinks that he is interpreting the really Christian idea of God. Says he, “The God of Christianity is a suffering, dying and rising God. Shall the Father be exempt from the experiences which faith has freely ascribed to the Son? Just as Jesus reveals the love of God, so also he reveals his suffering.”³ Now surely Professor Brightman knows that faith has never ascribed suffering to any of the persons of the trinity. On the contrary the church has guarded against that idea most carefully by teaching that the divine person of Christ assumed a human nature and suffered in his human nature only. The whole of the Chalcedon creed was formulated in order to keep out the heresy that Brightman is asking us to accept as a matter of course. The Chalcedon creed was formulated in order to guard against the mixture of time and eternity in the idea of the incarnation. It were better then if the Boston personalists would simply say that they are breaking off all connections with traditional Christianity. They ought to do this in pity on the poorly indoctrinated ministers who once “had” church history and who once upon a time studied “Hodge” but who are now too busy to trouble with such “details.”

With respect to the argument against the traditional conception of God as voiced by Brightman we would say that it is only the traditional God that gives any meaning to history at all. Without the traditional God human experience rests upon chaos and operates in a void. It is one thing to accept a belief that has difficulties; it is quite another to accept a belief that reduces experience to nonsense. We believe not in a personal God within the Universe but in the personal God as the presupposition of the universe.

¹ p. 63.

² p. 64.

³ p. 66.

Worship God

By James I. Vance, D.D. LL.D., Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee.
Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, London and Edinburgh.

This book of Dr. Vance tends greatly to confuse the reader. On the one hand Dr. Vance quotes the Westminster Catechism definition of God¹ and speaks of it very highly and on the other hand it appears that he does not believe in the God of the Westminster standards at all. If Dr. Vance really believed the Westminster definition of God he would have upheld the “system of doctrine” of the confession as a whole. The Westminster Confession presents a carefully elaborated and logically coherent system of truth. We cannot believe parts of it without believing the whole. Yet it is this that Dr. Vance tries to do. He definitely rejects the Westminster doctrine of Scripture when he says that he believes Scripture because it inspires him.² That is placing the subjective prior to the objective while the Confession places the objective prior to the subjective. Dr. Vance definitely rejects the Westminster view of eternal punishment. He even ridicules the idea and says it is one of the causes of Atheism. Speaking of people who have a tendency to disbelieve in God he says, “They think of God as a monster, a cruel despot, a vengeful Deity, the creator of an endless hell, flaming with unspeakable torments, Who gets His fun in life by making bonfires of the wicked.” People who have this idea of God cannot be blamed for wanting to get rid of Him.³ Dr. Vance will not blame us then if we do not take his statements about belief in the God of the Westminster standards seriously. If he wanted us to take him seriously at this point he should have tried to prove that the Westminster standards do not present a system of doctrine but that one can pick out what he pleases and deny or ignore what he pleases.

But we are not left to infer that Dr. Vance does not believe in the God of the orthodox church. He tells us frankly in other sections of the book that he does not believe in Him. He speaks of the traditional concept of God as a “static Deity” in which it is quite absurd to believe.⁴ And when we then ask him what sort of a progressive Deity he would substitute for the “Static” one he answers that it is a deity that is subject to time. Dr. Vance does away at one stroke with the qualitative difference between the eternity of God and the temporal limitations of man when he says “Time is a part of eternity.”⁵ On this point Dr. Vance is in perfect agreement with the pragmatic philosophers.

Yet it is amusing to note that Dr. Vance thinks his complete rejection of our God as being a matter of detail. Says he at another point, “This may not be your idea of God. Yours may be different. We will not quarrel about our differences. We will not destroy the canvas because we fail to see the same thing in the picture. We will think of the great

¹ p. 39.

² p. 78.

³ p. 24.

⁴ p. 46.

⁵ p. 49.

Father, and draw closer together as we fare on toward our long home.”⁶ All this is in the interest of church union since “sectarianism is dying.”⁷ But if Dr. Vance expects us to worship his God with him he ought to have given us some reasons for rejecting our God. He cannot expect us to worship our God and our devil at the same time.

But suppose that for the moment we absolve Dr. Vance from the duty of close reasoning on this question and try to worship his God with him. We would soon discover that our worship would return to our bosoms. The worship of the God of Modernism, the worship of the God of Pragmatism is the worship of man. The religion of Modernism is the “Religion without God” so well described by Paul Sheen. Dr. Vance should have changed the title of his book into “Worship Man” or better still, “The Death of Worship.”

GUIDE NUMBER: 1934.B

The Christian Experience Of Life

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

⁶ p. 37.

⁷ p. 12.

¹ p. 8.

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.

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

² p. 15.

³ p. 15.

⁴ p. 139.

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 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

⁵ p. 31.

⁶ p. 137.

⁷ p. 96.

⁸ p. 15.

⁹ p. 23.

¹⁰ p. 22.

¹¹ p. 26.

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.

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

¹² p. 68.

¹³ p. 77.

¹⁴ p. 37.

¹⁵ p. 157.

this we can only think him mistaken. For all the man] good points in the book as far as details and individual points are concerned it is in its main tendency subversive of orthodox Christianity.

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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Christianity—The Paradox Of God

The James Sprunt Lectures for 1933 were delivered at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, by Professor Donald Mackenzie and have been published by the Fleming H. Revell Co., under the title “Christianity—the Paradox of God.” Professor Mackenzie has succeeded Dr. Geerhardus Vos in the chair of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Since these lectures speak, as the paradox of God, they are of more than passing significance.

The term paradox, as quite commonly employed in recent times, fits into a non-Christian scheme of thought. The term paradox, more particularly, is easily made to bear the idea of modern Irrationalism.

Modern thought, generally speaking, says that Reality is ultimately mysterious. Facts, it is said, may fit about equally well into two apparently contradictory interpretations. According to this view it seems most reasonable that those who hold to such seemingly contradictory interpretations should humbly allow that it is likely they have each seen only one side of the truth. Together they should stand in reverent awe within the ultimate mystery that enshrouds both the interpreters and the facts they interpret. Paradox should end in praise.

Obviously, then, a Christian theologian, if he uses the term paradox with reference to Christianity at all, should wish to make it very clear that his usage of the term has nothing to do with modern evolutionism and Irrationalism. The paradox idea all too easily covers up the basic difference between the Christian concept of an absolutely rational God and the modern notion of a God who is Himself surrounded by mystery.

Unfortunately, Professor Mackenzie’s book, so far from stressing the basic difference between the Christian position and modern Irrationalism, ignores this difference. The net result is that it appears as though Christianity and evolutionary Irrationalism are but opposite sides of the same truth.

Chance And Grace

So, for instance, Professor Mackenzie speaks as though “chance” were a simple fact which we must accept as such. He reasons as though Calvin’s doctrine of secondary

causes and the modern notion of “contingency” are interchangeable.¹ He even maintains that Jesus “admits the unexpected, the unpredictable and incalculable, the capricious and casual element in the life of the spirit.”² This, Jesus is alleged to teach in the parable of the hidden treasure.

Now the classical meaning of the word chance, to which Professor Mackenzie refers,³ is derived from Aristotle. Aristotle’s conception of “*tuche*” is the polar opposite of the Biblical doctrines of creation and providence. Jesus, of course, built His redemptive work upon the Old Testament doctrine of creation. He was Himself the Mediator of creation, the Word through whom the world was made. Jesus, to be sure, did allow that there is the unpredictable for man, but He never allowed that there is anything unpredictable for God. A world not created by God could not be redeemed by Christ, the Son of God.

But Professor Mackenzie seems to have the courage of his convictions on this point. He is even willing to change the meaning of “redemption” in order to make room for the chance idea. He reasons as though Christ’s work consisted in doing something with a situation that, to some extent at least, existed independently of Himself and the Father. He says of Scripture that it “evangelizes the inevitable.”⁴ He says we cannot ascribe our salvation “to chance alone.”⁵ He says that our Lord appears at one time as “an evangelical Stoic,” and at another as “an evangelical Sceptic”⁶ His whole attitude is summed up when he says: “Chance evangelized becomes grace and grace is the paradox of God.”⁷

That Professor Mackenzie has modified the New Testament doctrine of redemption appears most clearly from his notion of grace. To quote: “Perhaps the day may come also when the scientific view of natural selection and the New Testament doctrine of an election of 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.’ ”¹ Now he who says that “election of grace” and “natural selection” may some day be seen to be “both sides of God’s activity,” can as well say that both Christianity and paganism may yet be seen to be equally true. The New Testament doctrine of grace presupposes the fall of man and the creation of man in God’s image, neither of which can be held if “natural selection” is to be maintained.

Miracle

Professor Mackenzie’s remarks on the miracles of Scripture corroborate what we have said so far. He makes the general statement that: “Miracle in Scripture is a religious, not a scientific or anti-scientific concept.”² This statement means nothing less than that it

¹ p. 128.

² p. 130.

³ p. 131.

⁴ p. 132.

⁵ p. 137.

⁶ p. 141.

⁷ p. 139.

¹ p. 80.

² p. 194.

is a matter of indifference whether Christ actually rose from the grave with the same body with which He suffered or not. But surely the bodily resurrection is a fact of history and he who deals with it certainly deals with a “scientific concept.”

With respect to the Old Testament miracles Professor Mackenzie makes it very plain that, as far as he is concerned, they need not have happened as physical and historical events at all. He says: “Miracles in the Old Testament are not to be explained physically or historically at all; they are to be explained theologically and redemptively.”³ A little later he adds: “A miracle or paradox, in the Biblical sense, therefore, may be as ordinary a thing as a harvest, if only we see God at work in it, and if it calls forth His praise, or it may be as startling as the raising of the dead.”⁴ Now if Christianity is true the contrasts made in these quotations are false. In all of his desire to reduce “either—or” contrasts to “both—and” supplementations, Professor Mackenzie has raised a false “either—or” after all. If Christianity is true the miracles of Scripture are physical and historical facts and as such can and must be interpreted “theologically and redemptively.” If miracles were not physical and historical facts, they could have no redemptive significance. Only a happy,—and yet unhappy—inconsistency on this point can keep Professor Mackenzie from the ranks of the Auburn Affirmationists, who hold that we can get all the religious benefit we need from the idea of the resurrection of Christ, no matter what the fact may have been.

The Changing God

What is true of Professor Mackenzie’s discussion of chance and miracle is once more true of his remarks about Christ and about God. To quote: “Above all, He changed for man the Unchangeable God, so that what sages would have died to learn is now known to cottage dames.”⁵ One is at a loss to know what this may mean. We do not see how it can possibly be fitted into the Christian position. According to the Christian position, God remained changeless not only when He created the world, but also when the second Person of the Trinity became incarnate. The non-Christian position frankly denies the doctrine of a changeless God. Professor Mackenzie seems to want both a changeless God and a God who has been changed. We now understand more clearly how Professor Mackenzie could visualize the time when natural selection and grace should appear as aspects of the activity of the same God. In fact, if God has really been changed already we need not wait for a future union of grace and natural selection; in that case they have been joined long ago. If by the method of paradox we can believe both in a changeless and a changing God we may believe anything else that is flatly contradictory. Still further, if Christ changed the “unchangeable God” He Himself is changeable, too, and that not only in His human nature but in His divine nature as well, for Christ is God. We, then, never know who Christ is. He becomes the “dear Anonymous.”⁶ Then, too, we are sure of Christ “not in possession but in paradox.”⁷ This Barthian distinction between

³ p. 194.

⁴ p. 196.

⁵ p. 57.

⁶ p. 138.

⁷ p. 32.

possession and paradox employed by Professor Mackenzie implies that there is no system of Christian truth at all.

The Unknown God

Here we have the heart of the matter. Professor Mackenzie, intentionally or unintentionally, utterly confuses the church's doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God with the modern mystery-religion which is hopelessly agnostic. Speaking of those who have in their "foible of pretended omniscience" attempted to exhaust the attributes of God he says that they ought to learn from the "chastened scientist" to "stand in awe before God, saying, 'O God of Israel, the Saviour! Thou art in very Truth the mysterious God.'" ^{p. 31} But the "chastened scientist" does not worship the God of Israel. Neither does he worship the God of Christianity. He worships the Mysterious Universe. The Christian Church, to be sure, has embedded in the very heart of its confession the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. ⁸ But to say that God is incomprehensible is not to say that God is wholly unknowable; it is only to say that God is not comprehensively knowable. Professor Mackenzie has equated the Christian conception of God as absolute rationality with the modern non-Christian concept of absolute irrationality. To say that absolute rationality and absolute irrationality are equally ultimate is to say that human language has ceased to have any meaning. It is to say that the changeless and the changing, the eternal and the temporal are but aspects of the same Universe. It is possible to "roll Huxley and Wordsworth into one" and to "add the psalmist."⁹ It is possible to bring Spencer and Paul into harmony by saying that Paul was sure of "God the unknowable,"¹⁰ but it is possible to do these things only if one has first forsaken the Scriptural doctrine of God and embraced modern agnosticism.

Reverence

Finally, we note that Professor Mackenzie expects a return of the spirit of reverence if only we think of God as equally unknown and known. ¹¹ There is a constant emphasis in the book on the contention that paradox must end in praise. Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr, in his review of Professor Mackenzie's book, ¹² rejoices in this victorious spirit. He says: "The same note is struck in each of the eight all-too-short chapters and when one comes to the end he finds His heart echoing the words 'Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously.'" In a similar spirit, Professor Wieman the Chicago pragmatic theologian, insists that we can be reverent no matter what our disbeliefs may be. He seems to have us bow in reverence before the Mysterious aspect of the Universe. We should remember, however, that if two enemies are at war they cannot very well both be victorious. We cannot be sure from Professor Mackenzie's book whether he would worship a mysterious

⁸ Westminster Confession, Chapter 2, 1.

⁹ p. 18.

¹⁰ p. 28.

¹¹ p. 36.

¹² *The Presbyterian Banner*, January 4, 1934.

aspect of the Universe with Professor Wieman, the pragmatist, or the God of Christianity with the people of God. So far, then, from agreeing with the judgment of Dr. Kerr that Professor Mackenzie is “following in the footsteps of Doctors Hodge, Warfield and Purves,” we hold that he has departed far from what these men have taught. These men taught Reformed theology. Professor Mackenzie has, as far as his published writings show, always been an opponent of Reformed theology. Even a single quotation proves this. In an article on “Free Will” in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, he says: “The defect of Augustinianism and Calvinism is that they start from a knowledge of God’s absoluteness above experience, deduce logically from this 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.” This experience theology has now, we believe, led Professor Mackenzie far beyond Arminianism. Professor Mackenzie is now ready to modify the Biblical conception of the changeless God till it be but a correlative of the non-Christian conception of a changing God. His earlier Arminianism seems to have been the bridge by which he has arrived at his present paradox-theology. Naturally we must disagree with Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer’s contention that Professor Mackenzie “leaves no doubt regarding his Pauline and Augustinian views of sin and salvation.”¹³ So also we cannot agree with Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer when he says: “The one chapter on The Chief Evangelical Paradox presents a burst of evangelical truth and depth of appreciation of the plan of salvation by and through Christ alone, which surpasses any statement we have seen in modern literature.”¹⁴ Augustinianism and Calvinism have never given Professor Mackenzie sufficient elbow-room; his paradox-theology seems now to be bursting the very bonds of evangelicalism.

Dr. Mackenzie Replies: An Open Letter To Dr. Van Til

Dear Dr. Van Til:

You have paid me a compliment by reviewing my book—*Christianity the Paradox of God*—at such length. But, in spite of the care with which you apparently have studied it, you seem to cherish grave misconceptions, indeed perversions, of my position, which, in the interests of truth, should be removed.

(1). First you point out the danger in using the word “paradox” of Christianity. I agree. But then the danger is no reason against using “paradox,” provided the necessary safeguards are forthcoming—as they abundantly are in my case. I suppose you would agree that Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield was tolerably orthodox, and yet he says that the title “The Lord Jesus Christ” is most “paradoxical,” and he applies the same designation also to our Lord’s death. And when he mentions these paradoxes he does not feel it necessary to explain that he is neither an evolutionist nor an irrationalist. He trusted his readers’ good sense and judgment in the matter, for his general theological position was well known. So did I, though mistakenly in your case.

¹³ *The Presbyterian*, January 11, 1934.
Bibliotheca Sacra, January, 1934, p. 101.

And yet the very nerve of my book is just to overcome the false paradoxes of a godless universe and an unbelieving rationalism, by the paradoxes of grace through a divine atonement, guaranteed to us by faith in the revelation of God in His Word.

In my first chapter I tried to show that our scientific knowledge itself was based on principles that transcended our intelligence, and that this left the door open to the scientist for faith. Do you object to that? If so, let me remind you of the saying of another Princeton Father, Dr. A. A. Hodge: "All knowledge is ultimately faith in the unintelligible. This is true of so ordinary a thing, for instance, as the assimilation of food." Are you so foolish as to bring the charge of modern irrationalism or agnosticism against Dr. Hodge, or to tilt with your critical lances of straw against Dr. Warfield? And yet is that not what you are in danger of doing in this count against me? Beware lest in fancying yourself an *Athanasius-contra-mundum*, you turn out to be a Don Quixote, and cover yourself with inextinguishable laughter.

But then, (2) you say I use the word "chance." With a latitude of inference which does credit to your imagination, however, it may reflect upon your intelligence and candidness; you accuse me, for this reason, of denying the providence and omniscience of God the Creator. Have you ever read Calvin or have you forgotten him? Do you not know that he also admitted that "to us" events often appear fortuitous or fated, and yet these are inadequatenotions which are corrected by our experience of grace? "What seems to us contingency, faith will recognize as the secret impulse of God." Is not that exactly the meaning of my statement that "Chance evangelized becomes grace, and grace is the paradox of God?" A man's conversion, for example, may appear to him at first fortuitous, but as he ponders over it, he knows it was not so. In paragraph after paragraph I have elaborated this; but you will not see it.

Again, does not Dr. Archibald Hodge also use "chance," correcting it later in the light of God's activity in grace, just as I have tried to do?

Our Lord took men as He found them with their crude notions, and corrected their false views of chance and fate and other things, until after the bestowal of His grace, they came to see that the very hairs of their heads were numbered.

Your dubiety in this present case, as far as it has any mental foundation, is due to your confusing of two magnitudes, vis. God's knowledge of Himself and His ways, and our knowledge of Him. Because I believe that both you and I are not omniscient, is that to assert that God is not so?

Why do you object to my saying, "Above all, He changed for man the Unchangeable God, so that what sages would have died to learn is now known to cottage dames? Is that not true? Did not our Lord Jesus change "for man" the Unchangeable God, i.e., our natural conception of Him? Do you honestly believe, or can you honestly infer that I, either intentionally or unintentionally, tried to maintain the doctrine of an essentially changing God? Is not your criticism here in danger of being unworthy captions? Such was not the old Princeton way of reviewing. They delighted not in sniping logomachies, but in honorable argument.

Your controversy on this point is not with me, but with Paul. He, for instance, speaks of Christ being formed us. Did that mean that Paul was guilty of the ineptitude of a growing Christ? Would you brand Paul as a heretic for that? Or St. John for saying that the Holy Spirit not yet until the full revelation of the Trinity was given? Even if St. John or St. Paul were Princeton professors, would you on that account father on them the

doctrine of a growing Christ or an evolving Holy Ghost? And yet, on your puerile argumentation they would fall under your flail as easily as I do and for the same reasons.

Again (3) you read into my sayings on miracles a theory which puts me into the ranks of the Auburn Affirmationists—a monstrous crew in your opinion, which seems to haunt you like a nightmare—as if I had said that a miracle was what did not happen, whereas my position is that an event, however startling, in which we do not see God at work and which does not call from us praise, is just a meaningless marvel. Did I not in plain words denounce Loisy’s position as the very evaporation of Christianity? Do I not say that “a paradox in Scripture is an exhibition in works of power and mercy of God’s saving and redeeming purpose”? You object to my saying that miracles are not to be explained physically or historically, but theologically and redemptively. Why? Do you mean to say that miracles are explained by purely physical or historical laws without God, or do you not agree with me that only the operation of God in such events alone explains? What you affirm on this point I also affirm. Then (4) you object to my statement that “the day may come when the scientific view of natural selection and the New Testament view of an election of grace may be seen to be, both, sides of God’s activity”; and in so objecting you say that a man cannot maintain “natural selection” and the New Testament doctrine of grace. Indeed! Dr. A. Hodge maintained both, for he says: “There is no doubt that the laws pointed to by Darwin and Wallace exist and are at work with beneficial results everywhere. They are divinely appointed laws and they explain very clearly the variations of species.” Have you become so orthodox that Dr. Hodge is anathema to you? Do you not lay yourself open to the charge not only of heterodoxy but of dishonoring the fathers?

And (5) lastly, you find fault with me for pointing out the common danger and defect of Augustinianism and Calvinism as held by many more Calvinistic than Calvin himself. But listen again to Dr. Hodge: “I’m afraid of Calvinism when it is alone. A mere Calvinist who is not a man and a Christian had better be shut up in Bedlam. But if he is human and Christian, then his Calvinism is a good thing. In this day we require perhaps to emphasize man’s free-will rather than God’s sovereignty. At the same time we must not lose sight of the latter or allow our theological system to centre wrongly.” What would you do with Dr. Archibald A. Hodge? I think I know what he would be tempted to do with you. Was he an opponent of Reformed theology as you affirm of me, for asserting in some sense free-will? Would you call him an Arminian for doing this? Would you doubt his evangelical position and exclude him from the congregation of the people of God as, in your inquisitorial fury, you would exclude me? If you did, then he might well relegate you to the category of “objectionable orthodoxy.”

You see then into what a plight you have brought yourself in your Jehu-like zeal against your own ungrounded inferences regarding me. You are in danger of making plain men suspicious that Westminster is a nest of illogical heretics in the guise of orthodoxy—heretics in the very truth—and that your only test of orthodoxy is the ululatus which utter at each and every turn only one cry, viz: “*Princeton delenda est.*”

There is a more excellent way than that—the prophetic way of working for the coming of the day when Ephraim shall not envy Judah or Judah shall vex Ephraim.

I am,

Yours in all courtesy and charity,

Donald Mackenzie

Princeton Theological Seminary.

The Theology of Dr. Mackenzie: A Rejoinder by Dr. Van Til

The Editors publish herewith the rejoinder of Dr. Van Til to Dr. Mackenzie's criticism of the review of his book, "Christianity-the Paradox of God." The Review appeared in our February number and the communication of Dr. Mackenzie in our March issue. The Editors believe it unwise to prolong the discussion indefinitely. Therefore they will permit Dr. Mackenzie to reply further in the next issue, if he so desires. As is customary in such discussions, Dr. Van Til as the first writer will be able to reply to whatever Dr. Mackenzie may write if he so desires, also in the May issue. Then the correspondence will be closed.

In his reply to my criticism of his book, *Christianity-The Paradox of God* (Christianity Today, February, 1934), Dr. Mackenzie falls back on certain theological distinctions which, he says, he took for granted, since his general theological position was well known. Thus, for example, he would make it appear as though I was criticizing him for such an innocent thing as using the word "chance" in everyday life in reference to the unexpected for s rather than for God, or for such a praiseworthy thing as pointing out that "chance" if really entertained as a serious concept, should be removed from a Christian's vocabulary.

I propose, therefore, first of all to go back to Dr. Mackenzie's well-known writings in order to see whether they warrant his present conclusion. My judgment is that they do not. On the contrary, it was to some considerable extent because of the nature of the background with which these well-known writings of Dr. Mackenzie furnished me, that I felt compelled to make the criticism contained in my review.

The writings referred to are chiefly five articles in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* entitled "Ethics and Morality" (Christian), "Free Will," "Libertarianism and Necessitarianism," "Synergism," and "Transcendentalism."

It will be noted that all the articles in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, to which I confine myself here, deal with subjects in which a definite position would, in the nature of the case, have to be taken on the chief issue between Calvinism and Arminianism, as well as between the Christian and the non-Christian solutions of the problem of free will.

In these articles Dr. Mackenzie quotes from several philosophers but makes very little use of the literature of the great Reformed theologians. We are prevented from thinking of this neglect of Reformed theology as incidental, inasmuch as the content of the articles is opposed to Reformed theology in the whole of its spirit and approach as well as in its specific teaching.

The Experience Approach

In the first place, the Reformed theologians have made the concept of God as absolute in all His attributes determinative for the whole of their theology. God has revealed

Himself as absolute in all His attributes. This God-concept is fundamental and the man-concept must be adjusted to it.

That Dr. Mackenzie does not agree with this Reformed approach appears only too clearly. In his article, "Free Will," he says: "Can God's sovereignty be reconciled with such freedom of choice as we require? It cannot if God's absoluteness be asserted without qualification; then the moral life becomes unintelligible. Butler has warned us against speculating on how God ought to reveal Himself. So God's absoluteness must be approached from experience. 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." (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VI, p. 126.)

We see from this quotation that Dr. Mackenzie, together with the Arminians, has taken for granted that if the absoluteness of God be maintained without qualification, the moral acts of man are meaningless. Thus he has conceded to the opponents of Christianity that the apparently contradictory is the really contradictory. He has reasoned as though that which man cannot fully understand must be really contradictory.

To do this one must start with human experience as something ultimate. That Dr. Mackenzie does not hesitate to do this, the quotation shows. He definitely sets his position which starts from "experience" over against the Reformed position which makes the concept of God the determining factor in its theology. So far from following Butler's advice not to ask how God ought to reveal Himself, Dr. Mackenzie felt himself compelled, by virtue of his un-Biblical ideal of comprehensive knowledge, to say that God cannot remain absolute while man has freedom.

Now it is perfectly true that Dr. Mackenzie here and in other connections also says, in the article referred to, that human experience must not be taken as ultimate. But it is in this also that the difficulty lies. Dr. Mackenzie's articles resemble in form the writings of idealist philosophers who write volume upon volume to prove that the pragmatist is wrong in saying that the Universe, inclusive of God and man, is wholly subject to time and change, and then at a critical juncture maintain that time is, after all, an aspect of existence as a whole. Thus, though they emphasize that God is eternal, they, in effect, subject Him to time also.

If, as Dr. Mackenzie himself correctly says in his article on "Synergism," the "supreme regulative principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God" (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 162), one cannot also begin from "experience" in order to adjust the absoluteness of God to it.

The Five Points of Calvinism

Our criticism on the starting point of Dr. Mackenzie's theology is further justified by the fact that he does actually reject Calvinism in some of its particular and distinctive doctrines. He does not especially discuss the "five points of Calvinism," yet where he does mention any of them he shows clearly that he does not believe them.

Speaking of the synergistic controversy as a whole, Dr. Mackenzie says: "They synergist fought against a view of God which made Him in the case of some men the obstacle of salvation, withholding His grace from some, and making remedial provision

only for some; and in this the synergist was right” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 164).

Here Dr. Mackenzie in the first place rejects unconditional election. He speaks of it only in its negative aspect, i.e., with respect to those who are lost. On this point he expressively denies what the Westminster Confession expressively affirms in Chapter III, Section VII, when it says: “The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.” This section teaches: “That as God has sovereignly designated certain persons, called the elect, through grace to salvation, so he has sovereignly decreed to withhold his grace from the rest; and that this withholding rests upon the unsearchable counsel of his own will, and is for the glory of his sovereign power.” (*Commentary on the Confession of Faith*,” p. 107, by A. A. Hodge; cf. also A. A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes*, article, “Predestination,” and B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, article, “Predestination.”)

In the sentence we have quoted above, Dr. Mackenzie not rejects unconditional election but limited atonement as well. He says the synergist was right in rejecting the doctrine which holds that God made “remedial provision only for some.” Here Dr. Mackenzie rejects the Westminster Confession when it says: “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.” (Chapter III, Section VI.) Of this section Dr. A. A. Hodge says: “All the purposes of God, being unchangeable, self-consistent and certainly efficacious, must perfectly correspond to the events which come to pass in time. He must have predestined to salvation those and those only who are, as a matter of fact saved; and he must have intended that Christ should redeem those and those only who are redeemed. God’s purpose in the gift of Christ cannot be in any respect in vain.” (*Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, p. 107.)

We need not point to further details, though it can be shown that Dr. Mackenzie rejects efficacious grace as well as unconditional election and limited atonement. Enough has been brought forth to indicate that he will appeal in vain to writings of A. A. Hodge such as his *Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes*, and *Outlines of Theology*, in order to prove that his own thinking is essentially Reformed. Dr. Mackenzie in his reply to me has merely referred to C. A. Salmond’s book, *Princetoniana*, which is a collection of disconnected student class-notes, to the neglect of Hodge’s well-known works.

Chance

The un-Reformed character of Dr. Mackenzie’s theology appears still more definitely in his use of the concept “chance.” He brings in the main philosophical concepts of Bergson, the great pragmatist, not for criticism or for acceptance with qualification, but as a help toward the solution of the baffling problem of freedom. For Bergson, fatalistic naturalism and the Reformed conception of the plan of God are equally obnoxious, inasmuch as both oppose the idea of something absolutely new coming into the world. Over against all “finalism,” Bergson sets his notion of the dynamic nature of life, which to him means that the absolutely new can be produced by man. Now Dr. Mackenzie uses

this concept of the dynamic nature of life that makes the whole difficulty of freedom; and for philosophy and theology the greatest task at present is to outline a theory of reality and of God that, starting from this fact, can give us some reasonable view of nature below us and God above us.” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, p. 906.) With this as a background and the actual words of Dr. Mackenzie’s book I quoted in my review, it would not seem to be an unfair conclusion that one must be in doubt where Dr. Mackenzie’s sympathies lie. He has himself and in unequivocal terms rejected specifically Reformed doctrines and has, to say the least, expressed his full sympathy with the basic concepts of Bergson’s philosophy. He cannot now dismiss the whole matter by saying that when he spoke of Christ changing the changeless God, he of course, meant nothing more than what all orthodox theology means when it says that in the economy of redemption God revealed Himself more fully from time to time. Dr. Mackenzie’s well-known writings seem at the most critical juncture to swing at least as far to the pragmatist as to the Reformed view of reality.

Still further, it seems that Dr. Mackenzie has clearly felt that from the orthodox, or certainly from the Reformed side, objection would be made to his views on this very ground that it brings in the Bergsonian idea of something absolutely new not only for man but also for God. After stating his own view of the relation of man to God by saying that God’s “unchangeable nature gives independence to our dependence” he says, referring to his own view: “The great objection to this view is that we get something ‘de novo.’ ” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, p. 907.) The exact point here is that something absolutely new for God as well as for man is spoken of. No one could possibly object for something new for man. The whole problem discussed is that of the relation of man’s freedom to God’s absoluteness. It will not do for Dr. Mackenzie now to brush all this aside and say of course he meant the new, or “chance” for us and not for God.

We observe that so far from apologizing for the concept “chance” or from showing that he has not taken it in the ordinary, accepted sense of the opposite of the plan of God, he definitely accepts it as such and that as the only escape of the mystery of man’s freedom in relation to the plan of God. To quote: “We need not be afraid of those who cry ‘chance.’ For there is so much unreason and absurdity, so much cruelty and evil in the world that we welcome even ‘chance’ if it opens a door to their abolition. That this could be possible without the dangerous gift of free power we cannot conceive. But so imperative is the need of betterment that even this dangerous method is welcome.” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, p. 907.) Dr. Mackenzie cannot say that he has put the word “chance” in quotation marks in order to indicate that he does not necessarily agree with its current meaning. If he did not accept it in its essentially non-theistic meaning, if he did not accept it as something genuinely new for God, there would be no point in introducing it as a solution for the difficulty of man’s freedom in relation to God’s absoluteness. Dr. Mackenzie cannot, after telling us that he is opposed to specifically Calvinistic doctrines, complain that I have unjustly called him an opponent of Reformed theology. So also Dr. Mackenzie cannot, after telling us that he has accepted chance as an escape from the problem of a changeless God and human responsibility, complain that I have unfairly fathered the doctrine of “chance” upon him.

Needless to say, Dr. Mackenzie’s position cannot be harmonized with the Westminster Confession’s statement that “God from all eternity did, by the most wise and

holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ...” (Chapter III, Section 1). It is needless also to say that Dr. Mackenzie’s position cannot be said to be similar to that of A. A. Hodge who, in discussing the same problem that Dr. Mackenzie discusses, says: “The free actions of free agents constitute an eminently important and effective element in the system of things. If the plan of God did not determine events of this class, he could make nothing certain, and his government of the world would be made contingent and dependent, and all his purposes fallible and mutable.” (*Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, p. 94.)

Finally, we note that after thus accepting the chance concept as an asylum to which he may resort to in time of need, Dr. Mackenzie does make an obviously sincere effort to harmonize his teaching on this subject with the church’s doctrine of the changeless God. He says, “Nor need we be concerned that thus the peace of the absolute is destroyed. The only Absolute for which Christian men care has, if certain tales be true, sacrificed His own peace and more to make it possible for men to obey their conscience and be fellow-workers with God.” (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, p. 907.) Now Dr. Mackenzie cannot say that of course he meant no more than that God revealed Himself redemptively. The question he is discussing is not merely ethical, but also metaphysical, i.e., one having to do with the nature of reality. Dr. Mackenzie is definitely seeking to outline a “theory of reality” in order to find a solution for the baffling problem of freedom. If there is to be a point to the argument, if the fact that the “Absolute” has “sacrificed His own peace and more” is to help us to see how we may believe in God and also believe in chance, these words must be taken as teaching a change in the very Being of God.

It is this strain of thought in Dr. Mackenzie’s well-known writings that unfortunately forbids one to think that of course he has taken for granted that the essence of God remains unchanged when he speaks of Christ’s work as being, above all, that He has changed for man the unchangeable God.

It appears from what we have said about Dr. Mackenzie’s theology that it seems to be built up of two contradictory motifs. Dr. A. A. Hodge speaks of the two motifs that lead men to construct their theological systems, when he says: “Instead of our doctrine of foreordination being the same with the heathen doctrine of fate, it is its absolute opposite and only alternative. We are shut up to a choice between the two—either a fatalism which results from mechanical coercion, or a fatalism which results from a mindless and purposeless chance, or an all-controlling providence of a heavenly Father who in the exercise of his own personal freedom has made room for ours. All thinkers who understand themselves know that they run along one or other of these lines.” (*Popular Lectures* ... p. 160.) Dr. Hodge virtually identifies “fate” and “chance” and takes refuge in the all-embracing providence of God. Dr. Mackenzie virtually identifies “fate” and the absoluteness of God and takes refuge in chance. To be sure, he also takes refuge in God, and this shows that he seeks to do what Dr. Hodge says can never be done. Dr. Mackenzie tries to combine the absolute rationality of God and the absolute irrationality of chance. We are quite willing to believe, on the present testimony of Dr. Mackenzie, that this is not intentionally done but this does not remove the fact that in the articles discussed the confusion prevails.

Agnosticism

In the preface to his book, *Christianity-The Paradox of God*, Dr. Mackenzie tells us that certain convictions deal largely with the recognition of mystery in physical science, in psychology and in theology. Speaking of science, Dr. Mackenzie says: "Here we can say, with Kierkegaard, that paradox is not a concession but a category of thought. Mystery, in short, is not at the margin of knowledge, but at its centre, and must be recognized there" (p. 6). Again in connection with his discussion of the recognition of mystery in psychology he repeats Kierkegaard's words that paradox is not a concession but a category. With respect to theology he says he welcomes the recent emphasis on paradox because of its recognition that God is "infinitely greater than our best categories."

In all this we note that Dr. Mackenzie has, to say the least, no great desire to distinguish his position from that of recent scientific agnosticism. Now we may rejoice that science today is not, generally speaking, materialistic and mechanistic but it cannot be denied that is thoroughly agnostic. The issue here is far deeper than the recognition of the fact that man cannot fully understand even the simplest of things. Christians have always held that we cannot fully comprehend God and they may most heartily believe that we cannot fully understand the circulation of the blood. But this is not what science means today when it says that mystery is not only at the margin but at the centre of human knowledge. Science today, generally speaking, assumes that the universe is ultimately mysterious. When science speaks of the recognition of mystery at the heart of human knowledge it does not mean that, of course, God knows all. It does not figure with God in its interpretation of facts at any point.

Herbert Spencer

When we read the book itself in order to see whether Dr. Mackenzie has helped to set Christian thought in opposition to the recent form of scientific agnosticism we are again disappointed. Dr. Mackenzie says: "We do not find fault with Herbert Spencer for dwelling on the mystery and so casting his vote in favour of agnosticism. His error was not in being agnostic, but in not being agnostic enough-his very agnosticism being dogmatism. He should not have separated off the Unknowable into a special compartment, for the simple reason that it cannot be so separated. It haunts us, penetrates us, and interpenetrates like the air we breathe, and clarity may be another name for superficial simplification" (p. 26).

It should be observed here that the meaning of agnosticism in the case of Spencer is that he interprets the universe without reference to God. In this he quite resembles James Jeans. The only difference is that Jeans, together with many other recent scientists, recognizes more definitely an ultimate mystery at the heart of the universe than did Spencer. Now one may hold, perhaps, that the present form of scientific agnosticism is, from the Christian point of view, preferable to the scientific agnosticism of the last century but one cannot say that agnosticism, as understood by science today, is in itself commendable.

We are well aware of the fact that Dr. Mackenzie goes on in this connection to tell us that "Mystery and knowledge are not incompatible, they are complementary" (p. 27). He

speaks of Paul's "doxological agnostic cry" when the latter spoke of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. We are well aware of the fact that Dr. Mackenzie also adds: "The 'Halt' of the skeptic must become the 'Hallelujah' of the saint" (p. 29). Our criticism is that Dr. Mackenzie has not actually in his argument pointed out clearly that modern agnosticism and the theology of Paul are two opposing systems of thought. He has not pointed out that modern agnosticism, whether in its nineteenth or in its twentieth century form, is basically wrong while Paul was right. His fundamental argument seems to be that if Herbert Spencer but became like Jeans he would only need to be supplemented by Paul in order to have the truth. It is in this way that he speaks of rolling Huxley and Wordsworth together and adding the psalmist in order to arrive at the truth.

Paradox Versus Possession

That this is a fair representation of Dr. Mackenzie's thought is definitely seen if we observe that he has set his conception of paradox in contrast to that of possession. Speaking of a form of theology which has been too "cocksure of God," Dr. Mackenzie says: "We thought we had domesticated and sociologized Him, ethicized and rationalized Him, until we found that while we His servants were so busy here and there, He had gone; and now our very uncertainty may be an indication that we are getting sure of Him again, sure of Him, not in possession but in paradox. For perhaps only in paradox can we have Him at all, and only in His unknowableness can He be known, and in our longing for His presence is He most truly present" (p. 32). In this connection we should note recall that Dr. Mackenzie has set it down as a deep conviction underlying his whole book that paradox is not a concession but a category. There would be no point to this if Dr. Mackenzie meant no more than that man, because a creature, cannot comprehensively understand the Creator. Orthodox theology has constantly maintained that man is created in the image of God and that therefore his thought, his "categories," and therefore his "possession" of God are perfectly true and valid, though he cannot exhaust God. Dr. Mackenzie, on the contrary, has virtually set the category of paradox over against "our best categories." We are said to be sure of God not in possession but in paradox. It is true that Dr. Mackenzie's argument is directed against the false imminentism of modern theology. It is equally true, however, that his argument here would, if valid, destroy the foundation of Reformed theology.

Kierkegaard's Paradox

This point becomes clearer still if we recall that Dr. Mackenzie definitely brings in Kierkegaard's conception of paradox. He uses Kierkegaard's phrase that "paradox is not a concession but a category." Besides all this, he devotes a section to Kierkegaard and his influence. In this section he does not indicate any disagreement with him. On the contrary, he says: "Kierkegaard is as subtle in his insight into the paradoxical nature of man as Pascal, as felicitous in his expression" (p. 210).

Now Dr. K. Schilder, in an exhaustive study, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des "Paradoxon,"* seeks to prove that Kierkegaard introduced a use of the term paradox not current till his time. Dr. Schilder speaks of the change introduced into the use of the word

paradox by Kierkegaard as radical because instead of using it to indicate the notion of something unexpected and strange or as something only apparently contradictory he has used it as indicating that human thought is really contradictory. According to Kierkegaard, says Dr. Schilder, the historical or relative precipitates in the form of systematic interpretation, while the eternal or absolute is paradoxical. (Chapter on “Radikalismus der Kierkegaardschen Wendung.”) It cannot, therefore, be taken as a serious reply to my criticism when Dr. Mackenzie shows that Warfield has used the term paradox. Calvin also uses it and Scripture uses it in the Greek text. The point in debate is whether the Kierkegaardian use of it is consistent with the Calvinistic use of it. Dr. Mackenzie has expressed great sympathy with Kierkegaard. If Dr. Mackenzie wished to use Warfield’s name he should show that his own use of the word paradox is like Warfield’s and that Warfield’s use of the term and Kierkegaard’s use of the term are similar. It cannot be denied that the only Reformed theologian who has expressed himself fully on this subject has found a radical difference between Kierkegaard’s use of the term and the use of the term in Reformed theology. (See also K. Schilder, *Bij Dichters en Schriftgeleerden, adn Tuusschen “Ja” en “Neen,”* on Barth’s attempt to claim Calvin as his authority.) Till Dr. Mackenzie really shows by an appeal to authorities that his usage of the term paradox accords with Reformed usage, we must argue the matter as best we can.

Kantian Antinomies

The root of the whole matter, as far as the conception of paradox goes, lies, we believe, in this fact that Dr. Mackenzie has not clearly distinguished between the apparently contradictory and the really contradictory. Dr. Mackenzie, as we have pointed out, began his argument about the relation of human freedom to God’s absoluteness, from experience. This forced him to introduce chance or the irrational as an element in the total situation. This would also naturally lead him to think that the apparent contradictions between God’s absoluteness and human freedom are real contradictions. In fact, it was only because he thought of these apparent contradictions as real contradictions that he could introduce the concept of chance at all. If the concept of paradox should mean no more than the harmony of the apparent contradictory it would not help to bring together the discordant elements of his theology.

Now it is true that Dr. Mackenzie has entitled one of the chapters of his book, *Paradox as Apparent Self-contradiction*. Yet, under this innocent flag Dr. Mackenzie has brought in the Kantian concept of a separation between one field, the phenomenal, in which the law of contradiction holds good and another field, the noumenal, to which the law of contradiction does not apply.

Immediately following his statement that “perhaps the day may come also when the scientific view of natural selection and the New Testament doctrine of election of grace may be seen to be both sides of God’s activity, and not the horns of an inescapable dilemma,” Dr. Mackenzie says: “The philosophy of Immanuel Kant gave the prestige of that great thinker’s name to the inevitableness of paradox or antimony in all our thinking” (p. 81). Then he adds a little further on: “I am not here attempting to defend all the Kantian antinomies, nor the justification of Hegel’s correction-but antinomies are not antagonisms either in the knowledge of nature or in the realm of theology” (p. 81). Here

it seems plain that though Dr. Mackenzie does not defend all the antinomies of Kant, he does accept the Kantian concept of antimony. Now Kant thought that as far as the understanding is concerned as good an argument can be produced for the proposition that the world has had no beginning in time. This illustrates Kant's conception of antimony. As far as the field of knowledge or science was concerned Kant held that A and not-A, though contradictory to one another, could be proved by arguments in which no such contradiction is found. From this inescapable dilemma in the field of knowledge, Kant sought refuge in the "noumenal" realm in which we need not be concerned with the law of non-contradiction. It was, according to Kant, with the noumenal realm that religion deals. Accordingly, the phenomenal is an aspect of Reality as a whole, religion need not be seriously considered with the law of non-contradiction. In Reality as a whole these contradictions of the realm of knowledge may, after all, each state an aspect of the truth. Reality as a whole is analytic but also synthetic; it is fixed and yet the absolutely new somehow appears.

Over against this Kantian view, as it largely controls modern philosophy, Reformed theology has maintained that God is absolutely rational, so that nothing absolutely new can exist for Him. Accordingly when we face what seems to us to be antinomies, we do not seek refuge in the realm of the irrational where something absolutely new may emerge, with the result that both of our contradictory statements may yet be approximations to the truth. Reformed theology has never allowed that there is any sphere in which the law of non-contradiction does not operate. To do that would be to give up its conception of God who "from all eternity did by the most wise and Holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain (s) whatsoever comes to pass." Thus we maintain that the world has had a beginning in time and we deny that it can, with an equal show of truth, be held that the world has not had a beginning in time. In short, Kantian thought denies while Reformed theology affirms that Christian theism is intellectually defensible.

Kantianism and Reformed thought may both say "antinomies are not antagonisms." For Reformed thought that is true because, if taken in the Reformed sense, antinomies are only apparent contradictions which are resolved in God. On the other hand, if taken in the Kantian sense of real contradictions one of the "antinomies" is true while the other is false. For Kantianism this phrase is true because in the totality of things the intellectual or phenomenal realm in which the antinomies operate is, after all, only one aspect of Reality as a whole. For Kantianism antinomies are not antagonisms because for it truth is relative; for Reformed thought antinomies are not antagonisms because for it truth is absolute. Kant's position implies an ultimate Irrationalism while Reformed theology is based upon the conception of God as an absolute, self-conscious and therefore wholly rational being.

There can be no peace but only war between these two types of thought. One will look in vain for a clear distinction between these two lines of thought in the writings of Dr. Mackenzie. The main impression created is that he has sought to combine the Kantian-Kierkegaardian and the orthodox-Christian lines of thought, that he has fought to combine the ultimately rational and the ultimately irrational. That was my main criticism. I brought out something of the results of such an effort by pointing to things that lie on the surface. In the present article I have tried to show that the difficulty lies at the very roots of Dr. Mackenzie's theology.

Dear Dr. Van Til

Our long rejoinder suggests (1) that brevity is commendable in writers of articles, and very grateful to their readers—in short, that “Brevity is the soul of wit.”

Consider the state of the case. In March you used 2000 words to prove me a heretic, or rather a perfect colluvies of heresies—an irrationalist, an evolutionist, an agnostic, a tychist, an Auburnist, an Arminian, and, worst of all, a modern Princetonianist—a new heresy unknown to the old Westminster divines, but the head and front of my offending in your sight. In April you use 6000 words for the same purpose. At that rate of progression you will have to produce 18,000 words in May. This is not calculated to add to the gaiety of nations or the edification of the church. Do you wonder that the prospect of this labored loquacity fills the adamant souls of the editors of *Christianity Today* with a canonical apprehension that this flood may carry us all away?

(2) It suggests also a great contrast between Warfield and Van Til. My five articles in *The Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics* you impale on the five points of Calvinism. These five points, really fabricated in the Arminian workshop, Calvinists transformed into the beautiful mnemonic tulip. You plait them into a crown of thorns with which to crucify my theology. You despaired of proving your case from my book alone, so you suborn the evidence of these articles. You have appealed to Caesar, then to Caesar let us go.

These articles were written from the philosophical standpoint, and not, save incidentally, from the theological. I was asked to do so because other writers had the handling of Calvinism, Arminianism, Predestination, etc. That explains the absence of direct theological reference which you find so ominous. You find in them nothing worthy of commendation. Would it have stained the ermine of your new orthodoxy to have noted in them any merit whatsoever?

Now contrast your cuttle-fish criticism with Dr. Warfield’s methods. He also in his reviews of the *Volumes of the Encyclopedia* (reviews which are in *The Princeton Review*, Vols. 11 and 13), deals with some of these offending articles of mine. In a review of four pages of small print, covering a volume of nearly one thousand pages—of which my article occupies only seven—he gives me one-fifth of His space, and the notice is on the whole most flattering and appreciative. He says it is “an oasis in which to rest our spirits,” and he quotes from it approvingly. I refer to this reluctantly, but you compel me to do so.

Then another article of mine, in another Volume, he describes as “a bright discussion abounding in illuminating statements.” He suggests that I give too much weight to Kant’s dictum—“Every ought implies a can”—a suggestion with which I agree. You will notice that in my book, I myself (unconscious at the time of Warfield’s suggestion), criticism this very sentence of Kant’s even more drastically than he did. Again he devotes a considerable portion of his review to my article, which would indicate that he saw something good in it. Does not that suggest a great contrast between your method and his? Is there any tenet of Calvinism, even of the new Westminster brand, which compels one to look for scorpions under every Princeton stone? So much for your method; now for your matter.

Agnosticism And Tychism

You again reiterate the charge against me of Agnosticism and Tychism, as if I held that God Almighty was defective in knowledge and experimented in ignorance of results.

To state the case is, for honest men, sufficient refutation of your poor calumny. There is no “chance” with the Eternal, nor darkness of ignorance in Him. What I am concerned with is our knowledge of Him and His ways—not His perfect knowledge of Himself and of our ways. This separates, by the whole diameter of being, my treatment from that of the agnostics and tychists you have in your brain. “We are compelled,” says Hilary, writing on the mystery of the Trinity¹ “by the errors of heretics and blasphemers to handle unlawful matters, to scale difficult heights, to speak of ineffable things, and to tread on forbidden ground. And when by faith alone we ought to do the commandments of God, to adore the Father, and with Him to venerate the Son, and to abound in the Holy Ghost, we are constrained to stretch the inadequacy of our speech to the handling of things unutterable.” Forgive me, then, if I prefer to stand with all reverent writers in Scripture and in the Church, and not with those sequacious quasi-theologians who speak of the Eternal as if they knew in logical detail every jot and tittle of His decrees and purposes. Spencer and James and others of that ilk move in a different universe of discourse from mine. For I believe in the Transcendent God who has in His Word revealed Himself for our redemption and our regulation. Why persist in covering me with the confusion which is in your own mind?

Antinomies

Nor am I greatly perturbed by the charge of being a Kantian or Kierkegaardian antinomist. There are no antinomies for God—but there are for me, and for most men who hesitate to claim omniscience. Can you satisfactorily reconcile foreknowledge and freedom? If you can, you are the first man I’ve heard of who could do so, and you ought not to deny your fellow-mortals the benefits of your esoteric knowledge. If we believe only what we thoroughly know, our creed will be very short indeed. “Beware of reasoning on Scripture statements, for logic in theology can effect anything. Its utter inapplicability is shown from this that we frequently believe in religion, what on admitted premises we can logically disprove, and on the other hand, refuse to believe what on admitted premises we can logically prove. The mind is not logic—truth streams into it through a thousand channels. And it is no proof in religion that you are in the wrong way if you see a precipice before you—you will be in the wrong way if you go over it. Reflect then that in the economy of providence no principles are carried to their full application, but there is an equipoise of forces.”¹ So much for antinomies. They are not applicable to God, even if Kierkegaard had said they are, which is doubtful, but to us. That brings me to your third charge, which I fancy you regard as the most serious of all, viz. myζ~

Anti-Calvinism

(3) I am grateful to you for your effort to teach me Calvinism. I flatter myself, rightly or wrongly, that your attempt is like bringing owls to Athens, or enchantments to Egypt, or indulgences to Rome, or coals to Newcastle—a work of supererogation in which as a

¹ Bk. 2.2.

¹ A. B. Davidson.

good Protestant I do not believe. But let me return the compliment without being guilty of supererogation. The first principle of Calvinism is the supremacy of the Word of God—not of the word of John Calvin or of any Confession. And so Calvinism has corrected Calvin on some points, as on the relation between faith and assurance, and others, and there is no reason why it may not correct itself by the Word, if necessary. We must keep that in mind, otherwise we put a system between us and God. Again while we hold that God's eternal purposes are known to Him and are His alone—yet the difficulty for us is the relation of these to events and to the nature of man. In the passage you quote, I state the dangers and defects of Calvinism against which it must ever guard—the spectre of Fatalism, as Dr. Hodge calls it. Every Calvinist knows it, and against that I warn, as all of us who are true Calvinists must do, for our enemies easily misrepresent us. And yet you captiously, like the Arminians of old, raise against me the spectre of reprobation. You isolate it and raise this to the level of a main tenet of Calvinism which it is not. The doctrine of reprobation in any form is, as all Calvinists admit, not revealed in Scripture as the positive doctrine of the Election of believers is. It is an inferential, rather than an integral part of revelation, which some good Calvinists hesitate to draw, but which their opponents for the sake of obloquy insist that they do draw, and that they exclusively emphasize, to the neglect of the positive side of God's sovereign grace in salvation. Now your method with me is the method of the Arminians at the Synod of Dort. I repudiate it, as it was then repudiated, nor do your copious quotations from the Confession substantiate it in the least.

My purpose in the *obiter dictum* you quote from my article was to make clear (I use the words of a famous Calvinist): “that a decree of reprobation which will damn men though they should repent and believe, or will hinder any man from repenting and believing, or will cause and work any man's impenitency or unbelief,” or any doctrine of election “which will save men whether they repent or not repent, believe or not believe, persevere or not persevere, is not Calvinism at all but its perversion”—an “error” and a “blasphemy”; and again to make clear, (I use the words of another Calvinist), that “election bars no man from blessedness ... is not in any sense a doctrine of exclusion, its whole design is to be an instrument of security. Election shuts no one out; but it is so contrived that it shuts the elect effectually in.”

That is the Calvinism in which I delight, and I refuse to be concussed by your inferences or overwhelmed by your irrelevant citations. I say with a great Calvinistic preacher “Election or no election, predestination or no predestination, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” or with the Synod of Dort, “The death of the Son of God ... is of infinite worth and value abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. Moreover the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ Crucified shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise together with the command to repent and believe ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction to whom God out of His mere good pleasure and wisdom sends the Gospel. And whereas many who are called by the Gospel do not repent and believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.”² Therefore I say to you as Luther said, “If thou wilt needs

² Art. 3.5.6.

dispute about predestination, then I truly advise thee to begin first at the wounds of Christ, and then all that disputation will cease.”³ Let us end our dispute there and refute the taunt that “party men always hate a slightly differing friend more than a down-right enemy.”

Yours in equanimity,
Donald Mackenzie
Princeton Theological Seminary.

Dr. Van Til:

In his second reply to me Dr. Mackenzie complains of the fact that I have gone to his article in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* in order to justify the criticism I had made on his book. It is difficult to see the justice of this complaint since Dr. Mackenzie himself appealed to what he called his well-known theological position in order to meet my charge against his book. As to Dr. Mackenzie’s reflections on my remarks with respect to Agnosticism, Antinomies and Calvinism little needs to be said. Dr. Mackenzie does not go to his articles in order to prove that my criticism of them was unfair or incorrect. He practically limits himself to stating what he now believes. Moreover, he does not give the references for the quotations he makes from theologians. The quotation from the articles of the Synod of Dort do not prove that Dr. Mackenzie believes in limited atonement. Dr. Mackenzie quotes from articles three, five and six of the “second head of doctrine.” I will quote article eight. “For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father, that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.” Now I have in effect maintained that Dr. Mackenzie rejects article eight. He replies in effect by saying that he believes articles three, five and six. To be sure, he says he was seeking to defend Calvinism against misinterpretation, but this cannot be accomplished by rejecting the doctrine of limited atonement itself. Dr. Mackenzie has in the past definitely rejected limited atonement. Nor does he even now say that he believes in it.

Warfield’s Criticism

One more point remains to be noted. Dr. Mackenzie once again appeals to Dr. Warfield. He attempts to prove that Dr. Warfield’s review of his articles has been much

³ *Table Talk*, p. 405.

more favorable than mine. Now while it is true that Dr. Warfield makes some commendatory comments especially on matters of form, as I might also gladly make, the fact remains that Dr. Warfield's criticism is basically the same as mine. Even in the review which we are told, is "on the whole most flattering and appreciative," Dr. Warfield says that Dr. Mackenzie is "a bit uncertain" in his handling of the "rally creative nature" of the operations of the Holy Spirit in relation to the activities of the human will.¹ This criticism, serious as it is, is made stronger still in another review. We quote at length. "Professor Mackenzie sees no outcome without the postulation of a truly creative power of the will; but so far as we can see he discovers no ground for such a postulation beyond the extreme desirability that a new and better world should somehow be created. 'Surely,' he exclaims, 'the real question is: Can the tree itself be made good? not, Can grapes grow on thorns?' He certainly is on solid ground when he adds: 'If any libertarian holds that good fruit can come from a bad tree without changing the tree itself first, then libertarianism is a lingering chimera.' But as certainly he has lost his footing on the rock when he contends that libertarians must, in the nature of the case, therefore be able to point to a 'possibility of changing the bad character itself.' True enough, 'for Christianity at any rate, the possibility of new creatures and a new world is basal.' But it is equally basal for Christianity that this is a possibility for God (with whom 'all things are possible') and not for a man himself. It is therefore that Christianity is a religion of Salvation. It is a faulty exegesis which reads our Lord as exhorting us ourselves to make the tree good that the fruit may be good: and the Kantian doctrine that every 'ought' implies a 'can' is but an *obiter dictum*, which Kant himself confessed had to be taken on faith and could not be rationally justified. Creation is not such an easy thing that we can lightly assume that it lies in our daily, nay momentarily, power, because without it we cannot escape from our evil selves—except by an act of God. It were better to abide in the *obiter dictum* of a greater than Kant: 'Ye must be born again.'"²

One could scarcely think of a more serious criticism than that contained in the quotation given. Warfield found it necessary to point out at length, in the little space at his disposal, that man cannot save himself. Warfield found that the theology of Dr. Mackenzie is of doubtful orthodoxy, not merely on questions of detail but on the most important point of the new birth. It is difficult to see how Dr. Mackenzie can think of this review of Warfield as on the whole very favorable. Has the matter of soundness on the question of the new birth become so insignificant that a most severe criticism of Warfield on that point can be lightly dismissed? My criticisms were made without knowledge of Warfield's reviews. It now appears that Warfield's criticism was at least as serious as mine. I am very sorry that in all this discussion Dr. Mackenzie has not seen fit to go into the merits of the case. His replies have only convinced me more deeply of the justice of my criticism. That criticism was most serious and therefore not lightly made.

¹ *Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. 11, page 495.

² *Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. 13, page 283.

The Church of Christ and the Problems of the Day

by Karl Heim, D.D., Ph.D., Professor of Theology in the University of Tubingen, Germany (Charles Scribner's Sons. New York).

This is a book to make one sad. There is a great deal of good in it, but it also contains a fundamental error. The error referred to is epitomized in the opening sentence of chapter five. Here Dr. Heim says: "The essence of Christianity does not lie in a philosophy or a system of doctrine, nor in an ethic, but in a person." Now if this basic statement about Christianity is true we can no longer read our Bibles as the expression of the program of God for our-selves and the world. We are then left in complete uncertainty as to the future. Speaking of the resurrection of the dead Dr. Heim says: "Our future is based solely upon His creative power. He can leave us in nothingness if it is His desire. And He can call us into new being."¹ To be sure, Dr. Heim adds that through our contact with the risen One "we become certain that God will take the latter course," but if we may really believe that God could leave us in nothingness we are at best uncertain. All this, we believe, is contrary to Scripture. The Scripture knows of no contrast between a person and a program; it teaches us about an absolute person with an absolute program.

In the modern situation we need to emphasize this conception of God's program. Modern thought as a whole is irrationalistic; any one who wishes to help Christian thought forward and strengthen it against the irrationalism that surrounds us on every side must bring out clearly that God does have a program and that Scripture does give us a system of doctrine. All the good that Dr. Heim has said in this book, if it is to be interpreted in consistency with the basic contrast he himself makes between person and program, falls to the ground.

It seems to be a phenomenon of the times that men hold to several individual Christian doctrines and yet deny the foundation of all Christian doctrine. Dr. Lewis in his book, *A Christian Manifesto*, seems to hold at least to some Christian doctrines. Dr. Heim's book contains a far greater proportion of orthodox teaching than Dr. Lewis' book. It is this latter fact that makes the book of Dr. Heim still more dangerous than the book of Dr. Lewis. Dr. Lewis' book is so obviously heretical in its every chapter that he who runs may read. Not so with Dr. Heim's book; its error is more subtle and for that reason more dangerous.

¹ p. 179.

A Christian Manifesto

by Edwin Lewis, D.D., Professor of Theology in Drew Theological Seminary (The Abingdon Press, New York, \$2.00).

Professor Edwin Lewis, of Drew Theological Seminary tells us the foreword of his book that he has been asked if he has “slipped back into orthodoxy.” Many of his former Modernist friends and many of his new conservative friends seem to think that he has. We cannot agree with this opinion.

Naturally we do believe that Dr. Lewis deserves a good deal of credit for turning away to an extent from an outspoken Modernism. Then too there are many points in the book which, if taken by themselves are praiseworthy. But this by no means signifies that Dr. Lewis is now orthodox.

In proof of our contention we need not stop to discuss Dr. Lewis’ low view of the Old Testament and his belief in evolution. We can pass on at once to his rejection of several New Testament doctrines.

Discussing Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians Dr. Lewis says: “For the modern scholar, there are problems a-plenty connected with the Epistle, as you may discover for yourself by reading a good commentary—say that of Ernest F. Scott. One of these has to do with what might be called ‘the world-view’ of the Epistle, with its inclusion of ‘discarnate intelligences’ that range some of them above the human level and some of them below. Paul apparently takes for granted the actuality of these intelligences. The universe he believes in is inhabited to the farthest bounds. The modern man is skeptical at this point: for him angels and demons and the like belong in the realm of exploded myths, and an argument for anything, even for so exalted a claim as is here made for Christ, leaves him cold, if the argument assumes that such beings actually exist. So Colossians with the daring flight of its thought which advances by bold and ever-increasing circles until it arrives at last at the Great White Throne and the transcendent Lord, even Jesus Christ, ‘pre-eminent over all,’ must be brushed aside. Once it may have meant something, but it means nothing today. There is, indeed, an ‘ethical section’ in the latter half of the Epistle, as is so often the case in Paul’s writings, and this still carries an appeal. But as for the rest of it—no! But here again we need our distinction between the peripheral and the central. The only reason why Paul brings in his angelic lords and celestial powers is to affirm their complete subordination to One in whom dwells ‘all the Fullness of God.’ ”¹

A little further Dr. Lewis adds: “You say you cannot believe all this fantastic speculation about intermediate beings. You say you cannot visualize such a universe as Paul here assumes. Nobody is asking you to do so. That is not the point of the Epistle at all. The message is what counts not its wrapping. If you wish you may criticize and even, I suppose, reject the cosmology of Colossians as you may criticize and reject the philosophy of the law in Romans.” Comment on this passage is really superfluous.

The “cosmology” of Colossians includes, e.g., the doctrines of creation Col 1–16 and of providence (Col 1:17). The whole of the Christian conception of redemption is built

¹ p. 60.

upon these doctrines. Are the “powers of darkness” of which Paul says Christ delivered us created powers? If so, Christ can save us from them; if not, if they exist by their own power, even the “pre-eminence of Christ” will be helpless against them. The meaning of the phrase “the pre-eminence of Christ” is one thing when brought into relation with the doctrine of creation and quite the reverse when taken in connection with the doctrine of evolution as Dr. Lewis takes it.

It is plain not only from the passages quoted but from the argument of the whole book that Dr. Lewis does not believe in any thing like a system of truth. All the labour of the church in searching out a system of truth from the Scriptures, has according to Dr. Lewis, really been in vain. Truth is relative. Says Dr. Lewis: “Augustine affirming man’s moral incompetency and Pelagius affirming man’s moral competency may both be right.”² This amounts to saying that man can be a sinner and yet not a sinner at the same time and in the same sense. Thus the death of Christ was both necessary and unnecessary. All this fits in well with modern Irrationalism but is quite the opposite from the system of truth found in Scripture.

But can Dr. Lewis really mean that truth is relative? Does he not merely wish to intimate that we as human beings cannot comprehensively understand the system of truth as it is presented to us in Scripture? Would he go so far as to say that God has no comprehensive plan? There can alas be no doubt as to the answer. We again give Dr. Lewis’ own words on this point: “Because of man’s sin, something happened to God’s plan. Because of God’s grace, something happened to God himself. If one dare write such words, God admitted into his being an alien element, with the ensuing necessity of undergoing structural reorganization. The claim that there has been such a structural change in God must be true, and it must be a revelation, because nobody could have had the audacity to imagine it, and because the statement of it, with the reasons that made the change necessary, has such an overpowering influence on the mind that accepts it. For evermore the God of the Christian bears a scar, and the scar is not a birthmark he could not help but a wound received in a freely chosen cause.”³

It is clear from such passages as these, which but represent the main argument of the book, that Dr. Lewis has not “slipped back into orthodoxy.” We should certainly rejoice if he had; as it is we can only be sorry that he has not.

Dr. Lewis has not really offended the modern mind as he seems to think he has. Very little remains of the gospel if it is handled as Dr. Lewis has handled it.

² p. 107.

³ p. 170.

Personality And Religion

by Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Borden Parker Boune Professor of Philosophy in Boston University. The Abingdon Press.

If one should ask Professor Brightman whether he is in general agreement with the position of Professor Wieman he would no doubt reply that he is not. Professor Brightman thinks that before we can speak of worshipping God we must think of God as personal. He thinks we cannot worship a process of integration within the universe. This seems to imply that his position is quite the reverse of that of Professor Wieman. Yet at bottom there is very little difference between the two positions.

In the introduction Professor Brightman tells us that he is among other things giving us in this a “restatement of the idea of a finite God.” Brightman is well aware of the fact that his doctrine is opposed to that of historic Christianity. He calls the position of Christianity “theistic absolutism.” He holds that “theistic absolutism is undoubtedly impressive” but untrue to the facts of experience.¹ “Nevertheless it seems to many, including the present lecturer, that the ideal God of traditional theism is open to some of the same sort of objections in principle as are rightly urged against the hypothesis of naturalism.”² Brightman holds that we must think of evil as ultimate, and therefore of God as suffering with us because of this ultimate evil. “Hence he who would learn his lessons from experience would be likely to avow faith in a God who is suffering and struggling, not on account of human sin, but on account of cosmic problems and obstacles which he did not choose, but found in his eternal experience and controlled.”³

If we had to choose between the philosophies of Wieman and Brightman we should certainly choose the philosophy of Brightman. Yet the philosophy of Brightman is as subversive of Christianity as is the philosophy of Wieman. Both of these men oppose the God of Scripture who is “infinite, eternal and unchangeable.” Of the two books the one of Brightman is the more dangerous. Brightman believes in a personal God. This might lead people to think that he believes in the God of Scripture. Nothing could be further from the truth.

¹ p. 96–97.

² 96.

³ 94.

Methods Of Private Religious Living

by Henry Nelson Wieman, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931.

Professor Wieman is well known as a writer in the field of the philosophy of religion. In general he represents the pragmatist school of philosophy.

Professor Wieman's pragmatist views appear plainly in his conception of God. In this book, as in his other writings, he speaks of God as the integrating process of the universe. "God is the integrating process at work in the universe."¹ "What is God? God is the integrating process at work in the universe. It is that which makes for increasing interdependence and cooperation in the world."² For some mysterious unknown reason this planet seems to have "a constitutional tendency toward integration."³ "All good is derived from the process of integration. It is derived from God, the integrating behavior of the universe."⁴ "God, the progressive integrating process, is the movement toward richer and more intensive integrations."⁵ "God is not identical with society but he is the integrating process which has reached in society its highest historical achievement."⁶ "There is a process which works to make the whole universe more organic. It is God."⁷

Now it is this integrating process within the universe that, according to Wieman, we are to worship. "The first step in the act of worship is to relax and to become aware of that upon which we are dependent ..."⁸ "Jesus expressed this first act of worship by the words: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. It is not a state in which one is thinking about anything in particular. One is simply relaxed, waiting and endeavoring to be filled with the consciousness of that encompassing and sustaining and integrating reality which, if he is psychologically capable of using the word God, he calls God."⁹ "The second step in worship is to call to mind the vast and unimaginable possibilities for good which are inherent in this integrating process called God."¹⁰ "Jesus expressed this second act of worship by the words: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."¹¹ There are, according to Wieman, other steps in the act of worship but with these we are not now concerned.

When we thus worship we are taken into God. "Religion releases maximum energy when the individual becomes fitted into this integrating process as one function of its working, with some sense of the scope and might of that which thus works in him and

¹ 28.

² 47.

³ 54.

⁴ 58.

⁵ 58.

⁶ 79.

⁷ 47.

⁸ 22.

⁹ 23.

¹⁰ 24.

¹¹ 25.

through him.”¹² Moreover, since society is “the fullest expression of God in the actualized historic achievement accessible to human experience” we may worship ourselves in worshipping society. “This community of need and interdependence is, then, a proper object of religious devotion.”¹³

The result of this worship of the integrating principle of the universe, of which we ourselves may be a part, is that we joyfully submit to the inevitable. This is as we should expect. If there is no absolute or transcendent God the evil in this universe is ineradicable. Religion must then be the joyful submission to the inevitable. “One is free of demoralizing fear just as soon as he is ready to accept the facts precisely as they are.”¹⁴ “Now this state of complete self-committal, this total self-surrender to reality, with consequent command over all resources of personality, is possible when one fills his mind with the thought that underneath all other facts is the basic fact upon which all else depends. This basic fact can be called the structure of the universe or it can be called God.”¹⁵

We need make no further comment. It is scarcely conceivable that even young people should mistake Professor Wieman’s position for Christianity. Those who should follow Professor Wieman’s advice in matters of worship would surely worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1936.C

The Return To Religion

by Henry C. Link, Ph.D., Director of the Psychological Service Center, New York City,
The Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1936. \$1.75.

The author of this book tells us that in his youth he had “what might be considered an extremely heavy dose of religion.” Yet because he “possessed a genuine craving for knowledge and truth” he found the intellectual atmosphere of the small college he entered stifling. This small college was “known for the fact that eighty per cent of its graduates entered the ministry.” The following year he entered “one of our great Eastern colleges, as a sophomore.” Two of his first courses were the history of philosophy and religious education. “The history of philosophy was the story of man’s intellectual emancipation from the superstitions and blinding beliefs of religion. It described the birth of science through the martyrdom of men who dared to defy the dogmas of the church.” Of this course the author says further: “It was about the most illuminating and stimulating course I have ever taken. It was the perfect answer to certain doubts about religion previously aroused in my mind. It gave me a tremendous respect for the powers of reason and for the revelations of science, and it left religion without a leg to stand on.”¹ The course in

¹² 60.

¹³ 80.

¹⁴ 110.

¹⁵ 112.

¹ p. 8.

religious education, the author tells us, made all his previous conceptions of the Bible seem childish.

In order to complete the picture of the ruin of his early religious convictions, the author adds a word about the course in anthropology. "Its high point was the lecture, in which the professor drew a small circle on the blackboard and a large circle around it."

" 'This small circle,' he explained, 'includes the realm of scientific facts, the things we really know and can prove, the facts of physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. Between this larger circle and the smaller circle,' he said, 'lies the field of partly proven facts, of half-knowledge.... Outside of this area of half-knowledge lies the whole realm of superstitions, beliefs, and notions for which we have no proof of any kind. The idea of God and the beliefs of religion fall in this indeterminate area.

We cannot prove the existence of God, neither can we prove that he does not exist. In respect to this great field, the truly intellectual man can only say, "I don't know." "

What was the result of this instruction on the beliefs of the college students? To this question the author replies as follows: "The students divided themselves roughly into two groups, those who did not take their professors too seriously or were too stupid to understand the full significance of what was being taught, and those who were earnest seekers after truth or possessed good minds. The duller the student, the more likely it was that his religion would remain intact, in a logic-tight compartment which his studies failed to penetrate. The more analytic a student, the more penetrating his search for truth, the higher his I.Q., the more likely he was to be stripped of his religious beliefs. I was a Phi Beta Kappa student, and the higher education left me a complete and powerfully fortified agnostic."²

But now the author has come back to a belief in religion. Moreover, he has come back to religion because of the "discoveries of scientific psychology." This sounds very encouraging. We are anxious to hear of these "discoveries." Many a Christian parent whose sons or daughters have, like Dr. Link, become "powerfully fortified" agnostics, will hastily turn the pages of this book for help. Their sons and daughters were unwilling to listen to their arguments, but surely they will listen to the "discoveries of scientific psychology."

Unfortunately, however, such parents will discover, ere they have finished the first chapter, that the "discoveries of scientific psychology" have not led the author back to historic Christianity. Says Dr. Link: "However; in so far as I can sum up what I mean by religion, it includes the belief in God as a Supreme Being; the belief, in a divine moral order expressed in the Ten Commandments and in the life of Christ, and the acceptance of the Church as the chief, even though imperfect, vehicle of religious truths that are greater than science, and values that are higher than reason."³

Now we do certainly rejoice that the author's work in psychology has led him back to this much of religion. To have this sort of religion is better than to have no religion at all. Yet this religion is not the Christian religion. The "discoveries of psychology," as described and interpreted by the author, do not lead guilty sinners to the foot of the cross of Christ escape the wrath of God.

² p. 10.

³ p. 14.

Thus our high expectations drop. As orthodox Christians we may indeed get some help from such a book this. We may learn from it that bold rationalistic interpretations of the universe have failed to satisfy many leading scientists. We may learn from it that many scientists today admit the fact of Mystery. But all this can only bring to the brink of despair, unless we may surely believe in a positive revelation of God! When you are lost in the woods it is better to know than not to know it. But to know that you are lost and to know of no way of escape is surely nothing to be desired, and this knowledge that “reason” is lost in the woods is all that the author offers.

GUIDE NUMBER: 1936.D

De Noodzakelijkheid Eener Christelijke Logica

Dr. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Hoogleraar aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam*. H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1932. Price fl. 2.25.

It is generally agreed that a consistently Christian conception of reality is quite distinct from all other conceptions of reality. It is not so generally accepted that this distinctly Christian conception of reality implies a distinctly Christian conception of scientific methodology. Many Christian scholars seem to take for granted that if we are to reason intelligently with non-Christians we must have a common or neutral methodology.

But are not one's conception of reality and one's conception of methodology involved in one another? We cannot help but think they are. One's conception of reality is one's conception of the foundation of the laws of logic.

We may take, for example, the Christian conception of reality and show that it has definite implications with respect to the law of non-contradiction. The Christian conception of God implies that “whatsoever comes to pass” in the created universe has been preinterpreted by God's plan. God's logic precedes history. God makes and sustains the facts and the laws of the scientists. The particulars and universals of the created universe are adapted to one another by God. They have their coherence and admit of interpretation by man because back of them is the absolute coherence of God.

Stated in terms of methodology this means that the law of non-contradiction has absolute validity because it has universal application. Truth is absolute. It is this conception of the foundation of the law of non-contradiction that enables us to ask questions about nature and history. It is this conception also that enables us to expect answers when we ask questions about nature and history. Without this conception of the foundation of the law of non-contradiction the curse of Heraclitus cannot be lifted; if “all things flow” logic flows too. Things do not submit to logic if the logic of God does not underlie them. God is the presupposition of intelligent human predication.

Reasoning from methodology to reality we come to the same conclusion. This need scarcely be pointed out if we adopt a Christian methodology. If Christian-theism is involved in your method, you will, of course, discover Christian-theism if you apply your method. If you have put a mouse in your hat, you will, as a true magician, discover a

mouse when you take off your hat. Thus your insistence on a Christian-theistic methodology, it will be said by our opponents, only helps to deceive the “faithful.”

This would seem to be sad enough. We should not wish to catch men by guile of this baser sort. But sad though it be to fool others, it is still more sad to fool yourself as well. He who adopts a “neutral” methodology does the latter. It is a foregone conclusion that if we apply a neutral methodology we can find no more than a finite God. History proves this as far as history can prove anything. None of all the many schools of philosophy, except the definitely Christian-theistic, have offered us anything higher than a finite God; all of them have used the “neutral” method.

It could not be otherwise. It is the logic of the matter. If men are “neutral” in their methodology they say in effect, that as far as the possibilities involved in their investigations are concerned, God may or may not exist. The facts and the laws of this universe may or may not be sustained by God. The law of contradiction does not necessarily have its foundation in God. Thus the law of non-contradiction may or may not have universal application. A may be A tomorrow or it may be not-A tomorrow. Thus history precedes not only the logic of man but also the logic of God; God Himself must search for truth. Eve was “neutral” when she put Satan’s interpretation of history on a par with God’s interpretation of history. She thought that the devil might possibly be right. That seemed to be an innocent attitude. Apparently God did not think so; He punished her with death for her “neutrality” in methodology. To doubt God is to deny Him. Does not this hold everywhere? Neutrality toward God is in effect negation of God.

Those who seek to defend the Christian-theistic position in the fields of science and philosophy ought to be well aware of the fact that “neutrality” is really negation. It is only a happy inconsistency that will lead us to a theistic conclusion by way of a “neutral” path and we should not expect men to follow our inconsistencies. We may do much valuable detail work but we cannot present the Christian-theistic position logically and fully if we adopt a “neutral” methodology. If we do so we place ourselves at the mercy of the enemy at the outset of the argument.

On the other hand, if we recognize the interdependence of method and conclusion in scientific research we can fruitfully reason with men. We can then place ourselves upon our opponents’ position for argument’s sake. We can be “neutral” for argument’s sake. We can see what happens to experience if the “neutral” method be adopted. We can then whirl about with men in their exclusively immanentistic and relativistic cauldron to tire them out. We may go with our opponents for argument’s sake when as men of water they build ladders of water and place them upon foundations of water against a support of water in order to get out of the water a pure temporality. If to save men we should really and not merely for argument’s sake enter the cauldron of “neutrality” or bare possibility we should need saving ourselves.

Can there be any doubt as to the urgent necessity of a consistently Christian methodology today? Modern thought as a whole has adopted the position that truth is relative. If the pepperpot of Chance shakes long enough every conceivable kind of configuration of facts and laws may eventually appear; theism may be true today and non-theism may be true tomorrow. This is virtually the position of such men as James Jeans. Such a position is reached by the application of the “neutral” method in the field of science.

To meet such a negation of God as is hidden under cover of the much-praised “neutrality” of scientists we need a humble but bold affirmation that God is so necessary to us that He is necessary in the field of method as well as elsewhere.

Arminianism cannot furnish such an affirmation of God. It says that God is at some points dependent upon the decisions of men. It says that the historical has not been preinterpreted by God. It therewith denies the universal application of the law of non-contradiction. It has compromised with the Irrationalism of modern thought. If anything is clear from Edwin Lewis’ book, *A Christian Manifesto*, that is clear. He tells us that “Augustine affirming man’s moral incompetency and Pelagius affirming man’s moral competency may both be right.”¹ He speaks of the necessity of a “structural change” in God, because of certain events in history.²

Nor is the compromise with modern Irrationalism limited to those who have an Arminian heritage. We have it in Dr. Geo. W. Richards’ book, *Beyond Fundamentalism and Modernism*. Dr. Richards tells us we need not concern ourselves with the world-picture given us in Scripture. For him there is no God-interpreted system of truth. So, too, Dr. Donald Mackenzie in his book, *Christianity—The Paradox of God*, toys with the idea of paradox as the really contradictory instead of the merely seeming contradictory. The influence of Karl Barth and Kierkegaard is apparent in all three of these men. Barth himself struggles in vain to combine the motif of absolute Irrationalism with the Christian motif of an absolutely rational, though to man incomprehensible, God. Karl Heim, in his recent *Sprunt Lectures*, makes a false antithesis between believing in Christianity as a system of truth and following the person of Christ.

The question is as to how we are to meet this avalanche of Irrationalism within as well as without the Church. We believe it can be done only if, in reliance on the grace of God, we present a consistently Christian position. If we attempt to work according to a “neutral” methodology we have lost our argument against Arminianism and thus have also lost our argument against all forms of modern Irrationalism.

We believe that this is in the main Dr. Vollenhoven’s position. His book gives the necessary discussion of the history of logic in order to establish what I have had to state briefly and dogmatically. The question of a neutral methodology and a neutral starting-point ought to be discussed, it seems to me, among those who wish to be Reformed in their thinking. It does not seem to me that we are really Reformed as long as we try to be neutral. It is a question that every teacher in a Christian institution of learning must face.

¹ p. 107.

² p. 170.

The Triune God

by C. Norman Bartlett, S.T.D., American Tract Society, New York, N.Y., \$1.50.

In his essay on “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity”¹, B. B. Warfield points out that Arminians have usually held to a very low view of the Trinity. This in an interesting point. It runs counter to our usual modes of thought. Ordinarily we say that all evangelical Christians agree on the basic doctrines of Christianity. We are accustomed to think of the differences between evangelicals, such as Calvinists and Arminians, as coming in only when such doctrines as election and free will are discussed. It would then seem as though Arminians and Calvinists could build their theological house together except for the top story.

If, however, Warfield is right it may be necessary for us to revise our usual way of thinking on these matters. If it be true that Arminians have usually held a low view of the Trinity it would seem that Calvinists must build the whole of their theological house by themselves. Perhaps we have still to learn the simple truth that if we wish to build the third story of a house aright we must see that the first story and even the foundation is built aright.

The Reason Why

Now we shall not question the truthfulness of Warfield’s statement that Arminianism and a low view of the Trinity have usually gone together. We believe he adduces sufficient evidence to prove his point. But we do wish to ask whether there is a reason for this.

Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to note the starting-point from which Arminians begin their reasoning about any doctrine and, therefore, about the doctrine of the Trinity. That starting-point is the “free will” of man. Arminians hold that man can initiate action in-dependently of the plan or counsel of God. God must wait to see what man will do before He can make up His mind as to what He will do.

This being the starting-point of Arminianism, the whole of its theology becomes a theology of claims and counter-claims. The claims and counter-claims are made, to be sure, by an infinite God and finite man. Accordingly, God will no doubt have larger claims than man. Yet God will never have more original claims than man.

If Rockefeller wants to buy up a large area of ground, one acre of which is owned by me, I may frustrate his plans by simply refusing to sell him the one lonely acre I own. It is in some such way as this that the God of Arminianism can never quite do what He wants to do. He is at every point dependent upon man and the created universe.

This last sentence will seem to some to be an overstatement of the case. Even some who hold the Reformed system of doctrine may think that I am at this point too hard on

¹ *Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 264ff.

the Arminians. “Do not Arminians hold to the creation doctrine?” they will ask. And is not God absolutely original when He creates man, even according to the Arminian? How could anyone hold to the creation doctrine and at the same time hold that God was at that point dependent on man? Surely you are unfair to the Arminian at this point. You cannot fairly say that the Arminian teaches error at every point of doctrine.

Arminianism And The Creation Doctrine

In the book under review we have an illustration of the fact that when an Arminian thinks consistently he virtually denies the creation doctrine. No, the creation doctrine is not openly denied. Quite the contrary is true. Yet it might just as well have been openly denied. What is openly denied is the conception of a God who existed as a self-sufficient being apart from the universe. And what is openly affirmed is that God needed the universe which He created. We quote Dr. Bartlett’s words on this:

Are we not warranted in thinking of creation—which is not static and complete, but dynamic and continuous—as the self-giving of God as energy? Whether the physical universe is eternal or temporal is a debatable question which we are not competent to solve. But it is at least conceivable that just as the physical life of man requires a body to indwell and animate, God as infinite energy may demand an eternal material universe as the only adequate field for His infinite physical creativity. The principle of reciprocal self-fulfillment through self-surrender on the part of both the infinite and the finite, to which we have previously alluded, may indicate that just as the finite requires the infinite as its ground of existence, so the infinite requires the finite as a field of expression.²

The quotation we have given expresses the sentiment of the book throughout. There is a constant emphasis on the essential correlativity between God and His created universe. According to Dr. Bartlett, the universe not only needs God for its existence but God needs the universe for his existence.

Arminianism And Sin

We do not need to be surprised therefore that when an Arminian argues consistently he will virtually deny the Biblical doctrine of sin as he virtually denies the Biblical doctrine of creation. We again quote Dr. Bartlett:

Let us again pick up our favorite thread of reasoning from the human to the divine. Crises rouse the best within us. We do not really know what we can do until we are driven to the wall. Necessity wakens buried and unsuspected potentialities. Within the very essence of Deity may there not exist an analogous something subconsciously requiring a universe abounding in obstacles that nothing short of the exercise of His infinite powers can overcome and bring into line with His holy purposes? If this be so it has a most intimate bearing upon the existence of evil in a world subject to His rule.³

On the following page, still speaking of God, the author continues this line of thought in these words:

² p. 153.

³ p. 117.

His subconscious perfections flower out into conscious self-recognition through the activities involved in the shaping of more or less refractory material into an ever closer resemblance to the divine original.⁴

The Trinity

It would seem apparent from these quotations, which are but fair expressions of the thought of the book, that we face here a very serious compromise of Christianity with non-Christian thought. Scripture is sufficiently plain in its teaching of God's free creation of the universe. God did not need man or the universe. It is hard to conceive of a doctrine that has more far-reaching consequences than the doctrine of God's free creation of the universe and man in the universe. It is the first main mark of distinction between pagan and Christian thought. If one believes in a God who needs the universe one has no more than a finite God. Dr. Bartlett does not wish to have a finite God. Yet a finite God is all he makes provision for in his theology.

As to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the particular doctrine discussed in the book now under review, we believe it to be basically erroneous. There are no doubt many fine passages in the book which, if taken by themselves, are true. But the value of the discussion of the Trinity is vitiated by the principle that God needs the universe. A truly Biblical discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity would require that we consider first what God is in Himself. Theologians speak of this as the ontological Trinity. It is only after we have discussed the Trinity as it exists in and for itself that we can turn to the question of how the trinitarian God stands in relation to the universe which He has freely created. This theologians speak of as the economical Trinity. Dr. Bartlett has failed to make the necessary distinction between these two.

Arminian Reasoning

Dr. Bartlett would probably object to this interpretation of his views by saying that he has merely reasoned from the human to the divine and that no one can do anything else. He might say that he has merely used "the lamp of analogy."⁵ To this we would reply that if the "lamp of analogy" be placed under the bushel of correlativity it will shed no light. The author's Arminianism requires him to think of God as depend-ent upon man much as man is dependent upon God. But this makes for an identity of conditions that control God and man. Arminianism snuffs out the lamp of analogy. For that reason it is unsound in its every doctrine and not merely on the doctrine of election and free will. There is a good logical reason why, as Warfield points out, Arminians have his-torically held to a low view of the Trinity. It is the basic error in their mode of reasoning that accounts for all the errors they hold. We would that our Arminian brethren might see the error of their way and turn from it. It is in the hope of winning them to a more truly Biblical view that we must point out the seriousness of their mistake.

⁴p. 118.

⁵p. 95.

Der Mensch im Widerspruch

Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80.

Emil Brunner is one of the leading theologians of our day. He represents what is frequently spoken of as Crisis Theology. This crisis theology has made a vigorous attack on Modernism. Brunner and Barth have called men back to what they call the “theology of the Reformation.” We cannot help but be interested in it.

Brunner’s recent book, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, deals with the doctrine of man. It speaks a good deal of man’s creation in the image of God and of his fall into sin. This naturally brings forward the problem of history. Does Brunner accept the Genesis account of man’s creation and fall at face value? Up to this time Reformed theologians have done this. Brunner’s predecessors in the chair of systematic theology at Princeton have done this. They have held that the Scriptures as the Word of God and historic Christianity itself would fall to the ground unless the Genesis account be taken as literally true.

We need not read far into Brunner’s book to find that it is at odds with the Reformed and generally orthodox conception of history. Brunner’s philosophy of history resembles that of Kant. Kant made a broad distinction between the realm of phenomena and the realm of noumena; Brunner makes a broad distinction between the dimension of Becoming and the dimension of History. Generally speaking Brunner’s dimension of Becoming answers to Kant’s phenomena while Brunner’s dimension of History answers to Kant’s noumena. The dimension of Becoming deals with causal sequences and necessary relations. It is therefore open to scientific research. The dimension of History, or rather real-history, (*die Echtgeschichtliche*) deals with events not repeatable (*das Einmalige*). True historical narrative is therefore descriptive, not explanatory.¹

Traditional or orthodox theology, says Brunner, has failed to make the all-important distinction between the dimension of Becoming and that of History. What Scripture tells us about man’s creation and fall into sin is History. It therefore does not belong to the dimension of Becoming. “The contrast ‘created good ... fallen’ has nothing to do with the distinction ‘earlier ... later’ in the field of empirical sequence.”² The creation and the fall of man are not occurrences in the empirical realm, the realm of Becoming. The creation and the fall lie behind or above the level of the empirical.³ Yet traditional theology has taken the Genesis narrative as referring to the realm of Becoming. The consequences, he thinks, have been sad indeed.

¹ p. 412. “Dass das Echtgeschichtliche gerade nicht das Werdende als solches ist, geht daraus hervor, dass es das Einmalige ist.”

² p. 413.

³ p. 413. (cf. also p. 79.)

Traditional theology has, according to Brunner, made itself ridiculous by clinging to the literal interpretation of the Genesis account.⁴ It has wasted its energies in a useless struggle with science. It has engaged in a fruitless apologetic for the Christian Faith.⁵

A “purified theology,” says Brunner, must follow a different procedure.⁶ It must recognize the fact of organic evolution as practically beyond dispute.⁷ It must not enter upon the dimension of Becoming in order there to engage in a debate with science. For information on questions of anatomy and chemistry a true theology turns to science, not to Scripture. The biological, the psychological and even the intellectual aspects of man answer to definite laws. Science, not Scripture informs us of the operation of these laws.⁸

A true theology, says Brunner, will limit itself to what Scripture tells us of the dimension of History. That dimension is the dimension of personality. It is here that man is responsible and responsibility is of the essence of man.⁹ It is here too that man is brought face to face with other persons. Here the I meets the Thou.¹⁰ The relationship of one person to another person is not by way of their common membership in the same species. The notion of a species is that of a universal and universals belong to the dimension of Becoming. Science may approach the idea of personality with the help of universals but personality is in the last analysis absolutely unique.¹¹

We pause to observe the close affinity of Brunner’s thought to that of Kant on this point. Both hold to a deep gulf between the domain of science and the domain of free personality. Then, to soften the resulting dualism, both introduce the notion of the limiting concept (*Grenzbegriff*). Those who do not accept the Christian conception of history are driven to invent devices of this sort. If the “facts” of the phenomenal world—Brunner’s dimension of Becoming—are not thought of as created by God they must be thought of as existing in their own power. Brunner, as will be shown later, does not really believe in the creation of the “facts” of the phenomenal world by God. Thus they are “brute facts.” And brute facts are mute facts. They are unintelligible. Granted the mind of man can know aspects of these facts, there is always a remaining surd. Granted man by science can discover certain laws of behavior in the realm of phenomena, the individual

⁴ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 76.

⁵ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 440.

⁶ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 416.

⁷ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, pp. 407, 434.

⁸ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 58.

⁹ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 38.

¹⁰ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 10.

¹¹ p. 10. Note also that Brunner admires the anthropology of Ferdinand Ebner, Martin Buber and Friedrich Gogarten, p. 529.

fact in its uniqueness must always recede as does the horizon. Kant's philosophy and Brunner's philosophy end in modern irrationalism.

Brunner insists again and again that human responsibility cannot be maintained if one fails to make the distinction between the dimension of Becoming and the dimension of History as he has made it. He charges traditional theology with obscuring the true Biblical doctrine of origins. The Scriptural doctrine of creation, he says, was meant to teach man's utter dependence upon God. But our descent from Adam in paradise would drag responsibility down into the dimension of Becoming. The church has toned down our individual responsibility to God by mediating it, in part at least, through mere physical descent.¹²

Similarly, says Brunner, traditional theology has obscured the Biblical notion of man's creation in the image of God. To be created in the image of God means to be personally and immediately related to Christ the Word and thus to be immediately responsible to God.¹³ But the church has toned down this individual dialectical relationship to the level of generic possession of certain attributes.¹⁴ True History has again been confused with mere Becoming.

Still further, the church, according to Brunner, has obscured the Biblical doctrine of the fall of man. Sin should be thought of as something purely personal and therefore individual. Sin is, in the last analysis, an act of the free personality. But the church has reduced personality to the level of membership in a species. Thus individual responsibility has been virtually denied. "Something, which in its very nature is purely personal: sin, disobedience to the will of God, has been reduced to the purely natural fact of physical descent."¹⁵ Thus it would appear that the fall of man is something that lies behind us in the dim past, something for which a certain individual named Adam, was responsible. In reality we are all responsible; we are all Adam.¹⁶ In the dimension of History there are no causal relations between individuals and therefore no transfer of responsibility from one person to another.

We see that Brunner's charges against traditional theology are very severe. He proposes to reconstruct traditional theology with the help of his distinction between Becoming and History. With the help of this distinction a really Christian theology is to be built up. It is with the help of this distinction that human responsibility is to be given a true foundation. Will Brunner accomplish his purpose? We believe not.

¹² p. 76. Also p. 78, "*Durch diese Neuformulierung wird vor allem erst deutlich gemacht, dass, wo vom Ursprung die Rede ist, nicht von irgendeinem Adam, der vor so und so viel tausend Jahren lebte, die Rede ist, sondern von mir selbst, ebenso von dir selbst und von jedem selbst.*"

¹³ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, pp. 87, 95.

¹⁴ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 94.

¹⁵ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 113.

¹⁶ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 144.

Modern philosophers and theologians who have followed Kant in making his distinction between phenomena and noumena have been unable to escape the notion of a finite God. The God they believed in was limited in a twofold fashion.

He was limited, in the first place, by the phenomena. These phenomena, or “facts,” were assumed to exist in themselves. They were thought of as non-created. Their laws were independent of the providence of God. God had to adjust Himself to the facts as He found them. In His knowledge of these facts he was essentially on a par with the scientists. Both had to await developments. Neither could do more than approximate to a knowledge of facts as they are.

God was also limited, in the second place, by the noumena. The inhabitants of the noumenal world too were non-created. God had to await the actions of the *homo noumenon*. The *homo noumenon* of Kant was the hypostatisation of human thought conceived of as self-sufficient. Thus man was, in the last analysis, responsible not to God but to abstract laws which he found operating within himself. God as well as man was surrounded by an ultimately impersonalistic universe.

Brunner’s God, like the God of Kant, is really no more than a limited God. At certain points in his book it might seem as though he were using the word creation in the traditional sense of the term but the full impact of his argument is against the creation idea. For Brunner the idea of creation conveys no information about the origin of the physical universe as such. Thus the facts and the laws of the phenomenal world are virtually beyond the control of God. Fate or Chance may rule over them.

We are aware of the fact that Brunner criticises both pantheism and deism with the help of the creation doctrine.¹⁷ But to escape from these enemies of the Christian faith one must take the creation doctrine seriously. The Reformation theology did take creation seriously. Kant took the creation doctrine metaphorically. Brunner has followed Kant, not Luther or Calvin.

Brunner’s distinction between the dimension of Becoming and the dimension of History removes the foundation of historic Christianity. For him nothing of real importance to Christianity happens in the dimension of Becoming.¹⁸ He leaves no room for the all-determinative significance of the death and resurrection of Christ. He leaves no place for miracle without which redemption falls to the ground. Every part of Christian doctrine would have to be modified, or rather volatalized, if Brunner’s philosophy of history were true.

The root error of Brunner’s theology, we believe, lies in his assumption of the ultimacy of man. The key-word of his book is “*Entscheidung*.” Man must make his choice for or against God. Now Brunner assumes that man must virtually be a self-sufficient being in order to make a significant choice. As Brunner’s dimension of History is broadly similar to Kant’s noumenal realm so his notion of human freedom is closely related to that of Kant. As a member of the dimension of History man is, according to Brunner, free from all entangling alliances with the dimension of Becoming. He is a citizen in the field of absolute personality.

¹⁷ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 80.

¹⁸ p. 458. “*Auf dem Feld empirischen Geschehens fallen keine endgultigen Entscheidungen.*”

Further we are aware of the fact that Brunner speaks of man as a creature of God.¹⁹ But this is really no more than metaphor. It is an undeniable fact that man's choices are to a large extent influenced by what Brunner calls the dimension of Becoming. If this dimension of Becoming is withdrawn from God's control man's choices are to that extent withdrawn from God's control. We are face to face here with an ultimate alternative. Either we take the doctrine of creation and of providence seriously and have man's real dependence upon God or we do not take them seriously and we have something similar to Kant's *homo noumenon*.

The alternative spoken of has controlled the history of philosophy and theology. On the one hand we have paganism or ultimate impersonalism. On the other hand we have Christianity or ultimate personalism. For paganism the Universe is logically prior to God; God is reduced to an aspect of the Universe. Together with man God is subject to the laws of the Universe. Man can at any time appeal from God's verdict to the constitution of the Universe. This constitution of the universe is as a "daysman betwixt them both." For Christianity God is logically prior to the universe; God's counsel controls all that which influences man. There are no "facts" or "laws" that operate independently of God. Even the "dimension of Becoming" exists and functions only by virtue of God's creating and sustaining power. Thus God is really sovereign. Man may deal with facts and laws but through them he always deals with God. In all that man touches he either obeys or disobeys the will of God.

Brunner has apparently sought to combine the pagan and the Christian motifs. There are many fine passages in his book that criticise the impersonalism of modern theology. Our hopes are again and again aroused when he scourges Modernism for its reduction of historic Christianity to a mere ideational system of thought. In eloquent phrases he chastises the pride of the modern *homo noumenon*. But in the last analysis Brunner falls into the errors he so passionately condemns. By his false notion of creation he withdraws the universe in which man dwells from the control of God. Thus man's responsibility is directed to abstract law and man is himself made the judge of that law. Pagan ideationism reigns supreme and *homo noumenon* is still upon the throne.

Brunner has no patience with traditional Apologetics. We may fairly request him then to make intelligible to us his own philosophy of human personality. He cannot escape doing so by saying that his interest is in theology and not in philosophy. His own criticisms of traditional theology are philosophical in nature. His entire scheme of Biblical interpretation—the distinction between Becoming and History—is taken from modern philosophy. The influence of Kant, Fichte, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and others, appears on every page.

In defending his philosophy Brunner will have to prove that human responsibility is intelligible upon the presupposition of an ultimately impersonalistic universe. But an impersonalistic universe is, when analyzed, a Chance universe, and Chance spells the death of intelligible predication. In a Chance universe no two facts can be brought into significant contact with one another.

Brunner's theology is destructive of historic Christianity; his Apologetic destroys human intelligence itself. In contrast with this the Reformed Faith, in accepting the

¹⁹ Emil Brunner: *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*. Berlin: Furche-Verlag. 1937. 15, 572. Rm. 12.80, p. 80.

creation doctrine in its ordinary sense has a basis for historic Christianity and has an apologetic which alone does not destroy human intelligence. The Reformed Faith does not claim to fathom the depth of the wisdom of God. It offers no apologetic in which the *homo noumenon* is the last court of appeal. It holds to the sovereign God, Creator and Ruler of all. To Him, and to Him alone, in the end is man responsible. Thus alone we do justice to plain Scripture teaching; thus alone we can save human responsibility and intelligible human predication. God is the presupposition of intelligible human predication.

If we could speak of Brunner's theology as orthodox we should have to call it Arminian but we cannot call it Arminian because it is in no real sense orthodox. The presuppositions of Brunner's theology are the same as those of Modernism. Much as we bewail this fact we ought to face it squarely.

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Christianity In America: A Crisis

E. G. Homrighausen. The Abingdon Press, 1936.

Dr. Homrighausen is professor-elect of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is to begin his work at that institution in the second semester of this year. It is therefore of interest to all Presbyterians to know what the beliefs of Dr. Homrighausen are.

Broadly speaking, we may say that Homrighausen is a Barthian. He resembles Barth in his vigorous attack on the Bible as the completed revelation of God to man. One quotation may suffice to prove this point:

I am not a Fundamentalist. I realize that there are abiding truths in that camp. But we have outgrown it. We cannot accept its literalism, its alliance with antiquated science. It is too static. It seeks to define too much, forgetting that all human definitions are only relative and tentative. It makes God too fixed a being. It inclines to arrogance and pride. It also tends to dry scholasticism. It is the ghost of the past trying to live in another day.¹

This passage, besides giving us an insight into the author's conception of Scripture, tells us what he thinks of several other matters. Moreover, it is typical of the teaching of the book as a whole.

It is apparent from the passage quoted that Homrighausen does not merely withdraw from the position of holding to the plenary inspiration of the Bible to the position of believing in its general trustworthiness. He says Fundamentalism holds to an "antiquated Science." Elsewhere he says that the Bible does not offer us a "theory of the world's origin."² Or again: "The message of the gospel does not teach men something they do not know in the realm of agriculture, physics, or history."³

All this is plain enough. Homrighausen does not feel bound to accept as a true record of history what the Bible teaches in the first chapters of Genesis about the origin and the

¹ p. 13.

² p. 55.

³ p. 77.

fall of man. He feels free to accept some other view, for instance, the evolutionary theory of the origin of the universe and man. In this way the author insists on the independence of the mind of man with respect to the Bible. The mind of man is not to be made captive to the obedience of God's will as expressed in the Scriptures.

We would call especial attention to this point. There are those who defend the policy of the reorganized seminary at Princeton. They reason that the appointment of Barthian theologians at Princeton need not be a matter of great concern. These Barthian theologians, we are told, have usually come from the modernist camp. They are on the way to the orthodox position. If only they keep on going they will sooner or later accept the orthodox doctrine of Scripture. It is too much to expect that "at the end of the day" they should be ready to accept the Bible as infallible.

Revelation

On the contrary we believe there is no basis in fact for such an optimistic view of the tendency of Barthian theologians. There is, for instance, no reason to hold that the Barthian conception of revelation is more sound than the Barthian conception of inspiration. Together with Modernists the Barthians have to a large extent been influenced by Immanuel Kant's activist conception of the human mind. Accordingly the Barthians, together with the Modernists, hold to an activist conception of revelation.

The activism of Homrighausen's conception of revelation comes to expression in such phraseology as we find in the quotation given above to the effect that Fundamentalism "seeks to define too much, forgetting that all human definitions are only relative and tentative." This means that the author is opposed to the notion that a creed can be an essentially correct statement of the system of truth found in the Bible. He tells us that: "Denominational thinking is our curse, and our insufficiency. It is too provincial. It lacks wholeness."¹

It is in this way that Barthianism prepares the way for church-unionism. If the various denominations could only break the chains by which they are now held down to the rock they could together soar to heights as yet unknown. Homrighausen has great expectations for good from the movement for church-union that gave vent to itself in the recent Oxford meeting.² It must be a source of great satisfaction to Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, retired president of Princeton Seminary and a leading exponent of church-unionism, that his successor, Dr. Mackay, is walking in his ways. Dr. Mackay, as his writings show, is himself Barthian in spirit. He invites one Barthian theologian after another to teach at Princeton. And Barthianism, by teaching that no church can rightfully hold to a creed, prepares the way for church-union.

Relativism

But we cannot stop here. The relative and tentative character of all human definitions applies, according to Homrighausen, to the Bible as well as to the Confessions. We could

¹ p. 25.

² See *The Review of Religion*, January, 1938.

give several quotations, besides the one given above, to prove this point. We call attention to the following: "Surely, there are many things about the Bible and Christian history that we cannot hold today. Surely, the clothing in which the gospel was dressed needs to be replaced with modern thought-forms."³ We have grown familiar with this type of argument from the writings of Barth. The contention is that God's Word, simply because it expresses itself in human thought forms and in human language, becomes for that very reason tainted with incompleteness and falsehood.

Could anything be more definitely opposed to the Biblical idea of revelation? That idea of revelation contemplates the mind of man as made in the image of God and as therefore a fit medium for the expression of the will of God. To be sure, the mind of man has been vitiated by sin through the fall of man. Even so the Holy Spirit can guide the mind of sinful man and use it as the medium of the infallible expression of His will. By the use of a simple illustration we can perhaps indicate something of the difference between the Barthian and the Biblical view of the human mind. The Biblical view says that the mind of sinful man is like a knife that has dropped into the mire. The Holy Spirit washes the knife and then uses it to cut the bread of life. The Barthian view says that even if the Holy Spirit washes the knife it is still unfit as a tool with which to cut the bread of life.

The result is that the bread of life really cannot be cut. The human mind which is thus seemingly reduced to a very humble station is nevertheless given such power as to be able to keep God from revealing Himself clearly anywhere. All the human minds have banded together and are engaged in a sit-down strike on the property of God. They have spread the tear-gas of relativity everywhere.

We see, then, that there seems to be no justification for optimism in regard to Princeton Seminary. Princeton Seminary is supposed to be a Reformed institution. But now President Mackay virtually identifies Barthianism with the Reformed Faith, as the following quotation shows: "It is the Reformed theologians like Barth and Brunner who have smashed the presuppositions of the theology of modernism and rekindled faith in the Scripture and historic Christianity."⁴ But we have seen in this review of the book of Homrighausen, and in previous articles on Barth in the *Presbyterian Guardian*, that Barthian theology is destructive of the Bible and of historic Christianity. Ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. ought to realize that if they allow Barthianism to reign in their chief citadel of theological learning they may be asked to scrap the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Bible as the infallible Word of God and even historic Christianity. Dr. Mackay apparently hopes to make Barth the rallying point for believers in historic Christianity. But Barth, the destroyer of historic Christianity, can never be made the rallying-point for the defenders of historic Christianity.

³ p. 49.

⁴ *Bulletin of Princeton Theological Seminary*, November, 1937.

Studies in the Philosophy of Religion

Archibald Allen Bowman: *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited with a memorial introduction by Norman Kemp Smith. London and New York: Macmillan. 1938. Two vols. 48, 423; 13, 438. \$10.50.

In his memorial introduction to the book under discussion Professor Norman Kemp Smith quotes from a letter written to him by his friend Professor Bowman to the effect that the book before us was meant to be the author's philosophical credo. A worthy philosophical credo it is and of a truly great man, whose early death is a great loss to the progress of philosophical thought. Professor Bowman was a specialist in the field of Logic and Metaphysics but he read widely in other fields. In the book before us we have the fruits of comprehensive reading and deep thought in the broad field of the philosophy of religion.

In the first two chapters of the first volume Bowman deals with the questions of starting-point and method. Our task, says Bowman, is to inquire as to the concept and the value of religion. First we look for its concept. How are we to find it? Can we find it by merely looking at the historical religions in order to see what they have in common? The answer must be in the negative. Religion is not merely "a class name for all religions and for whatever else may be brought under the term."¹ Religion has in it an ideal element. We cannot learn of this ideal element by simply observing religious phenomena. The study of religion involves, therefore, a study of the nature of reality. In a study of reality our starting-point will have to seem arbitrary to an extent. We cannot escape this. Least of all could we escape this if we should confine ourselves "to the positive methods of history and anthropology."² "What matters is not so much how or where we begin, but whether, once we have brought our inquiry to an end, it will be found that the resulting concept of religion is such as, all things considered, we had a right to expect."³

It appears then that it is no easy matter to find the concept of religion. We are not simply to amass facts but also to evaluate them. We are to judge which facts that present themselves as religious are, and which are not, relevant.⁴ We must know how to use the evidence. We shall be compelled to make distinctions. We must do this by seeking significant contrasts.⁵ "The crucial question, therefore, seems to be not only what the facts are, but what we are to make of them once they are known."⁶

This brings us to the question of the criterion by which we are to judge matters of religion. Can we find in the "primitive as such" a reliable criterion by which to estimate what is truly religious?⁷ To what extent are chronological considerations to be adduced at

¹ 1, p. 7.

² 1, p. 41.

³ 1, p. 42.

⁴ 1, p. 44.

⁵ 1, p. 32.

⁶ 1, p. 47.

⁷ 1, p. 44.

all?⁸ Does history as such furnish us with a standard by which to judge of the true and the false? To such questions as these Bowman makes reply in the following words:

The criterion will be neither correspondence—that point-to-point relationship which here more than elsewhere is devoid of meaning—nor mere workability nor any narrowly logical coherence. Yet in a sense it will be all of these. It will be coherence, if by that we mean, not any sort of principle binding things together into a systematic whole, but rather the power of all things, by throwing light upon one another, to reveal the true character of each. And it will be workability, if religion can be shown to tell us not only what things can be done but what things it is worth trying to do—more particularly if it can tell us by what changes in the fundamental assumptions the impossible becomes possible. Lastly it will be correspondence if its ideal postulates have their realizable counterparts—not their images and copies—in the actualities of experience.⁹

With the obligation upon him to sift the “facts,” and with the general criterion of coherence, workability and correspondence in his hand, Bowman proceeds to discuss the various methods that have been used in the study of religion. He speaks of three such methods. There is, first, the rationalistic method of the eighteenth century. There is, second, the historical or comparative method. There is, third, the anthropological method.

Bowman subjects the eighteenth century method to a severe criticism. The eighteenth century method, he says, has failed to observe the difference between “Truth of Concepts” and “Truth of Propositions.”¹⁰ For the eighteenth century method, truth and falsehood appear in the form of logical disjunctives; truth is absolutely true and falsehood is absolutely false.¹¹ No doubt Bowman had this propositional form of the contrast between truth and error in mind when he spoke, as we have noted in the quotation given above, of a criterion of narrowly logical coherence.

Over against this criterion of a narrowly logical coherence, this propositional conception of the relation of truth and falsehood, Bowman places his criterion of a wider coherence, his notion of truth as a matter of adequacy of concept. When we deal with the question of the adequacy of a concept we may still state our questions in propositional form but our whole emphasis then rests upon the meaning of the predicate. We can no longer say that Napoleon is either virtuous or not virtuous. “Thus it may not be possible with truth to assert of Napoleon either that he is virtuous or that he is not. The case is much more complicated. Both propositions may be true at once or both may be false; and in a sense it may be the case that both propositions are true and yet that neither is true.”¹² It is in this manner that Bowman hopes to do justice to the fact that Napoleon may have some good in him while yet he may not be a paragon of virtue. And thus religion may be a true religion even though its doctrinal statement is deficient or “not altogether true.”¹³ It is thus also that he hopes to do justice to those religions that have something of truth in them though they are largely false. It is thus, in short, that Bowman hopes to pay true tribute to a religion that is genuinely unique and at the same time universal.¹⁴

⁸ 1, p. 46.

⁹ 1, pp. 42 f.

¹⁰ 1, p. 57.

¹¹ 1, p. 69.

¹² 1, pp. 70 f.

¹³ 1, p. 74.

¹⁴ 1, p. 82.

The historical method, says Bowman, is more profitable than the eighteenth century method inasmuch as it allows for growth in religion. On the other hand the historical method in itself is uncritical. It does not take cognizance of the fact that history as such “contains no principles of judgment.”¹⁵ A true anthropological method will be truly historical but it will turn historical study to a philosophical account. It will know “how to utilize the evidence.”¹⁶

This anthropological method, therefore, is truly critical. It seeks for the conditions of actual existence.¹⁷ The chief of these conditions we soon find to be the existence of “what we call selves—highly integrated, self-identical wholes, which we have not begun to explain when we have enumerated the conditions of their physical existence.”¹⁸ Developing this argument Bowman finds personality to be not only the “transcendental condition of the validity of moral distinctions” but also of religious distinctions.¹⁹ “Among the principles determining the use of anthropological material must therefore be placed a constant consideration of the question how far any individual religion or any set of religious usages or beliefs is fitted, in a theoretical and practical way, to enhance the personalist interpretation of life.”²⁰

Bowman is quite correct in saying that “we have here a highly significant principle of discrimination.”²¹ From this point on we can to a large extent anticipate the general conclusions to which the author will come. There is placed before us a truly amazing wealth of material. This material is handled with a master’s hand. The sweep of the argument is truly grand. Yet for all our admiration it remains true that the general conclusion about the nature of religion is disappointing. Bowman comes to a highly refined type of personalistic philosophy but he falls short of a truly Christian conception of religion.

The reason for Bowman’s failure to reach a Christian conception of religion lies, we believe, in the fact that for him God comes in at the conclusion rather than at the beginning of the argument. In presenting a truly Christian position we must think of God as the presupposition of the possibility of investigation. Facts are what they are by virtue of the existence of God. More specifically facts are what they are by virtue of the free disposition of them by the will of God. They were brought into existence by the free creative activity of God. They are sustained by the free Providence of God. They serve the purpose God wishes them to serve. It is the self-coherent God who must give coherence to the facts with which we, human beings, have to do.

Bowman speaks of coherence as a test of the truly religious. He rejects a narrowly logical type of coherence. We can only rejoice in that. Man’s powers of logical comprehension cannot well be the test of reality and truth. But what of Bowman’s own principle of coherence? That principle no less than the one we have seen him reject is based upon the assumption that God is but one factor among many which must, by

¹⁵ 1, p. 83.

¹⁶ 1, p. 87.

¹⁷ 1, p. 89.

¹⁸ 1, p. 91.

¹⁹ 1, pp. 92 f.

²⁰ 1 p. 93.

²¹ 1, p. 93.

throwing light upon one another, reveal the true character of each. Bowman is very specific in his rejection of the creation idea as we have spoken of it. He speaks of God's relation to the universe as being that of Creator.²² He is anxious to avoid the identification of bare possibility with being. Yet he is very insistent that the facts of the physical universe operate independently of the plan of God. For him mechanism is simply a fact of nature.²³ Modern science shows nature as operating in accord with a system of laws. This should logically lead us to think of nature, says Bowman, as being autonomous.²⁴ Thus it appears that an independently existing nature is one of the facts that must throw light upon the nature of God. It is, according to Bowman, no doubt true that God as another factor is to throw light upon the meaning of nature. But even so God and the universe are correlatives of one another. For the physical scientist then, if we are to follow Bowman, God would be no more than a limiting ideal of rationality.²⁵

If we should accept this position of Bowman for our own would we then have coherence in our experience? It does not seem so. For our notion of coherence Bowman, after all, throws us upon the mercy of the "bad infinite." Experience is not only seen to stretch out far beyond the reach of our logical categories but it is evident that these logical categories themselves have no foundation. There is from the outset of Bowman's argument an unwarranted separation of fact and interpretation of fact.

As the point of coherence is of basic importance to Bowman we shall restate our criticism by pointing out that the strictures our author makes upon the method of the eighteenth century may, *mutatis mutandis*, be made upon his own method. The eighteenth century method, says Bowman, was a method based upon a false propositional logic which took no notice of the specific differences of things. For this method all that mattered was the quantity and the quality of the proposition. For this method, too, truth is a matter of the copula rather than of the predicate. Speaking of this eighteenth century method Bowman says:

The logic of the method is a strictly practical logic. We begin by assuming an attitude of neutrality. No religion, no doctrine shall claim more than another. Each, so to speak, shall stand for one. Now when doctrines differ, there will be some that are mutually inconsistent and some that are not obviously so. Confining ourselves to the former, we see that if one is selected as true, the others must be considered false. But having regard to our principle of neutrality, we are not permitted any such selection. The only practical way to avoid impossible choices is therefore by rejecting, not the individual propositions in question, but the cases in which such incompatible propositions occur.

Coming now to doctrines which differ but are not obviously incompatible, a somewhat similar argument will apply. There are three possibilities. Either (1) all may be true, or (2) all may be false, or (3) some may be false and some true. But so long as we preserve our attitude of strict neutrality, there is no reason why we should decide either in favour of or against any one of the three contingencies.²⁶

Bowman tells us on the basis of the criticism made that the eighteenth century method may be described as a "pragmatism of negations."²⁷ The point he stresses is that it is

²² 2, pp. 424 f.

²³ p. 52.

²⁴ 2, p. 390.

²⁵ 2, p. 413.

²⁶ 1, p. 77.

²⁷ 1, p. 78.

impossible really to distinguish between better and worse by the method criticised. It is this criticism that we wish to apply to Bowman's own method. He too, in the last analysis, starts with absolute neutrality. His final appeal is to an experience that is open to all. For him too all religions really have equal standing. It is, therefore, on the one hand, impossible for him to reach the position where anything can really be called true. So far from all things throwing light upon one another in order to reveal the true character of each, all things are in darkness still. The highest position one can reach with a non-Christian methodology is still no more than a "pragmatism of negations."

The second aspect of the criterion employed by Bowman in his study of religion is workability. By this he does not wish us to think of a narrow pragmatism as, in the question of coherence, he did not wish us to think of a narrowly logical coherence. He wants the supernatural to help the natural. He wants the ideal to become the real; he wants values to become facts.

Here, too, we can but admire the fact that Bowman seeks for that which is high and noble. He has a good deal to say about our right to believe in a personal God. The heart of his argument for our right to believe in a personal God lies in his analysis of human personality. Human personality, he reasons, needs other persons for its significant existence. Yet other finite persons do not furnish an adequate environment for human personality. Reality would be an ultimate enigma but for the existence of a personal God.

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Is there anything to which we must object in this mode of reasoning? We must, however unwillingly, object that the meaning of these words is colored by the fact already mentioned that for Bowman God is at most a correlative to the universe. It is not possible to frame a valid argument for the existence of God from the personality of man unless one also frames an argument, or rather the same argument, for the existence of God from the universe which surrounds man. If mechanism is a fact of nature, as Bowman says it is, human personality will be, in part at least, determined by that fact. God can then, at best, be one among other factors in the determination of human personality.

We are not surprised then to find that for Bowman man is necessary for God as God is necessary for man. Says he: "It would seem to be a postulate of the Christian standpoint that the existence of finite human selves, so far from being the root of all evil, is a divine necessity. Man, with all his limitations, is necessary to God."²⁹ Nor need we depend upon the very words by which this is affirmed; it is implied in the method of investigation used. For Bowman man is sufficient to himself in the interpretation of large areas of existence and in large areas of his moral endeavor. The God whom such a man may find it necessary to discover is not a God who needs to do much for him. Man, in that case, needs at most a finite God. Granted such a God has been found He cannot do many mighty works for man. He cannot make the "impossible" to become possible. The God whom Bowman seems to want but for whom he makes no provision in his discussion is the God of the Christian faith. That God is the Creator of the universe. That God is the true, because the only final, environment for the personality of man. Bowman finds the modern conception of impersonal nature to be necessary for a true appreciation

²⁸ 2, pp. 398 f.

²⁹ 2, pp. 333 f.

of the personal God. To this we should reply by saying that man's environment in the way of trees and rocks and oceans is, to be sure, impersonal in the immediate sense of the term but in it and through it we are always dealing with God. We are to do all that we do to the glory of God. In the final resort all of life must be religious, if any of it is to be religious. It is only thus that the finite personality has unity for itself; it is only thus that our religion really works. We must hold that Bowman's religion, however exalted its form of statement in comparison with crass naturalisms of various sorts, nevertheless does not really work.

The third aspect of the criterion by which Bowman seeks to establish the true nature of religion is correspondence. The ideal postulates of religion are to have their realizable counterparts in the actualities of experience.

There is a constant emphasis in Bowman's book upon the contention that experience is our final guide. Again he desires that we should have no narrow view of experience. He does not require that men be able to speak fully and intelligibly of their experience of contact with a personal God in order to be called truly religious. On the contrary he affirms or assumes that what we speak of when we speak of God must be within the reach of all human beings. Bowman speaks of the "introverted view of life." It is that view of life which does not stop short at the phenomenal aspect of existence but reads in the phenomenal the spiritual meaning which the phenomenal is calculated to convey.³⁰ Bowman says:

"Assuredly we do not rest our claim to selfhood exclusively upon the phenomenal aspect of nature. And if we do not, we tacitly acknowledge an extra-phenomenal range of experience. It is upon this, in the last resort, that our knowledge of what it is to exist and to be a self depends; and once this is granted, the world of phenomena is seen to acquire a new significance and a new function in the economy of human life. It becomes, as I have said, a phenomenal equivalent—a vast system of signs directing us about the world in our numberless contacts with other selves, but in itself unable to unlock the secret door that leads to the inner nature and the inner experience of any self whatever."³¹

The "introverted view of life" as thus spoken of should be carefully distinguished from the Christian concept of regeneration. Bowman cannot accept the Christian conception of regeneration if he is to remain true to his principle of interpretation. That principle works from the bottom to the top whereas the idea of regeneration implies God's activity in regeneration as a gift of grace to man. Regeneration in the Christian sense of the term would be for Bowman a violation of his principle that general human experience must be able to judge of the validity of that which comes to it by the help of that which it already knows.

In all this Bowman is perfectly consistent. For him coherence, workability and correspondence are based upon the assumption that the natural man is normal. He makes no difference between the experience of the natural and the experience of the regenerated man. To be sure, he speaks of the once-born and the twice-born as this has been done in modern psychology-of-religion literature. But the twice-born are not differentiated from the once-born by anything but the fact that they have the "introverted view of life" spoken of above.

³⁰ 2, pp. 329 f.

³¹ 2, pp. 308 f.

It is difficult to accord too high a tribute to the book of Bowman as a piece of philosophical writing. We are very appreciative of the high conception of religion he sets forth and defends. Yet the highest conception of religion, as long as it does not presuppose the existence of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe to Whom, now that man has sinned, no one can come except by grace, falls short of the glory of God and must in the last analysis be classed with the naturalisms of which it has given such valuable criticism.

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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.