

BULLETIN
RELIGION AND THE ONE GOD
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO AND NOW¹

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Fifteen years is a short period as theological eras go, but in the rapidly changing theological viewpoints of those outside the Church it is perhaps long. There was a large output of writing then, much of it an attempt to clear issues or to find some anchor-hold after the somewhat severe Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy among American non-Catholics. A look into some of the literature concerned with God and Religion (to cover it exhaustively would be too long) and a presentation of some of the later currents of thought are here attempted.

In 1925 the Reverend Charles P. Bruehl wrote a keen and scholarly analysis, generously documented, entitled, "*Recent Philosophy: Modern Conceptions of Religion*" [*Eccl. Rev.* 72 (1925), 203]. The author noted that American philosophy was taking a new interest in religion, was adopting a more favorable attitude toward it, and even gave evidence of a more reverent mien. Yet he noted that it was still far from a right appreciation and understanding of religion. He found that the whole field of God and religion suffered from two disadvantages. It was clogged by its fear of metaphysics and it was too enthusiastic in hailing as real the advances which it sought to make out of the Evolution which was being universally applied.

Father Bruehl found three attitudes to metaphysics, a topic on which, since religion deals with metaphysical entities, religious philosophy had to touch. He found as the most direct effect of the fear of metaphysics a denial of the objective validity of religion. It was therefore logically abandoned, even though its relinquishment was reluctant. Again, he found that though some denied any objective reality to religion, they hugged it as a necessary delusion, as a pragmatic plank for either their own sakes or that of humanity. Finally, there was a group which defended religion as something quite real, but their defense was on non-rational grounds; there was an appeal to instinct, feelings, emotionalism and voluntarism. This school seemed to be seeking a compromise between the precious realities of the past and the destructive philosophies of the present. Among these philosophies evolutionistic rationalism was the most popular.

The favor shown towards the application of evolution to religion was the second obstacle to right thinking about God and religion. Historically,

¹Because of the abundance of material, the liberal theology, and this only partially, is considered.

evolution was making religion, in origin, a thing of the sensual nature, the outcome of fears or other emotions. It was the day when the theories of the 19th century concerning the origin of religion had not been discarded, though they were beginning to be thoroughly refuted by anthropologists. At the end of his analysis, Father Bruehl spoke of the then new German Phenomenalism.

The article of Father Bruehl took account of adverse currents. Among non-Catholics it did not mention the still strong orthodox forces. How strong the liberalizing movement was at the time (1925) is fortunately answered for us in a survey which was published in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (July, 1925). The poll was an attempt to find the reaction of Protestant Theological seminaries to the recent Fundamentalist controversy. The survey revealed that 33 seminaries were definitely orthodox, 40 seminaries were definitely liberal, 11 seminaries occupied a middle ground, and 7 seminaries were non-committal.

A survey made in 1929 by the *Literary Digest* (May 4, 1929) by Professor G. H. Betts enables one to see the situation from another angle. To a questionnaire sent to 1500 ministers and seminarians, some 700 replied, 500 of these ministers. Some interesting points in the tables occur. None denies God's existence, but on every other point there is noticeable a lesser doctrinal faith in the seminarians than in the older generation. Thus, while only 9% of the ministers deny God is omnipotent, 29% of the students do. 66% of the ministers believe that the New Testament is God's final revelation of God to man; only 18% of the seminarians do. 13% of the ministers deny the Trinity; among the students the denial is found in 35%.

Professor Betts conducted another survey in the *Christian Century* (May 9, 1934) concerning the religious ideas which ought to be disseminated in Protestant religious instruction. Among other questions, this is pertinent: should man's descent from an inferior form be taught to children? 46% of the ministers answered affirmatively; out of the eight seminaries which were polled, the author concluded that 66% of the seminarians thought evolution should be taught to the young. It would seem to follow that the obstacle which Father Bruehl found to right thinking about religion in 1925 will be a larger stumbling-block as the years go on. The students who voted in the surveys are, many of them, presumably now in the Protestant ministry.

Such views almost naturally resulted in posing the question, "What must be done about religion?" Charles A. Bennett may be cited as a contender for a quietistic attitude. To the author of "Worship in its Philosophical Meaning" [*Journ. of Religion*, 6 (1926) 486], worship is a period of pause in the current of living, marked by an absence of effort. We are to make ourselves receptive so that our wills may be commanded from without; but it is not only an apprehension of such external power, for power may produce

fear, and in worship, if there is fear, it must be holy fear. The contemplation proper to worship differs from the esthetic variety, for it renews moral energies, stirs consciousness to one's defects, stimulates reform, answers doubts we have of the value of faith, gives singleness of aim and dispels despair, and substitutes creative inspiration for heroic resolve.

Voices were heard in favor of effort too. Professor James Ward in his article "Faith and Eternal Life" [*Hibbert Journ.*, 23 (1924-25) 193], held faith to be conative, and eventually volitional. He contended that it was already clear from the history of religious experience and from psychological research that it is a fatal error to call faith intellectual. Faith is trustfulness, involving a transvaluation of man's values through resolve. Thus, instead of following graven idols or dogmatic creeds, one is filled with an assurance of the unseen and atemporal and of the presence of a divine personality. The dogmatico-intellectual, liturgico-formalistic and ecclesiastico-political evolution of Christianity almost killed this proper sort of faith. We must return to the primitive enthusiasm of Christian striving (the conative element) and of Christian resolving (the volitional element) which is exemplified in the life of Christ. There we find the beauty and winsomeness of a faith which true followers will strive to attain.

This was not the single article to presuppose the exclusion of the intellect from the field of religion. Professor John Baillie, in an article on the "Idea of Orthodoxy" [*Hibbert Journ.* 24 (1925-26) 232] put the question: when did the idea of obligatory intellectual assent to doctrine become the test of orthodoxy. It is not found in Jesus, for his demand of faith is for the faith which in the Fourth Gospel is summed up in the concept of reliance. Nor is intellectualism found in the early Pauline writings. It shows first in the Pastorals, and after that, increasingly in the Church of the creeds. This change of an essential element of Christianity is traced to the influence of Socrates and Plato, especially to the doctrine in Plato's *Laws*, where "right opinion" (orthodoxy) commands a belief in the existence of the gods, in their providence, and in their purity of any stain of bribery. Modern toleration, however, makes it clear that there is no penalty for unbelief; moral goodness has again become our duty, not belief. There will be and there need be belief and orthodoxy only insofar as a code of goodness involves certain intellectual positions. With Kant, the author says that "there are beliefs inextricably woven with my moral nature." Baillie therefore substitutes for the formula, "I believe in God through Jesus Christ," the formula, "I put my trust in the love of God made manifest through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Edward Scribner Ames, in his article, "The Religion of Immanuel Kant" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 172], noted that Kant was still exerting a tremendous influence on religious thinking. Ames remarks upon an impor-

tant result of Kant's destructive work which it is well for all of us to have in mind. He states that Kant exposed the fallacies in the traditional arguments for the being of God, for the existence of the soul, and for its freedom, and that those arguments have never recovered from his devastating work. Religion was placed by Kant in the realm of values, and thus he forwarded the Pragmatic and Value theories of the 20th century in religion.

Shortly after followed an article by Eugene W. Lyman on "Ritschl's Theory of Value Judgments" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 500]. Sensations cause pleasure to the ego and are judged for their value in doing so; if inspected as mere knowledge, causal judgments (CJ) result. Of the two results of inner sensations the Value Judgment (VJ) is more basic since here the ego is originally present to itself, and a VJ is always the concomitant of a CJ. The VJ is basic in religious living, but no VJ is formulated when we examine the several CJ's which have to do with the proof of God's existence. With Kant, Ritschlianism states that all religious knowledge consists in VJ's. Within its compass, therefore, there will be no judgments concerning the Trinity or Incarnation; these have no value to man since they have to do, not with the relations of God to man, but with relations within God. Only that which synthetizes our experience into a world-view is *Valuable*, and thus *Valid*.

Walter M. Horton wrote on the Symbolo-Fideism of Sabatier and Ménégoz in the article, "The Theology of Eugene Ménégoz" [*Journ. of Religion*, 6 (1926) 174]. The author notes that Ménégoz (a Lutheran) was close in his theological views to Sabatier (of the Reformed Church), though he gave greater place in his theology to a sense of sin, a yearning for salvation, and an assurance of it. Together on a French Protestant Theological Faculty, they worked out their Symbolo-Fideism, of which Professor Horton notes the following points. The authors hold that the opposition of faith and science is less than commonly asserted, for religion is something far deeper than science. The formulations of doctrine might seem to clash with science, but this is because such formulations are only symbols; they are inadequate expressions of the deep, of the unutterable. Religion has great underlying truths, which are grasped by the religious and moral consciousness; creeds and doctrines are but fumbling external pronouncements of inexpressible inner convictions. Creeds, therefore, are always insufficient, and will always pass away and change; faith will remain, since it is the eternal witness of an order of truth which transcends scientific truth. Faith and Symbol together make up our religious total; what science attacks is only the Symbol, not Faith.

It might seem that with Symbolo-Fideism one has nothing to defend, since quick desertion of doctrinal expression would seem to be invited on the mere approach of a scientist; yet also, one might conclude that doctrinal

expression is to be improved as much as possible. This seems to be the view of Georg Wobbermin, as his system is described in a review of his book, "Wesen und Wahrheit des Christentums" [*Journ. of Religion*, 6 (1926) 211]. The reviewer is Gerald Burney Smith, who thus summarizes Wobbermin's views. To arrive at the essence and truth of Christianity we must abandon the road of the history of origins and doctrines. This leads to a barren Historismus. The psychological approach is the surer way, for the basic reality of religious life is experience (Erfahrung); through inner forces this becomes conviction (Überzeugung), and finally passes into doctrinal expression. Let religious experience, if it will, play in and out of objective history, and thus it may increase and precisize its convictions, and thus mold and remold doctrinal forms. Doctrine must always seek as its norm the basal religious experience; thus trinitariano-monotheism is but an expression of a fundamental experience of God at once as Father, Redeemer and Paraclete. In Wobbermin, experience is also a norm of history; an inner postulate of revelation restores to some extent the discredited Scriptures. Thus the divine power of Jesus to save is essential; not so a secondary expression of this, the Virgin Birth. So too, a Trinity is to be retained, but the Nicene formulation of the doctrine is unsuited to modern thinking. Again, Jesus must have entered into glory, but the doctrine of the resurrection is an expression of this which cannot stand modern search. All, however, is not relative; the absoluteness of a Christian revelation is affirmed on the ground that religious experience requires confidence in the finality of the redemption realized through Christian faith. Moreover, nothing more absolute than the Christian conception of the trinitariano-monotheistic redeeming God can be conceived; therefore, it is absolute. Professor Smith concludes the review with the assertion, "Wobbermin is right in his recognition of the fact that the ultimate reality of Christianity must be found in the religious experience of Christians."

Shailer Matthews in his "The Faith of Modernism" defines the modernism of 1925, and it has not changed substantially since. The faith of Modernism is not a mere matter of emotions or of social values, but it is based on the conviction that Jesus is a revelation of God. The modernist is convinced that his attitudes are consistent with other realities; he expresses his convictions in accordance with patterns which are drawn from current social ideas and life of men. The test of Christianity is active loyalty to Christ and his message that God is fatherly and that men, therefore, can and ought to be brotherly. With this Christianity doctrinal formulas are not to be identified; this was the error of confessionalism; dogmatic expression is only functional. It seems that the relation of this view of Modernism on doctrine with the Symbolo-Fideism of Ménégoz is not far to seek.

Professor Matthews goes more into detail on the manner in which the modernist's convictions are expressed in terms of modern patterns.

Some modernists hold that their doctrinal expressions are 'restatements' of Christian doctrines, and seek to defend their place in the continuity of Christian thought. Eldred C. Vanderlaan, in his article, "Modernism and historical Christianity" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 225] contends that certain of these restatements are "ambiguities in which the identity between the old and the new doctrine is only the identity of well-chosen words which covers two different ideas." He illustrates by stating frankly that the Jesus of Modernism is a man in whom God dwelt, and not a God-man. Let Modernism say that it has 'reconstructed' Christianity, not 'restated it.' And if it seeks for continuity with the doctrines of past epochs, then let it be in continuity with 'evangelical' Christianity; that is, let it make Jesus a captivating force in the lives of men. The theologies of the past did not let the face of Christ shine; if it did shine, this was in spite of the covering of metaphysics.

There is no doubt that creedal adjustments, in the sense understood by Modernists, will not occur in Catholicism. What tragic straining may take place in a church where authority is less hierarchic than in the Catholic Church may be seen in the brief account of Robert Hastings Nichols, "Fundamentalism in the Presbyterian Church" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 14]. The author notes that Fundamentalism has two general Protestant sources, (i) scriptural literalism, more accented in America than in England and Scotland; and (ii) millennialism. At the time of the heresy trials, scriptural literalism won difficult combats against Doctor McGiffert (1889), Professor Charles Briggs (1893) and Professor Henry Preserved Smith (1894) for their teaching that error may be found in the Bible. Yet these professors and writers had a very marked influence on many of the followers of the church. Again, the conservative element in the church gained in influence through the widespread pamphlets called, "The Fundamentals," which appeared from 1910 on. The General Assemblies of 1910 and 1916 laid down five doctrinal points as necessary and essential according to the Bible, (i) scriptural inspiration and inerrancy; (ii) the Virgin Birth; (iii) the Sacrificial Redemption; (iv) the Resurrection; (v) the Miracles of Christ. This was not an inclusive list of Presbyterian doctrines, of course; it brought emphasis to bear on doctrines which the liberal theologians were rejecting; the points were in the test of faith for ordination to the ministry. It is noticeable that the premillennial parousia of the Lord was not included.

The Presbyterian Church, as a church, continued to gain ground in the fundamentals after the Great War. It sought publicity through religious papers, spreading propaganda for Fundamentalist viewpoints and openly

attacking the liberalizing theology of the Union Theological Seminary. The Great War accentuated emphasis on the coming of the Lord, as it also favored a return to many of the Fundamentalist views. It is not surprising that in a nine-point program, jointly issued by the Presbyterians and Baptists in 1920, the premillennial Coming was included. In 1922 Bryan's attack on Darwinism and Fosdick's "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" served to draw the dividing lines between the Fundamentalists and liberals more sharply. In 1923 the conservative element won another victory, Professor Machen being one of its protagonists, and the five points of 1910 and 1916 were reaffirmed. But a reversal came in 1924 when the Commission of the General Assembly declared that the General Assembly was without authoritative power in the matter of doctrine.

Professor Nichols, the writer of this account, points out that the Fundamentalist view is one that approaches Catholicism in that it leans to the side which declares that there is a competent tribunal to declare what the Word of God means. He also points out that underlying the conservative view is the doctrine that religion is founded on some abnormal religious experience. By this he means that it accepts revelation, the inspiration of the Bible, and doctrines which cannot be comprehended by pure reason.

It was to be expected that many of the attempts to define the nature of religion would finally make necessary the query whether or not God Himself was necessary to the very essence of a religion. Many of the replies were so worded as not to include even the Lord of Man, certainly a strange enough phenomenon. In 1925 Gerald Birney Smith put the question openly in "Is Theism Essential to Religion?" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 356]. The writer discusses Robert Flint's defense of Theism, and its definition to the effect that Theism implies that nature has a Creator and Preserver, the nations a Governor, and man a heavenly Father and Judge. Professor Smith points out that God as Governor of nations was outmoded through political theory, that God as Lord of nature was set aside through scientific advance concerning physical causes and social sins; hence, finally it is to be asked if the God of Theism who deals with man is to be retained. History shows that doctrines about gods and God have sprung up and passed; religion is said to have a way of outgrowing its theologies. The author's view is that we must engage upon empirical study of that which we adore, and then in terms of that experience formulate our conception of God rather than in the terms of any *a priori* philosophy assumed to be final. "Men may believe in God without being able to define God."

Catholic theologians, conscious of the rigorous logic in the arguments for the existence of God, may be astounded at the flight from reason which

is exhibited, and question whether or not a calm consideration of the proofs has taken place. It is to be emphasized that in this matter the influence of Kant has been almost mesmeric. It is difficult to know how many have really read and studied the superficial page on which he states that the cosmological argument is only another form of the ontological; nevertheless one is not impressed with the fact that the arguments are any more thoroughly pondered now than in Kant's day. The essay of Durant Drake, "Critical Realism and Theism" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 130] reviews, superficially as I think, the arguments, and rejects them somewhat halfheartedly. "Thus, without meaning in the least to imply that these rejections are final, we cannot help realizing that the stock theistic arguments are highly precarious." And later, "It is obvious that the existence of the supernatural God does not stand on a par, evidentially, with the existence of . . . physical facts."

Mind apparently has been given up as means of attaining to a knowledge of God. It remains to find the direct assertion that God is known only in the subrational. Here the rationalistic view, which rejects all supernaturalism, harmonizes strangely with the statements of the revitalized supernaturalism of the Reform. In Karl Barth's preface to his dogmatic treatise on God there is the assertion that the doctrine of "analogia entis" is the discovery of the devil; both in his exegetical and dogmatical works he denies true knowledge of the "entirely other"; yet, in the depths of his being, man is put in contact with God. Knowledge of God through the feelings, emotions, and senses, in a word, through some form of lower experience, is definitely proposed, apparently without being aware of the strangeness of admitting that man's lesser and inferior features touch God, while that which makes him man, his reason, is incapable of reaching the sublime.

Henry Nelson Wieman definitely defends a knowledge of God in the field beyond thought in "How Do We Know God?" [*Journ. of Religion*, 5 (1925) 113]. His first postulate is that our experience covers a wider field than our cognition; it includes a vast number of stimuli which are not well organized in our consciousness, and our thoughts fail to crystallize out many of these experiences. The author assumes the position that we cannot know God through cognition; hence the question is pertinent: can we know Him in our non-cognitive experience. The dilemma is set before the reader: Either God is the object of sensuous experience, or else he is purely a system of concepts and nothing else. From this Professor Wieman concludes that God is to be found in that realm where experience ranges more widely than thought. There, apparently, God is abundantly known. For we may experience and not know it (as we breathe oxygen); we may experience and not know the intimate nature of the experience; we may experience and know the phenomenal form and not the underlying sub-

stance; we may experience and know that substance. In all four ways men experience God. This is clear from the record of religious experience.

Certainly it would require a very blind optimist to judge that the situation of fifteen years ago has become in any substantial way better. The doctrinal surveys, which were mentioned above, indicate that supernatural religion was losing, not gaining ground. And since religion is inconceivable without God, and since a vague non-cognitional God can never do for rational beings, it seems that the first duty of those who have systematic truth would be to hammer upon and publicize the proofs of God's existence. And there does not seem to be any doubt about the fact that a very elementary and plain exposition is needed, along with a clear critique of Kant's strictures, if the minds of America are to be recaptured from the fortress of sense and experience in which they are immured. In our attempt to draw men's minds back again to God, a God, be it noted, whom they seek earnestly, even if the liberal writers find Him only through sense, we must understand their positions and invite them to a consideration of a sympathetic apologetic. What was held in non-Catholic America in 1925, was held also in the intervening years, and is held today.

For the years between I may abstain from prolix notation of articles, and refer singly to a book, "Is There a God?" The contents of this book must have been widely read, for it is a "Conversation," which was planned by the *Christian Century*, and ran some six months in its pages in 1932 before appearing in book form. The editor, Charles C. Morrison, published the "Conversation" in the fall of 1932. The participants in the tri-partite conversation are Harry Nelson Wieman, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in the University of Chicago, Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Professor of Theology in Yale University, and Max Carl Otto, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Wisconsin.

Of the three, Professor Macintosh seems to be the most vigorous Theist. He disagrees with Professor Wieman on certain points, but agrees with him in not taking very much stock in rationalistic projects for proving the existence of God (294). That God the object of religious dependence and the source of religious deliverance is, is sufficiently known! Hence one must seek rather *what* God is.

The views of Professor Wieman have found place previously. In his conclusory article of the "Conversation," he notes that the important thing is not to believe that God exists, but to submit oneself to that process which is God (327). This "process" is defined (317) as the one which promotes the highest goods of life; it is a process of interaction which develops individuality and makes individuals contribute to the social good through associated living; it is God working in man, though God is not limited to the human level.

Professor Otto, finding that it is harmful to rely on God, affirms the non-existence of God; he is a spokesman of atheistic humanism.

The sociological trend is much more emphatic in the more recent writings on religion. Several factors have contributed independent influence in bringing this about. The doctrine of the Mystical Body and its recent seizure upon the theoretical and practical minds of Catholic theologians and pastors is one factor, though probably the least effective one, among non-Catholics. More important is the fact that the new approach to religion provides a substitute for discussion about doctrine, from which the non-Catholic churches are still taking flight. Thirdly, sociology is in the air, in governmental legislation, in the creeds of political parties and in collegiate and even secondary education. And while the Protestant churches cannot be said to have waged the combat of the workers' individual and social rights in the vigorous manner of recent Pontiffs, their interest has been turned to religion as a social force in promoting the Fatherhood of God and the fraternity of man. Finally, as an end-product of the evolution of American philosophical thought, much of it impregnated with theological considerations, the sociological trend is due.

There is possibly some advantage in reading the course of our evolution of thought, as it appears to a foreign philosopher. G. E. Müller was ten years in America, as a Professor of Philosophy, first in the University of Oregon, and later in the University of Oklahoma. His work, "Amerikanische Philosophie," appeared in 1936 (Stuttgart, Frohmann, 304). He finds four periods of thought, (i) the Puritan; here there is a theologico-philosophical Theism along with a thread of Platonic Christian idealism (Jonathan Edwards) as it developed under the impact of the Reform; (ii) the Deistic stage (Jefferson, Franklin, Paine); (iii) the Romanticism of Emerson and Henry James (the elder) which was twofold; there was an accent on infinity (Transcendentalism) and an accent on "Rugged Individualism" (Self-reliance); this movement continued to the end of the century and received, through Peirce and Royce, an impulse from the pantheistic idealism of Hegel; (iv) the Reaction to Infinitismus, is found in the emphasis on the Finite in James, Dewey, Santayana, Adams, and led to Pragmatism and Humanism, though to a narrow and still individualistic sort. Is it not clear that the fifth stage is already set? The Humanism of the turn of the century still clings to the Finite; but it has been socially enlarged; we are in the day of Sociological Humanism.

According to L. L. Bernard in "The Sociological Interpretation of Religion" [*Journ. of Religion*, 18 (1938) 1], a sociological view is imperative. For Science has had a destructive impact on Revelation,

showing its dubiousness, or non-existence, or difficulties, and a destructive impact on conscience denying the inner voice of divine guidance and showing that conscience is a product of experience. Hence the liberal theologians have insisted on Spirit, Value, etc., though their formulas often conform to the old mythological framework of doctrine. But out of the past thought (the author uses Toy's concept of religion), the three features of the sociological view are put forth, (i) a body of beliefs concerning the adjustment of man for his precious ends, seen in his social relations to a supernatural and mostly invisible power, thought of as superior to man, (ii) a faith in the power of his system to achieve its aims, and (iii) a practical devotion to it.

The recent definitions of the essentials of religion are showing the effect of the sociological trend. Thus, J. E. Turner, in his book, "The Essentials in the Development of Religion" (London, 1934, Allen and Unwin, 308), claiming to be of the line of Hegel, notes that religion must involve, on the part of the object, a consideration of the *totality* of things and of the principle of their unity, and on the part of the subject, a *totality* of reaction (mind, will, emotions, etc.).

Moreover, the question is being asked if the churches will survive, if among other things, they do not take account of social problems. Frederick C. Grant writes on the "Function of the Church in the Modern World [*Journ. of Religion*, 16 (1936) 127]. The author avers that religion will remain, for it is not the product of civilization or rationality, but has its subrational roots in the primitive sense of awe in the presence of the Numinous. Being deep in nature it will endure. But will the church? The churches must reunite (though this is not to be achieved through absorption); the churches must cease wrangling over doctrines, and get into closer contact with the problems of men; the churches must withdraw from any alliance with evil courses (e.g. capitalism), and perform their functions of worship and teaching better.

The faith of humanism cannot be said to differ from what was its customary tenet. For a recent expression of it one may consult the "Faith of a Christian Humanist" [*American Church Monthly*, 45 (Jan., 1939) and following issues].⁴

Occasionally among non-Catholic writers a warning from the more conservative standpoint is served. Thus Kemper Fullerton in "Some Problems of Liberal Protestantism in Historical Perspective" [*Journ. of Religion*, 16 (1936) 284], after remarking that the church is rapidly assuming an undogmatic form, shows that emphasis on the ethical has led to the socio-

⁴Another confession of the Humanist's faith appeared in *The Christian Register* [Nov. 23, 1939, p. 692] in a letter by John H. Dietrich.

logical viewpoint, and this to a secularist humanism. A similar warning is found in Howard B. Jefferson's article, "The Rôle of Religion in Changing American Culture" [*Journ. of Religion*, 16 (1937) 57].

But it is doubtful if the forces of Fundamentalism will be able to save non-Catholic religions from the threatening secularism. Fundamentalism itself has been recently described as a call from reason and progress to authority and tradition, in an article of Carl S. Patton, entitled, "The American Theological Scene Fifty Years in Retrospect" [*Journ. of Religion*, 16 (1936) 445]. After reviewing the Fundamentalist-Modernist discussion, the author notes that the conservative party had some great scholars, and still has some, but Fundamentalism cannot succeed in our day.

To the Catholic it is of interest to find how recent liberal theologians regard the sources of revelation, Sacred Scripture and tradition. On the place of the Bible Julius A. Bewer writes in the *Journ. of Religion* [16 (1937) 1]. The author takes the view that belief in total verbal inspiration is impossible, since there are errors, contradictions, and even a lower form of morality than is now admitted, in certain parts of the Bible. There is, however, divine truth in parts of the Scriptures, though certainly the Old Testament as a whole is not the Word of God. What part, then, is? The only norm of judging is the spirit of God as revealed in Jesus. Judged by such a canon, *Esther*, *Samson*, the imprecatory *Psalms*, and the war stories must go; in short, those parts without spiritual meaning are without authority. Christians will not agree on the divine parts, though they ought to agree on the general norm. However, the parts having good moral standards, the spiritual experiences of the prophets, the two ways (of God to man and man to God) are valuable. Yet, in principle, only that is authoritative for the Christian by which he is made aware and by which he feels a compulsion that God is addressing him; that leads him to assent, obey and adore.

A small place for authoritative guidance through tradition (in the liberal sense) is found in the article, "Authority and the Normative Approach" by Henry N. Wieman [*Journ. of Religion*, 16 (1936) 175]. The author here proposes the normative approach which is a compromise or an accumulation as one views it from different angles. History shows that the norms for testing the acceptable in religious belief have been six, (i) inherited tradition, due to disappear as society became more complex; (ii) a selective agency, as in Christianity where an authoritative norm was exercised through the Pope, or Bible, or church; (iii) inner experience which necessarily led to division and is psychologically untrustworthy; (iv) the scientific method, sought as a means of escape from threatened disintegration; it observes and properly evaluates life; (v) the cosmic-social process; (vi) the Unconditioned, the "absolutely other." The last norm is declared the

best; it exercises authority by delivering us from the domination of any specified objective, or other specific reality, . . . by liberating us from bondage to anything which can come within the scope of definable human concerns. By this the author seems to me to mean that singly and solely God and man are in contact, though man is not knowably, though experientially, aware of it. The writer avers that the Unconditional does not tell us anything, but even if so, the normative approach takes advantage of anything good in *any* of the *six norms*.

The modernists among the liberal theologians have sought a norm in the ethical teachings of Christ as described in the Eschatological School. The tenets of the school are well known, especially through five writers, J. Weiss (*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*,² 1900), Wrede (*Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1901), Volz (*Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, 1903, 2nd, 1934), and Loisy (*Evangiles synoptiques*, 1907). More influential in popularizing the practical consequences of the school was A. Schweitzer (*Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis*, and, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1907). In the Eschatological School it is a logical corollary to regard the whole ethical doctrine of Christ as a practical platform for the short period on earth before the expected coming. The "Interimsethik" may be much or little depending on the particular view which the higher critic brings to a study of the Gospels; it has tended to diminish in the views of the Formgeschichtliche School and also in that of the Social-Historical School. But whatever it is, there arises the question of its value for our times.

Both in Europe and America, the value of the Interimsethik has been proclaimed. A lengthy development of the thesis may be found in F. Buri, "Die Bedeutung der Neutestamentlichen Eschatologie für die neuere Protestantische Theologie" (Zurich, 1935). The Ritschlian Value-Judgment can seize upon something precious in the eschatological teachings; for it may seize the very essence, which is the will to perfection. This will was expressed in fanciful apocalyptic in the times of Jesus; but the expression is quite incidental, a point in which the writer agrees with the Symbolo-Fideist view. The same basic awe of the mystery of the world, life and being is to be emphasized as well as the constant activity of God in the processes of life. In a word, the insistence on perfection, attempted in the Gospels through an apocalyptic threat of a near coming, is to be revamped to suit modern needs.

The same revamping of Gospel ethics is advised in the article, "The Divinity of Christ and His Teachings," by Julian Price Love [*Journ. of Religion*, 7 (1939) 115]. Admitting that strictly the Interimsethik was for another and very different time, the writer would have us revamp it and do as well as we can.

The way in which a non-Catholic writer regards the situation in theology may be seen in Edwin Ewart Aubrey's, "*Present Theological Tendencies*" (Harper, 1936, pp. 245). After chapters on *Modernism*, the *Dialectical Theology*, *Neo-Thomism*, *Theology and the Cultural Crisis*, the author formulates his conclusions. He finds various appeals to return to former theological positions, such as pre-War Scientism, Evangelical piety, the Reform, the theology of Aquinas, the ecumenical unity of the first eight centuries. Somewhat optimistically, I think, he notes a revolt against naturalism and a better attitude towards metaphysics, and finds that theology is at the point where the individualistic and collectivistic currents may flow together. The pressing problems of theology are, in the writer's opinion, the finding of ethical solutions for economic situations, the new creation of an acceptable metaphysics of man, and the harmonization of scientific knowledge and religious truth. The author of the book does not seem aware that scientific theology has met and solved a great many of these problems both directly and indirectly.

This brief and only partial review of liberal theology in America in the last fifteen years indicates clearly enough the situation with respect to the doctrines on religion, God, and Christ. In reaction and in answer to it there has been much writing on the Catholic side, unfortunately too little of this in America. For this reason the clear and solid article of Hilary Carpenter, O.P., entitled, "The Philosophical Approach to God in Thomism" [*The Thomist*, 1 (1939) 45], is welcome. We may mention also, among recent works, the critique of the Deontological argument written by Max Rast, S.J., entitled, "Gott im Gewissenserlebnis" [*Scholastik*, 12 (1937) 321]. Joseph Leiwesmeier, in his "Zur Stellung der Gottesbeweise in der Scholastischen Philosophie" [*Theologische Quartalschrift*, 2 (1939) 164], discusses the attitude of the Scholastic theologians toward the proofs and the place in which they put them in their systematic scheme. For professional and extended discussion, the completest treatise of recent years is that of P. Descoqs, S.J., in which the fundamental importance of the argument from contingency emerges. H. Lennerz, S.J., published in 1926 a book, which is still valuable, on the mind of the Church concerning the arguments for God's existence, "Natürliche Gotteserkenntnis," with the sub-title, "Stellungnahme der Kirche in den letzten Hundert Jahren."

It is said, and it is true, that in European Protestantism, there are signs of a return to doctrinal belief. Certainly articles can be quoted to show a withdrawal from some of the rationalistic positions. But the recantations of *fundamental* positions are not numerous.