

1940 – 1949

Reviews

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A Sacramental Universe

Archibald Allan Bowman: *A Sacramental Universe*. Being a Study in the Metaphysics of Experience. Edited by J. W. Scott. Princeton: Princeton University Press. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1939. 28, 428. \$5.00.

In this volume of the late Professor Bowman there lies before us one of the most profound metaphysical treatises of recent years. A careful study of it will amply repay those who seek to understand the controlling principles of modern philosophy. A good share of the book is taken up with a penetrating criticism of the tendency toward naturalistic monism so prevalent in modern philosophy. In contrast with this tendency Bowman finds an irreducible duality in experience. At the outset he tells us what he hopes to establish:

To anticipate conclusions, my contention is reducible, in the main, to the following four points. (1) There are grounds for conceiving the physical world as a self-contained and indefeasibly non-subjective system of functionally related particulars—many of the latter themselves physical systems. (2) There are grounds for believing in the existence of subjective systems, otherwise known as spiritual beings or persons, and for thinking of these as irreducibly non-physical in character. (3) Any attempt to qualify the duality of the spiritual and the physical, any monistic prejudice which tends to obscure the absoluteness of the cleavage between these two ultimate modes of being, is fatal to an understanding of either, and is indeed apt to issue, not in a genuine monism, but in a dualism more invidious than that which it is designed to obviate. And (4), while nothing can detract from the ontological distinctiveness of the dual opposites, the spiritual and the physical enter into relations of a highly determinate character, from which arise certain new possibilities of being, (a) the forms of life and (b) the various types of value. Among the latter are the sensory and perceptual qualities of things, and the characters which we denote by the names charm or agreeableness, utility, beauty, wistfulness, glamour, sublimity, sanctity. I recognize a realm of being, an order or domain to which each of these belongs. One such domain is that which we ordinarily call the natural world. Nature on this view is the objective world of our perceptual experience, and the explanation of it is to be found in a functional dependence upon the relationship between the physical and the spiritual modes of being. Thus nature reflects the life of spirit in meanings that spirit imparts to the inanimate and non-spiritual. A universe in which such possibilities exist is a sacramental universe. That is to say, not only do its impersonal forms and processes propagate themselves in endless characteristic rhythms and purposeless recurrences: in relation to the consciousness of spiritual agents they contract meanings which minister to the power that calls them into being. And thus the spirit, having sanctified them to its use, renews the power from which all sanctity proceeds through their appropriation.¹

We can readily recognize in these conclusions, which Bowman expects to establish, the “personalist interpretation of life” for which he contends in his *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*.²

¹ pp. 9 f.

² *vide* Vol. 1, p. 93.

The method by which Bowman expects to reach his conclusions is, to an extent at least, stated in the passage given. Any view that minimizes or denies the irreducible character and the functional relationship of the original physical and spiritual modes of being issues in a dualism. Bowman argues that we must hold to duality to avoid dualism.

The argument as further developed seeks to prove that our experience itself requires for its explanation the presupposition of the existence of systematic subjective, and therefore self-conscious, experience on the one hand and the existence of the “purely physical”³ on the other hand. And of these two the emphasis rests upon the former. Says Bowman: “What I wish to show in particular is that the world we know, the world of our actual experience, is unthinkable except in so far as we recognize the existence of systems having the character of subjectivity”⁴ We shall note briefly the negative and the positive aspects of the author’s argument.

Both of these aspects of the argument find their natural development in a searching analysis of the monistic and naturalistic systems of Santayana and Whitehead.

Santayana and Whitehead, says Bowman, “are outstanding representatives of the current tendency to pass over the duality of body and mind as if the distinction were wanting in depth and reality.”⁵ “Behind this whole movement of thought,” he adds, “is a reluctance to take spirit seriously, and a manifest determination to exalt the natural to a position of complete preeminence.”⁶ Let us note Bowman’s criticism of Santayana’s views.

Santayana, says Bowman, seeks by his concept of “essences” to remove “all interpretative accretions from the bare deliverances of experience.”⁷ The part played by “essences” in the economy of an ever changing world of existence is, according to Whitehead as quoted by Bowman, that they “enable existence to pass from one phase to another, and enable the mind to note and describe the change.”⁸ The “essences” are “invariables beyond the stream of time.”⁹ They are not merely general terms derived by sorting out the common element in the manifold of changing existence. They owe nothing to generalization. They are self-contained.¹⁰ Like the Platonic Idea the “essences” define the things numerically distinct but are not themselves among the things they define.¹¹ The stream of existence is in no way caused by the essences, but by a “compulsion that is entirely its own” passes from one essence to another.¹² By this rigid separation of “essences” from the temporal flux Santayana aims to avoid the “cosmological, metaphysical, or moral prerogatives” attributed by Plato to his Ideas.¹³

³ p. 228.

⁴ p. 13.

⁵ p. 59.

⁶ p. 60.

⁷ p. 60.

⁸ p. 61.

⁹ p. 61.

¹⁰ p. 61.

¹¹ p. 62.

¹² p. 64.

¹³ p. 65.

In criticising Santayana's doctrine of "essences" and existence Bowman says: "By no possibility can this interpretation of existence and this philosophy of meanings be brought into intelligible relation. The mere attempt to harmonize the two points of view reveals the implicit contradictoriness of the situation. The being of the essences and the existence of a natural world are opposites, and cannot be lodged together either in the realm of essence or in that of matter. At the same time they cannot be separated."¹⁴

There has been a radical mistake in the procedure of Santayana's thinking. We need a reversal of method if we are to avoid the abstract separation between "essence" and being in Santayana's would-be monistic philosophy. Of this reversal of method Bowman speaks as follows:

"Now the procedure I wish to suggest is one that involves a radical change of viewpoint. If nature is an ordered sequence of events, the relevant question has to do with the fixation of identities. How is each successive phase determined? Under what conditions does it come to have the precise character, quantitative or qualitative, which, by methods of empirical observation, we perceive it to possess? It will be seen that when the question is so put, essence and existence are assumed to be inseparably united under the postulate of being. The former is nothing but the identity of the latter, the latter nothing but the realization of that identity."¹⁵

It is in order here to explain what Bowman would have us understand by "the postulate of being." This can best be done if we analyze the notion of scientific knowledge as Bowman thinks of it. We require the "postulate of being" if scientific knowledge is to be intelligible. Says Bowman: "In the last analysis every scientific problem is a problem in identity. The purpose in each case is to render things clear by telling us what they are. In practice this frequently means explaining how they come to be. A motion in space, for example, is defined as the product of antecedent forces, a geological formation, a plant or an animal species as the ultimate term in an evolutionary process. But the abstract type of all such explanations, whatever the mode of being or the nature of the phenomenon to which they have reference, is the mathematical equation. Here we seek to fix the identity of the expression on the left-hand side by means of the expression on the right. When the latter is an independent variable, the relation between the two is functional, and the dependent expression is called a function of the independent. Furthermore, quantities that are functionally related are said to constitute a system."¹⁶

We need the "postulate of being," it appears, in order to justify the application of our intellectual constructions to the world of changing reality. It is a postulate of being inasmuch as we cannot be certain, apart from experience, that system exists in nature. "Whether the world in its entirety is a system may be open to question."¹⁷ We merely use the notion of a single universe as a regulative idea.¹⁸ As such, however, it is indispensable. Without the postulate of being as a limiting notion we may have system but we do not have a world.

¹⁴ pp. 65 f.

¹⁵ pp. 66 f.

¹⁶ pp. 7 f.

¹⁷ p. 8.

¹⁸ p. 8.

At this juncture a word must be said about Bowman's conception of time. He tells us at the very start that he takes time for granted as the universal form of existence. Says he: "Of course I shall have to assume time. This I take to be the universal form of existence, and without it everything would fall to the ground. But granted time, and granted events which are also states of consciousness, identifiable in all their subjective particularity, I have virtually everything necessary to render the application of my special notions metaphysically fruitful. By means of these I hope to obtain a conception of the spiritual mode of being sufficiently exact to justify the attempt to relate the latter to the concept of the physical as developed by scientific investigation."¹⁹

It appears that by assuming time as the "universal form of existence" Bowman feels he is justified, methodologically at least, in making the "postulate of being." "It is my hope, also," he says, "that the recognition of time as integral to the constitution of all actually existing systems will be of some use as indicating a possible way of escape from an impasse which is as old as Plato, and into which (in a greatly aggravated form) modern philosophy has been led by some of its ablest exponents. I am thinking principally of the systems of Professor Whitehead and Professor Santayana, in which nature figures as a process in time, all of whose distinguishable characters are timeless essences or eternal objects."²⁰ What Bowman proposes amounts basically to this. Spiritual existence, and particularly subjective, personal existence, is to be thought of as a temporal process. The person who knows an "object" no less than the "object" known by the person must admit of temporal change. If the subject who knows does not exist in time he cannot exist as a unifying centre of interpretation. Summing up a detailed discussion of the time problem, Bowman concludes: "From every point of view we are driven to the conclusion that the permanent cannot be identified with the nontemporal, whether in the form of space or of timelessness. We must consequently seek it in the time-conditioned. The theoretical requirements of the case will obviously be met if the contents of any manifold, into which time enters as a component, can be shown not only to differentiate themselves, but also to be thereby integrated, in respect of their temporal character. This condition is fulfilled in so far as events and the constituents of events are functionally related and so organized together into systems. A detailed exposition of the subject calls for a special inquiry into the nature of time. Without such an inquiry, our treatment of the physical cannot be considered complete."²¹

The "special inquiry into the nature of time" which Bowman meant to give us was found, the editor tells us, "too incomplete for publication."²² From an article on "Spirit-Time" published at an earlier date²³ as well as from the book under consideration, we may perhaps learn what the main contention of a fuller discussion would have been. We can do no more than intimate the chief characteristic of Bowman's views on time.

Bowman contends that the human mind exists as a cumulative centre of interpretative experience because man exists temporally. It is because man exists temporally, so runs the argument, that he can accumulate his past into the present and make of the present a

¹⁹ p. 7.

²⁰ p. 25.

²¹ p. 328.

²² p. 329 note.

²³ See Aristotelian Society, Proceedings 1932-33, p. 295.

centre of interpretation for the future. The present is not a mere razor-blade line of division that has no content and therefore merely serves to separate a discontinuous past from an equally discontinuous future. The present is a specious present.²⁴ It is not a mere limit but a “meeting-place, or synthesis, of the past and the future.”²⁵ It is not a “durationless point” but has a “certain extensity.”²⁶ “The time so characterized may be designated spirit-time in contradistinction to the space-time of the physical world.”²⁷

On this view of time, experience is no longer “a mere receptivity of successive states of consciousness” but an active systematic adjustment of the psycho-physical organism.²⁸

If we have not altogether failed in finding the central thrust of Bowman’s argument the main point of his contention ought now to be fairly clear. If we think of man as a cumulative centre of experience we no longer face the invidious dualism that philosophy has faced since its inception in Greece. To be sure, there will be some aspects of the “utterly and absolutely physical”²⁹ that cannot be accumulated by the present interpretative experience of the individual and the race. Yet, for all that, the universe is a sacramental universe, a universe full of meaning. We need not resort to monistic reductions to bring thought and being into unity. Modally irreducible forms of existence may be brought into a systematic unity. Our “postulate of being” has been justified.

There is one further point that must be brought to the fore in connection with Bowman’s view of time. By the help of his conception of time Bowman forges what he thinks of as a genuinely theistic interpretation of life. We quote his words at length: The original Democritean overemphasis on spatiality has had to be corrected, and time has had to be recognized as an integral factor in the physically real. With this there has entered into the nature of physical reality a character which, in the last resort, can only be spiritually understood. A relation to the spiritual which we can only call creaturely is thereby indicated in the nature of the physical itself. For the definition of creation is the functional dependence of the physical world in its entirety on the energies of spirit. Now it is clearly not from our individual spirits that these energies can be conceived to go forth. We must assume a spirit adequate to the task. We must assume God. God is the metaphysical correlate of the creative activity which we are compelled to assume in order to account for the existence of the physical world.

In the concept of God, the definitory notion must be that of eternity. He is the eternal spirit—this, not in the timeless sense, but in the sense of an everlasting endurance. The being of God defines itself in relation to its time conditions, as an absolutely perfect adjustment of every past to every future in a present that is infinite in each direction.

God and the created universe. The spiritual mode of being, like the physical, is to be conceived as a vibratory system; vibrating in the non-spatial time of the spirit, as the other does in space-time.

The vibrations or undulatory motions of the spirit are non-spatial. What is the meaning of this statement?

It means that for purposes of His own, the divine Being creates within the ambit of His nature, a region where the undulations of His spirit die out in infinitesimal vibrations and cease to

²⁴ p. 364.

²⁵ p. 364.

²⁶ p. 364.

²⁷ p. 364.

²⁸ p. 365.

²⁹ p. 228.

function as a time-compelling power of consciousness. Space is the unconsciousness of Omniscience, the unconsciousness of God; and the creation of a spatial universe is one of the ways in which the Creator diversifies the infinite, unbroken curve of His existence. The vibrations of the physical world are the faint overtones of the divine orchestration. Or, to vary the metaphor, they are the last ripples that break the surface of the creeks and backwaters of existence, where being dies away into nothingness because it ceases to be spiritual.³⁰

It is difficult to do justice to a book so rich and various in content as this book of Bowman. It is a truly masterful attempt to meet the dilemma that faces post-Kantian philosophy. Of this dilemma Bowman himself writes as follows: "Thus is Idealism haunted by the thought of a reality which is never fully explained or explicable by the conceptions at its disposal, while Realism, while recognising in logically authenticated conceptions the only genuine knowledge, hands reality over to the custody of ideas."³¹ Post-Kantian philosophy has boldly burned its bridges behind itself. It will have none of what Hegel called "*die alte Metaphysik*." This "*alte Metaphysik*" with its notion of a self-contained God and a world created by the will of God in the absolutely non-existent has for Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy all the objectionable features of a "thing in itself." And the Kantian criticism of the "thing in itself" may well be summed up in Bowman's own words: "The latter could not be retained in the world of the knowable without destroying the autonomy of a knowledge found to rest upon its own principles and deriving its validity from conformity to these."³²

Bowman plainly adopts an essentially Kantian epistemology. This is apparent in all his major philosophical writings. There can be no reasonable doubt that for him the test of truth is an autonomous human experience and that his position is definitely phenomenological.

The question is what sort of theism comports with a phenomenological philosophy. There are those who hold that upon phenomenological principles all metaphysics is impossible. Bowman is not one of these. He argues that metaphysics is indeed possible upon a phenomenological basis if only we look upon the content of our metaphysics as the implicate of our phenomenological knowledge. He even holds that metaphysics is necessary. Without it, he reasons, phenomenological knowledge itself would be unintelligible. For him human experience lacks coherence unless it be related to God.³³

But the God who, according to Bowman, is indispensable for the intelligibility of human experience is, as noted above, a God whose eternity consists in everlasting temporal endurance. Time is for Bowman without qualification the form of every possible mode of existence. So far from falling into ambiguity on this point, as Idealist philosophers all too frequently do, Bowman is utterly specific and insistent that this is the logical outcome of a Kantian position. We find ourselves in full agreement with him on this point. It would, we feel, clarify the present theological atmosphere a great deal if this point were appreciated in its far-reaching implications.

The chief of these implications we would find in the fact that the God of historic Christianity and the God of post-Kantian philosophy are basically at variance with one

³⁰ pp. 369 f.

³¹ Article on "Kant's View of Metaphysics" in *Mind*, N.S., Vol. 25 October, 1916, p. 482.

³² *Idem.*, p. 488.

³³ Article on "Kant's View of Metaphysics" in *Mind*, N.S., vol. 25, January, 1916, p. 21.

another. If anything is elemental in the Biblical notion of God it is that He is self-contained or self-definitory. If anything is elemental in the post-Kantian notion of God it is that He is not self-definitory. As in his *Studies in the Philosophy of Religions*³⁴ so in *A Sacramental Universe* the God of Bowman finds a universe with resident forces, forces not derived from the creative act of God. We have noted Bowman's emphasis on the irreducible nature of two distinct modes of being. Bowman has sought to study the "possibilities of being in the light of its most significant distinctions."³⁵ But for him these most significant distinctions are a self-existent spirituality on the one hand and "the physical world as a self-contained and indefeasibly nonsubjective system of functionally related particulars"³⁶ on the other hand. When therefore he speaks of the spiritual mode of being revealing itself "in a way that is altogether self-definitory"³⁷ this is not to be taken strictly. Bowman means simply to urge that spirit is no mere epiphenomenon of matter. A really self-definitory notion of the spiritual mode of being would involve the position that no other irreducibly ultimate mode of being exists. Such a self-definitory notion of being would, accordingly, have to find the "most significant distinctions" of reality within that spiritual mode of being itself. It is this that we find in the Biblical doctrine of God. In the God of Scripture we do not have an accumulating, but an eternally complete and therefore wholly systematic and fully self-conscious, Experience. For Bowman God is really no more than an independent variable; for historic Christianity God is One for Whom there is no variableness or shadow that is cast by turning.

We ask in conclusion whether the God-concept of post-Kantian philosophy, presented at its very best as it is by Bowman, or the God-concept of the historic Christian faith makes human experience intelligible. We make bold to suggest that Bowman has after all fallen into the "invidious dualism" which he has so nobly striven to avoid. It seems to us that no phenomenalist position can avoid doing this. The "spiritual" cannot be thought of as a self-definitory system, if it finds over against itself a self-dependent series of events in a world not actually produced by itself.

Bowman is no doubt right in his constant insistence that a self-contained system is the only presupposition on which experience can be made intelligible. He is unable, however, on his assumptions, to find such a system. We have observed how it is by the help of his time-concept that he hopes to justify his "postulate of being" in order thus to provide for a basis of union between "facts" and "logic." His attempt on this score is truly grand but the best of minds cannot do the impossible. A temporally accumulating system is, after all is said and done, a system that is face to face with utterly unrelated facts. The "fallacy of bifurcation" cannot be outgrown unless one has the courage really to presuppose the God of the historic Christian creeds Who is ultimately simple and Whose simplicity is fully and eternally exhausted by His diversity. Bowman would speak of independent variables of which God is one and the universe is another. For him these two may, by the help of his "postulate of being" be thought of as standing in functional relationship to one another, while reciprocity is of the essence of this functional relationship. For Bowman the problem is therefore to "reconcile the indefinite manifoldness of experience and the

³⁴ *Vide this Journal*, November, 1939, pp. 55 ff.

³⁵ p. 217.

³⁶ p. 9.

³⁷ p. 217.

indefeasible oneness of the self-identical ego.”³⁸ Historic Christianity presupposes the functional and therefore reciprocal exhaustiveness of the independently invariable Experience called the triune God. On this presupposition alone is there really an “indefeasible and self-identical ego” and if there is such an indefeasible Ego there is no longer an “indefinite manifoldness of experience” with which it must stand in reciprocal relation. If the problem of philosophy were what Bowman makes it out to be, it would be insoluble. Any philosophy that has as one of its major assumptions the notion of an “indefinite manifoldness of experience” has made an everlasting cleavage between thought and being.

Professor Bowman’s book, here all too inadequately discussed, should help to make clear the issues facing thoughtful men. From it men might learn to see that he who espouses an essentially Kantian epistemology cannot, if he would be consistent, also do justice to historic Christianity. Historic Christianity needs as its foundation the God who is “infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” A Kantian epistemology can at best allow for a god who is a “*Grenzbegriff*,” an enlarged edition of human personality. Such a God is not the Creator-God of the Bible. It is not He against whom man has sinned. It is not He, whose eternal Son has assumed a human nature in order in it to die on the cross for sinners. The theologies of such men as Barth, Brunner, Piper and Lewis show how impossible it is to serve two masters; men cannot serve both Kant and Christ.

³⁸ p. 189.

The Philosophy of Physical Science

Arthur Eddington: *The Philosophy of Physical Science*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. 9, 230. \$2.00.

Sir Arthur Eddington is well known as a scientist of outstanding ability and accomplishment. In *The Philosophy of Physical Science* he continues his earlier work of setting forth in popular form the results of modern scientific research in the field of physics. These results, Eddington feels, may be spoken of as the philosophy of physical science. There is, he argues, an “accepted practice of science” a method which all scientists, worthy of the name, have adopted. Implicit in this “accepted practice” he finds a definite epistemology. It is with this epistemology that Eddington is primarily concerned in the present volume.

Eddington discusses “the knowledge acquired by the methods of physical science.”¹ He speaks of this as “physical knowledge.” Physical knowledge “has the form of a description of a world.” “We define the physical universe to be the world so described. Effectively therefore the physical universe is defined as the theme of a specified body of knowledge, just as Mr. Pickwick might be defined as the hero of a specified novel.”²

By the help of this definition Eddington hopes to “free the foundations of physics from suspicion of metaphysical contamination.”³ “A great advantage of this definition is that it does not prejudge the question whether the physical universe—or Mr. Pickwick—really exists.”⁴ Eddington refuses to begin with “an existent entity of which we have somehow to obtain knowledge.”⁵ On the contrary he would begin with knowledge and leave the matter of an “existent entity” for later discussion. Whether the physical universe—or Mr. Pickwick—“really exists” we may discuss, says Eddington, after we have agreed on what we mean by “really exists.”

We should not think, however, that in stressing the importance of what he calls the “epistemological outlook”⁶ Eddington is forgetting the place of facts in scientific research. Observation, says he, is “the supreme Court of Appeal” and observation must surely deal with facts. Are we then to fall back into classical physics after all? Are we to investigate an “external world” and seek for “entities” which our knowledge is said to describe? Not at all. We are never to forget that “epistemological physics” “directly

¹ p. 2.

² p. 3.

³ p. 3.

⁴ p. 3.

⁵ p. 3.

⁶ p. 5.

investigates knowledge” and not “entities.”⁷ Accordingly the place of actual observation “as a constituent of scientific knowledge” is “almost negligible.”⁸ Speaking of the place of observation in the scientific procedure Eddington says: “We have seen that every item of physical knowledge, whether derived from observation or theory or from a combination of both, is an assertion of what has been or would be the result of carrying out a specified observational procedure. Generally it is an assertion of what would be the result if an observation were made; for this reason it is more accurate to describe physical knowledge as hypothetico-observational.”⁹ The point is that “the physicist is not interested in special facts except as material for generalisation”¹⁰ and with generalisation a “hypothetico-observational element” “has entered into the body of scientific knowledge.”¹¹

With his well-known aptitude for happy illustration, Eddington introduces for our consideration an imaginary ichthyologist. This ichthyologist explores the life of the ocean. “Surveying his catch, he proceeds in the usual manner of a scientist to systematise what it reveals. He arrives at two generalizations: (1) No sea-creature is less than two inches long. (2) All sea-creatures have gills.”¹² In explanation of this parable Eddington says: “... the catch stands for the body of knowledge which constitutes physical science, and the net for the sensory and intellectual equipment which we use in obtaining it. The casting of the net corresponds to observation; for knowledge which has not been or could not be obtained by observation is not admitted into physical science.”¹³

If an onlooker should urge that there may be many fish under two inches long, the ichthyologist replies: “Anything uncatchable by my net is *ipso facto* outside the scope of ichthyological knowledge, and is not part of the kingdom of fishes which has been defined as the theme of ichthyological knowledge. In short, what my net can’t catch isn’t fish.”¹⁴ The onlooker speaks of “an objective kingdom of fishes” while the ichthyologist “is not concerned as to whether the fishes he is talking about form an objective or subjective class; the property that matters is that they are catchable.”¹⁵ “Dropping analogy,” says Eddington, “if we take observation as the basis of physical science, and insist that its assertions must be verifiable by observation, we impose a selective test on the knowledge which is admitted as physical. The selection is subjective, because it depends on the sensory and intellectual equipment which is our means of acquiring observational knowledge. It is to such subjectively selected knowledge, and to the universe which it is formulated to describe, that the generalizations of physics—the so-called laws of

⁷ p. 49.

⁸ p. 12.

⁹ p. 12.

¹⁰ p. 15.

¹¹ p. 14.

¹² p. 16.

¹³ p. 16.

¹⁴ p. 16.

¹⁵ p. 17.

nature—apply.”¹⁶ Accordingly Eddington speaks of his position as “Selective Subjectivism.”¹⁷

It would seem to be possible then, according to Eddington’s mode of reasoning, to explore the life of the ocean simply “by examining the net and the method of using it.”¹⁸ If the ichthyologist is to be quite indifferent to the “objective kingdom of fishes,” can he not limit himself to a study of his net? Or if, dropping analogy, the physicist is to be contemptuously indifferent to all “entities” not structured by his generalizing procedure can he not limit himself to a study of his sensory-intellectual equipment? On this point Eddington does not appear to be altogether clear. He says: “The traditional method of systematic examination of the data furnished by observation is not the only way of reaching the generalizations valued in physical science. Some at least of these generalizations can also be found by examining the sensory and intellectual equipment used in observation.”¹⁹ This statement does not meet the requirements of the case. Eddington insists that not merely some but all physical knowledge is hypothetico-observational in nature. Strictly speaking his argument allows for no observation whatever that is not colored by the sensory-intellectual equipment through the use of which all observation is made. Accordingly he should have done with an “objective kingdom of fishes” altogether, and reject “the traditional method of systematic examination of the data” in toto.

It was necessary to signalize this inconsistency thus early because it mars the whole of Eddington’s book and makes for great difficulty in understanding him. Eddington speaks of generalizations “that can be reached epistemologically” and of those that “can only be reached empirically.”²⁰ To the former he accords greater security than to the latter. He speaks of laws of nature that have an “epistemological origin” and of those that have no such origin. The former, he argues, are compulsory.²¹ Of the latter he says: “Before worrying about them, it will be well to wait till we see what is left of the system of natural law after the part which can be accounted for epistemologically has been removed: There may not be anything left to worry about.”²² It appears then that on the one hand Eddington is very outspoken in his indifference to an “objective kingdom of fishes” while on the other hand this kingdom follows him about wherever he goes. The “gills” of our ichthyologist’s sea-creatures seem to be in as doubtful a position as were the “*Dinge an sich*” of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Eddington makes large claims for his “epistemological method.” Says he: “I believe that the whole system of fundamental hypotheses can be replaced by epistemological principles. Or, to put it equivalently, all the laws of nature that are usually classed as fundamental can be foreseen wholly from epistemological considerations. They correspond to *a priori* knowledge, and are therefore wholly subjective.”²³ Speaking of

¹⁶ p. 17.

¹⁷ p. 16.

¹⁸ p. 18.

¹⁹ p. 18.

²⁰ p. 19.

²¹ p. 20.

²² p. 21.

²³ p. 57.

cosmical number he says: “But when we find that the cosmical number is subjective—that the influence of the sensory equipment with which we observe, and the intellectual equipment with which we formulate the results of observation as knowledge, is so far-reaching that by itself it decides the number of particles into which the matter of the universe appears to be divided—not only do we lose the support on which we were relying, but there is no heart left in us to oppose the devouring flood of subjectivity any longer.”²⁴ Elsewhere he says that selection “or operations mathematically akin to it cover the whole range of possibility.”²⁵ In the same spirit he writes: “The pervasion of fundamental physics by epistemology has therefore greatly changed its character, and brought exactitude within reach.”²⁶

All this, however, is only one side of the picture. On the one hand it seems that by a strict application of the “epistemological purge”²⁷ we can escape all “metaphysical contamination,” determine cosmic number itself and thus exclude “the whim of the Creator.”²⁸ On the other hand the “exact” epistemological laws operate in a subject matter of probability so that “the system of fundamental physical laws is indeterministic.”²⁹

Eddington is particularly insistent on his claim that recent scientific progress justifies his subjectivist claims. His argument here is similar to that set forth in his earlier work, *The Nature of the Physical World*. “The word elephant,” he says in that earlier work, “calls up a certain association of mental impressions, but it is clear that mental impressions as such cannot be the subject handled in the physical problem. We have, for example, an impression of bulkiness. To this there is presumably some direct counterpart in the external world, but that counterpart must be of a nature beyond our apprehension, and science can make nothing of it. Bulkiness enters into exact science by yet another substitution; we replace it by a series of readings of a pair of calipers. Similarly the greyish black appearance in our mental impression is replaced in exact science by the readings of a photometer for various wave-lengths of light. And so on until all the characteristics of the elephant are exhausted and it has become reduced to a schedule of measures.”³⁰ In the present volume he says; “It has come to be the accepted practice in introducing new physical quantities that they shall be regarded as defined by the series of measuring operations and calculations of which they are the result. Those who associate with the result a mental picture of some entity disporting itself in a metaphysical realm of existence do so at their own risk; physics can accept no responsibility for this embellishment.”³¹ Here we seem to have once more a full-blown subjectivism. And the claim is made that the recent relativity theory involves, or is the natural consequence of, the full recognition of this subjectivism. Says Eddington, in continuation of the passage quoted just before: “The innovation made by Einstein in his relativity theory was that the

²⁴ p. 60.

²⁵ p. 26.

²⁶ p. 45.

²⁷ p. 48.

²⁸ p. 65.

²⁹ p. 46.

³⁰ p. 253.

³¹ p. 71.

physical quantities involved in the measurement of space and time were brought under this rule.”³²

It is of special importance to observe that, according to Eddington, “If we call in an experimenter to test the truth of our statements, his first question must be ‘How am I to recognize the thing you are talking about?’ The answer we give him is its definition. If he verifies the truth of the statement, his certificate applies only so long as the words mean what we told him they did.”³³ Later he adds: “Not even quantum theory can calculate a quantity which has not been defined.”³⁴ And again he says: “If physics is to describe what we really observe, we must overhaul the definitions of the terms employed in it so that they explicitly refer to observational facts and not to metaphysical conjectures.”³⁵

Thus, “knowableness to mind,”³⁶ that is, knowableness to the human mind, is virtually made the test of significant reality. “The whole range of possibility”³⁷ is subjected to the legislative powers of man. With professor A. E. Singer we may speak of such a claim as the assertion of the Democritean postulate that “everything in Nature is structural in nature.”³⁸

From a Christian point of view we can scarcely quarrel with this postulate as a formal statement. Materially, however, the matter is quite otherwise. The Christian holds to a “Subjective Selectivism” but his “subject” is God by whose counsel all things come to pass. The God of Christianity has identified and does identify by exhaustive description. He has exhausted all classification so that for Him the *infima species* and the individual are identical. The hairs of our heads are numbered. What Eddington ascribes to man, the power of exhaustive dialectification of reality, Christianity ascribes to God. If Eddington is right in claiming that scientific methodology involves a type of “Subjective Selectivism” such as he advocates, a Selectivism in which autonomous would-be ultimate man wields the “Logician’s postulate,” in sovereign fashion denying significant reality to that which has not been trimmed on its Procrustean bed, Christians must first challenge the fundamental error of such Selectivism before they can accept any of the “good” which it may, in spite of its basic error, have produced.

It is of particular importance to observe that there is no no-man’s land of neutral factuality between Eddington’s position and that of Christianity. In these two positions two “Creators” stand face to face in mortal combat. Two minds, each claiming to define “fact” before the other mind meets “fact,” stand squarely opposed to one another. If Christianity is true, the “facts” are what God says they must be; if Eddington’s position is true, the “facts” are what man says they must be.

Perhaps some one will raise an objection at this point. Does Eddington really claim creative power for the human mind? Does he not allow a certain reality to the “objective” world, a reality independent of the structural activity of the human mind? Does he not hold to the Aristotelian as well as to the Democritean postulate? Does he not allow that,

³² p. 71.

³³ p. 70.

³⁴ p. 81.

³⁵ p. 84.

³⁶ See *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 265.

³⁷ p. 26.

³⁸ See *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July, 1934.

“some things in Nature are non-structural in nature”? Has he not, in order to avoid the contradiction in which a simultaneous maintenance of the Democritean and Aristotelian postulates would involve him, made much of the dimensional division of reality? Has he not by limiting the application of the Logician’s postulate to the dimension of science opened up to us wide vistas of spiritual being? And is not then the position of Eddington at least consistent with, if not friendly toward, the faith of the Christian man?

Our answer to these queries must be that for all practical purposes Eddington does claim ultimate creative power for man. He claims this by virtually denying creative power to God. The assertion of the Aristotelian postulate, that some things in Nature are non-structural in nature is, by implication, a denial of God’s original structural activity. If God were recognized as Creator He would be recognized as having given structure to Nature. It would then be inconsistent to say that some things in Nature are non-structural in nature. He who believes in God cannot consistently believe in “brute fact.”

Yet “brute fact,” that is “fact” uninterpreted by God as well as uninterpreted by man, is that which Eddington requires as a concomitant for his Subjective Selectivism. Not as though his ideal of knowledge as such directly calls for “brute fact.” On the contrary, his ideal of knowledge is that of exhaustive definition and calls directly for omniscience. But omniscience is obviously unattainable by man so long as a really omniscient God exists. A really omniscient God, a God Who by virtue of actual creation out of nothing has patterned the world according to His definition, would require man to seek out His structure in the facts of the universe. Thus man’s structural activity would be analogical and therefore reinterpreted of God’s structural activity. Man’s structural activity could not be the ultimate criterion and source of significant predication. Accordingly the assertion of brute factuality is a matter of life and death for one who holds to the scientific ideal of Eddington. Eddington, pretending indifference to metaphysical speculation, has in the very assumptions of his methodology made a universal negative statement about the nature of all existence. He has assumed that reality is not God-structured in nature. Only a “Creator” can rightfully make such a claim.

Eddington should help us all to realize more clearly than we have done before that current scientific methodology is anti-Christian to the core. Current scientific methodology is not a mere tool that may bring forth fundamentally diverse conclusions. The rejection of the God of Christianity is the prerequisite of the acceptance of current scientific methodology. There cannot be two ultimate interpreters.

It may be argued, however, that Eddington’s position is extreme. There are those who think that a realist rather than a subjectivist interpretation of reality is consistent with current scientific methodology. C. E. M. Joad has argued this point against both Eddington and Jeans, notably in his book *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science*. But granted this be so, current realism is no more favorable to Christianity than current idealism. The point at issue between the realist and the idealist is really no more than the relative amount of ultimate structural activity on the part of man that goes into the knowledge situation. Realists and idealists agree that Nature is not God-structured in nature. Both assume that man’s interpretative powers are original. The issue still remains: Whose structural activity is prior to that of the other, that of God to man or that of man to God?

Even the introduction of the dimension idea offers no escape from this dilemma. Eddington as well as many other scientists and religious leaders have readily welcomed

the dimension idea as an escape from the tension between science and “religion.” According to the dimension idea the scientist is ultimately legislative in one dimension only. Of other dimensions of existence he and others, it is said, may think what they please. Singer argues that by the help of the dimension idea the dilemma between the Democritean and the Aristotelian postulates may be resolved. With this we find it difficult to agree. The God of Christianity requires legislative power in every dimension. If man challenges God’s ultimate interpretative power in one dimension he has virtually challenged it for every dimension. It is even impossible to challenge God’s ultimate interpretative power in one dimension without challenging it in every dimension. If there is to be inter-dimensional coherence—and without it there is no philosophy—the various dimensions cannot be interpreted according to mutually exclusive postulates.

To say that science deals with abstractions from reality so that its findings, though true as far as they go, need to be supplemented by the insights of philosophy or religion is in itself of little help. It is not against every kind of abstraction that we would object. To concentrate on an aspect or dimension of reality, as it were forgetting all other aspects or dimensions, is a *sine qua non* of scientific progress. But the forgetting must always be, as it were, merely psychological, never epistemological. Legitimate abstraction is quite consistent with the recognition of a unified principle of interpretation in all dimensions. Illegitimate abstraction, on the other hand, is epistemological as well as psychological in nature. It amounts to a break in the unity of interpretation between various dimensions. Not as though such a break is ever accomplished. He who interprets his physics without God will also have a religion without God.

We are bound, therefore, to deem it quite inexpedient for Christians to seek for a peace between current scientific methodology and their religious views by the help of the dimension idea. Christians surely cannot be satisfied till every dimension of life is interpreted according to one unified Christian principle. Only thus can there be coherence between science and Christianity.

The Philosophy of John Dewey

ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp: *The Philosophy of John Dewey*. (The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 1). Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University. 1939. 16, 708. \$4.00.

This book is the first in a contemplated series of books. The editor of the series, Paul Arthur Schilpp, tells us of the purpose of the series. Outstanding living philosophers are to have their philosophical views evaluated by several of their contemporaries in the field and are to be given an opportunity to evaluate the evaluations. In this way, it is expected, misunderstandings may be removed and the general atmosphere clarified. We believe the venture to be very much worth while.

Among living philosophers John Dewey occupies a place of distinction. Dewey's philosophical output is enormous and his influence incalculable. It is well that we should hear what Dewey's fellow-philosophers have to say of his work, and what he says in turn.

In several, if not in most, of the contributions to this book great stress is laid upon the place of method in the philosophy of Dewey. Dewey himself makes no complaint of this. His is a philosophy of Instrumentalism.

There is, according to Joseph Ratner, only one thing that Dewey is willing to take for granted and that is current scientific methodology in its initial assumptions. Dewey is willing to follow the scientists in their method. Says Ratner: "The scientists have been empirical in their procedure for quite some time now, and it is agreed on all hands that it is a good procedure, that, to put it in the vernacular, it produces the goods."¹ Henry W. Stuart, speaking of the place of method in Dewey's philosophy says: "Thus experimental inquiry, or method, is the locus within which, or the supreme principle by which, conceptions of philosophy that are really significant can be understood. It is in this sense, according to professor Dewey, that method—that is to say, the method of experimental inquiry—is supreme."² From time to time Dewey has criticised various philosophical views on the ground that they are not the natural outgrowth of a true method of inquiry. Speaking of this point John Herman Randall, Jr. says, "Where Dewey approaches most closely to the narration of a history—as in the *Reconstruction in Philosophy*—it is in following the thread of the development of method. For him, it is method rather than vision that is fundamental in the history of philosophy, that reflective and critical method that aims to reorganize and reconstruct beliefs."³

¹ p. 53.

² p. 295.

³ pp. 78–79.

Now scientific inquiry, to be worthy of the name, must rid itself at the outset of all metaphysical speculation about the nature of Reality as a whole. How else can it be absolutely free? Ratner quotes Dewey on this point as follows:

It is often said that pragmatism, unless it is content to be a contribution to mere methodology, must develop a theory of Reality. But the chief characteristic trait of the pragmatic notion of reality is precisely that no theory of Reality in general, *überhaupt*, is possible or needed. It finds that “reality” is a denotative term, a word used to designate indifferently everything that happens. Lies, dreams, insanities, deceptions, myths, theories are all of them just the events they specifically are. Pragmatism is content to take its stand with science; for science finds all such events to be subject-matter of description and inquiry—just like stars and fossils, mosquitos and malaria, circulation and vision. It also takes its stand with daily life, which finds that such things really have to be reckoned with as they occur interwoven in the texture of events.⁴ Dewey’s book *The Quest for Certainty* contains a running argument against the notion of “antecedent Being.” Speaking of the “most influential and authoritatively orthodox tradition of thought,” he says: But for over two thousand years the weight of the most influential and authoritatively orthodox tradition of thought has been thrown into the opposite scale. It has been devoted to the problem of a purely cognitive certification (perhaps by revelation, perhaps by intuition, perhaps by reason) of the antecedent immutable reality of truth, beauty and goodness. As against such doctrine, the conclusions of natural science constitute the materials of a serious problem.⁵

The classical tradition in philosophy, Dewey feels, was unable to face really new situations scientifically because it was bound to make the new conform to an unchangeable body of reality or knowledge. Scientific method, so Dewey argues in effect, must assume that all “Nature” is non-structural in nature. Only thus is science ready to face whatever may possibly take place. Dewey is equally opposed to all forms of Realism and Idealism. All of them have, he reasons, failed to see the true requirements and presuppositions of a genuine method of inquiry. All of them have clung to some form of pre-existent structure whether of being or of knowledge to which the “new” of daily experience must conform. Sooner or later, says Dewey, men’s eyes were bound to be open to the fact that “all intellectual descriptions, must be formulated in terms of operations, actual or imaginatively possible.”⁶

Operations as carried on in experimental inquiry have constructive effect upon whatever comes to us in our experience. In fact we could not possibly reach an “antecedent existence.” “There are no conceivable ways in which the existence of ultimate unchangeable substances which interact without undergoing change in themselves can be reached by means of experimental operations. Hence they have no empirical, no experimental standing; they are pure dialectic inventions.”⁷

Thus it begins to appear that Dewey, like Eddington in the book discussed above, seems to insist that all true intellectual inquiry presupposes (a) brute factuality for its material and (b) an ultimate structural capacity of the human mind for its form. These two clearly go hand in hand. As soon as there is any structure whatever in the “object” of knowledge, the subject of knowledge loses some of its ultimacy.

The precise significance of this pivotal point should not escape us. Let us ask more carefully what Dewey takes to be the “object” with which inquiry deals. Says Dewey:

⁴ p. 66.

⁵ *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 43.

⁶ *Idem.*, p. 118.

⁷ *Idem.*, p. 118.

Just what did the new experimental method do to the qualitative objects of ordinary experience? Forget the conclusions of Greek philosophy, put out of the mind all theories about knowledge and about reality. Take the simple direct facts: Here are the colored, resounding, fragrant, lovable, attractive, beautiful things of nature which we enjoy, and which we suffer when they are hateful, ugly, disgusting. Just what is the effect upon them wrought upon them by physical science?

If we consent for the time being to denude the mind of philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions, and take the matter in the most simple and naïve way possible, I think our answer, stated in technical terms, will be that it substitutes data for objects. (It is not meant that this outcome is the whole effect of the experimental method; that as we saw at the outset is complex; but that the first effect as far as stripping away qualities is concerned is of this nature.) That Greek science operated with objects in the sense of the stars, rocks, trees, rain, warm and cold days of ordinary experience is evident enough. What is signified by saying that the first effect of experimentation was to reduce these things from the status of objects to that of data may not be so clear. By data is signified subject-matter for further interpretation; something to be thought about. Objects are finalities; they are complete, finished; they call for thought only in the way of definition, classification, logical arrangement, subsumption in syllogisms, etc. But data signify ‘material to serve’; they are indications, evidence, signs, clues to and of something still to be reached; they are intermediate, not ultimate; means, not finalities.⁸

It is in this way, according to Dewey, that “nature as it already exists ceases to be something which must be accepted and submitted to, endured or enjoyed, just as it is. It is now something to be modified, to be intentionally controlled.”⁹ In the book under review Dewey illustrates his view of the object of physical science in the following words: Pragmatic philosophers did not invent the idea of the nature of the scientific object here put forth. Long ago attention was called to the fact that English physicists tend to seek for literal models, while as a rule French physicists are content with interpreting physical objects symbolically rather than literally. Duhem, for example, many years ago presented a view which amounted in effect to saying that scientific objects are symbolic devices for connecting together the things of ordinary experience. Others have held that they were devices for facilitating and directing predictions. Now my view does not go as far as these. Its import may be gathered from the following illustration. Suppose one of those persons of extraordinary keen vision who abound in the Grimm fairy tales were in fact to see, sensibly to perceive, an object which had all the qualities a physicist attributes to the atom. He would surely see something. But would he see an atom in the definite sense of seeing that which is an object of physical science? I can find but one possible answer, namely: ‘It depends. If he himself has had a scientific training and if in sensibly perceiving this particular thing he explicitly identifies it as having all the relational properties required by the scientific theory of atomic structure and with no properties incompatible with the latter, the answer is Yes. But if he sees it merely as another man of lesser power of vision sees a rock, the answer is No.’ In other words, it is not just the thing as perceived, but the thing as and when it is placed in an extensive ideational or theoretical context within which it exercises a special office that constitutes a distinctively physical scientific object.¹⁰

Donald A. Piatt, setting forth Dewey’s view of the object of science speaks as follows:

It is customary to speak of data as entities that are given, one school realists holding that these entities are mental or logical contents as representations, and another school holding that they are external existential events either as identical with the external object of knowledge or as a part of that object. For Dewey, the datum is not what is given but what is taken, selected, noted,

⁸ *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 98–99.

⁹ *Idem.*, p. 100.

¹⁰ pp. 537–538.

observed, discriminated for the purpose of inference. What is given is the whole perceptual situation. What is taken as datum depends on the specific purpose of the inquiry, and purposes are manifold.¹¹

Or again he adds: "The point is also that no event can qualify as a datum save as it is reconstituted in inquiry as a signification of other events by the intervention of symbol-meanings. Data and meanings are correlative."¹² Once more he says; "In short, data are not given but have to be found and determined as such. They are post-analytic and not pre-analytic facts of inquiry. The scientist does not attempt to solve his problem until he has made sure of what the problem is, until he has experimentally established the facts that can be depended upon in further research. Nay more, when the particular problem is fully defined, that problem is solved."¹³

Dewey himself speaks of scientific objects as "statistically standardized correlations of existential changes."¹⁴ Scientific objects are therefore "existential because they formulate operations which actually take place."¹⁵

In all this we observe how closely the view of Dewey resembles that of Eddington. Both insist that they are absolutely neutral as to the nature of Reality. Both want to avoid "metaphysical constructions." Both are so frankly and openly subjectivist that they do not hesitate to ascribe ultimate definitory power to the human mind. Scientific objects, says Dewey, are what they are because the utterly raw material of experience has been "statistically standardized." This is the equivalent of Eddington's view when his ichthyologist boldly asserts, "What my net can't catch isn't fish." For both, a scientific fact to be a fact must first be defined by the mind of man. That is, the raw material of experience must be neatly trimmed and patterned by the scissors of the constructing power of the scientist before it can be used by him at all.

But is there not another side to the story? Is not Dewey the enemy of all abstraction? Does he not wish to be genuinely empirical? We reply that there is another side to the story. Dewey wants to think concretely if any one does. According to Dewey there are three circles of interest for philosophy. The first is that of logic or inquiry. The second is that of practical or utilitarian affairs. The third is that of the socio-cultural world. But these areas are, for Dewey, closely interrelated. Says Ratner in describing Dewey's view: "The fundamental idea then is that the primary subject-matter of philosophic inquiry is a continuously interconnected field of experience."¹⁶ Thus the mind of man is not to be set abstractly over against Nature. Says Piatt, in describing Dewey's logical theory: "Instrumental and experimental logic is naturalistic, not a logic of a separate world of thought but a logic of natural events which are functioning on a meaning level."¹⁷ In his article on *The Education Philosophy of Dewey*, John L. Childs calls attention to Dewey's rejection of all forms of supernaturalism. Then he adds: To use the method of experience as Dr. Dewey himself uses it, is to make a naturalistic theory of existence the common presupposition of one's philosophical outlook and educational practice. In

¹¹ p. 125.

¹² p. 126.

¹³ pp. 128–129.

¹⁴ p. 578.

¹⁵ p. 578.

¹⁶ p. 50.

¹⁷ p. 107.

his philosophy the naturalistic outlook is as fundamental as the empirical method. Indeed, so intimate is the connection between the two, that the full import of his philosophy of education can be discerned only as we grasp that it is grounded in a naturalistic interpretation of human beings and their experiences.¹⁸

Dewey himself tells us that the “biological-anthropological method of approach to experience” has helped him to escape from a mentalistic into a “behavioral interpretation of experiencing.”¹⁹ He adds that his “idea of experience and hence of an empirical method is naturalistic.”²⁰ He would begin his philosophy “with experience as the manifestation of interactions of organism and environment.”²¹ Thus “the self, the ‘subject’ of action,—is a factor within experience and not something outside of it to which experiences are attached as the self’s private property.”²² Dewey makes these remarks, in part at least, for the purpose of replying to the charge of subjectivism. He feels that his Instrumentalistic naturalism is the best possible protection against being caught in the “charmed circle” of subjectivism.

It would seem that we now have both sides of the story before us. The first side of the story does, on first glance, at least, look as though it offers little else than a “charmed circle” of subjectivism. As far as scientific knowledge goes, at least, a fact is not a fact till it is properly dialecticized into a pigeon-hole prepared in advance for its reception. It is this sort of thing that Donald A. Piatt has in mind when he says of Dewey: “He is a rationalist *par excellence* in recognizing the paramount rTMle of intelligence in the conduct of life.”²³ The other side of the story seems to present us with plain naturalism. The human mind is thrown back into the seething cauldron of natural forces and appears to be of the same fundamental substance with them. Through biological evolution there is continuity between the mind and its world.

How can the two sides of the story be brought into harmony with one another? Says Donald A. Piatt:

Dewey is empiricist and naturalist in recognizing the derivative rTMle of thought, the dependence of thought upon a non-logical subject matter. He is a rationalist *par excellence* in recognizing the paramount rTMle of intelligence in the conduct of life.

It will be asked how an instrumentalist, experimentalist, and immediate empiricist can be a rationalist. The answer is, by being a contextualist—by placing thought as inquiry within the natural existential context in which alone it can yield warranted assertions. Within such a context, inquiry is no more an instrument, tool, servant than a master. When inquiry turns in upon itself it finds that, to produce warranted conclusions, it must proceed according to certain rules or stipulations. The stipulations are not arbitrary or conventional save in verbal expression, for though one can choose whether to think or not, if one thinks, one is obliged to follow the *a priori* forms of thought shown by inquiry to be implicit in all previous rational inquiry and necessary for further inquiry.²⁴

William Savery has a somewhat different solution to offer. He speaks of the Concatenism of Dewey, which, he says, is a development of the synechism of Peirce. But

¹⁸ p. 422.

¹⁹ p. 526.

²⁰ p. 529.

²¹ p. 531.

²² p. 532.

²³ p. 109.

²⁴ pp. 109–110.

he does not offer his Concatenism as means by which the “Rationalism” and the “Naturalism” of Dewey may be harmonized. For him the Concatenism of Dewey is but an aspect of his naturalism. “Dewey’s entire philosophy,” says Savery, may be designated naturalism, and all his other doctrines may be regarded as synthetically contained in it. His instrumentalism is the only naturalistic theory of truth; mind and matter are both functions of natural events (neutralism); our perspectives are emergent natural events; these events have continuous flow (contextualism); events are unique, that is to say, historical (tychism).²⁵

In order to solve what has appeared to others as difficulty in his philosophy, Dewey writes as follows:

Some of my critics say that my philosophy does not tell much about the environing world which is discovered when experience takes on the cognitive phase. I hope this statement, though offered as an indictment, is correct. For, according to my view, the actual inquiries constituting the sciences of astronomy, archaeology, botany, down through the alphabet to the zed of zoology, are the procedures which tell us about the environing world; they tell because they follow out clues present in actually had experiences. The business of philosophy, in logic or the theory of knowledge, is not to provide a rival account of the natural environment, but to analyze and report how and to what effect inquiries actually proceed, genetically and functionally, in their experiential context.²⁶

Thus we see that the naturalism of Dewey is not meant to be a theory of Reality *überhaupt*. Dewey’s positivism as well as Eddington’s positivism wants to steer clear of metaphysical speculations. He maintains, as he thinks, the neutrality or open-mindedness of true inquiry. The space-time continuum may bring forth anything at all. On the other hand, wherever and whenever inquiry proceeds on its way it finds itself compelled to follow a definite route. Says Piatt on this point in explanation of Dewey’s views as well as his own:

Beginning as means of solving non-logical problems and of satisfying non-cognitive needs, logical forms become *a priori* ways of determining whether problems have been solved rationally. I suspect that Dewey accepts what he sets down as the basic pattern of inquiry, as the *sine qua non* of all future rational inquiry.²⁷

Thus the two sides of the story seem to have been harmonized. The human mind is thought of as sovereign or ultimate wherever and whenever it interprets anything. On the other hand the human mind does not pretend to interpret more than a fraction of all reality. The grand unknown, the non-constructed, underlies and envelops the human mind. Springing forth somehow from this unknown the human mind knows itself for what it is, a product of chance. This chance-produced mind carves out for itself areas of rationality and lays down its rules as the law of the realm, as the *sine qua non* of all future rational inquiry.

Here we discover the inner inconsistency of Dewey’s philosophy. Dewey decries the idea of a theory of Reality *überhaupt* but cannot escape having one. It is difficult to see how Dewey can make himself believe that his philosophy does not involve a theory of reality as a whole. If the mind of man is set up as legislative in any sphere of experience it is clear that God is excluded from that sphere. Now for Dewey the mind of man is legislative in the whole length and breadth of human experience. Accordingly God is

²⁵ p. 498.

²⁶ p. 533.

²⁷ p. 111.

excluded from the whole of human experience. Not only science but art, politics, education, and religion must do without God. Dewey's philosophy is that of the ontological ultimacy of chance. Every philosophy based upon the assumed epistemological ultimacy of the mind of man presupposes chance. It is only if the universe is a universe of chance that the mind of man can presume itself to be ultimately legislative at any point. A mind that meets an antecedent constructed reality must learn to conform its insight to the structure of that reality and therewith forfeit its claim to legislative ultimacy.

In a world of chance the would-be legislative ultimacy of the human mind meets with self-frustration. Why should not the little islands of rationality carved out by a chance-borne mind not be swallowed up by that chance from which all things come? The human mind for Dewey is like a white-cap on the wave of a shoreless and bottomless sea. Reason, which has in effect presumed to legislate for the whole of reality, needs chance for its existence, and has its existence swallowed up by chance.

We rejoice in the consistency with which Dewey has displayed the native inconsistency of all non-Christian methodology. Neither idealism nor realism have been so bold as to worship openly at the shrine of the goddess of chance. Both have paid lip-service to some form of "antecedent" structure, little as such lip-service really means. Thus the true nature of the deep antithesis between Christian and non-Christians thought was largely hid from view. Many have been the effort, even among Protestants, to place Christianity as a superstructure on the foundation of some idealist or realist philosophy. One and all, such efforts were bound to fail. The Christian and the non-Christian method of inquiry are so basically different that they are bound to produce different results. Or rather, the non-Christian method of inquiry already presupposes and therefore produces a non-Christian philosophy, while the Christian method of inquiry already presupposes and therefore produces a Christian philosophy. And it is the great merit of Dewey that his frank rejection of all antecedent structural existence has helped to bring out this point.

Dewey is even more consistent than Eddington. Both Eddington and Dewey maintain the ultimate legislative character of the human mind in the sphere of science. Eddington, however, fears to go forward with the self-generating torch of reason into other fields. When it comes to matters non-scientific and non-philosophical he soon falls back on mysticism. Religion and science he thinks of as being in quite different dimensions, each with principles of interpretation of their own. Not so with Dewey. He sallies forth boldly in the realms of chance. He makes for himself several clearings in the primeval forests of the irrational and does it all with his trusty battle-axe of reason. In the case of Eddington the true character of the non-Christian principle is once more camouflaged to some extent. Having conquered the dimensions of science and philosophy, dictator Reason assures the world that he has no further territorial aspirations, and Christians have been all too ready to follow a policy of appeasement. In Dewey's philosophy, however, Reason has made new conquests in part at least because of fifth-columnist activity among Christian thinkers. Men have made themselves believe that the "scientific method" of Reason is an innocent by which one aspect of reality may be neutrally described. But those who wield the tool of current scientific methodology feel that if the world is to be made safe for science, if the domain of dictator Reason is not to be encroached upon again, the whole realm of human experience must be made to feel its legislative power. Perhaps Christians will now see more clearly than they have seen before that the question

of methodology is not a merely formal question. Any methodology, worthy of the name, grows out of, and in turn involves, a theory of reality. And current scientific methodology grows out of and involves a philosophy of chance. Dewey has done a great service to Christianity by bringing out this point.

The upshot of the matter seems to be somewhat as follows. Dewey claims that his philosophy is the logical outcome of currently accepted methodology. We have no quarrel with him on this score. It follows that the current scientific methodology presupposes a philosophy of irrationalism and is therefore itself irrational. An empty, formal, and subjectivist a priorism stands helpless before a structureless realm of chance. There has been a complete and final break between knowledge and being.

Thus science itself becomes impossible. There can be no new facts for the scientist. When the “new” is new it is not a fact and when it is a “fact” it is no longer new. Says Piatt: “For Dewey, the datum is not what is given but what is taken, selected, noted, observed, discriminated for the purpose of inference.”²⁸ On the other hand there can be no body of knowledge accumulated in the past. Dewey says that his “reduction of given objects of data for a knowing or an investigation still to be undertaken liberates man from the subjection to the past.”²⁹ But the liberation is all too complete. The past is for Dewey as empty as the future. No intelligible distinction between past and future remains. “History,” says Dewey, “cannot escape its own process.”³⁰ The past becomes the ever new for the present, and as the new it has no structure. Thus rational process itself has been destroyed. Science has no starting point for its procedure. There is no intelligible communication between scientists on the basis of past accomplishment. Identification of facts becomes impossible; facts that have been reduced to universals but no universal remains in terms of which the reduction may be made, for universals have been reduced to facts. Facts are to be “post-analytic,” but the framework of analysis has disappeared. Experiment becomes a farce; the not-yet identified fact is related to the no-longer not-yet cohering body of knowledge. Lovejoy says that “I am about to have known” is Dewey’s equivalent for “I know.”³¹ Hypotheses must be made in the void on the basis of a “hunch” from the no-longer coherent. Scientific prediction turns into mystic prophecy.

Such is the logical outcome when man cuts himself loose from the God of the Scripture. We would humbly but firmly maintain that Christianity makes science and philosophy as well as other forms of human experience intelligible. Science and philosophy, in short human experience as a whole, cannot do without the presupposition of absolute rationality. But Christianity alone holds to such absolute rationality. The idealisms and realisms of the philosophical texts have without exception reduced their rationality to the status of correlativity with an ultimately irrational. To all intents and purposes this sounded the death-knell of all rationality; Eddington and Dewey have but drawn the logical conclusion from idealist and realist premises. Thus Christianity alone offers to science the absolute rationality without which it falls into ruin.

With God’s absolute rationality goes man’s derivative rationality. Hence there are genuinely new facts for science. God, for all man knows, may have arranged the facts of

²⁸ p. 125.

²⁹ *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 101.

³⁰ Quoted by John Herman Randall, Jr., p. 92.

³¹ Quoted by Arthur E. Murphy, p. 203.

the universe in millions of different ways. New facts have their ultimate structure given them by God; hence man's identification of facts is not their destruction. Psychologically, to be sure, the subject of knowledge is involved in the recognition or identification of the object of knowledge, but this has no ultimate epistemological significance. The mind of man is not a rigid pigeon-hole affair. It is rather a flexible power of adjustment to a God-structured universe. Thus experimental knowledge can actually get under way.

Accumulation of facts into a rational body of knowledge is possible. The past is no longer the bottomless basket into which the present throws the future. The past is not a "dead past" but a living coherent past. On the basis of it hypotheses can be made, and made not in the void; past, present and future have back of them and in them the rationality given them by God. Scientific predictions can be intelligently made because they are self-consciously made subject to the absolute rationality of God.

But if it is true that Christianity alone can make human experience intelligible, how is it that scientists working with the so-called neutral or non-Christian scientific method have actually discovered as much truth as they have? The answer seems to us to lie in the fact that these scientists have worked with borrowed capital. When the prodigal son left his father's house he did not realize that the "far country" was under the father's control. He acted on a "neutral," i.e., negative, methodology so far as his self-conscious relation to this father was concerned. When he reached the swine trough and "would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat" it was not the consistent application of his own principle of interpretation that made him resolve to arise and go to his father, but the father's "logic" challenging his own "logic," made him realize that his own "logic" had led him into the utterly irrational. In some such way as this, it is possible that they who are made in God's image and have nothing but God's world to work in, may be ethically hostile to God and therefore labour with a principle of interpretation that virtually denies God, and yet be used by God for the display of the works of His hands. As Christians we may therefore gladly and thankfully accept the "results of scientific investigation," if only we accept them *cum grano* and reset them in the configuration of Christian truth. As Christians we may gladly and thankfully use the technique of non-Christian scientists, if only by our Christian principle we are masters, and not servants, of technique.

The books of Eddington and Dewey, representative as they are of current scientific and philosophic opinion, and climactic as they are of the non-Christian principle of interpretation, present us with a challenge, a challenge to become more self-conscious and more consistent in our humble effort to see life whole and see it through according to one principle and that the Christian principle.

Die verhouding tussen die Teologie en die Filosofie by Calvyn

Dr. F. J. M. Potgieter, *Die verhouding tussen die Teologie en die Filosofie by Calvyn*.
Acad. Diss. Vrije Universiteit. Amsterdam 1939.

In the book before us we have a dissertation submitted to the theological faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. Dr. Potgieter's dissertation was written under the direction of Dr. V. Hepp, his "promotor."

A good deal of praiseworthy effort has gone into the making of Dr. Potgieter's book. He has made considerable study of the works of Calvin as far as they pertain to the question of the relation of theology to philosophy.

The first chapter deals with the training of Calvin. While not immediately germane to the subject of the dissertation this chapter gives a background that sheds some light upon the main problem.

Chapter two is also preparatory. It deals with the literature Calvin has left us and seeks for the key by which we can best understand that literature. Calvin, we are told, bowed unconditionally to the authority of Scripture but had due respect for the work of the "fathers." Calvin was not "biblicistic."¹ Great stress is laid on this point throughout the book. A particular point is made of the fact that Calvin did not reason from one Scripture truth at the expense of others.² About all this there can be little dispute.

Chapter three is the main chapter of the book. It discusses first Calvin's judgment on the relation of philosophy to theology in the light of his notion of theology. It discusses second the same question in the light of Calvin's notion of philosophy. In conclusion it seeks to unite what has been discussed in the first and second sections in order to obtain Calvin's ideas on the question in hand as specifically as possible. The first thing that impresses one in reading this main chapter is that, for all the efforts of the author, he has not been able to find in Calvin any well-articulated discussion of the relation between philosophy and theology. Stress is laid upon the favorable comments Calvin made at various times about non-Christian philosophers. Typical of these comments is the passage of *The Institutes*³ in which Calvin admires the gifts and accomplishments of non-Christians and says that "the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator." On the other hand Dr. Potgieter lays stress upon the fact that for Calvin these non-Christian

¹ p. 63.

² p. 75.

³ Calvin's *Institutes*, Book 2, 2, 15.

thinkers spoke the truth only to the extent that they agreed with Scripture.⁴ The author is unable to do much more than this. He himself says at the outset of his work: “*Opsetlik-gekonsipieerde uitsprake of formules omtrent die relasie tussen die teologie en die filosofie vind ons derhalve n[on]rens by hom nie.*”⁵

It is no wonder then that when the author seeks to formulate a somewhat more fully articulated notion of the relation of theology to philosophy Calvin falls into the background and more recent Reformed theologians come to the fore. The author seeks to develop his views along the lines of the outstanding dogmaticians of the past generation, namely A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck and more specially according to the views of his promotor, Dr. Hepp. The author is apparently in full agreement with the views of Dr. Hepp as set forth in various brochures and especially in his dissertation on “*Het Testimonium Spiritus Sancti.*”

That the author leans heavily on his “promotor” appears particularly when he undertakes to set forth his own views in contrast with those of Dr. H. Dooyeweerd as most fully set forth in “*De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee.*” Dr. Dooyeweerd’s views are constantly found to be mistaken to the extent that they do not agree with those of Hepp.

We do not criticize the author for agreeing with Hepp. That is his right. We only call attention to the fact that when Dooyeweerd is said to disagree with Calvin it really means that he disagrees with Calvin as interpreted by Hepp. Calvin has admittedly not spoken fully and specifically on the question in hand. The only thing that can really be done, therefore, is to ask whether our thought is in accord with the genius of Calvinism. Calvin’s words may and should be brought into the picture and the author has done well in doing so. Yet, for all that, the argument really turns on the genius of Calvinism as thought of by living men.

One of the purposes of Potgieter seems to have been to prove that Dooyeweerd’s views are out of accord with the main line of Calvin’s thought. The author at one point goes so far as to suggest that one of the natural consequences of Dooyeweerd’s notion of *Wetsidee* would possibly be a denial of the divinity of Christ. I quote the relevant passage:

“‘n Laaste punt waarop ons wil wys, is dat die grondstelling: ‘De wet is absolute grens tussen God en schepping’⁶ by ‘n mens die vraag laat ontstaan of Christus, terwyl Hij onteenseglik onder die wet was, dan nie as God moet beskou word nie. Duidelik s[on] Calvin in sy eksegeese van Galate 4 v. 4, by die woorde, *Redactum sub legem*, dat Christus was: ‘legi ... subiectus’⁷ en sonder twyfel het Hy Hom in die ewigheid in die verbond van verlossing (*pactum salutis*)⁸ aan die wil of wet van die Vader onderwerp. Ons wys hier slegs op ‘n konsekwensie van ‘De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee’. Daar is ongetwyfeld niks wat verder van die bedoeling van Professor Dooyeweerd le as om enigsins die Godheid van Christus aan te tas nie.”⁹

⁴ pp. 88, 89.

⁵ p. 5.

⁶ *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, H. Dooyeweerd, 1, page 473.

⁷ *Epist. Pauli ad Galatas*, cap. 4, 4. Opera, Lⁱ, col. 227.

⁸ V. de Bavinck, *Geref. Dogmatiek*, 3, pp. 192 v.

⁹ p. 221.

It would surely be a matter for great distress if the only articulated system of Calvinistic philosophy that can be found anywhere should be so fundamentally diseased as to lead us, if followed out, right into paganism. For Dooyeweerd, and incidentally also for D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, his collaborator, it would mean that their views are internally contradictory. They have sought to oppose all forms of “immanentistic” philosophies while, if Potgieter is right, they are headed straight for an exclusively immanentistic philosophy themselves. It must be small comfort to them to be assured that they mean well if their fundamental principles are said to be basically mistaken.

But is the virtual charge of heresy launched by Potgieter against Dooyeweerd justified? We believe not. It is, we believe utterly unfounded.

One of the most pivotal points at which Potgieter criticizes Dooyeweerd is that of the foundation of a Christian philosophy. His charge is that Dooyeweerd really takes the regenerated human ego rather than the Scriptures as the foundation or guiding principle of his philosophy. Granting that a true philosophy must have a religious basis he adds: “*Waarteen ons by Professor Dooyeweerd egter wel opkom, is dat hy die filosofie in die religio subjectiva in plaas van die phanerosis wil grond, en in sy wysbegeerte aan die hart van die wederebore mens sentrale betekenis toeken*”¹⁰ A little further he says: “*Waar Professor Dooyeweerd die ‘Grondstructuur der Christelike Wetsidee’ gee, noem hy, ... het herbore hart, als religieuze wortel ook van het wijsgerig denken ...*”¹¹ *Nie die Openbaring nie, maar die herbore hart word dus as grondslag van die wysbegeerte gestel. Ons sien nie oor die hoof dat die Hoogleraar spesifiseer dat die ‘Christelike vrijheid’ van hierdie herbore hart ‘slechts gewaarborgd is in voortdurende gebondenheid aan het Woord Gods...’ nie. Dog juis hierin is ons beswaar geleë dat sodanige voortdurende gebondenheid aan die Woord, weens die verdorwenheid van ons natuur, nooit voorkom nie; en daarom mag die vaste basis van die revelatio specialis nooit ingeruil word vir die onbestendigheid en feilbaarheid van die nog sondige wedergebore hart of ego regeneratus nie.*”¹² The author also states that Dooyeweerd has obtained his presuppositions empirically, i.e. without reference to Scripture.¹³

We need scarcely do more than state this criticism to refute it. The author himself admits—he could not well avoid admitting—that Dooyeweerd wishes at all times to subject the regenerated man to Scripture. No one could do more! Potgieter contends that a complete and constant submission of the *ego regeneratus* is nowhere found because no one is perfect. But surely such a submission does take place in principle or there would be no Christian theology any more than a Christian philosophy. Potgieter apparently desires that the Christian philosopher, instead of going directly to the Bible himself, shall come to a “*bekwame professor teologicus*” for a statement of what the Bible has to say to him.¹⁴ Are we then to understand that this is because this theological professor is perfect in degree as well as in principle? If the author had observed the simple distinction between perfection in principle and perfection in degree he could not have made the exceedingly serious charge of subjectivism against Dooyeweerd.

¹⁰ p. 217.

¹¹ *W. d. W.* 1, p. 471. Vgl. ook pp. 25 en 30.

¹² p. 219.

¹³ p. 204.

¹⁴ p. 195.

Potgieter, we noted above, claims that if Dooyeweerd's principle of philosophy were carried through consistently it might bring us to a denial of Christ's divinity. Here the author fails to make two common but fundamental distinctions. When Paul speaks in Galatians 4:4 of Christ's being γενόμενον ὑπο νομον (*Redactum sub Legem*) he is referring to Christ's humiliation in His human nature. In his commentary on this passage Calvin clearly recognises this fact. Calvin says of Christ: "*Legi fuit subiectus.*" When the "fullness of time" was come Christ was "made of a woman" and was "made under the law" for our redemption.¹⁵ Why cannot Christ be subject to law in His human nature while he remains divine as the second person of the holy trinity?

When Potgieter visualizes the spectre of subordinationism in the philosophy of Dooyeweerd he mentions the *pactum salutis* and says that in it the Son has subjected Himself to the Father. In subjecting Himself to the Father Christ was subject to law and, as he argues, would, if Dooyeweerd's principle were carried out, be no more than a creature. In this connection we are referred to Dr. H. Bavinck's *Dogmatiek*. Bavinck, however, plainly says that Christ is subject to the Father "as Mediator." "*Als Middelaar toch is de Zoon aan den Vader ondergeschikt ...*"¹⁶ There is to be sure a "subordination" in the "economical trinity" but this does not imply any subordinationism in the "ontological trinity." If the author had read with profit Dr. Bavinck's discussion of "*De Heilige Drieëenheid*" in the second volume of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* he could not have made the suggestion that subordinationism might be the issue of Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

We have noted that Potgieter's main criticism of Dooyeweerd's position refutes itself. We wish now, however briefly, to show how Dooyeweerd has constantly subjected the *ego regeneratus* to the Scriptures. To be sure, Dooyeweerd finds in the *ego regeneratus* the immediate starting-point and concentration-point of philosophy. The interpreting mind of man needs a vantage-point from which it may survey the complexity of the created world. But in order to have such a vantage-point, Dooyeweerd points out even in the very beginning of his book, one must be self-consciously related to the Originator of the World. "*In het Archimedisch punt staande, doet onze zelfheid echter de ontdekking, dat de blik des zin-totaliteit niet mogelijk is zonder den blik op den oorsprong, de ἀρχή van zintotaliteit en zin-bijzonderheid beide.*"¹⁷ Or again: "*Het denken zal in de wijsgeerige vóórvragen niet tot rust komen, alvorens die 'Αρχή ontdekt is, die aan het wijsgeerig denken zelve eerst zin, eerst creatuurlijk aanzijn, geeft.*"¹⁸ Nothing could be more in accord with the genius of Calvinism than just this. Calvin in the very first section of the first book of his *Institutes* insists that we shall think concretely. We are to think of ourselves as creatures of God and as sinners before Him. It is the great virtue of the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* that it so persistently and obviously does what Potgieter says it does not do. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven insist in all their writings that man should regard himself as a creature and a sinner and should therefore go to the Scriptures in order in the light of it to search out the meanings of the created world.

¹⁵ See also S. Greijdanus, *Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament, Galaten*, p. 260.

¹⁶ Vol. 3, p. 194.

¹⁷ *W. d. W.* 1, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Idem.* p. 13.

Potgieter says: “Die grondfout van ‘De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee’ is juis dat dit om die wet sentreer in plaas van om teocentries te wees. God is niet God omdat Hij bokant die wet verbewe is nie, maar omgekeerd, omdat Hij God is, is Hij bokant die wet verhewe (en nog oneindig veel meer as dit). Aan Hom mag geen ‘onoverkomelijke grens’ of ‘absolute grens’¹⁹ gestel word nie.”²⁰ Here we have a false antithesis. For Dooyeweerd “wet” is given its meaning by God who is the “Oorsprong.”²¹ Opposing the scholastic synthesis of Christian and pagan thought Dooyeweerd says: “Om de slechts schijnbaarheid dezer convergentie te verstaan dienen wij ons nog eenmaal rekenschap te geven van de religieuze-grondstructuur, welke aan de wetsidee van een wezenlijk Christelijk wijsgeerig denken noodwendig ten grondslag ligt, een grondstructuur, welke tegelijk de Christelike levens—en wereldbeskouwing bepaalt.

In deze grondstructuur is sentraal de belijdenis van God’s souvereinen Schepperswil als oorsprong van onzen kosmos en van alle ordening, die daarin het scepstel bindt, de aanvaarding van een goddelijk wereldplan in de ‘providentia,’ waarin de onderlinge verhouding en samenhang dier ordeningen is bepaald, de belijdenis van den zonde-val van heel dien kosmos in het eerste hoofd van het menschengeslacht, en van de verlossing en wedergeboorte in Christus, als nieuwen wortel van onzen kosmos, naar de goddelijke praedestinasie.”²²

In these words we have as it were a summation of the Biblical principles in the light of which Dooyeweerd seeks to interpret the universe. Practically all the Biblical principles which, according to Potgieter himself, Calvin thought philosophically important are here present. From no other place than from the Bible does Dooyeweerd claim to have taken them.

We see then how unjust the accusation is when Potgieter maintains that according to Dooyeweerd philosophy must study the universe “eiemagtig”²³ or that it should seek to find its presuppositions “empirically.”²⁴

There is one point, however, which we wish to mention in conclusion. Potgieter argues that Dooyeweerd has not brought in his Scripture principles at the beginning of his discussions. He says: “Juis daarteen het ons bezwaar dat Professor Dooyeweerd nie van meet af die Skrifprinsipes vooropstel nie, maar dat hy die ontdekking daarvan aan die verdorwe subjek, al is dit dan die ego regeneratus, toes. As beweer word dat die wetsidee die wijsgerige grondidee is, word daarmee ‘n grondstelling neergel. wat reeds inhoud het, en wat, omdat dit surrogaat is van die geordende prinsipeskema wat aan die Skrif ontleen moet word, niet kan gechristianiseer word deur die Skrif eers later by te bring nie.”²⁵

The author rests this criticism chiefly upon a passage of Dooyeweerd which reads as follows:

¹⁹ *W. d. W.* 1, p. 473.

²⁰ p. 221.

²¹ *W. d. W.* 1, p. 132.

²² *W. d. W.* 1, p. 144.

²³ p. 204.

²⁴ p. 204.

²⁵ p. 220.

“Wanneer ik nochtans voor de grondidee der wijsbegeerte den term wetsidee handhaaf, dan heb ik daarvoor mijn bijzondere redenen. In de eerste plaats deze, dat, in de toespitsing op de voor-vragen van het wijsgeerig denken, de grondidee der wijsbegeerte zóó moet zijn gevat, dat zij inderdaad als noodwendige voorwaarde voor ieder wijsgeerig stelsel in het oog springt. De preciseering dezer grondidee naar de Christelijke-religieuze stellingkeuze tegenover onzen kosmos, m.a.w. de bepaling van den inhoud der grondidee, komt eerst daarna aan de orde.”²⁶

That Potgieter’s criticism is beside the point may be shown as follows. When Dooyeweerd argues that the term “wetsidee” is preferable to the term “scheppingsidee” as a name for the philosophy a Calvinist should hold, he does so merely because the term “wetsidee” finds formal recognition on the part of non-Christian philosophers. He says: “Aan ieder wijsgeerig stelsel ligt inderdaad een wetsidee ten grondslag. Een scheppingsidee zal daarentegen als grondidee der wijsbegeerte verworpen worden door ieder denker, die de schepping loochent of althans meent, dat zij in het wijsgeerig denken buiten spel moet blijven.”²⁷ As far as the content of the Christian notion of “wetsidee” is concerned, Dooyeweerd, as has already been shown, says that it must be immediately brought into relation with the “Oorsprong.” To prove his point Potgieter should have shown that in spite of himself Dooyeweerd has sought to determine the content of the Christian “wetsidee” apart from the Scriptural principles of creation and providence. This he has not done and indeed, we believe, could not do. The mere assertion that because Dooyeweerd calls the “wetsidee” “de wijsgeerige grondidee” proves nothing.

We may go even further than this. One of the great values, if not the chief value, of the work of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd is that it has diligently sought to avoid the error with which Potgieter charges it. Potgieter himself has not avoided this error. On the very page on which he charges Dooyeweerd with seeking to establish basic philosophical content independently of Scripture he speaks of “algemene waarhede” which believer and non-believer have in common. This point appears repeatedly in his book. We cannot take space to criticize it in detail. This much seems to be clear, however, that here we deal with philosophical content obtained independently of Scripture. It is content on which all, Christians and non-Christians alike, are supposed to agree. The philosophical principles which the Christian philosopher—or as Potgieter desires, the Christian theologian—may draw from Scripture would have to be adjusted to a common content between believer and unbeliever.

We cannot believe this to be in accord with the genius of Calvinism. The author, following his promotor, has not thought “teosentries” on this point. Perhaps for that reason he has been unable to appreciate at its true worth the “*Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*.”

²⁶ *W. d. W.* 1, p. 59.

²⁷ p. 59.

Philosophic Foundations

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Philosophic Foundations is a book worthy of careful study. The author is a man of philosophical insight and erudition. He has a definite philosophical principle in accord with which he interprets reality. By the help of his philosophy Mr. Thomas desires to bring men “to the gates of the gospel.”

Mr. Thomas writes in the spirit of one who is deeply convinced of the truth of his position and of the crying need of such a philosophy as he presents. In an address delivered after the publication of his book he says: “I saw that the freedom of the Absolute Spirit must be as absolute as His Rational essence. I know it was a daring step to take, but further philosophic investigation has convinced me of its fundamental necessity and truth. I set idealism afresh on the way of development by affirming the absolute freedom of the Absolute Spirit as the second foundation-stone of the New Philosophy. I know that such a fundamental revolution as this in Philosophy will startle many minds, and will surely meet with all possible criticism and opposition from the sponsors of modern scepticism; but I have found it shed such amazing light upon the problems of the universe that I am convinced that it, or some philosophy closely akin to it, will shape the thoughts of the philosophic future.”¹ The author, though speaking of his philosophy as a new philosophy is perfectly frank to admit that he follows the idealist tradition. He speaks with great appreciation of Plato and Hegel while yet he departs appreciably from the latter’s dialectical method and “determinist” conclusions. He seems to have profited greatly from the recent development in British idealist philosophy represented by such men as Pringle Pattison, James Ward, Clement C. J. Webb, Hastings Rashdall and others, though he does not mention them. With them he sets aside the “block universe” of Hegel and the more absolute idealists like F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet. By asserting the “absolute freedom of the Absolute Spirit” Thomas feels he has laid the true foundation for life and all its manifestations.

To catch the spirit of the book under discussion we must first note its great emphasis upon reason, and the place assigned to it. Mr. Thomas is careful to emphasise from time to time that he has reached his philosophical conclusions quite independently of Scripture. In the address mentioned above he says: “The revelation of Holy Scripture is *sui generis*, and every reasonable man must admit that outside of that revelation God has

¹ *The Spiritual Nature and Constitution of the Universe*. Reprinted from *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, Vol. 71, p. 67.

allowed and arranged a wide field of truth for the investigation of the human mind.”² Or again: “The conclusion from all I have said is this: While Divine Revelation has its own special range, the quest of mind has also an appointed range of its own, and this quest in a true Philosophy is in necessary and vital alliance with true religion and its Divine Revelation. There is a true Philosophy of being, whether we have discovered it or not, on which all the truths of life, from the lowest to the highest, must be based, and with which they must be in harmony. It is on these foundations of universal reason that all the heavens rest, and truth towers upwards into its highest Divine revelation.”³

These quotations already suggest to us a difficulty that we meet again and again in the philosophy of Mr. Thomas. We are told that philosophy and Revelation each have an area of investigation of their own. On the other hand it is evident that his philosophy covers the whole of reality in its quest. “All the truths of life” must be based on this philosophy and be in accord with it. Is it clear that on such a basis there is really any room left for Revelation at all?

At any rate Scriptural revelation, such as Christianity holds to, seems to us to be at variance with the conception of Reason entertained by Mr. Thomas. Scriptural revelation itself brings to us what for the moment we may call a “philosophy of being” an interpretation of the whole of life. Scripture offers a “life and world view.” It says something very distinctive and significant about what is often spoken of as the domain of philosophy and the domain of science. The “facts” of the scientist are, according to Scripture, created by God. They fit into the plan of God. They are therefore God-structured. God works all things after the counsel of His will. Scripture is specific on this point. There are no “brute facts” i.e., facts uninterpreted by God as well as by man. We may even say that it is God’s interpretation that is epistemologically prior to the existence of any fact in the universe.

To this something must be added with respect to the mind of man. Of this too, Scripture says something specific. In the first place Scripture says that man’s mind is a created mind. This is of basic importance. A philosophy that recognizes the created character of the human mind is one kind of philosophy; a philosophy that denies or ignores the created character of the human mind is another kind of philosophy. The two cannot walk together. A created mind recognizes or ought to recognize the fact that the Creator’s thoughts are high above its own thoughts. Isaiah speaks oft of this. Thus there is a Christian Irrationalism that is not only consistent with but the necessary implicate of the ultimate Rationality that is God and His plan. Man must think God’s thoughts after Him as far as it is possible for a creature to do so. But man can see only the beginning of God’s ways. By his intellectual efforts man must seek to bring as much coherence into his experience as he can. In doing so he must presuppose the Absolute Coherence that is in God. In God’s light man sees the light. But man must not presume to be as God. He must allow for that which to him is new before him and out of reach above him simply because in the nature of the case he cannot fathom the thought of God. God is and must be incomprehensible to man. Not as though God is a limiting concept for man, a concept which will always recede as the horizon but which he may legitimately seek to exhaust. God as the ultimate self-contained absolute rationality must reveal Himself spontaneously

² *Idem.*, p. 61.

³ *Idem.*, p. 62.

before man can know ought of Him. True, in creating man God has already revealed Himself to some extent. But even so, as Scripture tells us in its very beginning, God planned to have man know much more of Himself than he could naturally know from the fact of his creation in the image of God. If then man seeks for coherence in his experience he should always realize that his coherence, though to be sure analogical of God's internal coherence and therefore basically true, can yet be no more than analogical coherence.

This implies therefore (a) that a Christian is in the nature of the case utterly opposed to all forms of Irrationalism and (b) that a Christian is in the nature of the case utterly opposed to all forms of Rationalism. With respect to the first point we can rejoice in the effort of Mr. Thomas to oppose Barthianism. With respect to the second point, however, we are bound to maintain that he has been insufficiently critical of idealist philosophy. To be sufficiently critical of idealist philosophy is to reject its basic interpretative principle. Idealist philosophy speaks simply of Reason without making a genuine distinction between divine reason and human reason. I do not say that idealism makes no distinction at all between human and divine reason. It makes a distinction, to be sure, but merely a quantitative one. At bottom all Reason, divine, no less than human, is, for idealism, confronted with utterly brute fact. Plato worried about "unthought thoughts" about a "something" that stood in a manner of independence over against God and in terms of correlativity with which God had to be defined. And even Hegel, though as a limiting concept he honoured the Absolute, and sometimes speaks as though by his formula, the Real is the Rational and the Rational is the Real, he has slain the spectre of brute fact, none the less equates Being and non-Being at the beginning of his philosophy. Accordingly his dialectical method, itself born of illegitimate correlativity between bare potentiality and equally bare actuality passes on beyond God. Thus all forms of Rationalism, and, we may add, all forms of historic idealism are really irrationalistic at the core. Thus Rationalism is but a stepping-stone to Irrationalism.

Mr. Thomas is basically right, we believe, in saying that in Christianity we have a philosophy of the Absolute Spirit and therefore a philosophy of Absolute Rationality. In its notion of the self-contained ontological Trinity there is given us a Concrete Universal. In it unity and diversity are mutually exhaustive of one another. Thus, as Mr. Thomas says so well, there is within the Godhead a self-sufficient intercommunication. "The Christian conception of God is that, in His own Absolute and Infinite Personality He must be conceived as completely independent of the Finite creation. If we could conceive of the whole creation as being dissolved and swept into nothingness, the Infinite Spirit would abide in the unassailable and undiminished perfection and glory of His own Absoluteness."⁴ Or again: "In Philosophy itself, to face the truth with complete sincerity and simplicity, we must accept the idea of Infinite or limitative definitions, for even the profoundest metaphysic must condescend to accept terms and phrases in their patent meanings—the meanings which they convey to the general intelligence of Man."⁵ If he had boldly maintained this fundamental contention in his book, Mr. Thomas would have cut himself loose completely from the idealist principle of interpretation. Idealist philosophy, in assuming that it may rightfully speak of Reason without reference to the

⁴ p. 28.

⁵ p. 28.

creation idea, in assuming that “all possible experience” is essentially on one level, thereby makes God correlative to man. He who builds his philosophy on the uncritical assumption of the essential oneness in ontological status of divine and human reason, must, if he is not to lose himself in a formal identity philosophy, eventually confront God, no less than man, with brute fact and thus reduce God Himself to an abstract principle of unity that is somehow to string into unity equally abstract non-intelligible particularities.

Mr. Thomas, in spite of his best intentions to defend a truly rational philosophy and in spite of his best intentions to defend the doctrine of a God who is really Absolute, has been compelled by the force of his adopted principle of interpretation to fall into a species of Irrationalism and to make his God interdependent with the universe.

It is with reluctance that we make this basic criticism. But if we are ever to have a truly “evangelical philosophy,” a philosophy calculated to bring unity of thought to the Christian student’s mind, a philosophy that shall really challenge the mind of those we as Christians are seeking to win, we must needs be clear on our basic principle of interpretation. That basic principle of interpretation, there is no help for it, we must simply and frankly take from Scripture. It is nowhere else to be found. If sin had not come into the world this would be otherwise. Then man would, of his own accord, wish to interpret the whole of his experience in terms of the self-contained ontological Trinity. He would then wish to think God’s thoughts after Him. As it is the sinner seeks to do the opposite. Born and conceived in sin as he is, he prostrates his intellectual efforts to the justification of his self-assumed autonomy. The natural man—on this too, Scripture appears to be plain enough—hates God in the inmost core of his being. Even if by God’s restraining grace he is far from being in the manifestation of his personality as bad as he might be and one day will be, this does not change the fact that underneath all of the efforts of the natural man there is hatred of God. He has “worshipped and served” the creature rather than the Creator.

It is accordingly not too severe a stricture on non-Christian systems of philosophy to say that underneath them all there is the sinner’s effort at self-justification of his declaration of independence from God. The sinner is so utterly powerless in the vice of sin that he cannot of himself really attempt to interpret experience in terms of God. For him to do so would be to deny himself as a sinner. It is by grace alone that men can be saved from their never-ending efforts at interpreting life as ultimate autonomous interpreters instead of as derivative reinterpreters. It is therefore the frank acceptance of the Bible as the Voice of the Absolute and the acceptance of the regeneration of the mind of man which enables one truly to recognize the God which Mr. Thomas says a true philosophy requires. It appears to be quite impossible to divide experience into two domains, one of which is to be interpreted by reason and the other by revelation. Reason in the sense of man’s ratiocinative powers must always and everywhere be used. But Reason as an epistemological principle is a fiction and a snare. There is no escape from the simple alternative that faces every man. He may either interpret all of the universe, himself included, in terms of God or he may interpret all of the universe, himself included, in terms of himself. If he does the former he does so because he has by the Holy Spirit’s illuminating power accepted Scripture as God’s revelation. If he does the latter he does so because he persists in holding, whether psychologically conscious of the fact or not, two false assumptions, namely: (a) that he is not a sinner and (b) that he is not created by God. These two are naturally involved in one another. The sinner may speak

in exalted phraseology of Reason and of his desire to follow Reason fearlessly, what he really means, according to the basic principle of his being, is, that he will seek to interpret life as an ultimate interpreter who faces a universe utterly non-structural in nature till he comes with his categories bringing order into chaos.

2

Before seeking to substantiate our main criticism of the book under discussion we would briefly examine one objection that has constantly been raised to the position we have taken on the relation of Scripture and human reason. Mr. Thomas himself really voices the objection we have in mind when he says: "It was through the truths which God has placed within the reach of human reason that Paul introduced the message of the Gospel to the Athenian idolators. He told them that God has so arranged the scheme of things that men might 'seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him; though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being. As certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.' It was by this clear journey of the rational mind that Paul led the Athenians to the gates of the gospel, and some of them entered in, and found life."¹ To this he adds some familiar passages from the first section of Romans.

A careful exegesis of what Paul says in Romans and elsewhere does, however, not require us to reject the plain teachings of Scripture we have brought forward. For it should be clearly noted that if Paul meant to teach in the first section of Romans that the "natural man" can by the exercise of that *principium* of interpretation which alone as a natural man he honours, be led to the "gates of the gospel" he would have to contradict what he so plainly teaches, in Romans as elsewhere, that the natural man is at enmity against God and cannot discern the things of God. For Paul to ask men to find God by the exercise of their Reason according to their assumed principle of interpretation would be for him to ask them to find a finite God. All so-called "theistic-proofs" built up on the basis of the natural man's use of "Reason" have, as a matter of historical fact, led to a finite God. The "clear journey of the rational mind" could never lead men to the "gates of the gospel." What Paul did was not to recognize and honour the natural man's principle of interpretation but to challenge it. He told the Romans what they should have known had they rightly interpreted nature. He told them that the revelation of God was all about and even immediately within them, rendering them without excuse. He further told them, that as a matter of fact, none of them had truly interpreted experience. All of them as Calvin, following Paul, says of the "divine Plato" have lost themselves in their round globe. All of them have given exclusively immanentistic interpretations of reality. Paul seeks to bring men to the gates of the gospel and seeks to have them enter these gates by asking them to make a Copernican revolution. They are asked to worship and serve the Creator instead of the creature as they have formerly done. He points out to them that unless they interpret life on a new and radically different principle they are lost. He places himself upon their position, not really, but for argument's sake, and points out to them that unless they accept the new principle they are lost. His argument in Romans is not inconsistent with his challenge in First Corinthians: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the

¹ *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, Vol. 71, p. 62.

wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe."

If it be said that we must be on common ground with those we seek to win for Christ we would reply that if we were really on common ground with them we should together be lost. The blind cannot lead the blind. And if it be said that reasoning with men is of as little use as a display of colours would be in the valley of the blind, we reply that Jesus made the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He spoke to Lazarus in the tomb. Did He place Himself on common ground with Lazarus? And if He did not was there no purpose in His speaking to him? Jesus gave Lazarus life, as He spake to him. Thus, if only we speak in the name and by the authority of our Sender, we may reason with men, preach to men, in short make every form of appeal to men, confident, that in ways above our understanding, the Holy Spirit will enlighten them so that they may see and accept the truth.

Only thus, it seems to us, can we avoid perplexing "embranglements" with any and every form of non-Christian philosophy. We do not say that non-Christian philosophy is absolutely wrong in every sense. Just as men are restrained by God's "common grace" from running into the consummation of wickedness the principle of which is in them, so they may set forth many things that are far from fully wrong in every respect. We dare even say that they can produce that which is "good." Even Satan does much "good" in the world. Through his efforts to the contrary God's grace and general virtues are set before the eyes of men in ever greater splendour. Any God-made mind, operating on the material of God's universe, is bound to help display the truth. Accordingly we as Christians may do what Solomon did when he built the temple of God. He had skilled artisans, not partakers of the covenant, prepare material for him. So we, as long as we ourselves assume the responsibility of the architect, can use much of that which an idealist or even a pragmatist philosophy has said.

When first we take hold of the book of Mr. Thomas we might be encouraged to think that it is along such lines as these that he plans to develop his philosophy. We have already quoted his excellent statement about the doctrine of God. We are to have an absolute Spirit "without qualification or limitative definitions." The transcendence of God is said to be "as necessary a metaphysical idea" as His immanence. Against Hegel's "block universe" he insists on the freedom and independence of God. Says he: "Since this ordered universe has therefore only a relative and dependent existence, it is useless and unphilosophical to attempt to find the absolute within its dependency, as Hegel seems to have done by his evolving scheme of metaphysical logic; for the Absolute cannot be reached from below, but must be immediately apprehended from above."²

It soon appears, however, that Mr. Thomas is evolving his Absolute "from below." Following the idealist tradition he fails to do justice to the Biblical truths of creation and the fall in the assumptions he makes with respect to Reason. Nowhere in his book does he speak in the Biblical sense of created and sinful reason as over against uncreated and perfect Reason. True, Mr. Thomas makes a distinction between finite and Infinite Reason, but the distinction is patterned after the idealism of J. Caird. Speaking of the finite mind he says: "It is conscious of the Infinite, both in the measureless possibilities of its advance and in the mental equipment of universal Ideas through which this advance is

²p. 101.

achieved. But it is also conscious of vast limitation in its powers and achievements, and of an encompassing Universe of Infinity which it must for ever explore, and can never exhaust. In this way the Human Mind and the Infinite Mind in and through which it releases itself are fundamentally and for ever distinguished from one another.”³ All this seems sufficiently specific for us to feel that in it the Biblical distinction between Creator and creature is before us and that the absolute God is really “presupposed.” The fact of man’s limitation may simply mean what in fact it does mean to many philosophers and scientists namely, that there is an utterly uncharted realm of non-structured existence as a primeval forest for man to explore. The question is whether God too is in the woods surrounded by a still larger and ever expanding universe of brute fact. If God is also roaming in the primeval He may be ever so mighty a hunter and ever so far ahead of man, but He is not essentially different from man. The mind of a great scientist may be far ahead of me as I seek to make a few experiments of my own, but after all we are fellow men surrounded by the uninterpreted. I may be well-advised to take note of what, coming before me, and with far greater capacity than I have, God has already explored, but my interpretation need not be and cannot be a reinterpretation of His. He is not my Creator nor the Creator of the facts I seek to know.

But have we not seen that Mr. Thomas insists strongly on the necessity of believing in a really absolute God? We have, but we are disheartened when he virtually identifies his God with Plato’s God. When he has told us that the Absolute “must be immediately apprehended from above” he adds in the immediate context: “There can scarcely be any doubt that the Absolute was thus conceived by the mighty mind of Plato, when he set as the foundation of all Reality the ‘Idea of the Good,’ that is, of the philosophically good, the Absolute Potentiality of all that is true and beautiful. This ‘Idea’ was transcendent, distinguished from the ‘Ideas’ impressed upon the objects of the phenomenal world. It was the Absolute of Rational Intuition, abiding in its own eternal glory.”⁴ We are not concerned here with the contention that the Absolute must be reached by intuition rather than by the intellect in order to be seen “from above.” We are concerned merely with the nature of the Absolute itself. And on that score it is, we believe, highly confusing to speak as though Plato’s theism and Biblical theism were virtually identical. Whether we take the “Good” or the God of Plato, both were confronted with brute Irrationality. Neither can with fairness be said to be absolute as the God of the Christian faith is absolute.

Speaking of his conclusion that the Absolute God must be transcendent, Mr. Thomas says: “There is nothing disappointing or strange or surprising in this, for Reason is the ultimate authority in all knowledge, and we can never go behind or beyond it. Since it is valid as the active agent in knowledge, it must be valid also in presenting and conceiving the Absolute after its own image.”¹ Thus Mr. Thomas has arrived at his virtual identification of the Absolute of Plato with the Absolute of Christianity by working “from below.” It is to contradict the idea of creation when he says: “It is in the pure self-conscious Reason of Man, raised to Infinity by the operations of the same Reason, that

³ p. 20.

⁴ p. 101.

¹ p. 102.

we must seek to find the nature of the transcendent Absolute.”² It is this sort of thing that Plato and idealists after him have sought to do with the result that for them the Absolute is an abstract principle of identity that must somehow bring into unity abstract factuality. An Absolute reached “from below” is no Absolute.

There is a Sense, to be sure, in which we must start “from below.” Psychologically we must start our process of interpretation with ourselves. We cannot escape from ourselves and jump into the being of God. But this is not the point at issue. The real question is one of epistemology and not of psychology. And in epistemology we must begin “from above.” That is, we must presuppose God. Which is to say that we must take the notion of the self-contained, self-sufficient God as the most basic notion of all our interpretative efforts. If we fail to make God epistemologically prior to ourselves we cannot fail to descend with Plato and the idealists into a final Irrationality after all.

3

We turn now to see more specifically how Mr. Thomas gradually brings down his Absolute from a self-contained eternity to dependence on the created universe. One point on which Mr. Thomas constantly dwells is that of the “freedom of the Absolute Spirit.” Summing up in the lecture referred to what he had written in his book he says: “I saw that the freedom of the Absolute Spirit must be as Absolute as His rational essence.”³ At an early point in his book this point comes to the fore: “To the Absolute Spirit, Free Volition is as fundamental as the Infinite Essence of Rational Thought. A metaphysic of Infinite Reason without Free Volition leads inevitably to the mechanical enclosure of a ‘block Universe’ in which Man is no more than a pulse in the ticking of an Infinite Machine.”⁴ A little later he adds: “The infinitely Rational Spirit is also Infinitely Free. After the vast and inevitable Rational mechanism of Hegel, such a thesis as this will startle many, but it is the only way out from the Rational ‘block house’ into the Freedom of the Universe, and is therefore unhesitatingly accepted as the Foundation of the Philosophy of this book.”⁵

We can have no possible quarrel with an insistence on the freedom of God. The question is, What is the nature of this freedom and how is it obtained? Is it identical with God’s necessary self-existence, with His absolute freedom from dependence upon anything beyond Himself? We can most heartily agree with the form of statement which says that “the infinitely Rational Spirit is also infinitely Free,” but we are worried when Mr. Thomas speaks of the “Freedom of the Universe” as though it were virtually the same as the Freedom of God. By asserting the Freedom of God, Mr. Thomas argues: “The process of the Universe appears no longer as a predetermined Mechanism, but as a great and inspiring Idealism both for God and man.”⁶ It is perfectly apparent here that Mr. Thomas has sought for the freedom of God not by stressing His self-contained independence, but by opening up to Him an area of brute fact. Nothing could destroy both the freedom and the absolute rationality of God more effectively than to speak of a “process of the Universe” as an area of adventure for God. The Biblical doctrine of God

² p. 103.

³ p. 67.

⁴ p. 30.

⁵ p. 31.

⁶ p. 35.

is, we believe, altogether at variance with this. God's rationality and freedom are, according to Scripture, self-contained. This is the presupposition of that teaching which tells us that the process of the Universe is determined by God. The doctrine of the foreordination of all things in the Universe is based upon the absolute self-contained Freedom of God. To confront God with a structureless Universe is to make Him dependent on that Universe. Absolute Freedom in God consists, according to Scripture, in His absolute self-confrontation in the ontological Trinity.

The capitulation to the Irrational at this early point is fatal in its consequences. After this God is endowed with the freedom of the Mighty Hunter in the dark Forest. The idea of God's Self-limitation is introduced as fundamental to the philosophy of the book.⁷ "When we pass from the Absolute to the Ordered world," says Mr. Thomas, "we speedily discern that we have passed from a Timeless and Spaceless Rational Infinity to a Universe of which the perceptions are conditioned, and hence limited, by Time and Space. Consequently it is by this Self-Limitation through Time and Space that the Absolute Spirit wills to pass into the multiplicity of a Finite Universe."⁸

Space and time, Mr. Thomas contends, are the "Willed Self-Limitation of the Absolute Spirit of Reason."⁹ Thus the "Rational Spirit of the Absolute" is "conditioned by Time and Space"¹⁰, while "continual change is metaphysically necessary in a Universe conditioned by Time and Space."¹¹ The Self-Limitation of God later appears to be an act of "Self-renunciation"¹² "so that the whole of Being can be regarded as an act or process of sacrificial love."¹³ God "adventures a Universe on the astonishing basis of perfect Moral freedom."¹⁴ Thus we come to what Mr. Thomas says he is almost ready to call the "romance of the Absolute Spirit."¹⁵ "Here," he said, "are all the materials for history in *excelsis*. Here is the free arena for the Moral battle of the Universe. Here is the complete potentiality of world-agonies and world-ecstasies. Here are fought out the issues of Being amid the din of many voices and the clash of many forces. Here the Absolute Spirit adventures all on the victorious power of the free Moral ideal. And here He Himself, the Lord of the powers of freedom, is the omnipresent Warrior in the arena of conflict. This is history indeed."¹⁶ Once more he adds: "There is an element of freedom in history which cannot be bound or measured by the categories, and there is enough of irrational thinking and doing to throw all the Rational categories into confusion. History is not the production of a 'block Universe.' The history of mankind is real history, and truly belongs to the 'Universe in the making.' It is the creation of minds

⁷ p. 35.

⁸ p. 121.

⁹ p. 122.

¹⁰ p. 138.

¹¹ p. 156.

¹² p. 190.

¹³ p. 197.

¹⁴ p. 236.

¹⁵ p. 236.

¹⁶ p. 236.

that are free, and are given the power of initiative because, as Rational Beings, they are also Moral Beings.”¹⁷

Enough has been said to prove that Mr. Thomas has sought for God’s freedom by conditioning Him by forms of existence not under His control. On such a basis as this Mr. Thomas is not entitled to say that “the irresistible teleological force of the Absolute Spirit,” is bound to realize “the perfect end,” of “this Moral ‘Universe in the making.’ ”¹⁸ First to say that there are irrational forces, forces beyond God’s control, and then to say that God’s teleological force is irresistible is to take back with one hand what you have given with the other. If we make the Rational and the Irrational equally ultimate correlative forces in Reality we have reached a point where we ought to abstain from further mention of the Absolute God.

The sad consequences of following the dictates of an uncritically accepted Divine-human Reason to the end appear perhaps most fully when Mr. Thomas approaches the person and work of Christ. The work of redemption is presented as really being the natural consequence of the work of creation. In creation God has given to men as the makers of history the freedom “even to be irrational.” God had to make this adventure for purposes of Self-realisation.¹⁹ And God is bound to succeed. So He must and does follow up creation with redemption. We quote: “But the attainment of the Moral ideal is written in the nature of the Absolute Spirit and in the purpose of creation, and it cannot fail. The Absolute Spirit cannot rest until He sees His own Moral image in the Rational Spirits He has produced. His great Self-renunciation in creation must culminate in perfect Self-realisation, when Moral harmony shall be for ever complete. The passions of men must be subdued and the Moral ideal must be all in all. Either by penal judgment or by Moral attraction the Moral evil that opposes the Absolute must be destroyed.”²⁰

Our objection to all this is not that God has a unified plan and that this plan includes redemption as well as creation. Our objection is to pooling God with the Universe in order then to speak of Reason as controlling all. A truly Christian philosophy should, it seems to us, begin with the notion of God as self-contained. Then there never can be irrational forces beside Him. Then creation exists really by the fiat of His will. Then creation is perfect at the outset. Creation is no adventure for God. He is not as it were taking chances with millions of little ultimate creators who are free to produce the ultimately irrational. Thus God does not need to realize Himself through a huge adventure. If man sins against Him, He does not need, for purposes of Self-realisation, to follow up creation with salvation. When God saves men He saves them by grace. An “evangelical philosophy” should not be fundamentally inimical to the evangel. So far from leading men “to the gates of the gospel” a philosophy of abstract Reason leads, however unintentionally, to naturalistic conclusions. It is bound to trim the message of the Gospel till it fits into an impersonal pattern of Rationality. The postulates of such a Reason are no doubt “imperative” but they are not “convincing.”²¹

¹⁷ p. 252.

¹⁸ p. 256.

¹⁹ p. 208.

²⁰ p. 261.

²¹ p. 85.

We deal with a major effort of interpretation in the work of Mr. Thomas. He has tried anew to make a modified form of idealist philosophy the theistic foundation of Christianity. He has made a splendid effort, but the best man cannot do the impossible. Mr. Thomas finds himself compelled to appeal from formal logic to a “unity of contradiction.”²² In this he frankly follows Hegel. Life, he argues, “is far profounder and more complex than Formal Logic.”²³ Contradictions are said to be inherent in the relation of the infinite and Finite.²⁴ No one need imagine for a moment then, that Mr. Thomas pretends to offer a philosophy of Rationality in which the union of all the dimensions of reality will be immediately penetrable by man’s discursive intellect. It is to a higher Rationality that the appeal is made. Scarcely any serious philosopher to-day would do otherwise. That mystery out-stretches even the most penetrating efforts of man’s intellect hardly a scientist or philosopher to-day denies. Thus we are face to face again with a simple alternative. Christian-theism really presupposes a Rationality that is higher than man can reach. It takes its position frankly on the doctrine of the self-contained Rational deity. It therefore does not believe in a union of contradictories. For God there are no unthought thoughts; He is the self-consistent ultimate Self-affirmative one who needs no correlative of irrationality in contrast with which He may define Himself. Such a God is really free. Such a God it is that has freely created the world according to a rational plan which man can only in part understand. Such a God it is who alone can save by grace.

On the other hand all non-Christian philosophies, idealism no less than others, start with man. They first try to fix all reality by the pattern of formal logic. Then, driven to despair, lost in the woods of ultimate Irrationality, they resort to a logic of contradictions. Thus a philosophy of Rationality not based on the God of Scripture refutes itself by culminating in Irrationality.

If theological students are to be warned against Barthian irrationality, if science and philosophy students are to evaluate the “abstractions” of science aright they ought to be offered a truly rational philosophy, a philosophy rational from beginning to end, the philosophy based on the God of the Christian Scriptures.

²² p. 88.

²³ p. 273.

²⁴ p. 273.

The Nature and Destiny of Man

Reinhold Niebuhr: *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1941. 12, 306. \$2.75.

Reinhold Niebuhr's *Beyond Tragedy*, published in 1937, consisted of "Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History." The Gifford Lectures on *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 1941, undertake a similar task on a larger scale and in a more systematic manner. The first volume of this work lies before us. It deals with *Human Nature*. The second volume, soon to follow, will deal with *Human Destiny*.

In reading the volume on *Human Nature* our high expectations are not disappointed. The breadth and depth of vision of Niebuhr's work mark it as a worthy companion to the lectures given on the Gifford foundation by William James, John Dewey, Josiah Royce and William E. Hocking. Niebuhr tries to see life whole and see it through.

"Man has always been his own most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself? Every affirmation which he may make about his stature, virtue, or place in the cosmos becomes involved in contradictions when fully analysed."¹ In this very first sentence of his book Niebuhr serves notice that we can no longer be satisfied with a narrow naturalism or an equally narrow rationalism. Dewey and Whitehead are taken to task, the former for his rigid naturalism, the latter for his rigid rationalism. The "confidence in the goodness of man" displayed in the naturalism of Dewey, argues Niebuhr, is equalled if not surpassed by the "idealistic optimism" of Whitehead. Whitehead's "speculative reason" is the reason " 'which Plato shares with God.' " Though hampered by the " 'pragmatic reason,' " " 'which Ulysses shares with the foxes,' " it none the less " 'seeks with disinterested curiosity an understanding of the world.' "²

Niebuhr has no sympathy either with naturalistic or rationalistic optimism. He says they share a common weakness. For them the "unquietness of the human spirit" is something that does not lie embedded in the very nature of man.

This broad indictment becomes broader still in the following words: All modern views of human nature are adaptations, transformations and varying compounds of primarily two distinctive views of man: (a) The view of classical antiquity, that is of the Graeco-Roman world, and (b) the Biblical view. It is important to remember that while these two views are distinct and partly incompatible, they were actually merged in the thought of medieval Catholicism. (The perfect expression of this union is to be found in the Thomistic synthesis of Augustinian and Aristotelian thought.) The history of modern culture really begins with the destruction of this synthesis, foreshadowed in nominalism, and completed in the Renaissance and

¹ p. 1.

² p. 113.

Reformation. In the dissolution of the synthesis, the Renaissance distilled the classical elements out of the synthesis and the Reformation sought to free the Biblical from the classical elements. Liberal Protestantism is an effort (on the whole an abortive one) to reunite the two elements³

In opposition to this modern, largely classical view of man, Niebuhr strives to make a truly Christian analysis of the nature of man. We are to investigate the metaphysical presuppositions of both the classical-modern and the Christian view of man.

As the classical view is determined by Greek metaphysical presuppositions, so the Christian view is determined by the ultimate presuppositions of Christian faith.⁴

As soon as we reach this point, however, our difficulties with Niebuhr's position emerge. We rejoice in the penetrating criticism he offers of various "naturalistic" and "rationalistic" views. Yet we are bound to maintain that his analysis of the presuppositions of the Christian faith itself rests upon the assumption of the truth of the classical-modern view of man. Niebuhr speaks of the Christian view of man as follows: The Christian faith in God as Creator of the world transcends the canons and antinomies of rationality, particularly the antinomy between mind and matter, between consciousness and extension. God is not merely mind who forms a previously given formless stuff. God is both vitality and form and the source of all existence. He creates the world. This world is not God; but it is not evil because it is not God. Being God's creation, it is good.⁵

"~is man's highest assertion of freedom."⁶ This solution, thinks Niebuhr, we largely owe to Kierkegaard:

Kierkegaard's explanation of the dialectical relation of freedom and fate in sin is one of the profoundest in Christian thought. He writes: 'The concept of sin and guilt does not emerge in its profoundest sense in paganism. If it did paganism would be destroyed by the contradiction that man becomes guilty by fate.... Christianity is born in this very contradiction.'⁷

By this "qualitative leap," argues Niebuhr, the "paradoxical relation of inevitability and responsibility" is best explained.⁸ "Sin posits itself."⁹ In this position Niebuhr finds "the ultra-rational foundations and presuppositions of Christian wisdom about man."¹⁰

We naturally expect that Niebuhr will distinguish sharply between his position and that of the orthodox faith. In a section that deals with "literalistic errors" Niebuhr contrasts what he speaks of as the representative and the historical character of Adam's sin.¹¹ He then says:

It is obviously necessary to eliminate the literalistic illusions in the doctrine of original sin if the paradox of inevitability and responsibility is to be fully understood; for the theory of an inherited second nature is as clearly destructive of the idea of responsibility for sin as rationalistic and dualistic theories which attribute human evil to the inertia of nature.¹²

A little further on he adds:

³ p. 5.

⁴ p. 12.

⁵ p. 12.

⁶ p. 263.

⁷ p. 263.

⁸ p. 254.

⁹ p. 252.

¹⁰ p. 16.

¹¹ p. 261.

¹² p. 262.

The relation of man's essential nature to his sinful state cannot be solved within terms of the chronological version of the perfection before the Fall. It is, as it were, a vertical rather than horizontal relation. When the Fall is made an event in history rather than a symbol of an aspect of every historical moment in the life of man, the relation of evil to goodness in that moment is obscured.¹³

But if the "literalistic errors" are to be rejected, we would maintain, the naturalistic and idealistic errors, against which Niebuhr has so vigorously protested, must be accepted. We face a simple but profound alternative at this point. In opposition to naturalism and idealism, Niebuhr says, "God is not merely mind who forms a previously given formless stuff."¹⁴ But "formless stuff" with "abstract universal idea" is the only alternative to the "literalistic error" of creation. To say that God is "the source of all existence"¹⁵, and not to mean this causally is to cut man in two. It is to make him an inhabitant, on the one hand, of the world of "alogical fact"¹⁶ with the naturalists and, on the other hand, of the world of the impersonally divine with the idealist.

The error of the naturalist, argues Niebuhr, is to regard causality as the principle of meaning.¹⁷ But without causal creation by a God of self-contained meaning the world of causality is what the naturalist says it is, a world without meaning. The "vitalities of history" then have in them the power to defy forever the "structure" that "God" may seek to impose upon them. It is true enough that naturalistic interpretations "do not understand the total stature of freedom in which human life stands" and that they are unable "to appreciate the necessity of a trans-historical norm of historical life."¹⁸ It is equally true, however, that Niebuhr, in rejecting causal creation, retains a naturalistically interpreted world which must artificially be brought into relationship with the world of the "trans-historical."

The error of the idealist, argues Niebuhr, is that he has a God of pure form, of abstract structure. But a God who is not the causal creator of the world can be nothing more than pure Form. We may impersonate this Form but all the bellows of our imagination cannot give it life.

What then does Niebuhr offer us that is better than the "idolatry" of naturalism and the "idolatry" of idealism? He offers us a combination of these idolatries. For all his criticism of naturalistic and idealistic "idolatries" he yet turns these "idolatries" into subordinate principles which, for him, are true in their place. His final argument is directed against what he thinks to be the mistake of substituting a subordinate for an ultimate principle of interpretation. Says he:

If the effort is made to comprehend the meaning of the world through the principle of natural causation alone, the world is conceived in terms of a mechanistic coherence which has no place for the freedom which reveals itself in human consciousness. Rational principles of coherence represent another, somewhat higher, and yet inadequate system of meaning. Every effort to identify meaning with rationality implies the deification of reason.¹⁹

¹³ p. 269.

¹⁴ p. 12.

¹⁵ p. 12.

¹⁶ p. 120.

¹⁷ p. 134.

¹⁸ p. 164.

¹⁹ p. 165.

It appears then that “naturalism” and “idealism” are, after all, thought to be right as far as they go. The “ultra-rational foundations and presuppositions” of the Christian faith will have to accord with the presuppositions of naturalism and idealism. Says Niebuhr: Though the religious faith through which God is apprehended cannot be in contradiction to reason in the sense that the ultimate principle of meaning cannot be in contradiction to the subordinate principle of meaning which is found in rational coherence yet, on the other hand religious faith cannot be simply subordinated to reason or made to stand under its judgment.²⁰

In this manner Niebuhr keeps the “ultra-rational” principles within proper bounds, within bounds that the “autonomous individual” can readily allow. The contrast between the classical-modern and the Biblical view of man has after all been effaced. With all due appreciation for the breadth of Niebuhr’s position we must yet maintain that its breadth consists, in the last analysis, in little more than an effort to give various naturalistic and idealistic perspectives their due. The superrationalistic dimensionalism that comes forth from the crucible of this procedure may be said to be “nearer to the Christian faith and a more perverse corruption of it” than either naturalism or idealism.

Reinhold Niebuhr: *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation. 2—Human Destiny.* Charles Scribner’s Sons. 1943. 14, 329. \$2.75.

As in the first volume of his Gifford Lectures Professor Niebuhr dealt primarily with human nature, so in the second he deals primarily with human destiny. The two together offer a comprehensive philosophy of history. This subject stands in the forefront of theological and philosophical discussion today. The mere mention of such works as *The Interpretation of History* by Paul Tillich, *The Meaning of History* by Nicolas Berdyaev, *Time and Eternity in Christian Thought* by F. H. Brabant and *Philosophy and History, Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer*, is enough to indicate this fact. Generally speaking the recent works dealing with the philosophy of history presuppose a critical epistemology. Such is also the case with the work before us. More particularly it is Kierkegaard’s notion of the Individual, as having true particularity and true universality within itself, that has captivated Niebuhr’s mind. But Niebuhr is the slave of none. His work merits attention on its own account. In the American scene it presents a challenge to liberalism and orthodoxy alike.

Like so many modern works on the philosophy of history the present volume wants to make it very clear that it is anti-metaphysical. We are to have no truck with what Hegel called the *alte Metaphysik*. Once and for all we have done with the thing in itself. We simply deal with natural experience and its rational analysis.¹ There may, and even must, be that which is beyond human experience, but a beyond that is self-contained would be irrelevant to us. The only God we can allow for is one that stands in dialectical relationship to us. Applied to the general idea of history this means what Niebuhr says in such passages as the following: “The significance of the affirmation that God is revealed in Christ, and more particularly in his Cross, is that the love (*agape*) of God is conceived in terms which make the divine involvement in history a consequence of precisely the

²⁰ p. 165.

¹ p. 96.

divine transcendence over the structures of history.”² It is only this sort of God that answers to the true idea of man. Each man is an individual. As such he is both involved in and transcendent over the historical process.³ “Man is, and yet is not, involved in the flux of nature and time. He is a creature, subject to nature’s necessities and limitations; but he is also a free spirit who knows of the brevity of his years and by this knowledge transcends the temporal by some capacity within himself.”⁴ A God wholly above history, one not himself naturally involved in history, could be of no service to man. It is only if both God and man are alike involved in and alike above history that they can stand in relationship with one another. And the relation between them may then be said to be dialectical in character.

The nature of the dialectical relationship between God and man appears more fully in what is said about the person of Christ. The Christ also must be beyond, but not too absolutely beyond, man. Man has need of one who is more supra-natural than he is himself. Any particular man is too tightly bound to nature. No individual has become anything like what he may be. But a Christ who is wholly supra-natural would be useless to man. The Christ must be paradoxically related to man. The church sought to give expression to this paradoxical relationship in the Chalcedon creed. But “by stating this double facet of Christ in ontic terms, a truth of faith, which can be expressed only symbolically, is transmuted into a truth of speculative reason.”⁵ The result was “logical nonsense.” “But,” says Niebuhr, “the logical nonsense is not as serious a defect as the fact that the statement tends to reduce Christian faith to metaphysical truths which need not be apprehended inwardly by faith.”⁶ The orthodox doctrine would establish man in his “false security and pride.”

What has been said so far may suffice to indicate briefly the metaphysics of Niebuhr’s book. To be anti-metaphysical in the post-Kantian sense of the term means to have a metaphysics of correlativity between God and man. The first great theologian to define Christianity in terms of this correlativism was Schleiermacher. The essence of Christianity, argues Schleiermacher in effect, can be set aside only if we spoil the dialectical tension between God and man. This may be done in either of two ways. We may lift man up so high and bring the Christ down so low as virtually to identify them. Or we may push man down so low and lift the Christ up so high as to break all contact between them. A speculative theology always tends to either one or the other of them; it is only if we are antimetaphysical, it is only if we think of dogmas as faith-constructs that we can maintain the true essence of Christianity.⁷ Niebuhr has not materially altered the basic contention of Schleiermacher. When he argues that the Greeks did not expect the Christ and the Jews expected the wrong Christ, he is virtually saying what Schleiermacher said. The Greeks, says Niebuhr, want to save man by taking him out of history, while the Jews want to bring salvation down to something that takes place directly within history. The former maintain that man is not really man till he is wholly

² p. 71.

³ p. 36.

⁴ p. 1.

⁵ p. 60.

⁶ p. 61.

⁷ *The Christian Faith*, Engl. tr., pp. 94 ff.

supra-historical and the latter contend that true manhood can be fully expressed in history. The truth, he reasons, lies in between. Man must be saved both by fulfillment in, and by liberation from, history. History must not be swallowed up in eternity and eternity must not be swallowed up in history. The perfect Individual, the one who realizes the true idea of manhood as our ideal, must, as it were, be wholly above and wholly within history. It is the “second Adam” that meets these requirements.

The anti-metaphysical metaphysics of Niebuhr is, we note, supposed to do at least these two things: (1) it is to save the essence of Christianity and (2) it is to save us from the “logical nonsense” of orthodoxy. These two are, for Niebuhr, involved in one another. This is strikingly illustrated in what he says about the wrath and the mercy of God. The two, he contends, must be taken as dialectically involved in one another. If not so taken we destroy them both and at the same time return to the “logical nonsense” of orthodoxy. Wrath is not an attitude of displeasure by some God who is wholly eternal, towards man who is wholly temporal. On the contrary wrath is an aspect of the structure of a Reality that has both an eternal and a temporal aspect. “The wrath of God is the world in its essential structure reacting against the sinful corruptions of that structure; it is the law of life as love, which the egotism of man defies, a defiance which leads to the destruction of life.”⁸ And mercy as expressed in the idea of atonement is not the act of a God who can do what he pleases inasmuch as he is sovereign over the universe. Mercy, too, is a part of the structure of the Universe that is inclusive of both God and man. “The revelation of the Atonement is precisely a ‘final’ word because it discloses a transcendent divine mercy which represents the ‘freedom’ of God in quintessential terms: namely God’s freedom over His own law. Yet this freedom is not capricious. It is paradoxically related to God’s law, to the structure of the world. This is the paradox of the Atonement, of the revelation of the mercy of God in its relation to the justice of God.”⁹ It is always the Universe or Reality that is Niebuhr’s final subject of predication. This Reality is full of tensions, the most fundamental of all being that of time and eternity. Involved in this basic tension of time and eternity is that of wrath and mercy. Man will always be temporal and as such always under the wrath of God. Man will always be eternal and thus always under the mercy of God. The sin and grace antithesis is inherent in the time-eternity antithesis; ethics and metaphysics are at bottom one.

In all this we have Niebuhr’s equivalent to what Tillich calls the “dimension of depth” in human experience. By means of it we are to escape the flat moralism of modern liberal theology. Having no truly dialectical conception of sin, liberalism, Niebuhr argues, has an inadequate notion of the mercy of God. Niebuhr would call liberalism back to a deeper sense of sin and a deeper sense of the grace of God. He presents a challenge to many of his contemporaries on this point. Yet it is orthodoxy rather than liberalism that is his chief foe. The basic contrast running through the whole book is that between “literalism” and dialecticism. Liberalism may lack for depth of insight into the wrath and mercy of God; it is not logically nonsensical nor as such destructive of Christianity itself as orthodoxy is. We do well then to bring out more fully the contrast between dialecticism and literalism or orthodoxy as Niebuhr sees it. This will enable us to understand more clearly the general principles so far discussed.

⁸ p. 56.

⁹ p. 67.

To begin with, literalism requires us to believe in an actual state of historical perfection at the beginning of history. But this is nonsensical. Such a state cannot have existed. History is in the nature of the case always subject to the wrath of God. Original sin is therefore more profoundly original than Calvin ever thought of making it. If we wish to use the idea of a perfect man we must always look forward to it as an ideal, but never backward to it as a reality. Life “can approach its original innocency only by aspiring to its unlimited end.”¹⁰

Moreover, if, *per impossible*, we imagine a perfect man at the beginning of history such a man could have had no permanent and all-determinative influence on his posterity. Every individual, though in one sense subject to nature, is also above nature. That is, every man at every point in time has a direct as well as an indirect relationship to eternity. No man is fully determined by his historical antecedents. Every man is free as Adam was free. Every man is and must be his own Adam. Thus original sin is not nearly so serious a thing as Calvin made of it. The idea of a first Adam is meaningless unless it is made subordinate to the idea of the second Adam.

But literalism spoils the idea of the second Adam as much as that of the first. As it fails to understand the symbolism of the first Adam’s innocency so it also fails to understand the symbolism of the second Adam’s perfection. As it brings the innocency of the first Adam down into history, so it also brings the sinlessness of the second Adam down into history. But the historical Jesus was not perfect. If he had been he would not have been historical.¹¹ Christ as the second Adam ought rather to be taken as the essential man, “the perfect norm of human character.”¹² As such he reveals to us the ideal of sacrificial love. The first Adam lived in a state of innocence. That is, history began with natural undifferentiated life. But as freedom developed, good and evil also developed. And evil seemed likely to prevail over the good, for “a strategy of brotherhood which has no other resource but historical experience degenerates from mutuality to a prudent regard for the interests of the self ...”¹³ It is here that the idea of the second Adam comes in. Christ stands for the idea of sacrificial love. This love can never be actually realized fully in history as such; it must always remain primarily ideal. It “has its primary justification in an ‘essential reality’ which transcends the realities of history, namely, the character of God.”¹⁴ But God, it will be remembered, stands in paradoxical relation to man. Though transcendent above, he is also of necessity involved in, history. Accordingly sacrificial love, while it is always essentially an ideal above history must yet make its contact with history. The Cross always represents a “transcendent perfection”: “The New Testament never guarantees the historical success of the ‘strategy’ of the Cross.”¹⁵ For this reason “it is not even right to insist that every action of the Christian must conform to *agape*, rather than to the norms of relative justice and mutual love by which life is maintained and conflicting interests are arbitrated in

¹⁰ p. 77.

¹¹ p. 73.

¹² p. 76.

¹³ p. 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ p. 87.

history.”¹⁶ Yet the Cross is not wholly above history. As the ideal of sacrificial love it is a “desirable end of historical striving.” Jesus’ perfection, then, must be thought of as genuine historical striving for the always receding and primarily suprahistorical ideal. Literalism has no eye for this.

Niebuhr’s teaching on the consummation of history naturally accords with the symbolism of the first and second Adam of which we have spoken. And this time Jesus and Paul are among the literalists whose views must first be discarded. “One seemingly serious, but actually superficial, change in Jesus’ own interpretation must be made. He expected the historic interim between the first and second establishment of the Kingdom to be short. In this error he was followed both by St. Paul and the early church, with the consequent false and disappointed hope of the *parousia* in the lifetime of the early disciples.”¹⁷ There was a very good excuse for this mistake. It was the most natural thing for people to think in terms of years when they spoke of the relation of time to eternity. “This error was due to an almost inevitable illusion of thought which deals with the problem of the relation of time and eternity. The *eschata* which represents the fulfillment and the end of time in eternity are conceived literally and thereby made a point in time. The sense that the final fulfillment impinges on the present moment, the feeling of urgency in regard to anticipating this fulfillment, expressed itself in chronological terms and thereby becomes transmuted into a ‘proximate futurism,’ into the feeling that the fulfillment of history is chronologically imminent.”¹⁸

Apparently neither Jesus nor Paul realized that it is “important to take Biblical symbols seriously but not literally.”¹⁹ By taking them literally they seem to have imperilled “the dialectical relation between history and superhistory.”²⁰ Niebuhr speaks of Jesus’ mistake as only apparently serious. Yet when others make the same mistake that Jesus is said to have made, it is said to be destructive of Christianity and logically nonsensical. What Niebuhr is really saying is that the historical Jesus was quite mistaken in his basic philosophy of history. For the difference between the literalism of Jesus and the dialecticism of Niebuhr is not limited to a question of earlier and later. According to Niebuhr, Jesus was simply and radically wrong in thinking that anywhere in history a state of perfection could ever exist.

Niebuhr seeks to avoid the logic of this situation by distinguishing his position from that of Albert Schweitzer. Speaking of Schweitzer’s views he says: “According to his conception the whole ethic and religion of Jesus is based upon the illusion of his proximate return.”²¹ Then he adds: “The real fact is that the absolute character of the ethic of Jesus conforms to the actual constitution of man and history, that is, to the transcendent freedom of man over the contingencies of nature and the necessities of time, so that only a final harmony of life with life in love can be the ultimate norm of his existence.”²² But surely the palm of consistency must be accorded to Schweitzer rather

¹⁶ p. 88.

¹⁷ pp. 49 f.

¹⁸ p. 50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² pp. 50 f.

than to Niebuhr. The Jesus of Niebuhr's portrait is really both radically wrong and radically right, while yet he is assumed to be essentially consistent with himself. Jesus is said to be really an expert in reading off human nature correctly. That is, Jesus is in effect to be taken as the first genuine dialecticist. He saw clearly that man is inherently both temporal and supra-natural, that history must therefore always contain both evil and good. Yet Jesus was also a literalist living under the delusion that his second coming in perfection would take place at a point in time. He was the first one really to originate the true Christ idea as always ideal and then destroyed this ideal by making of it a reality of history as such. Niebuhr has no logical right on his principles to dismiss the literalism of Jesus as a minor matter. He should at least have spoken of a serious lapse on the part of Jesus from true dialecticism into destructive literalism.

More basic than that, Niebuhr should have cut himself loose from the historical Jesus altogether. The historical Jesus took the Old Testament with its story of creation literally. He claimed to be without sin and he claimed that he would return on the clouds of heaven as his disciples had seen him go. If Niebuhr wants to hold to a dialectical construction of reality, it is well, but the legitimacy of his attributing it to the Jesus of history must be questioned.

The same point must also be made with respect to what the volume before us says about the Reformation. Niebuhr presents his dialectical reconstruction of Christianity as being truly Protestant in character. Rome, he says, had claimed to have escaped the ambiguities of history.²³ The Reformers, on the other hand, understood the nature of the Biblical paradox. Even so they fell back frequently into the Roman error.²⁴ They made absolute distinctions between those that were and those that were not justified by faith. In this they were mistaken. History allows of no absolute distinctions anywhere. "This fact suggests that Reformation insights must be related to the whole range of human experience more 'dialectically' than the Reformation succeeded in doing. The 'yes' and 'no' of its dialectical affirmations: that the Christian is '*justus et peccator*,' 'both sinner and righteous'; that history fulfills and negates the kingdom of God; that grace is continuous with, and in contradiction to, nature; that Christ is what we ought to be and also what we cannot be; that the power of God is in us and that the power of God is against us in judgment and mercy; that all these affirmations which are but varied forms of the one central paradox of the relation of the Gospel to history must be applied to the experiences of life from top to bottom."²⁵ Here, too, it would have been better if Niebuhr had set his position fully and frankly in opposition to that of the Reformers. Luther and Calvin were anything but paradoxical in the main thrust of their theology. They were followers of Jesus and Paul in their literalism. Luther and Calvin thought history was a fit medium for the direct expression of the plan of God; indeed they thought of history as being nothing other than an expression of that plan. The idea of an ideal limit always suprahistorical as well as historical, such as a "critically informed" modern theology offers us, was foreign to their thought. The "new synthesis" that, according to Niebuhr, is the need of the hour, ought therefore to have been presented as wholly new, or at least as being as new as *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

p. 145.

²⁴ p. 203.

²⁵ p. 204.

If the dialecticism of Niebuhr is calculated to save the essence of Christianity, it is so because it is at the same time calculated to destroy historic Christianity. Such has been the conclusion of what has been said up to this point. A life and death struggle will naturally ensue between those who still hold to historical Christianity and those who follow the “new synthesis” that is offered by Niebuhr’s dialecticism. Niebuhr claims that literalism or orthodoxy has given us a false reading of human nature and history. This claim has not been substantiated in his book. Indeed the charge that he makes on this score with respect to orthodoxy must be made with respect to himself.

For Niebuhr there are two orders of reality. The one consists of the contingencies of nature and the necessities of time. The other is that of timeless rationality or logic. The one is called natural and the other supernatural or rational. And man is said to participate in both. He warns us not to forget this fact. Man must not be taken as belonging to the natural order only. Nor must he be taken as belonging to the rational order only. We must not be naturalists. Nor must we be rationalists. We must be dialecticists. Naturalism misreads and destroys experience. Rationalism does the same. But by joining naturalism and rationalism we read experience aright and save the meaning of history. Such is, broadly speaking, the nature of the argument of the present, as of the previous, volume. But why the adding of two errors should produce the truth is not apparent.

The defenders of Niebuhr’s position will no doubt exclaim that dialecticism is not the mere addition of naturalism and rationalism. Is not the whole more than its parts? Does not the whole even precede its parts? When naturalism and rationalism are made correlative to one another in dialecticism they have lost their identity, they have become quite different in character.

To this we would make the following reply. It cannot be shown that in dialecticism the whole is greater than its parts. Dialecticism is not a unity that controls its parts. It is but a dictatorial cohesion by which rationalism and naturalism are brought together against their will. This is apparent from the fact that Niebuhr is, throughout his book, either a rationalist or a naturalist. It is only the rapidity with which he shifts from one position to the other that gives the appearance of something else.

We are told that dialecticism is simply the correct reading of experience. Yet the nature of experience is basically determined by purely rationalist methods. Niebuhr simply swings about the law of non-contradiction to determine what is possible and impossible. The existence of a transcendent God above history is said to be impossible, and why? Because such existence would not be penetrable to the intellect of man. The idea of an originally perfect man is said to be impossible, and why? Again because it is not penetrable to the intellect of man. The Chalcedon creed is said to present us with logical nonsense, and why? It, too, is not penetrable to the intellect of man. The idea of a final victory over evil in history is said to be impossible, and why? Again because it is not penetrable to the mind of man. Thus the intellect is sent out to bring down the mountains and lift up the valleys in John the Baptist fashion in preparation for the coming of experience. All reality has been swept clean of that which might have qualities of its own and thus prove to be in any measure determinative of experience. Experience may now be truly free and unrestrained. Or, so it seems.

When the intellect has swept all things clean it has at the same time prescribed strict limits for experience. John the Baptist has claimed to be the Messiah himself. Experience that has accepted the services of rationalism for purposes of clearance is bound to trade

with rationalism when it seeks for positive content. And this is the death of experience as anything that is intelligible. It means that experience to have meaning must become pure formal logic. To have meaning, experience must become timeless. For individuals to have relations with other individuals they must all become universals. For Frenchmen to be Frenchmen and for Poles to be Poles they must become members of the *Reich*.

Of course experience may seek to escape its own destruction at the hands of Master Intellect by refusing to trade with him at all. But then it must be sub-rational or non-rational. The individual to be a true individual must then have no contact with any other individual. Every Frenchman not ready to be a true Frenchman and every Pole not ready to be a true Pole by leaving home for work in a munitions factory of the *Reich* may make a fox-hole for himself at home and remain there the rest of his natural life. That is to say the “contingencies of nature” of which Niebuhr speaks are what they are in their utter meaninglessness just because his world of meaning is a world of abstract logic. Naturalism and rationalism are always close friends.

The dialecticism of Niebuhr now appears for what it really is. Niebuhr is first a rationalist. The logic of his rationalism would lead him to the position of Parmenides. Unwilling to land there, he assumes the ultimacy of change. But the change he thus assumes must be irrational. If it is not irrational it is, on his basis, not change. So Niebuhr is secondly a naturalist. But unwilling to be either a rationalist or a naturalist he stands with one foot on one and with one foot on the other position, apparently hoping thus to make a fine-pulling team of them. But pure rationalism and pure irrationalism each want to control everything. Each horse will pull in the opposite direction from the other for all it is worth. Dialecticism is but the attempt to ride off with both horses in opposite directions at the same time.

This is not to say that dialecticism is any less acceptable than either outright rationalism or outright naturalism. It is only to say that, when the presuppositions of historic Christianity are left behind, human experience and history must be read in terms of abstractly rationalistic or abstractly naturalistic categories. Niebuhr’s Gifford Lectures are a work of great learning and ingenuity, but they cannot conceal this fact. When a great theologian, dexterously handling the tools the great logicians of modern times have given him and fully conversant with the literature of methodology, seeks ever so hard to unite rationalism and naturalism in such a way as to produce something new and fails to do so, then it is fresh cause for encouragement to those who have ever held that the historic Christian faith alone gives the true reading of experience and the true meaning to history. Historic Christianity presupposes a self-sufficient God in whom eternal meaning is eternal activity. This God is, to be sure, not penetrable by the mind of man. For this very reason, however, it is possible to avoid the fatal error of naturalism. Because historic Christianity is not rationalistic it need not be naturalistic. It is only because God’s counsel is inscrutable to man that it is wide enough and basic enough to include “whatsoever comes to pass.” Only a logic that is higher than, and prior to, that of man can provide for genuine individuality, genuine meaning and genuine progress in human experience. Only a logic that is higher than, and basic to, that of man can provide for facts a meaning that is not destructive of those very facts. It is only because historic Christianity is supra-rational and supra-natural that it is not absurd. *Credo quia non absurdum est.*

The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead

ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp: *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 3). Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University. 1941. 20, 745. \$4.00.

The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead constitutes the third volume of "The Library of Living Philosophers." The first volume dealt with the philosophy of Dewey and the second with that of Santayana. "The Library of Living Philosophers," as this volume shows afresh, serves a very useful purpose. Unfortunately Professor Whitehead was unable to offer the customary "Reply" to the evaluations of his philosophy the present volume contains. In lieu of a "Reply" we find "his two most recent philosophical papers and utterances: papers concerning which he himself writes that they 'summarize' his 'final point of view' and constitute, to his own mind, a sufficient answer to his questioners and critics."¹ We cannot deal fully with the wealth of material this volume places before us. It is with the picture as a whole that we shall be concerned. Difficult as it remains, even after the admirable work bestowed upon this volume, to obtain a rounded view of the philosophy of Whitehead, we must attempt to say something about it.

Whitehead's philosophy, it appears anew from this volume, is primarily a "process philosophy." In this respect it is very similar to that of Alexander, for whose work he expresses an admiration², and to that of Bergson, to whom he considers himself indebted. Whitehead calls his particular variety of process philosophy the "Philosophy of Organism."

The "Philosophy of Organism" seeks to avoid the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." This fallacy, Whitehead says, is imbedded in the Cartesian tradition of science and philosophy. The "fallacy of misplaced concreteness," he argues, was due to false intellectual abstraction from experience. By means of this false abstraction from experience men absolutized entities so as to deprive them of all relevance to daily life. They indulged in the idea of "vacuous actualities." The "world of becoming" was "managed from without" by a Stage Manager called God. Scientists worked with "the ancient trinity of time, space and matter"³ and spoke of each of them as ultimates.⁴ Says Whitehead: "Newtonian physics is based upon the independent individuality of each bit of matter. Each stone is conceived as fully describable apart from any reference to any other portion of matter. It might be alone in the Universe, the sole occupant of uniform space. But it would still be that stone which it is. Also the stone could be adequately

¹ p. 15.

² *Science and the Modern World*, New York, 1926, p. 11.

³ p. 66.

⁴ See, also *Science and the Modern World*, pp. 74 ff.

described without any reference to past or future. It is to be conceived fully and adequately as wholly constituted within the present moment.”⁵

Whitehead’s philosophy is negatively critical of this doctrine of “simple location,” this “bifurcation of nature.” The Century of Genius, he argues, forgot that the “notion of a mere fact is the triumph of the abstractive intellect.”⁶ “A single fact in isolation” is, to be sure, “the primary myth required for finite thought, that is to say, for thought unable to embrace totality,”⁷ but in reality there is no such fact. “No fact is merely itself.” He argues that “in every consideration of a single fact there is the suppressed presupposition of the environmental coördination requisite for its existence.”⁸ “In the nature of things there are no ultimate exclusions, expressive in logical terms.”⁹

It is Whitehead’s aim to overcome all dualism. Traditional modern physics, he says, has bequeathed to philosophy an epistemological impasse that cannot be adequately met unless we insist relentlessly on the primacy of process. Only thus can we correct the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.¹⁰ “‘Nothing is finally understood until its reference to process has been made evident.’”¹¹ Process is “the on-going of the universe.”¹² If we insist on the primacy of process we see things as they are. Experience knows nothing of mere facts in an order of observation or of abstract universals in an order of conceptualization. All ultimate facts are events.¹³ A fact without its “historic route” is a nonentity. “The final problem is to conceive a complete fact.”¹⁴

The fundamental notions in terms of which we are to seek for the idea of a complete fact are set forth in Whitehead’s great work on *Process and Reality*. He himself has summarized these notions for us as follows:

The temporal world and its formative elements constitute for us the all-inclusive universe. These formative elements are:

1. The creativity whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty.
2. The realm of 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. The actual but non-temporal entity whereby the indetermination of mere creativity is transmuted into determinate freedom. This non-temporal activity is what men call God—the supreme God of rationalized religion.¹⁵

These basic concepts, as Victor Lowe puts it, “are intended to be so inclusive in scope, and so interlocked, as to overcome all the classical dualisms of metaphysics: mind and matter, God and the world, permanence and transience, causality and teleology, atomism and continuity, sensation and emotion, internal and external relations, etc., as

⁵ *Adventures of Ideas*, New York, 1933, pp. 200 f.

⁶ *Modes of Thought*, Cambridge, 1938, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Idem.*, p. 13.

⁹ *Idem.*, p. 76.

¹⁰ p. 470.

¹¹ p. 568.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Dorothy M. Emmet, *Whitehead’s Philosophy of Organism*, p. 78.

¹⁴ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 203.

¹⁵ *Religion in the Making*, New York, 1926, p. 90.

well as subject and object.”¹⁶ To begin with, we have the protean character of creativity as such. Due to its persistent and pervasive influence the universe is open and remains open. The temporal world, says Whitehead, “is an essential incompleteness.” This notion of bare possibility is fundamental to all Whitehead’s thought. Secondly, we have the notion of “eternal objects” or abstract universals. These forms have no independent ontological status; they are to be understood in a genetic-functional manner. By these forms the human mind creates finite order in the infinite chaos. The notions of infinite possibility and the finite categorising activity of the human mind involve one another and are meaningless without one another. “The notion of the essential relatedness of all things is the primary step in understanding how finite entities require the unbounded universe, and how the universe acquires meaning and value by reason of its embodiment of the activity of finitude.”¹⁷

It is difficult to determine the place of God in Whitehead’s philosophy. When he has an ultimate creativity plus the forming activity of the human mind, he seems to have all the factors he needs for his “Philosophy of Organism.” Individuality seems to be provided by creativity and connectedness seems to be provided by the forms. Indeed, Whitehead frequently writes as though this is all that is needed for an explanation of experience. This is the case, for instance, in his lecture on “Mathematics and the Good,” which forms part of “The Philosopher’s Summary” at the end of the book under discussion. “The crux of philosophy,” he says, “is to retain the balance between the individuality of existence and the relativity of existence.”¹⁸ But these requirements are met, he seems to think, if the human mind in its generalising activity, exhibited particularly in mathematics, imposes its pattern upon the original indeterminate infinitude. By the correlativity of the two factors of pure creativity and the patternizing function of human experience Whitehead seems to provide, on the one hand, for “sheer individuality” and, on the other hand, for “essential relativity.” Yet Charles Hartshorne holds that Whitehead’s is the “first great systematic philosophy” that leads “naturally and consistently to the religious idea of God.”¹⁹

To be useful and necessary in philosophy, God must not be conceived, Hartshorne argues, either as “sheer absolute perfection” or as “sheer causality or actuality.”²⁰ “It has been too lightly assumed that God’s perfection must be all of one kind, without contrast or categorical distinction.”²¹ We must rather distinguish between the primordial and the consequent natures of God.²² the primordial nature of God is, says Hartshorne, quoting Whitehead’s words, “‘limited by no actuality which it presupposes.’” It is “‘complete, perfect, infinite.’” The consequent nature is said to be “relative, incomplete, and in flux.”²³ What purpose does such a God serve in the categorial scheme of Whitehead’s philosophy? In answer to this question we quote from Hartshorne:

¹⁶ pp. 106 f.

¹⁷ pp. 674 f.

¹⁸ p. 680.

¹⁹ p. 516.

²⁰ p. 517.

²¹ p. 519.

²² p. 525.

²³ p. 525.

To the question, Why after all is there a conception of God in Whitehead's philosophy? the answer is two-fold. First, Whitehead is not without religion. Second, his categories, adopted at least as much for other purposes, require God as their "chief" and indispensable exemplification.²⁴

A little later he adds:

How do Whitehead's categories require a supreme example? There are as many answers as there are categories; for they all require God. (1) Possibility implies a supreme and primordial ground, (2) actuality an all-inclusive entity, (3) the transition (creativity) from possibility to actuality a supreme creative agent, (4) memory a highest type of retention of elapsed events, (5) purpose and love a highest or perfect type of purpose and love, and (6) order a supreme ordering factor.²⁵

This argument of Hartshorne is far from conclusive. We have seen that Whitehead himself reduces all his categorial distinctions to three that are basic. The "primary actual units of which the temporal world is composed," often called the "epochal occasions," are said to be what they are because of these three basic categories. "The various elements which are thus brought into unity are the other creatures and the ideal forms and God."²⁶ And of these three God has least to do. In fact he seems to have nothing to do. He is, it would seem, to use Hartshorne's expression, nothing but the great exemplification of the Process of the Universe. That is to say, he is the pictorial representation of that Process in the minds of men. The transition from the primordial to the consequent nature of God is virtually identical with the Process of the Universe. The primordial nature of God in itself involves no consciousness.²⁷ "It is only the consequent nature that recognizes and cherishes concretions."²⁸ We must remember, says Stallknecht, that for Whitehead the "final plunge into actuality, the 'decision of the subject-superject' is beyond any domination."²⁹ Out of this plunge into actuality personality finally emerges. "This completes the Odyssey of the creative philosophy. With this doctrine speculation arrives at a completely 'reasonable' theory. Whitehead's God seems to be the first God of metaphysics that can really be considered personal. He is not an eternity of accomplished achievement: he is not all-powerful, nor is he all knowing as regards the future."³⁰ Again he adds: "For the first time in the history of western metaphysics, God is interpreted as really anthropomorphic. For the first time, God is really the author of existence—the poet of the world. He is Plato's Demiurge, free at last from the eternity which, for centuries of speculation, seemed to deluge his efforts with determinism. Man is free because God is human."³¹

Stallknecht's interpretation of Whitehead's conception of God corroborates what we have said. The God of Whitehead is a metaphor for the cosmic process. We can, consequently, spare ourselves the effort of pointing out how far Whitehead's conception of God is removed from the Christian doctrine of God. The fact of their mutual

²⁴ p. 535.

²⁵ p. 536.

²⁶ *Religion in the Making*, p. 93.

²⁷ See Newton P. Stallknecht, *Studies in the Philosophy of Creation*, Princeton, 1934, p. 144.

²⁸ *Idem.*, p. 145.

²⁹ *Idem.*, p. 146.

³⁰ *Idem.*, p. 150.

³¹ *Idem.*, p. 151.

exclusiveness is so obvious as to need no elaboration. Whitehead says, “ ‘It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.’ ”³² The independent self-existence of God, which is the heart of Christian teaching, is set aside completely.

It remains then to ask whether Whitehead has been able to interpret human experience so as to give it meaning. Has he been able to do more than his predecessors who have sought, in their interpretation of reality, to do without the God of Christianity? We do not think so. We may admire Whitehead’s great abilities, and his great accomplishments in the field of mathematics. We may stand amazed at the ingenuity with which he has worked out his categorial scheme in *Process and Reality*. For all that, the greatest intellect will fail to find significance in cosmic happening, unless he build upon the presupposition of the self-contained God of Scripture.

Whitehead has been unable, we believe, to overcome the “bifurcation of nature” and must therefore be charged with “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.” “The final problem,” he says, “is to conceive a complete fact.”³³ This statement comes as the climax of a long and thorough criticism of the dualism of traditional modern science. Traditional science, he argues, has put a sharp cleavage between the Observational Order and the Conceptual Order. It has worked on the assumption that it is possible to describe the Observational Order, the order of bare eventuality, without reference to the Conceptual Order. As against this he remarks, “The first point to remember is that the observational order is invariably interpreted in terms of the concepts supplied by the conceptual order.”³⁴ Or again, “Observational discrimination is not dictated by the impartial facts. It selects and discards, and what it retains is rearranged in a subjective order of prominence.”³⁵ Now modern physics, he continues, has done away with the Newtonian idea of the “independent individuality of each bit of matter,” with the idea of “simple location,” and has substituted for it the functional inter-relationship of all things. The “thing” that we see or hear is but a “focal region” whose “influence streams away from it with finite velocity throughout the utmost recesses of space and time.” “Thus the physical fact at each region of space-time is a composition of what the physical entities throughout the Universe mean for that region.”³⁶ A fact is not understood unless taken in its “historic route,” in its functional ubiquity. It is here that Whitehead comes to the high conclusion that science needs to conceive of a complete fact.

How and where are we to look for such a complete fact? The answer is given in the immediately following sentence: “We can only form such a conception in terms of fundamental notions concerning the nature of reality.”³⁷ With these notions we have become acquainted. Basic to them all is the idea of pure creativity. This creativity is more fundamental than God. Whitehead makes a specific point of this when he says, “The misconception which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of ‘independent existence.’ There is no such mode of existence; every entity is only to be understood in terms of the way in which it is interwoven with the rest of the

³² p. 522.

³³ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 203; also *Process and Reality*, pp. 27 f.

³⁴ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 198.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Idem.*, p. 202.

³⁷ *Idem.*, p. 203.

Universe. Unfortunately this fundamental philosophic doctrine has not been applied either to the concept of 'God,' nor (in the Greek tradition) to the concept of 'Ideas.'³⁸ In the most fundamental sense then "the Universe is open." Its "historic route" will never be finished; there is to be no far-off divine event that serves as a climax for it all. And the "historic route" of every "focal region," or of every "epochal occasion," is essentially interwoven with the "historic route" of the Universe as a whole. It is not till the Universe has run its course that a completed fact has been reached, and the Universe will never be finished. So the idea of a finished fact must always remain a "limiting concept." In practice we are left with the two orders, that of observation and that of conceptualization, unreconciled. Philosophy "seeks those generalities which characterize the complete reality of fact, and apart from which any fact must sink into an abstraction,"³⁹ while yet pure creativity by its protean character makes such generalities forever impossible of attainment. "Nothing is more impressive," says Whitehead, "than the fact that as mathematics withdrew increasingly into the upper regions of ever greater extremes of abstract thought, it returned back to earth with a corresponding growth of importance for the analysis of concrete fact."⁴⁰ This fact is indeed impressive, but Whitehead's philosophy offers no explanation for it. His philosophy leaves us on the one hand with "mere mathematics," and on the other hand with the facts of "simple location." And, to use the author's own words, "There is no valid inference from mere possibility to matter of fact, or, in other words, from mere mathematics to concrete nature."⁴¹ The realm of abstract attributes stands unreconciled over against the realm of pure accident.

We realize that Whitehead requires no more than that science and philosophy should be on the way to truth. But how can one know that he is on the way to truth? To know that we are on the way, we must, according to Whitehead, conceive the idea of a complete fact. But his own most basic conceptions allow for no such fact. We can never know such a fact. To know such a fact would be to have the world of observation and the world of conceptualization coterminous with one another. Moreover, if they were, man would be omniscient. We must know all about everything to know anything, and if we know anything we know everything. This dilemma, which has always faced the great non-Christian philosophers, faces Whitehead too.

This dilemma cannot be met, we are compelled to hold, unless we presuppose the coterminousness of the order of conceptualization and of the order of observation in the self-complete ontological trinity. It is upon this presupposition alone, we contend, that the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" can be avoided. If we make the "bifurcation of nature" extend, as Whitehead wants it to extend, to the being of God, we have no right to expect a "philosophy of organism" to come out of the crucible of our thought. Unless God is placed back of creativity, mere mathematics or bare attributes, on the one hand, and pure accidents or brute facts, on the other hand, will stand in ultimate antagonism over against one another. There is for Whitehead's doctrine a "mysterious reality in the background, intrinsically unknowable by any direct intercourse." He declines to follow Bergson in seeking contact with the world of observation by direct intuition as such. He

³⁸ p. 687.

³⁹ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 187.

⁴⁰ *Science and the Modern World*, p. 48.

⁴¹ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 161.

realizes that “substantial thing cannot call unto substantial thing.”⁴² He therefore seeks for “explanatory description” similar in nature to the *Wesensschau* of certain recent German philosophers. But much as we appreciate the criticism he offers of the sharp separation between a world of description and a world of explanation, we cannot grant that his own “explanatory description” has overcome the dualism he is so anxious to escape. There is no escape from this dualism, if we begin with dualism. The “third man” difficulty may be urged against Whitehead as it has historically been urged against Plato. Plato’s Demiurge was unable to bridge the gulf between the world of Ideas and the world of sense; it constituted nothing more than a concession to mythology. Whitehead’s God is unable to bridge the gulf between his world of “eternal objects” and the world of “epochal occasions”; he, too, is nothing more than metaphor and illustration. Symbolising the idea of power, he is powerless still.

Whitehead’s philosophy, we believe, makes extremely valuable reading. And the present volume helps us greatly to obtain a unified picture of that philosophy. Like Dewey’s philosophy, it seeks to be truly consistent in the thoroughness with which it applies the process idea. As such it may help believing scholars to rely no longer upon the sharp separation between the supposedly innocent “descriptions” and the dangerous “explanations” of a non-Christian science. Whitehead shows clearly that every description involves explanation. Though not always consistent on this point, his main criticism of traditional science is to that effect. It is therefore up to those who hold to Christianity to show that true scientific description or interpretation and true philosophic generalization can be undertaken upon Christian presuppositions only. This is not to say that non-Christian scientists do not give much true description; they undoubtedly do; but they do this with borrowed capital; they do this on the basis of the “complete fact” which is the God of Scripture. This is the God whom they ignorantly worship; this is the God whom we know by grace and would therefore preach unto men as the One without whom no aspect of life has meaning, and with whom all aspects of life have meaning.

⁴² *Idem.*, p. 170.

The Logic of Belief

D. Elton Trueblood: *The Logic of Belief*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers. 1942. 9, 327. \$2.75.

The writer of this volume is not unknown to the religious-minded public. He has already dealt with the possibility of religious knowledge in two earlier books, *The Trustworthiness of Religious Experience* and *The Knowledge of God*. The volume now under discussion is more comprehensive than either of the earlier works. It seeks to deal with all the lines of evidence for, and with all the kinds of objections against, the belief in God. It seeks, moreover, to make the “great tradition”¹ acceptable to us by showing that it is really as reasonable to believe in God as to believe in anything else.

In the Preface to his book Trueblood tells us that he has quoted from Archbishop Temple’s works more often than from any one else. For many of his sentiments he appeals not only to Temple but also to John Oman, A. E. Taylor, Rufus M. Jones and others. And there is no doubt that his position represents a widely accepted point of view.

We are to be concerned with the question of God’s existence. But the author prepares the ground by speaking at length of belief in general. Belief in facts is always a matter of probability. In matters of fact, and therefore in matters of religious belief, “there is always a chance we are wrong. Otherwise there would be no room for faith.”² “The existence of God cannot be demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt for the simple reason that religious belief refers to something objectively real.”³

In matters of fact, therefore, we are to seek for converging lines of evidence. We are to be mindful of Butler’s famous aphorism that probable proofs “by being added, not only increase the evidence but multiply it.”⁴

Trueblood argues that we must apply the scientific method in religion as elsewhere. We must take the four steps of this method, “observation, hypothesis, implication and verification.”⁵ Doing this we shall find that there is analogy between belief in God and belief in anything else.

Having shown that faith is a necessity in any field we now ask which faith we are to hold.⁶ To answer this question we inquire which items of faith “are most in accordance with the facts or most faithful to experience.”⁷ A difficulty then arises. There is no agreement on the question of fact. “What some call facts others call fictions and what seem to some men to be veridical experiences seem to other men to be hallucinations or

¹ p. 293.

² p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ p. 41.

⁵ p. 43.

⁶ p. 65.

⁷ p. 66.

illusions.”⁸ Thus “our dependence on facts turns out to be somewhat pathetic, since we do not know any facts at all except as they are involved in the experience of men.”⁹ And “the conclusion to be reached, in view of our individual mental poverty is that we cannot avoid reliance on some sort of authority.”¹⁰ But this is no disgrace. All of us depend on the authority of a doctor sometimes.¹¹ So why should there be no authority in religion? There is, to be sure, no infallible authority.¹² Instead we depend upon the authority of the expert. Dependence on such authority “is itself the path of reason.”¹³ It only indicates that we want “disciplined insight.”¹⁴ We want this in other sciences. Why should we not look for it in religion? Why should not the saints tell us of that in which they are experts? Saints have that “tenderness of spirit”¹⁵ which entitles them to a special hearing. And, in any case, we can test that which we are told for ourselves, “since each man may have the direct knowledge of God in his own experience.”¹⁶ “The heart of religion,” it should always be remembered, “is not an information about God, but experience of God.”¹⁷

We are now ready to proceed to a choice of faiths. In the first place it is evident that “we cannot return to the naive spiritualism which satisfied our ancestors for so many generations. The existence of natural science renders this general conception of the world untenable.”¹⁸ In the second place “we cannot, with intellectual integrity, adopt a system as demonstrably inadequate and self-defeating as philosophical naturalism is.”¹⁹ We must therefore “press forward to some genuine synthesis.”²⁰ This synthesis the author finds in what he calls “theistic realism.”²¹ Theistic realism has already “won the assent of sensitive minds.”²² “The religion of maturity”²³ cannot rest except in a God “who is at once the union of genuine power and perfect love.”²⁴ God must at least be personal though He may be more than personal.²⁵ We are justified in holding then that the belief in a God who at least is personal is a reasonable belief. In fact we hold that such a belief is the hypothesis that best explains the facts of experience. “The hypothesis is that the

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ p. 67.

¹¹ p. 69.

¹² p. 71.

¹³ p. 72.

¹⁴ p. 75.

¹⁵ p. 81.

¹⁶ p. 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ p. 116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ p. 117.

²² p. 118.

²³ p. 131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ p. 137.

kind of order we know best, the order of purposive mind, is the ultimate explanation of the order of the universe.”²⁶

We test this hypothesis at four points: with respect to nature, to moral experience, to aesthetic experience, and to religious experience. A word must be said about each.

If science shows the world is intelligible, at least to a considerable degree, “science becomes a witness to intelligent Purpose in nature.”²⁷ The phenomena of moral experience again corroborate our belief in God. There is an objective reference inherent in all ethical judgments.²⁸ And nothing tangible can furnish this objective reference. It must refer to God “who is the Purposive Intelligence revealed in the actual world, but not identical with it.”²⁹ The “augustness of ought” is inexplicable except on a theistic basis.³⁰ And “the paradox of freedom” points in the same direction.³¹

Aesthetic experience furnishes another independent line of evidence. There is “the objectivity of beauty”³² about which there can really be no serious dispute; and there is “the sense of communication”³³ which points to unity of reference. Then, too, “the reverence which so many feel in noble scenes is not intelligible or defensible on any other than theistic grounds.”³⁴

Finally we turn to religious experience as evidence for the reasonableness of our faith in God. Millions of men have reported that they have known God indirectly. This is in itself no absolute proof that they have really done so.³⁵ We ought therefore to have the attitude of pure agnosticism so well exemplified by Romanes.³⁶ Our golden text should be, “Sit down before fact as a little child.”³⁷ We take the reported experiences and deal with them scientifically. We consider the number³⁸ and the quality³⁹ of the reporters as well as the agreement of the reports⁴⁰, and “the difference it makes.”⁴¹ Our conclusion is that the hypothesis of God is based on so much evidence that it is well-nigh impossible not to believe in His existence. “The miracle of coincidence is so great that it is bound to be unacceptable to thoughtful persons.”⁴²

By means of these four independent lines of evidence, each containing several independent strands, we are prepared to give a sympathetic ear to the story of history and

²⁶ p. 138.

²⁷ p. 148.

p. 164.

²⁹ p. 166.

³⁰ p. 169.

³¹ p. 172.

³² p. 179.

³³ p. 187.

³⁴ p. 193.

³⁵ p. 197.

³⁶ p. 63.

³⁷ p. 62.

³⁸ p. 206.

³⁹ p. 208.

⁴⁰ p. 210.

⁴¹ p. 211.

⁴² p. 214.

in particular to the words of Jesus. “There is good reason to suppose that He plumbed the depths of the human spirit more fully than any who has ever lived. As the Fourth Evangelist so cryptically puts it, ‘He knew what was in man.’ ”⁴³ We do well to pay attention to the testimony of this “Supreme Expert.”⁴⁴ Jesus “believed implicitly in the existence of God as His Father.”⁴⁵ We need not concern ourselves with the author’s discussion of the difficulties that face him who would believe in God. The material adduced is, we believe, sufficient to give a fair sample of the nature of his argument as a whole.

“Belief in God,” Trueblood says, “is rationally supported by the combination of several lines of converging evidence, each having nearly the same importance. They amount to a much closer approximation to proof, when considered together than could be supposed by considering them separately, since, as Butler said in an aphorism already quoted, ‘Probable proofs, by being added, not only increase the evidence, but multiply it.’ ”⁴⁶

We can well appreciate the general acceptance of a position such as Trueblood offers. Here is a position that is not in any sense extreme. Trueblood argues against the subjectivists, the naturalists and the mechanists. He believes in a God who is “an independent centre of consciousness, with his own unique life and purposes, with a differential activity of his own.”⁴⁷ He believes in “The Living God” and at the same time in the commonly accepted conclusions of modern science. The argument for the position, too, appears, at first sight, to be eminently reasonable. It appeals to “ ‘the spontaneous creed of the natural man.’ ”⁴⁸ It abhors apriorism. It does not rest too heavily on any individual argument; it wants to be convinced by nothing less than an overwhelming convergence of evidence. It sits before a fact as does a little child and has at the same time a decent respect for the law of non-contradiction.

However, it must be said that the position is held at the expense of a certain vagueness. This is apparent especially in the concept of God that is entertained. Trueblood seeks to defend the real existence of God. Throughout, he argues against subjectivism. He argues that though our ideas are and must be subjective they can none the less have an objective reference.⁴⁹ At the same time it is said that such a statement is epistemological rather than ontological. “That is, it says nothing whatever about the constitution of objects.”⁵⁰ We are not altogether surprised then when we are told—without argument—that religion consists not in information about God but in experience of God⁵¹, while yet we are also told that the religious experience is cognitive “in that it claims to be the kind of perception which gives the perceiver actual knowledge of God.”

⁴³ p. 218.

⁴⁴ p. 219.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ p. 308.

⁴⁷ p. 132.

⁴⁸ p. 54.

⁴⁹ p. 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ p. 82.

⁵² p. 202.

⁵² Again we are told that in Christianity we have clearly and unambiguously arrived at the notion of God as personal ⁵³, while yet it is said that God may be “more than personal.” ⁵⁴ The “Living God,” who is at least personal and possibly super-personal is also said to be other than, while yet not inconsistent with, the “It” which Aristotle called his god. ⁵⁵ Then, too, it must be remembered that we cannot be certain that this God exists. ⁵⁶ But if He exists He is limited “by the conditions of goodness.” ⁵⁷ This goodness seems to be an abstract principle independent of God while yet it also seems to be the goodness of God. The same holds true of the idea of “divine Purpose.” It seems to be used personally and yet impersonally or, perhaps, super-personally. The world-order is accounted for “by reference to the constancy of divine Purpose.” This fact is said to remove the usual obstacles offered against the doctrine of Providence, the effectiveness of prayer and the concept of miracle. ⁵⁸ How this can be done is not clear. Is Providence the activity of God or is it a name for a principle supposedly active in a self-existent universe? Do we pray to God or do we pray to a super-personal principle? Or are we praying at the same time to the personal and the super-personal God? Is miracle an act of the limited personal God or is it an extraordinary sort of event somehow related to the impersonal idea of Purpose?

All this vagueness is not sufficient to conceal the real sympathies of the author. Indeed the vagueness itself indicates the fact that Trueblood, and those who think like him, do not want the Scriptural idea of the absolute personality of God. The Scriptural idea of God is such as to allow for no uncertainty of His existence. His existence is certain because no other existence has meaning without it. His existence as absolutely personal is the presupposition of the meaning of anything else that exists. Hence His counsel controls “whatsoever comes to pass.” There is no abstract law of non-contradiction in accord with which as a pattern or as a rule of possibility God makes or does not make the universe. He is Himself the source of significant possibility. Finite personality and its choices have significance not by virtue of the limitation of His counsel, but by virtue of its unlimited character.

It may be objected, however, that Trueblood reaches his conclusion fairly enough. Unless we can point to major flaws in his reasoning, such a position as he holds seems to be that to which we are logically bound. Our answer is that the argument is indeed conclusive on the basis of the premises accepted. We have nothing but admiration for the breadth of conception and the consistency of the argument. Our difficulty lies with the premises accepted.

Trueblood assumes at the outset that the world of fact and the world of definition are basically independent of one another. He holds that certainty can arise only in conclusions that are fundamentally hypothetical. ⁵⁹ We can have certainty, he says, only by avoiding questions of fact. Hence “the existence of God cannot be demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt for the simple reason that religious belief refers to something

⁵³ p. 134.

⁵⁴ p. 137.

⁵⁵ p. 134.

⁵⁶ p. 42.

⁵⁷ p. 296.

⁵⁸ p. 277.

⁵⁹ p. 34.

objectively real.”⁶⁰ Now this assumption of the independence of the world of logic and the world of fact involves the rejection of the God of Scripture. The only kind of God which one starting with the assumption mentioned can reach is a God who finds a situation confronting Him over which He has no control. He finds, on the one hand, an abstract impersonal law of non-contradiction and, on the other hand, a series of self-existent facts. Over neither of them does He have any control. He may begin the investigation of facts by the empirical method and, to His amazement, find that, somehow, facts do to an extent operate in consonance with abstract law. He may call this Providence and “divine Purpose.” When He sees a particularly strange event fit somehow into the general pattern, He may call it a miracle. But if He sees other self-conscious beings prostrate themselves in prayer before Him, He will urge them to stand upright since He is of like passions with themselves. With them He would worship abstract principle and self-existent fact, and the marvel of their union. Trueblood’s Jesus refuses to be worshipped; there is no reason why his God should not have the same tenderness of feeling. Perhaps He would by a motion and a vote accept the title of “Supreme Expert,” but further than that He could not go.

It is a foregone conclusion, then, that only a finite God can issue from reasoning based upon the premises of the two separate worlds of logic and of fact. It is also, we believe, a foregone conclusion that he who begins with the absolute separation of the two worlds must, if consistent, end in despair. The words possibility and impossibility, as well as the words probability and improbability, would deal only with abstractions. They would have no application to the world of fact. In the world of fact literally anything might happen. Science would be the effort to empty the seven seas with a sieve. There would be no converging lines of evidence because there could be no evidence for anything at all.

Again we do not mean to suggest that Trueblood’s position is on a lower plane than that of others. We appreciate his efforts to escape mechanism and subjectivism. His position is less openly hostile to Christianity than the avowed process philosophies of Dewey and Whitehead. Yet in the end to miss the train by a minute is as serious as to miss it by an hour. It is only, we believe, in the frank acceptance of the absolute God of Christianity, who controls whatsoever comes to pass, who is the source of possibility and probability, that we can find a foundation for science and an object of worship.

⁶⁰ p. 36.

God and Evil

C. E. M. Joad: *God and Evil*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1943. 349. \$3.00

On the jacket of Dr. Joad's book we read the following words: "England's great philosopher, formerly an agnostic, tells how present world events have brought him to a new belief in God." We shall briefly consider what these words may mean in the light of what Joad says.

An interesting autobiographical note runs through Joad's book. The names of Aldous Huxley, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell and C. E. M. Joad, he says, "have come to sound like an incantation which the priest murmurs as with bell, book and candle he adjures the people to turn their backs on the dark river of thought and return to the lighted way of simple faith."¹ The implication is that, of course, there has never been any justification for such an unseemly attitude. For "the fundamental truths of religion do not seem to fall into the self-evident class; if they did, there would not be so much disagreement as to what they are, or so much doubt as to whether they are true."²

Joad is careful to enumerate the various difficulties connected with the "religious hypothesis." He says: "The evidence for God is far from plain. The evidence for a good God is in the highest degree dubious; so at least, I have always believed.... If it be said that the universe must have a cause, since it could not have arisen from nothing, and that God was the cause, the question arises why does not the same consideration apply in the case of God? Must he too not have had a cause? ... One might, that is to say, just as well begin with a mysterious universe, there from the first, as with a mysterious God there from the first."³ And it may well be doubted whether such objections have ever been answered.⁴

Why then re-open the question? Well, because of "the obtrusiveness of evil." With such modern theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr and others, Joad has learned to conclude "that what the religions have always taught is true, and that evil is endemic in the heart of man."⁵ The universe is not running "according to plan." With Stephen Vincent Benét's new settlers in Virginia, Joad seems, as it were, to say:

We die, we die!

There are seven dead in four days—and every morning
We drag them out of their cabins like stiffened dogs
To lie in the hateful earth of this wilderness
Where we thought to find the gold.

¹ p. 281.

² p. 25 f.

³ p. 59.

⁴ p. 61.

⁵ p. 20.

The forest-god is “sleepily vexed” at last, weaving round us with the vapors of a deadly marsh. And when we fire into the forest of pure possibility with the muskets of rational arrangement there is nothing. It verily daunts a man. To use Joad’s own words: “To be confronted with a universe which contains evil as an ultimate and ineradicable fact, to know that there is no defence against it save in the strength or rather in the weakness of one’s own character, no hope of overcoming it save through the efficacy of one’s own unaided efforts—this I find to be a position almost intolerably distressing.”⁶ Joad accordingly wants to make use of “the grace of God”⁷ if it is really available to man. But is it? How do we find out? What must be our method?

The method is, of course, that of experience. As a true Quartermaster-General, Joad calls the men of “first ascents,” the experts on tropical and arctic weather. We must learn to fight not only in Maine in summer and in Florida in winter, we must also prepare to enter the jungle with its malaria and the arctic with its deadly frost and wind. So we make our experiments in Washington, D.C. We consult our “table of basic allowances” and send our men into the cold chamber where it is 60° below zero or into our simulated desert with the thermometer at 120° and a hot wind blowing sand in their faces.

That is to say, Joad does not pretend that his role as the returned prodigal is to be taken as anything more than a role. There is to be no place for any sort of revelation on the part of the God in which he is to believe. We have enough information about the various climatic conditions of the world to enable us to prepare in Washington, D.C., by our own laboratories, for the worst of evils that can befall us. The world has been pretty well explored from the south pole to the north. Our “pile garments,” our dehydrated and compressed K rations will enable our soldiers to meet and conquer the enemy anywhere. We shall insist that the Indians “stand in battalia to be butchered” rather than slip from tree to tree. We shall make muskets that make more noise than the old ones we had at the beginning of the war. If Christianity comes to us with the claim to be for all men, says Joad, we shall concede this claim. But this “concession carries with it the right of all men freely to examine and, if they be so minded, to reject the pretensions of the claimant.”⁸

In his last chapter Joad lays down in detail some of the things the Indians are not to be permitted to do. They must never go beyond the reach of our muskets or the sight of our eyes. The God he wants to believe in is not to be one who determines all things by His plan. There is to be no creation out of nothing, or of man in the image of God. There is, too, no unique claim to be made for Jesus as though He were in any unique sense the Son of God and as though anything that He did in Palestine at a certain date in history had any particular significance. “Is it really conceivable that our descendants a hundred million years hence will still be looking back to this event as unique and central in the history of the planet? Credible even that our descendants ten million years hence should so regard it?”⁹ A million Frenchmen cannot be wrong. Then, too, there is to be no exclusion of any one from the “grace of God.” Speaking of Socrates and Plato, Joad says: “As to the exclusive claim to salvation, the claim that believing Christians will pass their eternal life in more desirable circumstances, at a higher moral level, and with greater spiritual

⁶ pp. 103 f.

⁷ p. 104.

⁸ p. 280.

⁹ p. 295.

enlightenment than these men, I do not see how it can be either proved or disproved. I content myself with the remark that a universe in which such a claim was true would seem to me to be a non-moral universe, and the God who prescribed the law which made the claim true, an unjust God.”¹⁰ In fact any one who turns to the gospel narrative will find nothing very attractive in Jesus. Many of his utterances are really meaningless. There are many inconsistencies in what he says. He “makes assertions that have been shown to be untrue.... But it is the character of Jesus Himself that I found most disconcerting. I was astonished at the lack of warrant for the ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild’ conception in which I had been nurtured.”¹¹ Jesus is “touchily sensitive and liable to break out into torrents of denunciation on what seems to me very inadequate provocation.”¹² He dislikes being “asked for evidence.” He equates sin with “an inability to assent to what must have seemed highly dubious propositions.”¹³ Most disturbing of all is the “anti-intellectual bias” of Jesus. “He abuses men of learning, denounces the critical attitude in order to throw into favourable relief that of unquestioning acceptance, and tells people that it is only if they become as little children, and, therefore, as innocent and, presumably, as ignorant as little children, that they can hope to understand Him and be saved.”¹⁴

In short, the God of orthodox Christianity is no more acceptable to Joad now than he has ever been. Any hostility that he may formerly have had against religion, says Joad, has long since disappeared,¹⁵ and adds “I would like to believe, even if I cannot.”¹⁶ But as for historic Christianity and its God, well, that is something else. Speaking of orthodox Christians he says: “Why should I be frightened of provoking those who have never been my friends?”¹⁷ and adds: “I too have my prides and vanities, and one of them is to follow reason wherever it leads.”¹⁸ And on Joad’s premises following reason amounts to denying God.

There is no point, then, in Joad’s saying that he has met the orthodox half way.¹⁹ He has in this work as much as in any earlier work done everything he can to make their faith appear irrational and immoral. One who follows reason and the facts of science, and one who follows the moral sense that he has within him, Joad argues, must reject the claim of historic Christianity throughout.

Nor is there any point in Joad’s saying that “the heart demands, even if the reason still denies,”²⁰ for the demands of reason and his heart are in perfect accord with one another. His heart condemns as unjust a universe in which things do not happen according to plan, that is the plan of human reason, and his reason limits the field of possibility so that

¹⁰ p. 298.

¹¹ p. 104.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ p. 305.

¹⁴ p. 307.

¹⁵ p. 281.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

nothing can happen that will seem unjust to what he thinks are the legitimate claims of his heart. Oppressed with the reality of evil, arguing vigorously against the subjectivist or idealist and oriental evaporation of its objectivity, he takes pains not to define evil and sin in relation to the God of Christianity. Evil is still to be defined in terms of man and his own self-sufficient ideals of morality. Lying prostrate in his cabin with malaria, the poison arrows of the darkwood Indians killing on every side, helpless without the “grace of God,”

There came the savages, smiling, bringing corn,
As if compelled by something past all plans,
Some old, barbaric courtesy of man’s,
Wild as his heart, red as his hunter’s dreams
—And for no cause the white men ever knew.

Somehow, somehow, no one knows how, the Ethiopian will change his own skin and the leopard by licking himself diligently or by applying Rid-o Spot, a “fabric cleaner that’s different, Safer and Better” but manufactured by the well-known firm of Goulard & Olena, Inc., 140 Liberty Street, New York, N.Y., will change his spots. Man finds the grace of God within and no wonder, for man himself is God.

To return now to the statement quoted from the jacket of the book, near the end of his work Joad says that as a returning prodigal he is “only just on the affirmative side of agnosticism.”²¹ In reality he is more sure than ever now that God does not exist. All he has contended for is that there is hidden in human personality something more than the historical materialists and subjectivists have been willing to concede. The “little clearings” of science are “small in the forest.” We have just landed in Virginia. Unexpectedly the “hazel arrows” rain thick from the coverts, and the Indian yell goes up. Never fear, for possibility itself lies no further west than the Pacific ocean. Daunted for the moment our brilliant Quartermaster staff will write off the “impossibles” as they come and teach us to hunt and trap all the evils that are “endemic to the human heart.” There is no God; we are not creatures of God, we are not sinners before God, we need no salvation through Christ, but all of us will be saved by the grace of ourselves and of the universe that, we and millions of posterity insist, shall be moral.

Joad says he has been impressed “by the obtrusiveness of evil”; we reply that he has not even seen the first glimpse of the true nature of evil. Virtually denying the existence of God, he has also virtually denied the existence of evil. How can there be evil in distinction from good, how can there be meaning in the terms better and worse, if reality is what Joad says or assumes that it is? On his basis all that is is good or, it may as well be said, all that is is evil. Rejecting the fall of man as an historical fact, Joad to all intents and purposes thinks of evil as part of the ultimate metaphysical situation. Why then, Plato would argue, dare we hope that the ideas of “mud and hair and filth” will not be as permanent as the ideas of the true, the good and the beautiful? As a realist, Joad has no answer to the subjectivist. As a dualist, Joad has no answer to the monist. All that because, on his assumption of man’s ultimacy, he places reason in the midst of pure or bare possibility. If evil is what his metaphysics virtually asserts it is, namely pure uncontrolled factuality, it should like the Virginia swamp of Benét’s poem, make all the white carpenters and bricklayers from merry England “purge out their entrails” and disappear forever. On the other hand, if evil is, what his epistemology says it must be,

²¹ p. 278.

fully reachable by the musketry of reason set on the emplacement of autonomous man, one fine sweeping dictatorial purge will remove all Indians and mosquitoes as well.

It is, of course, not for lack of intellectual acumen that Joad has been unable even to present the issues clearly, let alone offer any solution for the problem of evil. As one of the most brilliant and most popular writers on philosophy in our day, Joad cannot even state the basic problem of philosophy because that problem can be stated only in terms of the God who by his assumption is excluded from his view.

The Covenant Idea in New England Theology

Peter Y. De Jong: *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1945. 264. \$2.50.

As the title indicates, we deal in Dr. De Jong's book with a study in the history of the covenant idea. The author point out that the idea of the covenant come to its natural and fullest expression when the principles of the Reformed Faith were worked out by Calvin and his followers, among whom Bucer requires special mention. Even so, the idea of the covenant as developed in Reformed theology and in the Reformed creeds, the author tells us, is not easy to define. "Rather than considering it a specific dogma or doctrine of the church, we should regard it as a basic motif or pattern controlling and modifying various doctrines in systematic theology."¹ In its bearing on the idea of sin, Reformed covenant theology teaches that Adam was not merely the physical, but also the representative, head of the race. In its bearing on the question of God's relation to the world, covenant theology maintains that God is not merely the Creator of all things but that he has entered into a voluntary relation with man, entrusting to man the privilege and task of subduing all created things to God's greater glory. As applied to the question of redemption, the covenant idea expresses the fact that the persons of the trinity made a compact between themselves with respect to the salvation, not merely of certain individuals but, of the human race as an organic whole. As applied to the idea of the church, the covenant idea again expresses the representative and the organic idea. God deals with his people as self-conscious acting creatures. Children, though not able to act self-consciously for themselves, are in the covenant through representation by their parents. As applied to the Christian life, the covenant idea stresses the fact that believers and their seed should everywhere and always show themselves to be governed by the laws of the kingdom of heaven. As when applied to the whole question of the philosophy of history, the covenant idea places emphasis upon the unity of God's plan as apparent in the whole course of events. Out of all nations, and throughout all ages, God calls unto himself a people for his own possession and he makes all things work together for good in their behalf and, thus, to his own glory.²

The puritans, Dr. De Jong tells us, were largely influenced by the covenant conceptions as outlined above. But they were also influenced by another concept of the covenant, namely that developed by the Anabaptists. This, he says, may be observed even in the earliest and best writings of the puritans such as those by John Cotton on the covenant of grace. "Throughout his works, as well as those of others, the significance of the covenant promise of God as an objective reality was forgotten in an eagerness to

¹ p. 4.

² pp. 50 ff.

stress the personal experience of comfort and joy in the Lord. Lest they should fall into the error of the homeland, they sought to discover who were in the covenant by virtue of election.”³ It was this partial adherence to an anabaptistic concept of the covenant that prepared the way for the Half-Way Covenant. There tended to be a great stress on the “subjective and personal side of the gospel at the expense of the objective.”⁴

A certain confusion followed. Some basic issues were left unsettled. Especially the place of the children of believers became a disputed point. On a more objective view of the covenant, they would clearly have a right to the sacrament of baptism. On the other hand, they could not testify to their own experience of regeneration. After much argument, the Half-Way Covenant came forth as a compromise measure. It introduced the notion of degrees of covenant relationship. The ideal of a pure church composed only of regenerate members was maintained while yet those who merely professed an “interest in the covenant” and lived morally responsible lives could have their children baptized.

The results were sad indeed. “The masses who perhaps would have dreaded a complete break with the church under the old system were now quite satisfied with their partial admission to church privileges.”⁵ Things went from bad to worse. If baptism could be given to such as had at best a doubtful right to the privileges of the covenant, why should not the same be true of the Lord’s supper? Could not those who merely had an external relation to the covenant receive the supper as a converting ordinance? It was Solomon Stoddard who had the courage of his convictions when he openly advocated this position. Though men were admittedly still in an “unconverted state,” the supper might become the means of bringing them into the full measure of salvation.⁶ Unfortunately, when Mather sought to maintain the sanctity of the supper, Stoddard was able to point out that consistency was on his side. If the sacrament of baptism is to be merely a sign of respectability, and is to be used merely as a converting ordinance, why should not the same be true of the supper?⁷ Even Jonathan Edwards was unable to do more than momentarily stem the tide toward Arminianism and Modernism. Edwards had no rounded and comprehensive conception of the covenant. In particular, he lacked appreciation for the organic relationships of human life. “Thus in spite of his heroic defense of certain Calvinistic positions, he overthrew the Calvinistic heritage of the churches by championing revivals as the true method of church reformation.”⁸ Though constantly using covenant terminology, Edwards failed to make the idea “truly determinative” in his thinking. Men began to pattern the whole covenant idea after the pattern of human contracts between equals. Nathaniel Emmons maintained that God had no right to make any covenant with man without man’s previous consent.⁹ “Thus the whole organic conception of the covenant broke down with the men of the New Divinity and left room only for an emphasis on human action and responsibility.”¹⁰ Individualism

³ p. 93.

⁴ p. 97.

⁵ p. 123.

⁶ p. 128.

⁷ p. 133.

⁸ p. 143.

⁹ p. 175.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

and voluntarism became the pillars on which Congregationalism rested. “The God who was worshipped at the end of the eighteenth century bore little resemblance to the God trusted by the first settlers.”¹¹

The author has undoubtedly performed a good and useful piece of work. The reading of his work is well calculated to lead us to a “deeper reflection on the covenant idea” for the churches of our day. For this purpose it provides excellent stimulation.

In his evaluation of the covenant idea in New England theology De Jong asserts that “New England Congregationalism from its earliest beginnings can hardly be called a form of Calvinism in its generally accepted sense.”¹² Is not this stricture a bit too sweeping? Granted that it did not apply the covenant concept comprehensively; granted, also, that the stress on the covenant idea was one-sided, in some cases perhaps tending to overemphasize “personal experience and surrender to God” and in other cases perhaps tending to an identification of the covenant of grace with the covenant of redemption, had the covenant idea in that day come to a balanced and comprehensive expression anywhere else? If “the first settlers accepted the Calvinistic idea of God as absolutely sovereign,”¹³ and if “in the days of John Cotton all of life was placed in covenantal relation to God,”¹⁴ it would seem that, at least in the earliest beginnings, New England Congregationalism might fairly be said to be a variety or form of Calvinism.

The point just made, however, in no wise detracts from the validity of the main point of the author’s argument. A covenant concept that is not made determinative of one’s whole theological structure, a covenant concept that is not used as the basic principle of theological interpretation in every domain of human life, is constantly in danger of having little force in life, even in such areas as it is supposed to control. If false experientialism and individualism are allowed free sporting grounds in some areas of life, they will end eventually to drive the covenant idea into the realm of Platonic ideas.

It is obvious that the author writes from the vantage point of one who has become saturated with the comprehensive and balanced covenant idea of such men as Kuyper and Bavinck. The present volume is primarily historical rather than doctrinal. Prepared by this study, and by his familiarity with the writings of Kuyper, Bavinck and Vos, the author should be in a favorable position to give us a study of a doctrinal rather than an historical character, a study, namely, that would use the covenant concept as basically determinative for the interpretation of the whole of life. Of the timeliness and usefulness of such a work there can be little doubt. The need of the day, both in theology and in apologetics, would seem to be to show that Christianity is the only life and world view that gives unity and coherence to human experience. It is only in the God of Christianity as self-contained that we have a principle of interpretation that is not itself in need of interpretation. This God, just because he is self-contained, mediates all things in the course of history by means of a covenant with his self-conscious creature, man. Man acts as a covenant keeper or as a covenant breaker, not only on the Lord’s day but also on week days, not only in church but also in the laboratory. It is of the genius of the Reformed Faith to bring out these facts. Calvin and his followers have set the example.

¹¹ p. 176.

¹² p. 195.

¹³ p. 196.

¹⁴ p. 198.

Kuyper and Bavinck and Vos have done much to work out their principles for more recent times. A restatement in our day of their position and an application of it to our times would tend to unify and intensify both the theological and the apologetical effort of Christians in our generation.

The Christian Answer

P. J. Tillich, T. M. Greene, G. F. Thomas, E. E. Aubrey, John Knox: *The Christian Answer*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1945. \$2.50

The Christian Answer is the fruit of corporate writing on the part of five members of The Theological Discussion Group which has met twice a year for the last decade, "to consider issues of common concern in the interpretation of the Christian faith for our day."¹

The first chapter contains an analysis of the world situation today by Paul Tillich. Tillich divides modern history into three phases. There was first the period of bourgeois revolutions. This period was marked by "belief in reason," that is, revolutionary reason.² "It was the belief that the liberation of reason in every person would lead to the realization of a universal humanity and to a system of harmony between individuals and society."³ The second phase of modern history was that of the "victorious bourgeoisie." This period was marked by the control of "technical reason." "The decisive feature" of this period was "the loss of control by human reason over man's historical existence."⁴ Today we are in the third phase of modern history. The foundations of bourgeois society have now been destroyed. The release of reason from authority has not produced the expected harmony between the individual and general interests.⁵ Planned reason is now employed to control the Frankenstein monster produced by technical reason. But while controlling this monster, planned reason also irritates it into destructive action.⁶ Giving up hope for rational harmony, men allow such forces as "passion," "*Ibid.*" and others to have free play.⁷ They surrender themselves, with fanaticism, "to irrational and unconditioned purposes."⁸ All objectivity disappears. In art men turn to surrealism,⁹ in philosophy to existential truth. "Thus, in the third period of modern society, technical reason is employed to execute the commands of an existential decision above which there is no rational criterion."¹⁰

It would seem that, after painting such a dark picture, Tillich might be ready to listen to the voice of a truly transcendent God. Not so, however. He gives fair warning, as it were, to his collaborators who are to formulate the answer to the hopeless situation he has

¹ p. 7.

² p. 2.

³ p. 3.

⁴ p. 5.

⁵ p. 6.

⁶ p. 7.

⁷ p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ p. 30.

¹⁰ p. 32f.

portrayed that they must by no means turn to anything higher than that which reason, which is a law unto itself, can produce. “The answers themselves must acknowledge and accept the positive contributions of the modern period. Here the principal point is the elevation of reason as the principle of truth above all forms of authoritarianism and obscurantism.”¹¹ Moreover Tillich asserts that “man is fully rational only on the foundation of, and in interdependence with, non-rational factors.”¹²

The Christian Answer must give full sway to reason, and when it does it will appear that “the achievements of man, as though by a logic of tragedy, turn against man himself.”¹³ And this must always be true. The only answer that is acceptable is an answer that itself automatically turns into a question mark.

The other authors of the book are not slow to oblige. They are at pains not to offend reason by the idea of “‘asserted authority.’”¹⁴ “The Bible is not itself the revelation but the record of the revelation” of God to man.¹⁵

The real authority of Scripture is that of “luminous and compelling insight.”¹⁶ The God presented by this insight is, of course, to be called transcendent but He is transcendent only in a Pickwickian sense. He is eternal only as the permanent factor in time. He is immutable only as the principle of continuity in the universe.¹⁷ God’s perfection is nothing that He is in Himself apart from the world, but consists in the “communication of His being and goodness to that which is other than Himself.”¹⁸ Hence, too, the idea of the creation of the world and of man must not be taken as an historical event but as a “sublime and inspired philosophical myth.”¹⁹ God comes to expression in the “rich diversity of the world.” It is of the essence of the trinity to teach us this. The true view of man is that he “occupies a middle position on the scale of being.”²⁰ This amounts to saying that in his lower aspect he participates in the world of those irrational forces of which Tillich spoke and in his spiritual aspect he participates in that aspect of Reality that men call God. Man cannot help being sinful inasmuch as he is man.

The Christ of *The Christian Answer* is also carefully patterned after the demands of the planned reason of the modernist discussion group. His divine nature is, of course, identified with a dynamic principle in the universe.²¹ There is some evidence, we are told, to indicate that the resurrection appearances of Christ “were spiritual rather than physical in character.”²² The atonement that He wrought was not that of a “blood

¹¹ p. 44.

¹² p. 11.

¹³ p. 44.

¹⁴ p. 74.

¹⁵ p. 98.

¹⁶ p. 79.

¹⁷ p. 106.

¹⁸ p. 103.

¹⁹ p. 107; see also pp. 137, 141.

²⁰ p. 109.

²¹ p. 116.

²² p. 119.

sacrifice” but that of a “ ‘demonstration of His righteousness.’ ”²³ In Christ men have, as it were, a concrete manifestation of what they mean by God as the principle of Reason in the universe. He therefore binds men, all men, together in unity. Aubrey speaks of the “Christian principle of universalism.”²⁴ All men are the children of God.²⁵ “To believe in the God of Christianity is to believe that all men are indeed brothers.”²⁶ God forgives all men even while He requires them to be perfect. He seems to think that in this way He can get men to do their best. Presumably in this way He expects them to join the universal church which is said to be the continuation of the incarnation of Christ.

It is plain, of course, that the “nar-row fundamentalists” are not expected to apply for membership in this new church. Such as believe in a really transcendent God and in historic Christianity are throughout portrayed as the only really hopeless people in the world. They have darkened counsel by dogmatism and literalism. They have refused to trim their God and their Christ to the pattern shown them by autonomous reason. Yet if anything is also plain from *The Christian Answer*, it is that its answer is no answer. It offers no God and no Christ in terms of which an answer might be given to the problem presented. Tillich insists that the leprosy of the human race is incurable; the other writers have portrayed a Christ who, in order to touch and heal the leper, must Himself be a leper. And this is not only the Christ of Henry P. Van Dusen, the editor of the volume, but also of John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Seminary, a member of the Discussion Group which the volume represents.²⁷

²³ p. 122.

²⁴ p. 147.

²⁵ p. 84.

²⁶ p. 83.

²⁷ p. 9.

Reasoning Faith

T. C. Hammond. *The Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions*, London, 1943. 275.

Reasoning Faith is a companion volume to *In Understanding Be Men* and *Perfect Freedom*. In this trilogy Mr. Hammond has provided an Apologetics, a Systematics and an Ethics in semi-popular form for young people. *Reasoning Faith* is as readable as the other two and will probably be as widely used.

All three of the books have been written for evangelicals in general. Why should we trouble non-believers with such differences as we Christians have among ourselves? That seems to be the author's general attitude.

Such an attitude is bound to be more acceptable to the Arminian than to the Calvinist. In the field of doctrine the author's "modified form of the Calvinist view"¹ is frequently hard to distinguish from Arminianism. In Ethics Hammond seems to seek for some sort of *modus vivendi* between the theonomy of the Bible and the autonomy of Kant.² In Apologetics the author's Calvinism is practically forgotten. We note two unfortunate consequences that follow.

The first consequence of an evangelical Apologetic such as Hammond offers is a failure to challenge the natural man's interpretation in large areas of his life. The reasoning of non-believers about such fields as physics, biology and psychology is virtually said to be right. At least reason, quite apart from saving grace, is said or assumed to possess the power of self-correction. The natural man is not so much wrong in what he says as in what he does not say. His view of life is not basically wrong but only insufficiently incomprehensive. The materialists should realize that there are other things than those that are dreamt of in their philosophy. "We plead therefore for a complete system."³

As if conscious of the concessive nature of his approach Hammond has a twofold apology to make. The first concerns the doctrine of total depravity. If we say to him that according to St. Paul man is dead in trespasses and sins he replies that this is true, but that the doctrine of total depravity was never meant to teach that man is as bad as he possibly can be.⁴ This is, of course, quite true. But the reason for it is the restraining general grace of God. The inward desire of every sinner is to interpret every dimension of life, the phenomenal no less than the noumenal, in terms of himself as the ultimate unifying center. Hammond himself virtually admits this fact.*Ibid.* Yet the method of Apologetics that he uses assumes that man can think fully true thoughts or make the correction of his wrong thoughts in certain areas of life.

¹ *In Understanding Be Men*, p. 118.

² *Perfect Freedom*, p. 173.

³ *Reasoning Faith*, p. 36.

⁴ *In Understanding Be Men*, p. 96.

The second apology concerns the question of the need of a point of contact for the gospel in the mind of the natural man. "Any redemptive measure must begin by finding some affinity with existing circumstances and moral ideals, otherwise, so far as we can see, it would be incapable of effecting a response in the heart of men."⁵ In this connection he says that he fully endorses the conception of the Greek fathers, "most fully elaborated by Clement of Alexandria," and appeals to Calvin's apparently high estimate of heathen writers. But Hammond will surely have to choose between the Greek fathers and Calvin. When Calvin praises the accomplishments of the pagan writers it is the common grace and the providence of God that he extols. He marvels at the fact that men who in the depth of their inmost thought would hold down the truth in unrighteousness can yet, in spite of themselves, by the Spirit of God, discover as much of truth as they do. He never forgets that even Plato, the best of the philosophers, has always in all of his interpretations lost himself in his round globe.

There is, to be sure, the need of a point of contact. But that need can be met not in the idea of an area of interpretation, however small, in which Christians and non-Christians are in basic agreement. It is met rather in the fact that men are, whether they are willing to admit it or not, created in the image of God, so that they sin against the law of their own being every time they interpret anything in any dimension without relating it to the true God. Why should we turn back the hands of the clock to St. Thomas or the Greek fathers when Calvin has taught us to go forward to the high plateau of St. Paul? Even in the interest of being all things to all men we dare not be concessive to the illegitimate demands of the natural man.

The second consequence of a generally evangelical rather than a frankly Calvinistic Apologetic follows naturally from the first. If we allow that the natural man is not basically wrong in his interpretation of one dimension of life we cannot logically maintain that he is basically wrong in his interpretation of any dimension of life. If we allow the legitimacy of the natural man's principle of interpretation in things "phenomenal" we cannot deny the legitimacy of that principle when he seeks merely to extend it to things he calls noumenal. If physics can be rightly interpreted without God, theology can too. The non-Christian and the Christian have each of them a blueprint. The non-Christian's blueprint makes everything revolve about man as an end in himself, the Christian's blueprint makes everything revolve about God as an end in Himself. We must build the whole house of interpretation according to the one or according to the other. But an evangelical Apologetic seeks to build the first story according to the non-Christian's and the second story according to the Christian's blueprint. The second story is bound to suffer most from the adjustment that must be made.

Hammond quotes with approval the words of Gwatkin to the effect that "revelation and discovery must be the same process viewed from different standpoints."⁶ By this idea of process he hopes to attach the second story of revelation onto the first story of Reason. "But if the Universal Reason struggles to express itself in the order imposed from without on our perceptive faculties, and also finds expression in our subjective reactions, then the welling up of consciousness is also a discovery, and is also a

⁵ *Perfect Freedom*, p. 150.

⁶ *Reasoning Faith*, p. 65.

revelation.”⁷ It is thus that we have reached “not indeed the book, but the possibility of the book which a less intensive study had ruled out.”⁸

But have we really allowed for the possibility of the book on this basis? We cannot think so. We have, to be sure, allowed for books but not for the book. We have provided merely for experts in the moral and religious sphere as the natural man provides for experts fields of physics or psychology. Isaiah becomes a man of in his field as the late Sir Arthur Eddington was a man of in his field. Prophets are no more than pioneers.

It is perfectly plain from his writings that Hammond himself is not satisfied with such a purely naturalistic notion of revelation. He longs to have the second story of his house built according to the Christian’s blueprint. But he is the victim of his own method. Desiring to see men make every thought captive to the Word of the one great Prophet, his method makes provision merely for a salute to the “prophets of humanity.”

⁷ *Idem.*, p. 69.

⁸ *Idem.*, p. 70.

Therefore, Stand

Wilbur M. Smith: *Therefore, Stand*. Boston: W A. Wilde Co. 1945. 24, 614. \$3.00.

The volume before us seeks to offer “a plea for a vigorous apologetic in this critical hour of the Christian Faith.” It aims to defend in particular the Biblical doctrines of creation, of the resurrection of Christ and of His final return to judgment. In doing so the author would follow the example of the apostle Paul in his Athenian address.

The argument on these three great doctrines is placed in a broad context. We are first made acquainted with the nature of the weapons with which the enemy attacks Christianity in our day. ¹ We are shown what great inroads the foes of Christianity have made on Christian territory and how the forces of evangelicalism seem to have been well-nigh driven into the sea. Unbelief is rampant in the modern world. ²

There are, of course, causes for this general unbelief. The natural man has a “bias against God.” ³ His mind is in darkness. ⁴ Men have determined to live without God. ⁵ They have conditioned their children to do the same. ⁶ They have set too great store by material things; science has become their god. ⁷ Living in sin they refuse to believe. ⁸ And back of all, there is the ever present influence of Satan and his servants. ⁹ As a result they have fallen into pessimism and despair. ¹⁰

The main argument of the book now begins to take shape. Still preparatory to it is a chapter dealing with Greek civilization “that we might realize anew the similarity between the age of the glory of Athens and our own intellectual age.” ¹¹ It was to the Greeks that Paul came with his teachings on the doctrines of creation, resurrection and final judgment. Will Athens, compelled as she is by the sense of her own inadequacy to worship the unknown god, accept the God who has made the heavens and the earth? ¹² “Athens knew about everything that was knowable, except the most important things: she did not know God, she did not know what to do with her sins ...” ¹³ Will she accept the resurrection of Christ and His return to judgment if by revelation she is told of them? And

¹ p. 14.

² pp. 1–202.

³ p. 143.

⁴ pp. 147 ff.

⁵ p. 153.

⁶ p. 156.

⁷ p. 160.

⁸ pp. 165 ff.

⁹ p. 175.

¹⁰ pp. 187–202.

¹¹ p. 15.

¹² p. 263.

¹³ p. 265.

in accepting them will she repent? And if we present the doctrines of creation, resurrection and judgment to the men of our age, will they accept them and repent?

At any rate we must make the same high claim that was made by Paul. We must tell men that they will remain suspended in chaos and contradiction if they do not accept the fact of creation,¹⁴ and that they might as well believe the earth to be flat as deny the fact of Christ's resurrection.¹⁵ We must also tell them that "no one can raise a reasonable objection, say from the laws of logic or the demands of the human heart against a final and universal judgment of God upon men who persist in breaking His laws."¹⁶

Let us note how the author makes good these high claims he makes. His argument for creation may be summed up in the following quotation: "If there is such a thing as cause and effect and, thus, there is such a thing as cause, as all will agree, and if it seems reasonable from causes for all things that we seek to ascend to a First Cause, as the originator of this universe, then the creation account in Genesis is not only reasonable, and acceptable, but it sets forth a truth to which logic inevitably leads us."¹⁷

There are, to be sure, those who are determined to say that there is no cause. Such will have to find some other theory "illogical as it may be, to account for the universe in which we live."¹⁸ There may also be those who even deny the existence of the universe but "with the intricate, fantastic, irrational theories concerning the non-reality of this great universe, and of life itself, we have no time in a world like this ..."¹⁹ As realists we discuss only such things as "all our senses, and the very laws of logic, compel us to believe ..."²⁰ Beginning thus we soon discover with G. D. Hicks that "we cannot be condemned forever to the mere treadmill exercise of an indefinite regress" and come ultimately upon a reality "that is there, so to speak, in its own right."²¹ Nor need we fear to present the idea of creation as reasonable because we cannot show it to be wholly explicable. With F. R. Tennant we may say: "Some ultimates, analysable [should read "unanalysable"] and unassimilable, there must be. Theism needs but to allow that creation is one of them."²² Scientists themselves ought to be quite ready to accept the creation doctrine. Do they not unanimously confess that science "can tell us nothing about the origin of the world in which we live?"²³ "In other words, what science cannot discover, scientists long to know."²⁴

There follows an extensive discussion of the Genesis record, a comparison of the Biblical account of creation with non-Biblical accounts, a criticism of the idea of logical derivation. We cannot speak of these matters further. The value and validity of all of this

¹⁴ p. 289.

¹⁵ p. 406.

¹⁶ p. 457.

¹⁷ p. 284.

¹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹ pp. 272f.

²⁰ p. 273.

²¹ p. 291.

²² p. 282.

²³ p. 273.

²⁴ p. 275.

material depends in large measure upon the validity of the main point in the argument for creation. It is this main argument that we have brought to the fore.

Essential to the author's defence of the resurrection of Christ is his distinction between fact and meaning. "The meaning of the resurrection is a theological matter, but the fact of the resurrection is a historical matter ..."²⁵ In his argument, therefore, he deals primarily with the fact of the resurrection. To convince men of the fact he deals at length with the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances. Living in a day when "the value of historical certainty is dogmatically insisted upon,"²⁶ we can give men an abundance of the sort of evidence they seek when investigating any other subject.²⁷ Since, then, the proof for the resurrection of Christ is so abundant and so wholly in accord with the modern scientific demand for proof we may call upon young men to take a stand upon it and accept it in its full significance.²⁸ "To reject the Resurrection is to go against every law of logic which man has discovered." Not only that, it is virtually to reject the whole of Christian teaching.²⁹ It is to "put out the one great light that can illuminate our future."³⁰

The question of the final judgment is treated far more compendiously than either that of creation or the resurrection of Christ. Is there evidence for a final judgment as compelling as that for creation and the resurrection of Christ? In the chapter on creation the author found the fact of creation which everybody, barring a few extremists, accepted, to be a well-graded runway from which he could take off with men and reach God as the Creator of the world. In the chapter on the resurrection he found a similar point of contact in the fact that the evidence for the resurrection is exactly the same sort of evidence as scientists demand when seeking knowledge in any field. In the first case, theists and non-theists have the concept of causality in common. In the second case, they have the concept of evidence in common. It is on this identity of content of the concepts of causation and evidence as between theists and non-theists, or Christians and non-Christians, that the author rests his case when seeking to make good his high claim for creation and the resurrection of Christ. Is there a similar point of contact in the minds of men in general for the idea of a final judgment?

It is a little difficult to determine the author's meaning at this point. We are told that "apart from the Word of God we know absolutely nothing about a future judgment."³¹ This would seem to preclude the hope of a point of contact with those who do not accept the Scriptures as the Word of God. However, the author does seem to find a point of contact after all in the general idea of judgment. "Whatever one may think of the truth or falsehood of a final, universal, righteous judgment by God, no one can possibly deny the fact that judgment itself is an inescapable, daily experience, individually and corporately, for all mankind."³²

²⁵ p. 386.

²⁶ p. 359.

²⁷ p. 389.

²⁸ p. 430.

²⁹ p. 437.

³⁰ *Idem.*

³¹ p. 446.

³² pp. 439f.

There is also the testimony of men's hearts to a judgment to come.³³ "Judgment is not only a scriptural doctrine. It is the inevitable, inescapable end of history, if there is anywhere ruling in this world a righteous God."³⁴ The "laws of logic," then, and "the demands of the human heart" seem not merely to agree with what Scripture teaches about a final judgment day, but seem of themselves to demand what is there taught. Moreover, the orthodox apologists may be encouraged by such theologians as Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr who have "brought into sharp focus ... this inevitableness of final judgment."³⁵ As we realize, then, that we need to preach this doctrine of the judgment with the authority of the Word of God we are comforted with the fact that "this need is exactly what is recognized among some of the outstanding leaders of thought of our day,"³⁶ who do not base their thinking upon the infallible Word at all. Having found a common meeting place with those whom we seek to win to a belief in a final judgment in the identity of concept that we have, both as to judgments in history and as to the human heart and its basic moral demands, we can press our claims with confident hope of acceptance. Thus, then, on the question of a final judgment as well as on those of creation and of the resurrection of Christ we may still carry on a vigorous apologetic. We need only to push men to accept the logical conclusions of concepts they have themselves embraced. Having accepted the fact and concept of cause, they ought logically to accept the fact of a Creator. Having accepted a concept of evidence by which they satisfy themselves of the actual existence of the realities of the world, they ought logically also to accept the resurrection of Christ. Finally, having accepted the fact of judgment as seen in history and as required by the moral consciousness of man, they ought logically to accept a final judgment of all men by Christ.

For an understanding of the author's argument it is important to note that he is not appealing to something in men that is hidden underneath their professed positions. He is appealing to the conceptions of cause, of evidence and of judgment that men have self-consciously formed for themselves. The distinction between what men say they believe in their professed positions and what, deep in their hearts, they believe in spite of their own professions is not introduced anywhere in the book. The argument may accordingly be said to be basically similar to that of Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*. Both Butler and Smith would simply ask men to be consistent with themselves and to apply the principles of interpretation that they have already successfully employed in one field to a field that is new to them. The chief difference, apart from details, between the procedure of Butler and that of Smith seems to be that Smith makes higher claims than Butler did. Butler felt that men had done justice to the evidence if they concluded that God did probably exist and Christianity was probably true, whereas Smith boldly affirms that men ought to conclude that Christian theism is certainly true.

Our evaluation of the book under discussion may accordingly begin by affirming our agreement with the author when, in distinction from Butler, he asserts that of the creation of the world, of the resurrection of Christ and of His final judgment men ought to have no doubt. The evidence for these doctrines, as for the whole Christian scheme of things, is

³³ p. 451.

³⁴ p. 455.

³⁵ p. 460.

³⁶ p. 462.

abundantly clear. In expounding Scripture, and especially St. Paul, Calvin has made this point quite clear. No apologetic argument dare omit or ignore this basic fact. It is equally clear, however, that the natural man refuses to see any fact in the universe, and therefore the universe as a whole, for what it really is. Calvin, again following Paul, is as insistent on this point as on the former. Men's professed positions are the means by which they "keep under" or cover up the truth about themselves and the facts about them. This is true even when in these professed positions they say what is formally true. Deep down in their hearts men have the sense of deity; deep down they know they are God's creatures and that God is the creator of the universe in its totality. Yet in their professed positions they assume the non-createdness of themselves and of the world at large. Deep down in their hearts they know that they are sinners before the Creator God and that judgment awaits them. Yet in their professed position they reduce good and evil to correlatives of one another.

In refusing to make the distinction between what men profess to believe and what they believe deep in their hearts the author has chosen to follow Butler rather than Calvin and Paul. This is a matter of great disappointment. Butler failed to prove by his method that Christianity is probably true; how much the more must one fail if one seeks by a similar method to show that it is certainly true. This is not to say that much of the material employed by the author is not good and apologetically valuable. But it is to say that there is in the book no adequate organizational principle by means of which the material can be made to tell its story in a truly effective way.

The only organizing principle commensurate with the needs of the occasion is to be found in the position defended. If Christianity is to be defended as certainly, rather than probably, true, as the only reasonable religion rather than as a mere faith-construct, this must be done, we believe, by showing that nothing, either in logic or in fact, is intelligible to man except in terms of Christianity's basic principles and differentiations. If logic, to be fruitfully employed, can be shown to require as its presupposition the Creator-creature distinction as this is maintained in the orthodox faith, then, and then only, dare we say to men that it is illogical not to accept the Christian position. If the concept of fact can be shown to be unintelligible except upon the presupposition of the counsel of God as controlling whatsoever comes to pass, then, and then only, dare we say to men that it is out of accord with fact not to accept the Christian position.

Smith assumes that Christians and non-Christians mean the same thing when they speak of causation within the universe. He urges those who accept the fact of causation within the universe to be consistent with themselves and therefore to accept, also, the fact of the causation of the whole universe. That is the burden of his argument. But Aristotle did accept the fact of causation and he also accepted the idea of a first cause. And the author himself points out that the first cause of which Aristotle speaks is not the God of Christianity. Was then the father of logic illogical? We do not think so. He was strictly consistent with himself. The kind of first cause he believed in accords exactly with the kind of causation concept he spoke of as operative within the universe.

Or again, it is of the essence of post-Kantian phenomenalism to assume that time and chance are ultimate. This notion of the ultimacy of chance is one of the ingredients of its concept of causation. Such is the case with the work of G. Dawes Hicks to which Smith refers. Hicks argues that those who believe in causation within the universe should logically also believe in a first cause. While asserting his belief in a first cause, however,

he specifically affirms that it must not be causation “in the strict sense of that phrase. For if it were, it would imply either a change in something already existing other than God, or else a change in God Himself, whereby from a condition of non-creativeness God passed into one of creativeness. And each of these alternatives is clearly contradictory.”³⁷ And on his assumptions Hicks is right. To ask men merely to be consistent with themselves when they have accepted the fact of causation within the universe usually means not to ask them to see the Christian position as certainly true, nor even to ask them to see it as probably true; it is to ask them to see that it is not true at all.

In the chapter on the resurrection of Christ Smith again seeks for common or neutral ground. This time he finds it in the common notion of historical evidence. If, then, men will only apply their accepted method of historical investigation they ought to accept the fact of Christ’s resurrection. Could not the risen body of our Lord be touched with human hands and seen with human eyes?³⁸ But Smith does not make clear how, if scientists would accept the fact of the risen Jesus on the basis of their own principles of evidence, they should also logically accept this Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Nor could he do so. On the commonly accepted concept of historical evidence in post-Kantian science, no fact can be accepted as a fact with scientific standing unless it is an essentially repeatable instance of a law that finds its ultimate reference point in man. Having misinterpreted every other historical fact by such a method, why should men suddenly make an exception and look at the resurrection of Christ for what it really is? When, therefore, we ask men to be consistent with their own principles of historical evidence and merely to apply these principles to the fact of Christ’s resurrection, we are really asking them to remain true to their initial error in order that they may thus escape ever being confronted with the real resurrection of Christ.

As already suggested, the argument on the final judgment is not as clear as that on the two subjects discussed. Yet here, also, the author seems to base his apologetic argument on a general concept of judgment concerning which the general moral consciousness of man agrees. The courts in every civilized country recognize the necessity of punishment for personal crimes. The last war has convinced men that international crimes must also be punished. How then can they logically raise any objection to a final punishment?³⁹ If men believe in the fact of punishment within the universe, why should they not believe in a final punishment for wicked men at the end of all history? But, we ask, why do men believe in the fact of judgment? More often than not, it is because they think it useful for the evolutionary progress of the race. It is not because they think that, as God’s image-bearers, men have broken the laws of their Creator. For such men the whole course of history runs without God. Why then should they think of God as having anything to do with the end of history? In fact, why should they think of an end of history at all? The author speaks of Karl Barth as teaching the “inevitableness of judgment.”⁴⁰ But Barth asserts emphatically that eschatology has nothing to do with dates on a calendar. For Barth, the creation of the world, the resurrection of Christ, and his return to final judgment are alike non-historical. To be sure, as a merely limiting concept or faith-

³⁷ *The Philosophical Bases of Theism*, New York, 1937. p. 176.

³⁸ p. 389.

³⁹ p. 457.

⁴⁰ p. 460.

construct, men such as Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr may logically believe in a final judgment, but their basic principles of theology do not permit of a judgment at the end of time. It follows, then, that to ask men who believe in the fact of judgment within history simply to be consistent with themselves and also to believe in a final judgment at the end of history, is usually to ask them, in effect, to make an illogical jump or else to reject altogether the final judgment as orthodox theology thinks of it.

Much then as we may approve of the high aims of the book before us, and much as we may admire the industry that has gone into its making, we are bound to indicate that a general evangelical apologetic, inasmuch as it is bound to concede the autonomy of man to some extent, is not adequate for our day. A really "vigorous apologetic" must spring directly from a vigorous theology and must in its method be the direct implicate of such a theology. When setting forth their system of theology, Reformed theologians are anxious to be true to Scripture and, therefore, to make no concessions to the demands of the natural man. They are vigorously critical of Arminianism, though highly appreciative of good men who are Arminians, because they are convinced that it makes concessions to the natural man, and thus is virtually the hole in the dike through which the waters of naturalism may come to inundate the gospel of God's free grace as proclaimed in the church of Christ. Why then should not Reformed theologians at least strive to develop a method of apologetic argument that dares to face the natural man and challenge the correctness of his interpretations of facts within the universe no less than of facts pertaining to the universe as a whole? In theology, men insist that all facts and all concepts of men have their meaning and are intelligible because of their ultimate reference point in the self-contained sovereign God. How dare they allow, in apologetics, that men are right in their conception of facts even when they make the would-be autonomous man the ultimate reference point of predication?

One thing, at least, seems to be clear. A generally evangelical apologetic to a large extent defeats its own purposes. True enough much good may be accomplished, both by an Arminian theology and by a generally evangelical method of apologetic. In this fact all who love the Lord will rejoice. But how much more good may be accomplished by the grace of God through a more consistently Biblical theology and a more consistently Biblical apologetic. A generally evangelical apologetic does not drive the natural man into a corner with no hope of escape. It does not track him down till he is at bay. It does not destroy his last shelter. His fire is not altogether extinguished. There always remains to him, even by permission of the soldiers of the cross, the right to undermine the work of God. If then the heart of man is desperately wicked, it will not fail to use the instrument of consistency and claim the right to reject the central facts of Christian theism. A plea for a vigorous apologetic ought therefore to be a plea for a genuinely Reformed apologetic. We may not be clear, indeed, as to the full implications of a truly Reformed apologetic. But this fact does not justify us in refusing to point out to those who, with us, love the Christian Faith that a generally evangelical apologetic, like a Roman Catholic apologetic, is inadequate for any time and especially inadequate for our time.

Karl Barth: Die kirchliche Dogmatik

Karl Barth: *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*. Zweiter Band, Zweiter Halbband. Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G. 1942. 10, 899. Sw. Fr. 37.00. Dritter Band, Erster Teil. Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G. 1945. 7, 488. Sw. Fr. 24.00.

The books under discussion form the second half of the second and the first third of the third volume of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. In the first volume of this work Barth deals with the prolegomena to theology.

He discusses (a) the word of God as the criterion of dogmatics, (b) revelation, (c) Scripture, and (d) the message of the church. In the first half of the second volume he deals with the doctrine of God, discussing (5) the knowledge of God, and (6) the existence of God. He now concludes his consideration of the doctrine of God by dealing (7) with the election of God, and (8) with the commandment of God. The first third of volume three treats of the doctrine of creation. It contains the ninth chapter of the entire work and is to be followed by two other parts dealing with the doctrine of man, providence and other matters. The fourth and fifth volumes are to deal with the doctrines of reconciliation and redemption respectively.

The doctrine of election, we are told, contains the whole of the gospel *in nuce*.¹ As such it may be summed up in two sentences. The first is, "Jesus Christ is the electing God."² From this any true statement of the doctrine of election must take its start. It is to be substituted for Calvin's notion of an absolute decree.³ Scripture knows of no God in Himself⁴ and "there is no *decretum absolutum*."⁵

The second sentence is, "Jesus Christ is the chosen man."⁶ When taken in relationship to the first, this sentence means that election never deals with man in himself and as such ("*an sich und als solcher*"). God rejects man as such but He rejects him in Christ. In Christ God loves man in himself and as such.⁷

In thus taking Jesus Christ as the subject and object of election we escape the double mystery of the unknown God and the unknown man of the traditional view.⁸ We now

¹ 2:2, p. 13.

² p. 111.

³ p. 119.

⁴ p. 123.

⁵ p. 124.

⁶ *Idem*.

⁷ p. 133.

⁸ p. 158.

realize that the decree of reprobation is penultimate rather than ultimate,⁹ that evil has only a shadow form of existence and that as such it is already past.¹⁰

Surrounding the Christ as the object of election is the inner circle of God's people (*die Gemeinde*). And surrounding this inner circle is the larger circle of the world of men in general.¹¹

The task of the inner circle of God's people is to testify of God's electing grace to men in general. Men should not seek to realize that which has been made inherently impossible for them by the grace of God.¹² It is futile for man to choose for the existence of pure non-being.¹³ In choosing for the Satanic possibility of pure non-being, his faith itself is an act in the void. It is nothing. "He chooses as and he chooses what he cannot choose.... He chooses that which in his election of God he made a rejected possibility."¹⁴ This impossible possibility takes on meaning and reality by means of its sublation in Christ. Man can hate God and be hated of God. But all this is possible only in a negative sense. God's victorious love is all-encompassing and all-inclusive.¹⁵

In bringing this message of God's grace to man the *Gemeinde* feels its solidarity with the world. As elect only in Christ, God's people speak to those who with them, even in their most violent hatred of God, are also elect in Christ. In Christ all are brethren.¹⁶ All are destined for participation in God's glory.¹⁷

In Barth's view the doctrine of ethics follows immediately upon that of election. The two are cemented together in the concept of the covenant of grace.¹⁸ As Jesus Christ is the electing God and the chosen man, so He is also the commanding God and the obeying man.¹⁹ Only on this presupposition can the comprehensive claim of God upon men everywhere be fully appreciated. In Christ man has a *mandatum concretissimum*.²⁰ In obedience to Christ man is truly free.²¹

Again, as reprobation is reprobation in Christ, so disobedience to God's command is disobedience in Christ. Judgment is always reconciliation.²² Accordingly "what God wills of us is the same as that which He wills and has done for us."²³ The commandment is the promise of the love of God.²⁴

⁹ pp. 182 f.

¹⁰ pp. 185 f.

¹¹ p. 215.

¹² p. 347.

Idem.

¹⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁵ p. 352.

¹⁶ p. 389.

¹⁷ p. 460; cf. also pp. 499, 507, 509.

¹⁸ p. 564.

¹⁹ p. 573.

²⁰ p. 745.

²¹ p. 755.

²² p. 819.

²³ p. 631.

²⁴ p. 821.

As Barth's doctrine of the covenant of grace unites his doctrine of election and his doctrine of ethics so it also unites his entire doctrine of God and that of man. Creation is accordingly said to be the external ground of the covenant.

Jesus Christ is both the noetic bond and the ontological ground of creation.²⁵ Creation is for the covenant and the covenant is the theme of history.²⁶

As covenant history, creation takes place in time, in true or genuine history. Our ordinary calendar time is not true time. It has virtually become non-existent through grace. Through grace men are participants in true, creation time.²⁷ Accordingly the story of creation is not a record of ordinary history. It is a "pure saga" (*reine Sage*).²⁸ Only pure saga can penetrate into and convey the real depth of genuine time. Furthermore, this pure saga must be received by fantasy.²⁹ Only by fantasy can we understand that all things in creation are directed toward their covenant consummation.³⁰ God's creation is the setting of limits to the infinite powers of Chaos.³¹ Existence is, therefore, *per se*, existence for God and in Christ.³² The negative aspect of reality is a mere passageway to reality properly so called. True self-consciousness is coterminous with Christ-consciousness. This is the best possible world because it is the only possible world. "So then Adam was Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ was Adam."³³

The main features of the doctrines of election, of ethics and of creation as set forth in the two books under consideration are now before us. All problems are to be christologically interpreted. When God elects, commands or creates, He makes His covenant with man in Christ. When man believes, obeys or comes into being he accepts God's covenant of grace.

Basic to an understanding of Barth's covenantal or christological treatment of the doctrines discussed are his ideas of correlativity and incommensurability. Throughout his various writings Barth has employed the concept of correlativity in order to do away with the notions of "God in Himself" and "man in himself." For all practical purposes God is nothing but that which He is in His relationship to man and man is nothing but that which he is in relationship to God. Both God and man are wholly exhausted in Christ the mediator between them. If anything exists beyond the Christ it does not concern us. The absolute decree of God, the expression of His sovereign will to man as such and the creation of man as such must therefore be set aside. Thus Barth's critical idea of correlativity continues to make havoc with the very foundations of historic Christianity.

Based upon this notion of correlativity is that of incommensurability. By means of it Barth seeks to make God's yes to man more ultimate than His no. Reprobation must be reprobation in Christ. "Jesus Christ is the propelling power given to all men unto eternal

²⁵ 3:1, p. 29.

²⁶ p. 64.

²⁷ p. 82.

²⁸ p. 89.

²⁹ p. 99.

³⁰ p. 106.

³¹ p. 152.

³² p. 411.

³³ p. 229.

life.”³⁴ In Christ God moves downward with man in utter dereliction and in Christ man moves upward with God into His glory. Because God has in Christ entered into the same process with man the end is victory. Judas “the great sinner of the New Testament,”³⁵ in whom the principle of reprobation is concentrated,³⁶ merely represents “the impurity of all the apostles.”³⁷ Judas is “himself a devil” but even as such he is in the midst of the church.³⁸ To be sure, Scripture does not say that Judas was saved. His relationship to Jesus therefore represents “the open situation in preaching.”³⁹ But Peter, too, did not wholly love Christ. It is because the elect are also reprobate and as such are elect that Jesus died for them.⁴⁰ The salvation of God’s people is in all instances purely eschatological. The figure of Judas is that of a shadow. This shadow is negative light. The divine no of judgment must always be viewed in the light of the divine yes of forgiveness. Hence it is not too bold to speak of an “objective justification of Judas.”⁴¹ We know nothing of hell but only of a triumph over hell. We know of none whom God has left wholly and finally to himself.⁴²

In attributing to the *decretum absolutum* the ultimate, and to man as such a secondary, constitutive function in the doctrine of election, orthodoxy has, argues Barth, embraced a hopeless fatalism. For orthodoxy there was an existential system with a fixed number of reprobate as well as a fixed number of elect. The gospel of victorious grace could scarcely break through such a mould. The true gospel must now be brought to light from the double darkness of the hidden God and the unknown man.⁴³ Only thus do we deal with light that is unapproachable instead of with darkness that is meaningless and arbitrary. Instead of staring at the mysterious *decretum absolutum* we look with joy into the face of Jesus Christ and the *decretum concretum*.⁴⁴ If mystery still remains it is no longer objectionable. If reprobation remains it remains only as a shadow. Man’s freedom to oppose God is not a genuine, only a negative, possibility. Man’s true freedom, his true choice, is enveloped by Christ’s choice; it is a choice in Christ. If evil remains, it remains only as a shadow. If we are not to speak of a general *apokatastasis* it remains true that darkness, creation, and sin are penultimate not ultimate. God’s final word for man is grace.

Barth’s attack on the orthodox Protestant position is, it appears, now more vigorous than ever. It is especially historic Reformed theology that forms the citadel under attack. He has deeper reasons than Arminius had for his objection to Calvin’s absolute decree. His reasons are such as the consciousness theologians, together with him, would borrow from Immanuel Kant. Barth’s “christological” treatment of the various doctrines he

³⁴ 2:2, p. 630.

³⁵ p. 511.

³⁶ p. 508.

³⁷ p. 513.

³⁸ p. 522.

³⁹ p. 528.

⁴⁰ p. 526.

⁴¹ p. 542.

⁴² p. 551.

⁴³ p. 158.

⁴⁴ p. 175.

discusses dissolves all the differentiations of orthodox Christianity. It dissolves the orthodox Creator-creature distinction on the ground that it speaks of a hidden God and a hidden man. It dissolves therefore the orthodox distinction between revelation to man and the acceptance of revelation by man. It dissolves the orthodox distinction between God who elects and man who is elected. All these differentiations, argues Barth over and over, are meaningless except in Christ. They are meaningless, that is to say, by the standard of Kant's autonomous man. What is not exhaustively penetrable by the manipulations of formal logic must be regarded as objectionable mystery⁴⁵ The autonomous man takes to himself the power of determining the limits of the practically possible and actual. All this Schleiermacher and Ritschl have also done. They too have followed the *Critique of Pure Reason* and dealt with historic Christianity accordingly. If the new Modernism differs from the old it differs on the score of thoroughness. Its principle of continuity is still more formal than that of the consciousness theologians. Hence its greater flexibility. Hence its greater capacity for swallowing up all the "contradictions" of the traditional life and world view and of Scripture alike. It is only a dialecticism of the sort that Barth offers which can negate the negation of its own asserted correlativity and reach incommensurability at last. The God of Roman Catholicism at its best, the God of orthodox Protestantism, but most of all the God of the Calvinist, the freely revealing and freely choosing or rejecting God, has never been more vigorously rejected than by the system of Karl Barth as expressed in these his latest works.

Correlative to this formal principle of continuity is Barth's principle discontinuity. Barth is no rationalist of the Cartesian and Leibnizian sort. He is an "irrationalist" of the post-Kantian, post-Hegelian, Kierkegaardian sort. He would seek for no individuation by complete description. Man is most of all not what he is, in the last analysis, by virtue of God's self-contained and self-conscious decree. Man in himself and as such—Barth's equivalent of Emil Brunner's "entirely single thing"—is what he is ultimately for no reason at all. He springs from pure possibility. The Chaos element surrounds and pervades him. His mother home is Non-Being.

Yet this realm of pure Non-Being is somehow also the source of the material of true Being. It is the home of the eternal triune God in Himself and especially of the "Father." By some telescopic technique of *Wesensschau*, perfected by the furbishing hands of such men as Husserl and Heidegger, Barth is able to tell us of this interchangeability of pure Being and pure Non-Being. In rejecting all "existential systems" Barth is able now to legislate even for pure possibility. As a limiting concept the counsel of God, formerly standing for the freedom of the Sovereign God, now stands for the freedom of the would-be sovereign man.

So sovereign is this man that he elects to save or realize himself by means of an ideal, which, borrowing the terminology of folklore, he personifies in Christ. He keeps forever saying to himself that he is a Judas and therefore unreal so far as he is not fully identical with his Christ. So omniscient is this sovereign man that, in spite of the requirements of his own logic of correlativity, he can affirm the permanent and positive apostolate of Judas and the ultimate victory in Christ of every man. In a procedure similar to that of Plato who studied human nature by means of the State, in which human nature is "writ

⁴⁵ cf. e.g. Barth's treatment of time in its relation to eternity in 1:2, pp. 50 ff. and 2:2, pp. 157 ff.

large,” Barth solves all problems by means of enlarging the proportions of his own becoming. Together with his God he emerges from Chaos into Christ. Reality, he says to himself, has two aspects, a lower and a higher. When my ideal commands me to be perfect I obey by saying that I am perfect in my ideal. My Christ-consciousness is my self-consciousness. The evil that I do does not exist, for in doing evil I do not exist. Thus does consciousness theology, the theology of the autonomous man, make void the Word of God. Feuerbach still smiles.

There is no doubt that Barth is seeking to make the Christian faith diagnostically and redemptively significant for the problems of our day. But on his presuppositions the problem of the day cannot even be correctly formulated and therefore certainly cannot be solved.

The God and man of Barth’s theology are unknown to one another till, in a common process, they become identical with one another and therefore indistinguishable from one another. Thus revelation becomes ventriloquism. The God and man of Barth’s theology are non-existent till, in a common process, they become identical with one another and indistinguishable from one another. Election thus becomes their common aim and task.

Barth seeks to escape what he speaks of as the monism of traditional Reformed theology. But his own position ultimately destroys all difference between God and man by means of process. For him all reality is one stream of Becoming. This is monism with a vengeance.

Barth seeks to escape the mystery involved in the *decretum absolutum*. But in doing so he surrounds God as well as man with mystery. On his position man must know everything to know anything. No appeal is left to God who knows what man cannot know. And yet the Chaos element is really ultimate. Man can therefore never know anything. Pure knowledge as pure form and pure ignorance as pure matter stand in everlasting antagonism over against one another. As was the case with Hegel’s dialecticism so it is the case with Barth’s that pure being and pure non-being are logically interchangeable. Accordingly, the notion of becoming as proceeding from these two is wholly and ultimately irrational. And Barth’s “faith” becomes mere “will to believe” *a la* William James. Barth’s ultimate subject of predication is Reality. His attempt to make predication intelligible on such a basis is no more successful than that of idealist logicians in general. In his theology the Christian faith is diagnostically and redemptively irrelevant. The gospel is choked rather than set free.

That Barth’s theology finds its chief object of attack in the Reformed Faith is but natural. In the Reformed Faith the freedom of God, the self-contained God, is central to everything. It is this freedom of God that is most directly opposed to the would-be ultimacy or freedom of man, as modern science and philosophy teach or assume it. Barth’s system has neutralized the true freedom of God. He has woven this true freedom of God into a pattern of identity with the freedom of man. Thus the imperatives of God are silenced and the healing streams of grace are swallowed up in the flats of human self-righteousness.

Christian Apologetics

Alan Richardson: *Christian Apologetics*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers. 1947. 256. \$3.00.

Edward John Carnell: *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1948. 379. \$3.50.

The two books under review represent two opposite points of view both as to the nature and the defence of Christianity. We may therefore think of them as engaged in debate and watch for results.

Representing the modern point of view, Richardson naturally contends that “Christian apologetics must inevitably raise the question of the methodology of theological science in relation to that of the sciences in general.” Theology must submit its claims “to the test of scientific method.”¹

In masterly fashion the author acquits himself of his task. Revelation, he argues, is not a figment of the imagination of theologians but “a category based upon observable facts and recognizable experiences.”² And when the Christian intimates the nature of his approach to Reality by saying, *Credo ut intelligam*, he does what the adherent of the best philosophy also does. What is more, the “biblical faith-principle” appears to be the highest, the most unifying, hypothesis for the explanation of life that man can find.

Richardson insists that his position be distinguished from that of classical rationalism. His view, he says, allows him to accept the “scandal of particularity” and the mystery of election. Special revelation is “revelation in and through history.” Then too his position allows him to say with Augustine that all human knowledge needs the illumination of God.

That Richardson’s view of Christianity is typical of our time scarcely needs to be established. One need only to think of such names as Niebuhr, Kroner, Tillich, Ferré, Mackay and Homrighausen to realize this fact. But that for all its stress upon the “uniqueness” of Christianity and for all its “Augustinianism” this view implies the complete rejection of historic Christian theism not to be generally recognized. Not as though Richardson himself seeks in any wise to hide his hostility to the orthodox Christian Faith. He informs us plainly that “there are no such things as ‘absolute perspectives’ in existential matters.”³ The Christian perspective is the best perspective we know of now.

Not so long ago orthodox apologetics was wont to defend its position by the “you also” method. Does Christianity depend upon faith? so does science and so does philosophy. To use this method now would lead to nothing but confusion. Philosophers and scientist now vie with one another in their acceptance of the “unique” and the

¹ p. 7.

² p. 21.

³ p. 107.

mysterious. There is, moreover, not merely a “return to religion” but a “return to Calvinism.” For all that, the rejection of orthodox Christianity is as violent as ever.

It is imperative, then, that the two faith-principles themselves be compared with one another. The old and the new conceptions of “uniqueness,” as well as the old and the new forms of Augustinianism, must be set over against one another.

But this very thing it is that the traditional method of orthodox apologetics, still so much in vogue, is unable to do. Traditional apologetics is committed to a methodology which is not Augustinian in either the historic or the modern sense of the term. It is thereby virtually bound to deny the significance of the contrast between the two types of Augustinianism. On the principles of Thomas Aquinas and Bishop Butler “reason” and “faith” mean virtually the same thing for the Christian and the non-Christian. How then could a Romanist, or a follower of Butler, meet a position such as that of Richardson?

The only recourse of the traditional apologist is an appeal to balance. Sensing the fact that Richardson’s conception of uniqueness is obtained at the expense of all rationality he might use the argument so commonly employed since Hegel’s day to the effect that uniqueness apart from system is without intelligible meaning. Following T. H. Green he might show how pure empiricism must lead to scepticism. On the other hand, sensing the fact that on Richardson’s conception of universal coherence all historic uniqueness disappears, he might use the argument so commonly employed since Kierkegaard’s day that coherence or system, without content derived from pure uniqueness, is also without intelligible meaning.

It is apparent, however, that in both cases Richardson would agree. It is difficult to conceive of a nicer balance than that found in his book. But then it is a balance between pure rationalism and pure irrationalism. Post-Kantian phenomenism, whether in theology or in philosophy and science, consists precisely in the delicacy with which it seeks to satisfy both Parmenides and Heraclitus. And failing to challenge the common assumption of both, traditional orthodox apologetics were never able to challenge either rationalism or irrationalism effectively. The most they were able, at any time in the past, to accomplish was to hold out for balance between them and call it “analogy of being.”

But if orthodoxy has always been largely at the mercy of its foes because of its failure, and even unwillingness, to work out its own apologetic methodology, that fact ought now to be more apparent than ever. There is nothing that the traditional method of Aquinas or Butler could present that would really tell against the position of Richardson. That position is a well high perfect balance between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* forms of reasoning as these have frequently been employed by orthodox Christian apologists.

As already suggested the only way in which Richardson’s position may be really challenged is by showing that a non-Christian *a priori* cannot save from scepticism and that a non-Christian *a posteriori* cannot produce true historical individuality, while the balanced combination of these two but hides from the unwary the defects of both.

But then it is only on the presupposition of the truth of historic Calvinism that this can be accomplished. It is only if God by his counsel really controls whatsoever comes to pass that we have a true Augustinianism, a true *a priori*. For then the mind of man is required to think of its moulding of the facts of history into a “system” as at every point analogous to the prior and ultimate ordering of these facts of God. Then, too, we have the true idea of uniqueness, a uniqueness consisting in the precise place that anything in the universe occupies by virtue of the plan of God. Thus to presuppose the self-sufficiency of

God, thus to maintain the actual control of all historic factuality by the plan of God is to exercise the historic Augustinian faith-principle in our times.

But such Augustinianism is identical with Calvinism. And this will at once indicate the necessity of dropping once for all the appeal to categories accepted by believers and unbelievers alike. It is precisely on the nature of the most fundamental categories of interpretation that the true historic and the modern pseudo-Augustinianism are most profoundly at variance with one another. To appeal to “logic,” that is to the “law of contradiction,” or to “experience” and “facts” as such, is worse than merely confusing. It is these categories themselves that are in dispute. To argue about a position as being “in accord with logic” and as being “in accord with fact” is to beat the air and thus to fail to present the challenge of the Christian position at all. Really to challenge men with the truth of Christianity is to deal with logic and with facts, showing that the two have their relevance on Christian presuppositions alone.

Turning now to Carnell’s book, the question is whether, in seeking to vindicate orthodox Christianity, Carnell has continued to follow traditional methodology with all its fatal weaknesses or has developed a more consistently Christian, and therefore a more effective, approach. The answer to this question is not easy to find. Sometimes he comes out boldly with the Christian challenge, contending that unless one presupposes the infallible Scripture, with the system of doctrine it contains, there is no rationality in any human experience. Then again, he relies on a vague sort of Platonic or even Cartesian a priorism to bring unity into human experience.

In evidence of the former such points as the following may be mentioned.

Without any hesitation he takes the highest possible position with respect to the question of authority: “Christianity assumes the existence of the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture to solve both metaphysical and epistemological problems.”⁴ Or again: “The Christian, having chosen as his logical starting point the existence of the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture, is admonished, as an implication of this starting point, to hue (sic) to the implications of this decision in every phase of life.”⁵

It is the sovereign God who speaks in Scripture. “Being contingent upon God’s will, it is this will, and not an antecedent system of logic, which gives meaning to the movement of the time-space world.”⁶ It is therefore by an act of this sovereign God that men learn to accept Him and His revelation for what they are: “The power by which the heart is enabled to see that the word of God is true is the Holy Spirit. The word of God is thus self-authenticating. It bears its own testimony to truth; it seals its own validity.”⁷ “The surest proof one can have that his faith in God’s word is valid is the internal witness of the Spirit of God in his heart.”⁸

In all this we have historic Augustinianism. To have a “whole-soul trust in God’s word as true”⁹ and to mean by this that one believes in the Bible as infallibly revealing an existential system is something abhorrent to the “Augustinianism” of Richardson.

⁴ p. 96.

⁵ p. 212.

⁶ p. 40.

⁷ p. 68.

⁸ p. 68.

⁹ p. 66.

Believing in the total depravity of the mind of fallen man¹⁰ Carnell speaks of the “complete penetration into our inward lives that sin enjoys.”¹¹ Speaking of men in general he says: “But, being in defection by their sins, what they see is vitiated. Thus, they are not able to see and appreciate that one of the peculiar characteristics of this God is that He is the Creator of the world and the Savior of men.”¹²

How then, Carnell virtually asks, can there be a common basis of argument between believers and unbelievers? The “Christian operates under one major premise—the existence of the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture.”¹³ “The Christian denies the competency of man’s mind to know reality without revelation, while the non-Christian confesses it.”¹⁴ How shall the Christian, then, reason with one whose major premise is the self-sufficiency of the human mind? The Christian must be alert to the danger that the “enemy” likes to “fix” the game. “If the Christian is disqualified from the arena by rules which his opponent makes, it is evident that the game has been ‘fixed.’”¹⁵ An orthodox Christian ought therefore not to argue with his opponent on “common ground.” For on this “common ground” the enemy has “fixed” the rules of the game. “If we try to come to the Bible with a principle of selectivity found outside of the Bible, we render the Bible needless, since we can accept of it only what coincides with the truth which we had before we ever came to Scripture in the first place.”¹⁶

What then should the Christian do? He should argue that unless one presupposed the truth of the existential system revealed in Scripture one drops into scepticism.¹⁷ The Bible’s message “stands pitted in judgement against” the scientific method of its critics.¹⁸ “Technically speaking, whenever a man talks and expects something to be meant by it, he is resorting to a prerogative which belongs to the Christian alone. On an empirical flux system, one can only, like Cratylus, wave his hand to express his philosophy, for from flux and change only flux and change can come.”¹⁹ It is thus that Carnell sets off the true Augustinian faith-principle from false. With full confidence the true principle of individuation. The false faith-principle of Richardson posits God’s promise as the source of space-time factuality. Carnell’s faith principle posits God’s promise as the reason for the regularity of the seasons.²⁰ The challenge is also made at the most crucial point—the place of the mind of man in one’s life and world view. The false faith-principle of Richardson in effect denies the created and fallen character of the human mind. The faith-principle of Carnell says that “the creature-Creator relationship is inviolable.”²¹ The former seeks its coherence by means of abstract principles of logic above gods and men;

¹⁰ p. 279.

¹¹ p. 199.

¹² p. 171.

¹³ p. 175.

¹⁴ p. 201.

¹⁵ pp. 94f.

¹⁶ p. 198.

¹⁷ p. 97.

¹⁸ p. 194.

¹⁹ p. 212.

²⁰ p. 53.

²¹ p. 185.

the latter seeks for coherence by reformulating the facts of God's revelation according to the principles of Scripture.

But, the careful reader of Carnell's book will ask, are you really presenting Carnell's main approach in thus stressing the difference between the true and the false Augustinianism? That there is a legitimate doubt on this matter may be briefly indicated as follows.

We have seen how Scripture is said to be self-authenticating and its reception by the sinner as absolutely true as due to the internal witness of the Spirit. But this high position is not maintained. It is not made to count as basic in the argument. It is even openly rejected and flouted. Self-authenticating Scripture is asked to give "rational evidences of its authority."²² Reason, not as interpreted by Scripture but as taken by those not believing in Scripture, is authorized "to canvass the evidence of a given authority."²³ "When one comes averring to be from God, it surely is a man's duty to demand a proof that this is so."²⁴ "Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man's assent."²⁵ And the Christian apologist is presented as being glad to take the test as set by an autonomous reason, "A careful examination of the Bible reveals that it passes these stringent examinations *summa cum laude*."²⁶ "The Conservative" now forgets to make the creature-Creator relationship primary. He forgets his doctrine of total depravity. For fear that he shall be classed with the mystics and sceptics, he hastens to explain that, after all, his final appeal is not "to *ipse dixit* authority, but to coherent truth."²⁷ After all, "the Reformation stemmed from a sanctified application of systematic consistency to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church."²⁸ "Any theology which rejects Aristotle's fourth book of the *Metaphysics* is big with the elements of its own destruction."²⁹ Though our logical starting point is the Trinity we realize that "all logical ultimates must be tested" and that "the only way to do this is to work out a still more primitive starting procedure."³⁰ And here we gladly turn with you to Plato. Carnell's "Conservative" is glad to substitute a Platonic *a priori* for the *tabula rasa* empiricism of the Thomist. In his doctrine of the image of God, the "Conservative" has the justification for the identification of his own *a priori* with that of Plato. "But that Plato hit upon the right synoptic starting point can be explained by the Christian through the hypothesis that, being made in the image of God, he was given illumination to see more of the problem of epistemology than were others."³¹ With Plato, with Descartes, and with Kant, the "Conservative," as a follower of Augustine, would appeal to an innate knowledge of self

²² p. 71.

²³ p. 72.

²⁴ p. 268 f.

²⁵ p. 178.

²⁶ p. 178.

²⁷ p. 72.

²⁸ p. 73.

²⁹ pp. 77 f.

³⁰ p. 124.

³¹ p. 186.

that the rational man possesses and to a criterion that this rational man has within himself by which he may judge of the validity of any revelational claim.³²

Against all this the “Augustinianism” of Richardson has no complaint to make. When Carnell fails to distinguish clearly between the Augustinianism that has come to expression in Descartes, he is playing into the hand of his foe. Calvin did, and Descartes did not, make the Creator-creature relation fundamental in his thought. Calvin did, and Descartes did not, make the fact of the fall of man determinative in his estimate of man himself. When Carnell’s “Conservative” follows Calvin, he boldly contends that Scripture is the Christian’s highest category. When this same “Conservative” follows Descartes, he virtually allows would-be autonomous reason to pass sentence both upon the credibility and the content of Scripture. The “Conservative” will need to choose between these two. But then it is endemic to the nature of the “Conservative,” that is to an “Evangelical” who refuses frankly to confess Calvinism, to halt between two opinions. It is only on the basis of the Reformed Faith that a clear distinction can be made between Calvin and Descartes, between a true and a false Augustinianism. Arminian Evangelicalism, in practice, always tones down the Creator-creature distinction. Its doctrine of “free will” requires it to do so. The same holds true of the doctrine of sin. Accordingly it is quite impossible for Carnell’s “Conservative” really to challenge the “Augustinianism” of Richardson on the matter of the criterion of judgement.

And here lies the fundamental weakness of Carnell’s book. It is formally correct in its argument against all forms of mysticism and empiricism. Carnell is rightly anxious not to tie up Christianity with a theory of knowledge that cannot distinguish between truth and “snarks, boojums, splinth, and gobble-de-gook.”³³ But why is Carnell not equally anxious to avoid tying up Christianity with a theory of knowledge that would, forthwith, make impossible the idea of Biblical revelation itself? Christianity is squarely opposed to irrationalism; but it is equally opposed to rationalism. An *a priori* such as that of Plato, of Descartes, of Kant, or of Blanshard makes man himself the final reference point of all interpretation. Such an *a priori* requires that the contents of any “revelation” shall be poured into hard and fast moulds supposedly found within the human mind. Modern theology has obeyed the requirements of this *a priori* and has therefore cast overboard the doctrines of God’s transcendence, of man’s creation and fall, and every other doctrine of orthodox Christianity. It was only logical in doing so. Those theologians who have most consistently followed out the demands of the *a priori* of the men to whom Carnell makes his appeal have been the first to put Christianity on a par with “snarks, boojums, splinth, and gobble-de-gook.”

It is not any *a priori*, but the specifically Christian *a priori*, that saves from scepticism. Traditional apologetics failed to point out this fact. In consequence, it found itself writhing in the clutches of its foes. In many other respects Carnell has left Thomas and Butler far behind. He rises to great heights when he boldly claims that only the Christian has the logical right to speak of anything at all. But then at the crucial point his “Conservative” crouches before the throne of the natural man offering to trim the contents of the Bible itself to any form and size required.

³² pp. 158 ff; also p. 125.

³³ p. 81.

Apparently the “Conservative” leans heavily on the recent generosity of the natural man. Has not this natural man made a recent edict that henceforth he will not require the positive but only the negative application of the law of contradiction to the contents of any revelation? The “Conservative” apparently thinks that this edict gives standing to the uniqueness of the facts of Christianity. But he overlooks the fact that the uniqueness thus allowed is the uniqueness of irrationalism. From the high position where he claims: “In history, then, there is no surd, inexplicable, or antinomy. History is as rational at every point as the rational God Who decrees its movement”³⁴, Carnell’s “Conservative” descends to the admission that “all reality is obscure.”³⁵ From this high position where he claims that the promises of God with respect to the course of history cannot fail, this same “Conservative” descends to the plainest irrationalism when he says: “If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?”³⁶ The modern scientist is a cross between rationalist and irrationalist. As a rationalist his *a priori* principles require him to say with Spinoza that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things. Virtually making no distinction between the mind of God and the mind of man as God’s creature, he must therefore seek to individuate by complete description. He may say that man reasons discursively and God knows intuitively but he cannot make this distinction mean anything in practice. On rationalist principles man either knows all things or he knows nothing.

The rationalist should be able to predict the whole course of history, except for the fact that on his basis the idea of prediction is meaningless. For him all historical factuality is identical with timeless logic.

To escape this nemesis the scientist also becomes irrationalist. He would save individual historical existence, but to do so he must posit an existence that is prior to, and independent of, all rationality. He therefore contends that space-time factuality is in the nature of the case obscure. He commits himself to a view of individuality diametrically opposed to that of Scripture.

Being both rationalist and irrationalist is to embrace the utterly self-contradictory and meaningless notion of rational probability. For facts to be rational means, on this basis, to be exhaustively, demonstratively, analytically or intuitively known. The facts must lose their existence to be know. Thus there is no probability; there is no omniscience. On the other hand, if the facts retain their existence, they are utterly unknown. There is then no rationality; there is no ignorance.

Why then should the “Conservative” appeal to this principle? If he “ardently defends a system of authority”³⁷ he does so only because, in effect, he admits to his judge, the natural man, that the Christian hypothesis is, like any other hypothesis, a fish-line of rationality thrown out into a shoreless and bottomless ocean of Chance. Thus we are back to the “snarks.”

In conclusion we repeat that Carnell’s effort to teach a higher position in orthodox apologetics than that furnished by Aquinas and Butler is laudable indeed. But it is only

³⁴ p. 296.

³⁵ p. 209.

³⁶ p. 114.

³⁷ p. 71.

when his "Conservative" learns to make his Calvinism count more consistently than he has in his book, that he can effectively meet the needs of our day. The modernist apologete is now pretty consistently pagan; the orthodox apologete must be consistently Christian. It is consistent Christianity, it is Calvinism, that alone can meet the scepticism of unbelief. Carnell's "Conservative" seems to believe this. Why does he not tell the world so?

Karl Barth en de Kinderdoop

G. C. Berkouwer: *Karl Barth en de Kinderdoop*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1947. 168. Fl. 4.75.
E. Smilde: *Een Eeuw van Strijd over Vetbond en Doop*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1946. 367.

If you witnessed a debate on the question of infant baptism and Karl Barth were present, which side, do you suppose, would he defend?

You might naturally think first of his stress on the sovereignty of God. Man, says Barth, contributes nothing to his salvation. If he believes, it is the Holy Spirit who believes in him. Would not this priority of God come to really climactic expression in God's acceptance of infants so obviously unable to present anything to God? Moreover has not Barth written a large volume setting forth and defending the covenant of grace? And has he not, in this volume, done what even Abraham Kuyper was not willing to do, namely, made the ordinances of creation wholly subservient to the purposes of grace? Surely then, you may argue, the natural relationship of parent and child must also serve the purpose of the covenant of grace. If creation is exclusively for the covenant and the covenant is the theme of history, then infants are from birth in the covenant and ought to be baptized.

But your friend, also present at the same debate, comes to the opposite conclusion. What is more he draws the opposite conclusion from the very premise to which you appeal. For Barth, he says, all things are to be Christologically interpreted. Existence is, therefore, *per se* existence for God and in Christ. Hence true self-consciousness is coterminous with Christ-consciousness. To exist at all is to have faith in Christ. Thus the existence of infants as such is a contradiction in terms. For the church, as guardian of the covenant no one exists unless he has faith in Christ. And only adults have faith in Christ.

Your friend points out that Barth's doctrine of election corroborates his view. Christologically interpreted, election means that Jesus Christ is the electing God and also the chosen man. By putting the matter thus, your friend points out, Barth seeks to do away with the "unknown God" and the "unknown man" of the traditional Reformed position. He thus does away at one stroke with God's absolute decree and with man's meaningful existence in terms of this decree. Existence has become exclusively a matter of correlation. God's existence is existence for man and man's existence is existence for God. Thus existence itself is a matter of full self-consciousness. And children have no such self-consciousness. They should not be baptized because they do not exist in Christ.

By this time you may be scanning Barth's face for his answer. Sorry, the answer is in favor of your friend. Berkouwer points out that, in his recent emphasis on God's election and the covenant, Barth has come to regard the "natural" as virtually hostile to the spiritual.¹ Thus the natural relationship of parent and child cannot be taken into self-conscious covenant relation with God. In truly masterful fashion, Berkouwer shows that Barth's rejection of infant baptism is but symptomatic of his general rejection of

¹ p. 133.

Christianity as presupposing the historicity of the creation, the fall and the restoration of man. He indicates that Barth's principle of continuity requires him to subject the revelation of God in history to one master concept that will enable man to see through it all. This is to say, in effect, that Barth's great stress on discontinuity—on which you depended in your argument—requires for its correlative an equally great stress on continuity. Only thus can his conception of correlativity be maintained.

But why then, you say, should Barth after all favor my friend rather than me? If correlativity is his real principle why should continuity be favored over discontinuity? And is it not discontinuity that is stressed in his recent rejection of natural theology? Would not Barth's principle of discontinuity itself require him to depreciate and even to reject the natural relation of parent and child as spiritually significant?

In all this you are quite right. Berkouwer points out that some followers and friends of Barth, working with the same dialectical principle as he, continue to defend the practice of infant baptism on the ground that it illustrates the priority of God. But he adds that in effect such a defence of infant baptism is tantamount to its rejection. Without the orthodox doctrine of the historicity of creation and the fall, there is no real sovereignty of God and no true subservience of natural relations to covenantal ones. Barth's principle of discontinuity is not that of the sovereignty of God in the orthodox sense of the term at all. He vehemently rejects the idea of an absolute decree. His principle of discontinuity is simply that of chance. And a maintenance of the ordinance of baptism on such a basis would be based on mere tradition.

So there was much good sense to your argument after all. Your only trouble was that you had not fully realized that on Barth's principle of correlativity between God and man in Christ the very affirmation of infant baptism would still, in effect, be the negation of your orthodox conception of this ordinance. And as to why, in actual fact, Barth stresses his principle of continuity rather than his principle of discontinuity in his rejection of infant baptism this too finds a ready explanation. Throughout his theology Barth's principle of correlativity, involving as it does the perfect balance between utter irrationality and exhaustive rationality, is broken by a principle of incommensurability which is that of the predominance of rationality over irrationality. There is no possible justification for this. One who flatly denies the counsel of God as back of the course of history has no logical right to believe in the victory of rationality over irrationality. He has immersed the mind itself in chaos and old night. But every man must strive after rationality.

Barth's denial of infant baptism has therefore no sound foundation. This does not mean that no instruction can be gained from it. Those who would defend infant baptism can do so only if they do it on the foundation of God's all-comprehensive plan. Only on this foundation can the idea of the covenant be stated with adequacy. Only on this foundation can it be made comprehensive of all the relationship of life. Only on this foundation can the natural be made fully subservient to the spiritual.

It is therefore a matter for rejoicing that the concept of the covenant is once again in the center of discussion and debate on the part of those who self-consciously reject the dialectical principle of Barth and work on the presupposition of the sovereignty of God in the Reformed sense of the term. Between the two parties of this debate the question is not one of a nice balance between irrationalism and rationalism. Both parties reject irrationalism, for both believe in the exhaustive rationality of every relationship of man to

God in terms of His plan. Both parties reject rationalism, for both believe that God's rationality is at no point fully comprehensible to man. Both parties want therefore to make God's revelation of Himself in Scripture supreme in their debate. Finally both parties reject the Romanist analogy of being which, though not committed to the rejection of all antecedent being, yet has so largely catered to human autonomy that it can do little to stop the avalanche of dialecticism now flooding the church.

The debate between these two parties then is one of the relative faithfulness with which the basic principles of Scripture are applied to the question in hand. Those interested in this discussion may read the large historical review of the debate on the covenant and baptism that has been carried on between Reformed theologians in The Netherlands for over a hundred years written by Smilde. This book is historical. It is at the same time polemical. By and large it defends, or at least is sympathetic toward, what, for want of a better term, may be called Abraham Kuyper's point of view. It is a critique of a small volume *Rondom 1905* written by those who have subjected this view to some criticism in recent years. It is impossible here further to discuss the nature of this debate. Suffice it to say that the criticism of the "Kuyperian" view of the covenant is of a nature similar to that made of Kuyper's general conception of culture. In both cases the charge is made that Kuyper's work, though it has been of the greatest service in the development of Reformed theology, needs to be made somewhat more consistent with its basic principles.²

Much good is already emerging from this debate. One point in particular may be mentioned. It appears clearly now that if the Reformed Faith is to defend itself against dialecticism, it must purify itself of all the remnants of Romanism. The covenant concept alone, when made all comprehensive, including even the activities of man in the field of science and philosophy, can serve as a sterilizing agency for this purpose. Made all comprehensive, made to stand for the idea of Christianity itself, it allows for, nay requires, infant baptism. Infant baptism is as defensible as is Christianity itself. Rejecting it implies the subtraction of some of the relationships of man from their dependence upon God. Rejecting it leads eventually toward Arminianism, toward Romanism, toward dialecticism which is Modernism.

² See also the answer to Smilde in an extended series of articles in *De Reformatie* by Professor C. Veenhof.

De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper

S. J. Ridderbos: *De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1947. 338.

I. A. Diepenhorst: *Algemeene Genade en Antithese*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1947. 52. Fl. 0.80 (paper).

These two publications here brought to the notice of the reader deal with the Christian philosophy of culture as this has found expression in recent Reformed theology, and particularly in the works of Abraham Kuyper.

Romanists have frequently charged that because of its low view of human reason Reformed theology is unable to account for the accomplishments of science and art. In reply to this and other such charges, Kuyper pointed out that in reality it is only in terms of Reformed theology that one can account for culture. For Reformed theology is Christianity come to its own. The more truly Biblical one's conception of God and man the more truly can one account for human culture. But what of the doctrine of total depravity? Does not that depreciate all human accomplishment? Not at all, says Kuyper. To teach total depravity is also to teach the grace of God. It is by the grace of God that men, though sinners, may yet build the structure of human culture. There is, first, saving grace. It is that by which men strive self-consciously to do all things to the glory of God. It is that which enables them to engage in artistic and scientific construction as well as in worship, never forgetting the fact that they are building the temple of God.

But there is also common grace. It does not change the heart of man. But it restrains him from spending all his energies in building a tower of Babel. And while restraining the downward and destructive tendency of sin, it even enables him to labour conjointly with the believer in bringing to light the potentialities of God's created universe. Thus it is that the Reformed theology, with its doctrine of total depravity complemented by its teaching of grace, both special and common, is able to show that Christianity and it alone saves man, the whole man, for this life as well as for the one that is to come.

Ridderbos has done a fine service in bringing together the materials that bear on Kuyper's conception of human culture. It enables one afresh to rejoice in the comprehensive and balanced character of the Reformed Faith. It enables one to realize anew how it is only in Reformed thinking that one can explain the whole of human experience.

But this is not to say that Reformed theology has come to a fully adequate expression of Christian truth. Reformed theologians are fully aware of this fact. One problem that vexes them greatly is that of the relation of special to common grace. Some have even

found them irreconcilable. Such is the case with H. Hoeksema. Others have found it necessary to re-evaluate Kuyper's statement of the relationship between the two. They have felt themselves compelled to reduce the significance of common grace lest it should, after all, impinge upon the purity of the doctrine of special grace which all are equally anxious to maintain. Among these are such men as de Graaf, Dooyeweerd and Schilder.

Ridderbos, however, is inclined to leave Kuyper's structure intact. He likes the old mansion pretty much as it is.

We are inclined to think that in this he is too optimistic. We do not agree with Hoeksema in thinking that Kuyper's mansion needs to be destroyed. But we do think that it needs a new roof.

We do not know why Ridderbos failed to take notice of the criticisms by Hoeksema of Kuyper's view of common grace. These criticisms are as fundamental as any that are lodged by the theologians he discusses. Even so, Ridderbos does not succeed too well in answering some of the criticisms of Kuyper that he considers. One such point may here be indicated.

The chief task of human culture, Kuyper argues, is the development of the potentialities God has placed in the created world.¹ At the same time Kuyper contends that it is through common grace that mankind can fulfill this task. "Thanks to common grace the powers of creation come to fruition in spite of sin. And this preserving and development of the original creation to the glory of God, is the first, independent goal of common grace."² Accordingly the covenant of God with Noah is said to be a covenant with man as man. It is to enable man as man, whether believer or unbeliever, to fulfill his cultural task.

But is it not man's business to do all things self-consciously to the glory of God? And are the recipients of common, but not of special, grace in covenant with God to do all things to His glory? Or, if not, is their task really fulfilled if with grouchy faces, as driven workers in God's concentration camp, they carry their brick and mortar? All that is not of faith is sin. If non-believers do help for the fulfilling of man's task, they do so in spite of themselves, because they could not even be successful as covenant-breakers if they were not also forced to be, in spite of themselves, co-labourers with God's covenant-keepers. But then, to bring out this fact, the covenant with Noah should have been made subordinate to the covenant of grace with Abraham. True, Kuyper says that the common grace has a second goal, the goal of preparing the ground for special grace. But this should be its only purpose. True also, Kuyper says that both purposes of common grace must serve the glory of God.³ But the devils also must serve the glory of God. And in their hearts unbelievers are in covenant with Satan. To the extent that they are conscious of this fact they would destroy all culture. Their "cooperation on common ground" with believers in the construction of human culture is possible because they are not fully conscious of their own basic principles. And the Christian can accept of this cooperation only if he is himself fully aware of the difference in ultimate objectives that obtains between the unbeliever and himself in all that they do.

¹ Ridderbos, p. 287.

² p. 89.

³ pp. 92f.

Kuyper's work on common grace needs reconstruction along these lines. To speak of an independent goal of common grace is to tone down to some extent the claim of Christianity as alone being able to save.

It is therefore also to tone down the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed conceptions of human culture.

Ridderbos seems to be unwilling to face this fact. His work, admirable as it is in many ways, resembles that of a man who has just a few, say three or four, new shingles with which to repair a leaky roof. He uses the new shingles for the largest holes, but insists on re-using all the old shingles for the smaller leaks. With considerable ingenuity he trims as he replaces but the result is, at best, a makeshift. It is no dishonor to a father who has built a house if the son finds that fifty years later it needs a new roof.

A brief word may be added about Diepenhorst's pamphlet. Its title indicates that it is designed to deal with the specific question of the relation of the doctrine of total depravity and common grace. Diepenhorst does take notice of Hoeksema's criticism of Kuyper. He also concedes, implicitly if not always explicitly, that Kuyper's views on common grace need considerable modification. In particular, Kuyper's insistence on the independent goal of common grace has virtually disappeared. Diepenhorst merely denies the exclusive subservience of common to special grace. And the reason given is the perfectly innocent one that God may rejoice Himself in the glories of nature never seen by man. For the rest, he maintains as the central and main purpose of common grace that it serve the purposes of redemption.⁴

Even so, Diepenhorst does not really come to grips with the most basic criticism made of Kuyper. As already indicated above, that criticism has placed Reformed theologians before the responsibility of articulating their various teachings more self-consciously in relation to one another. When they are confronted with such teachings as are found in Romans 1.20 and 2.14–15 they will have to distinguish their position carefully from that of Scholasticism. Scholasticism confuses the ever present pressure of God's revelational requirement upon man with the sinner's ethical response to this revelation. From the fact that every man knows God and His law, because he cannot escape knowing Him, Romanism concludes that every sinner has, at points, a proper reaction to this knowledge. It is on this confusion that the Roman Catholic conception of natural theology is based. Rome teaches that the reason of man as such, whether or not he be regenerate, does interpret something of God's revelation truly. What Reformed theologians are now seeking to do is to show that any true interpretation on the part of the natural man is due to the fact that he is not a finished product, that he has been unable to suppress God's revelation within and about him completely.

Kuyper failed to stress this point. He frequently spoke of areas or territories of activity that believers and unbelievers have in common. As though there were any commonness without difference. There is need for commonness. Kuyper was right in stressing this fact. Christianity is truly human and Christian culture is the only truly human culture. But the commonness required by Christian culture is commonness with a difference.

⁴p. 19.

Would that Diepenhorst had joined the constructive critics of Kuyper in making plain this fact. Then his otherwise masterful control of all the factors that bear on the subject would have been made to serve a still better purpose than it has.

Geloof en Recktvaardiging

G. C. Berkouwer: *Dogmatische Studiën. Geloof en Recktvaardiging*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1949. 220. f. 4.95.

G. C. Berkouwer: *Dogmatische Studiën. Geloof en Heiliging*. Kampen: J. H. Kok. 1949. 222. f. 4.95.

The author of these volumes is already well and favorably known among those who are interested in the spread of the full-orbed gospel of saving grace. He has written several important works in evaluation and criticism of Romanism and of Crisis Theology. Even from his doctoral dissertation (*Geloof en Openbaring in de Nieuwere Duitse Theologie*) it was apparent that he had made himself thoroughly familiar with the various schools of modern thought without being swept off his feet by any of them.

We are happy, therefore, that Dr. Berkouwer has projected a series of studies of a doctrinal nature. In nineteen volumes he plans to cover such subjects as the Dogma of the church, the Revelation of God, the Bible as the Word of God, Creation, Providence, Sin, the Comfort of Election, the Covenant of God, Christology, The Holy Spirit, Faith and Justification, the Church, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Kingdom of God and Eschatology.

In the first of the present volumes, which deals with faith and justification, the *sola fide-sola gratia* principle of the Reformation is stated afresh and set off clearly against ancient and especially against modern deviations and perversions of it.

Everything depends, Berkouwer argues, upon viewing faith and justification as genuinely correlative to one another. With constant and comprehensive reference to Scripture he indicates the nature of this correlativity. The sovereign grace of God is at the bottom of it.¹ Those who do not make the electing grace of God basic to the correlation between faith and justification are bound to ascribe merit to faith. On the other hand those who substitute the dialectical for the historically Reformed conception of election are bound to deny the significance of faith as an act of man for to them faith is really belief by God in God.² The real priority of the grace of God and the genuine historical significance of man's response in faith therefore rest upon the sovereign election of God.

There are many variations on this central theme of the book. The author shows that the entire Bible, not only the letters of Paul, teaches both the absolute priority of grace and, at the same time, the absolute necessity of faith. He shows that the truly ethical concept of justification must be of a forensic or juridical nature. Denying the truly forensic nature of justification, Romanism has been unable to maintain the full Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Berkouwer indicates that James as well as Paul teaches justification by faith alone, that a judgment upon men's works is still a judgment on their faith. He shows that faith is "empty," is but an "instrument" but not a "crater" in

¹ p. 168.

² p. 181.

the dialectical sense of the term. He shows that the orthodox rather than the dialectical view of justification is truly existential in character. The orthodox view does not pretend that man is able to penetrate the relation between God and man by his intellect; it is not speculative in character. On the other hand the orthodox view does not make a false contrast between Christianity as a set of intellectual propositions and Christianity as communication of reality; it is not irrational in character.

Other matters might be mentioned but these may suffice to indicate the truly Biblical and up-to-date character of the work before us. The author frankly builds upon the work of such great Reformed theologians as Kuyper and Bavinck but is not a slavish follower of their thought. In him Reformed theology has found an exponent worthy of its glory.

In the second of the volumes under consideration Dr. Berkouwer deals with the relation of faith to the process of sanctification. The Biblical doctrine of sanctification is clearly set forth. The Romanist and dialectical heresies are contrasted with Scriptural teaching. He who constantly keeps in mind the correlativity of faith and sanctification, Berkouwer argues, will not be either a perfectionist or an antinomian.

There is a particularly fine analysis of the *imitatio Christi* literature. "There is an absolute priority of His grace" in our following of Christ's example.³ Christ did not merely illustrate a general law of humility, but true human humility is founded on redemption through His mediatorial work.⁴

Berkouwer fears every form of reaction theology. The Romanist doctrine of infused grace led by way of reaction to antinomianism. He points out that true faith is bound to express itself in observance of the law of God. Sometimes he speaks of dialecticism as though it were merely a matter of reaction. It may be doubted whether such a movement as dialectical theology is adequately signaled in terms of reactionism. Berkouwer's own writings have done much to show that Karl Barth's theology is based upon a nominalist foundation. On such a basis no Christian theology is possible. There is merely a similarity of words between the doctrine of free grace as taught by Barth and as taught by the Reformed Faith. Barth's doctrine of the process of sanctification is therefore more than a false emphasis of the truth; it is a rejection of the truth.

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³ p. 152.

⁴ p. 155.

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