

A SURVEY OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY IN OUR DAY

As an introduction to this study I would like to make a criticism of present-day Catholic theologians. Most of these men live and work in the area of the West, that section of the globe where the patterns of action and thought are genetically derived from the social life that has its roots in the Roman Empire. In that area one of the most conspicuous cultural phenomena is Protestantism, and it has been present for four hundred years with palpable vitality and extensive spread. Certain sectors of the West are not in immediate contact with living Protestants to any large degree, but in others Protestantism is the prevailing religious climate. Examples of the latter would be large parts of Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, the whole Scandinavian bloc, England, Scotland, the United States, and parts of Canada.

Yet if we consult the manuals used for the training of the Catholic clergy and for the elementary formation of Catholic theologians, we discover a strange thing. The Protestants as a vital, active element in our actual life and thought are totally ignored. In the Catholic dogmatic treatises the early Protestants receive due attention, and they are still called *Novatores* although they are as novel as the cross-bow still used in their time. The real contemporaneous *Novatores* are mentioned nowhere, and actual Protestant theological thought is completely unknown to most of our students. In Fundamental Theology the Protestants are mentioned, but they are the thinkers of the last century who by some mysterious fashion are often gathered up under the name of Harnack. Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Cullmann, Niebuhr, Nygren, Pittenger, Tillich, and a score of others who are definitely forming the Protestant mind of our day mean nothing at all to our young seminarians. Even in the classes of Liturgy, no mention is made of Protestant liturgical forms, so that the average Catholic priest quite literally has no idea how Protestant worship is conducted.

Now this situation is amazing. The influence of Protestant theology on Catholic theology in the past is patent in the Council of

Trent and the three generations following that important synod. Subsequent to that time, except in the brilliant instances of Johann Baptist Möhler and Cardinal Newman of the last century, and Karl Adam in our time, Protestant thought has not influenced our theologians very much, if at all. The Pope himself raises a protest against such a situation in *Humani generis*. After outlining some prevalent thought schemes of our day, the Encyclical pronounces these strong words:

All this, evidently, concerns our own Catholic theologians and philosophers. They have a grave responsibility for defending truth, both divine and human, and for instilling it into men's minds; they must needs acquaint themselves with all these speculations, to a more or less extent erroneous; they must needs take them into account. Nay, it is their duty to have a thorough understanding of them. There is no curing a disease unless you have made a study of its symptoms. Moreover, there is some truth underlying even these wrong-headed ideas: yes, and they spur the mind on to study and weigh certain truths, philosophical and theological, more carefully than we otherwise should.¹

We can take it for granted, then, that the Catholic theologian should be anxious to know what Protestant theology in our day has to say. The immediate problem is, where can he find a synthetic but authentic expression of the Protestant mind? This problem is most vexing, and Protestants themselves have different answers. I was told by a distinguished professor of theology in a Protestant seminary that I should give up trying to find a unified synthesis of Protestant doctrine, because no such synthesis is possible. If this is the case, then is nothing left for us but the study of hundreds of isolated Protestant journals in a dozen languages? If this is all we can do, obviously we shall do nothing, because who is going to burden himself with such an inhuman task? I think that my Protestant friend was too pessimistic, and it seems to me that Winfred E. Garrison insists quite rightly in *A Protestant Manifesto* that there is a subtle but substantial unity in Protestantism. It is true that this substantial unity is not homogeneous in its manifestations. The formulas used

¹ Encyclical, *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, xxxii (1950), pp. 563-4. The translation employed is that of Msgr. Ronald Knox, paragraph 9, *The Tablet* (London), September 2, 1950, p. 187.

by different Protestants cannot be reduced to a unified system of categories, because different Protestants use different categories and different starting-points which are irreducible. Even in their use of certain formulas where the words are identical, the understanding is often quite different. The word "Church" does not mean the same thing in an Anglo-Catholic theological essay as it does in the pages of an Evangelical theologian. The word "Bible" does not convey the same concept to a fundamentalist and to a naturalist. Even the term "God" carries a sense to an existentialist theologian different from that intended by an Orthodox Lutheran. In the use of all three words the Catholic must beware lest he think they mean what he understands by the terms in his system of theology. The description of God as given by some of the Protestant theologians comes dangerously close to what a Catholic would call atheism.

Above all, a Catholic theologian must be warned against the easy fallacy that a study of the first reformers, especially as synthetically presented by Bellarmine or Suárez, will give him an understanding of present Protestant theology. The American Lutherans, especially those of the Missouri Synod, in their fashion try to live up to the Augsburg Confession of 1530, but the Calvinist churches do not feel any obligation to follow the *Institutes* of Calvin or the Westminster Confession of 1647. In the Calvinist churches one will not find Calvin's doctrine of predestination, but quite the contrary. No Protestant theologian feels even the slightest necessity to accept any position of Luther or Calvin, though all will speak well of these divines, adding implicitly or explicitly that their contribution was for their time and not for ours. In conversations with Protestant theologians, therefore, it would be the greatest naiveté to suppose that the Protestant holds even one of the old theses or that he would be embarrassed by being shown that he does not. In like manner, the Catholic seminary professor must not give the impression to his students that the doctrine of the first reformers is actually the core of Protestant doctrine today. The Luther-Melanchthon theology (due to Melanchthon more than Luther who was no systematizer) is radically different from Lutheran theology in Germany today, and even different from American Lutheran thought which is more conservative than its German counterpart. What Luther meant by faith

and Bible would hardly be accepted by Lutherans today, though there is still a group preoccupied with his doctrine.

If, therefore, the doctrines of the first Protestants are not normative for modern Protestant theology, *a fortiori* later theologies constitute no criterion. Some of these theologies are even regretted and not defended in the slightest. For example, the theology developed by the Lutherans of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, called today Protestant Scholasticism, is universally considered as quite unfortunate. Needless to say, little of it will be accepted by modern theologians and its method is utterly repudiated. The Pietistic school of thought which came into vogue in the late seventeenth century was hardly a theology and could not bring forth a true system. Schleiermacher's Sentimentalism is not accepted anywhere now, but he is admired because some of his ideas are dynamic still. Today it is quite the mode to speak disdainfully of the liberal Historicism of the nineteenth century, and its big names, Strauss, Bauer, Renan, Jülicher, Ritschl, Harnack, Wellhausen, are considered outmoded and irrelevant. Ernst Troeltsch, however, is still a respected figure, through his methods and his doctrine are of the past; while Albert Schweitzer, who ended the quest for the historical Jesus, is today the Protestant saint rather than the Protestant theologian.

Though all these movements are without normative force for Protestant thought in our time, most Protestant theologians will justify the efforts of their past as legitimate Protestant enterprises, and helpful for their time and for the development of Protestant theology. So far will they commit themselves, but no farther. If anything taught by the ancients is to the liking of the modern Protestant divine, he will gladly cite it, not as proof but as a valid insight of an older generation. Older doctrine contradictory to a modern position is simply ignored as without pertinence to the discourse of our hour.

It will be noted from this cursory glance at the past of Protestant theology that there is no perennial systematic skeleton proper to Protestant divinity. Except in the period of Protestant Scholasticism, Protestant theology was never rich in systematic presentations. Today, Barth, Brunner and Tillich have published new treatises of syste-

matics, but they are not widely accepted, with the result that older systematic theologies are still currently used in Protestant seminaries. In fact, in 1950, Heinrich Heppé's Calvinistic dogmatics of 1861 was reissued for the use of schools, and Heppé's sources and references are almost all works that stem from the despised Scholastic period of Protestantism. Although the lack of a modern, universally acceptable treatise of systematic theology (or what Catholics would call Dogmatic Theology) is much lamented, yet there seems little fruitfulness in this field. One gets the feeling that the Protestant either has not the patience or the courage to bring all of his theological thinking together into one disciplined synthesis. One reason for such a situation is that any system made has a *de facto* value only. It represents the views of the author and his followers, and even they may reject it altogether at some later date. The only possible extrinsic norm that Protestantism has is the Bible, and each Protestant is free to construct and interpret it as best he can. Under these circumstances to call the Bible a norm is to use words in a Pickwickian sense.

In the place of systematic theology, most of the work of the Protestant theologians is an attempt to outline the valid method of a dogmatic theology, showing the effect of such a method on one or other theme of dogmatics. Such a method is usually inspired by a current philosophy, although Protestant theologians always protest against the intrusion of philosophy into theology. This paradoxical position brings many advantages with it. First, the Protestant theologian is not faced with the task of constructing a philosophy slowly over the years and centuries; he plunges *in medias res theologicas*. Second, there is always a timeliness to his thinking because it is embedded in the philosophy of the moment. Third, it gives Protestant theology its fluidity and flexibility, because the philosophy which the Protestant uses as the matrix of his thought is not something that he has to cling to. He is not "stuck with it," for he got it by being sensitive to the prevailing winds of thought, and when those winds change, so does he. Paul Tillich, who gave this problem much thought and who will not have philosophy dictate to revelation, yet calls his dogmatic course, "philosophical theology." There is no contradiction in this position, for the philosophy the Protestants in-

stinctively shun is a reflex *a priori* metaphysics. The only branch of philosophy that is constantly affecting Protestant thought is epistemology. Their systematic visions change because their epistemologies change. In consequence Protestant theology is never brilliant for its metaphysical cohesion and profundity. It can only shine with an empirical or critical glow. The first reformers dropped metaphysics with joy, and substituted for it an unscientific philological method. This method with time became refined and followed the canons of historical method. With the eclipse of historicism, existentialism and actualist empiricism guide Protestant thinking. The deep metaphysics of Plato or Thomistic Aristotelianism are not at home in Protestant dogmatics. Instead we find a constant appeal to something on the surface of the real; something that can easily be detected by experience alone.

All these general observations are necessary for understanding Protestant theology in the concrete. Unless forewarned, the Catholic theologian looks in Protestant theology for those values which are central in his own: a definite consensus among the theologians because of the existence of an abiding, effective norm, quite precise and sufficiently clear; a metaphysical understanding of theological data; a preoccupation with historic continuity of the theological enterprise in terms of homogeneity as against heterogeneity; an agreement of all theologians on the sources of theological data; a strong tendency toward a cohesive synthesis of all the data. These characteristics are not proper to Protestant theology. One or the other characteristic may be desired by one or other theologian, but the complex of them all is not desired by any Protestant.

We are now ready to see concrete Protestant theologies in our time. As was said, they cannot be reduced to one scheme. We shall classify them into opposed groups because grouping is possible and the groups are distinguished by certain major principles. We shall restrict our considerations to the theologies that are important for the American scene. In consequence we shall ignore, for example, the work done by the Calvinist group of the Basle *Verbum Caro* school formed by such interesting men as Jean Louis Leuba and Max Thurian. If we consider European theology at all, it is only because it has palpable meaning for our country.

We shall divide the Protestant theologies into three large sections which can be labeled Left, Right and Center. This division takes the stand of the primitive Protestants as a point of departure, a stand that admits the supernatural and clings to the notion of divine revelation as a propositional deposit, to be accepted with a high degree of literalness. Those imbued with this spirit we call the Right, while the Center and the Left are movements away and farther away from this spirit. We shall begin from the Left.

THE LEFT

I—Historicism. Up to the time of the first World War the most provocative and most typical Protestant theology was characterized as liberal and historical. The upshot of such a work was embodied in the slim volume of Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1900). This man, who died in 1930, excellently typified the theological work done in his time principally on the Continent. He was much more conservative than some of his colleagues, but the spirit of the age was his spirit too. In theology he was dedicated to the historical method, which for him was the only serious way of considering Christianity. He subjected not only Christ to this method, but the total Christian phenomenon. He was interested in the "historical Jesus," and believed with Von Ranke that an historian could present the past *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist*. He believed in human progress in all fields, and thought that Christianity, essentially an ethical doctrine, was growing ever purer, and that its main contribution was the advancement of the moral evolution of mankind in function of the principle of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This for Harnack was the message of Jesus, when the historical sources were properly criticized and everything mythical and legendary eliminated.

Today no one accepts such a position, and Harnack and his contemporaries are only landmarks in the progress of the Protestant theology. Liberalism is jeered at and historicism ridiculed. Yet not all of that spirit is gone. Rudolf Bultmann in our day is a metamorphosed Harnack, but the change is very great. Harnack and the men of his time wanted to find out just what happened around the man Jesus of Nazareth, and they believed that the New Testament

writings were sources for such knowledge. These sources had to be sifted carefully so as to exclude all that was false and what was left over would give me the historically exact picture of the man and his doctrine. Using all the techniques of historical science: lexicographic research, comparative history, historical interdependence, literary forms and borrowings, they constructed the historical Jesus. Bultmann is not now anxious to do this, although his *Formgeschichte* technique was dedicated to a similar task.² The fullness of his thought has come to term in his recent cry for *Entmythologisierung*, the demythologizing of the New Testament. This must not be understood as the critical enterprise of the historicists. Bultmann does not share their presumption at all, namely that the New Testament is an historical source for the construction of the life of Jesus.

Bultmann is much taken by Heidegger's existentialism. For him the meaning of life is decision, and life calls for decision. Man is not a thing but a subject, and man finds himself "fallen," not in the sense of Original Sin as developed by the older theologians, but as brutalized and materialized by life among brutes and matter. Man seeks to transcend this state, and the Christian *kerygma* shows him the way. That is the meaning of Christianity, and that alone is the Christian message of the New Testament. It deals not with the

² Bultmann was closely associated with Martin Dibelius (1883-1947) in the evolution and formulation of the *Formgeschichte* technique for New Testament research. The theory was much discussed in the Twenties and Thirties until the Second World War. It was rooted in existentialism but still had historicist pretensions. Today Bultmann is no longer interested in the historical elements of the New Testament, and the *Formgeschichte* question has not been actual for the last ten years. The principles of the theory were that the Gospels and Acts were essentially anonymously redacted collections of stories current in the early Christian churches, constructed according to determined forms by communities according to their needs and interests. However, the early Christians were not interested in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, but only in the Christian message of eschatological salvation. Nevertheless, in the oral transmission of the message they used story materials, some of which did go back, at least nuclearly, to the historical person of Jesus. The historian's work, in consequence, is to extract the individual stories and precariously try to find some elements which are historically valid concerning Jesus. For a Catholic presentation and evaluation, cf. L. J. McGinley, S.J., *Form-Criticism of the Synoptic Healing Narratives*, Woodstock, Md., Woodstock College Press, 1944.

historisch, the historically factual, but with the *geschichtlich*, the historically significant—significant in existential anxiety. Consequently, to consider the New Testament or the whole Christian phenomenon as an instrument primarily for the use of the historian is an error—the error of the nineteenth-century historicists. The New Testament is not at all interested in the historical Jesus and tells us little or nothing about Him, nor were the first Christians interested in Him. The New Testament speaks to us of Jesus as the Christ, the product of the Christian vision. As one of the opponents of Bultmann has said, for Bultmann it seems a matter of no importance if Jesus actually lived or not. At all events, the New Testament builds up a Christ on the occasion of the life and death of Jesus, in whom God spoke to man. The message was existentialist, explaining to man what he really is and where his salvation is to be found, namely in trustful self-surrender to God's will. The man who makes this self-surrender has risen from the dead.

Now the way that this Christian message was conveyed by the disciples of Christ was in the form of allegories, which seemingly were historical narration. No one was interested in the historical accuracy of the stories but only in their human meaning. That meaning is the Gospel. Obviously, the stories used were imposed by the cultural climate of the time. Hence we have miracles, demons, bad cosmology, divine determination of the action of free men, and physical resurrection. All these things are repugnant to modern man who can believe in none of them. However, since these were only the external form of the true message, they can be dropped without affecting the basic Gospel. In fact, they must be dropped if the Gospel is to be intelligible in our time. This is the theologian's task of demythologizing.³

Such in essence and in strangling brevity is the new Bultmann theory. On the continent it has produced much comment, but it has only slightly affected American Protestant thought, and the reason for this slight impact is that existentialist philosophy, from which it arises, is not congenial to America.

³ Cf. Ian Henderson, *Myth in the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 7, London, S.C.M. Press, 1952; Karl Barth, *Rudolf Bultmann*, Theologische Studien 34, Zollikon-Zürich, Evangelischer Verlag, 1952.

II—Neo-Liberalism. The liberal theology of the last century was optimistic, subjectivistic and historicist. The First World War left no climate propitious to optimism. The decade of the Twenties was "hard-boiled" and objective. Von Ranke historicism under the blows of Croce looked rather naive. These flank attacks on liberal theology routed it. A successful prophetic cry was raised first by Karl Barth against this smug adolescent attitude. He went back to the transcendental, objective God of the ancient reformers and would have nothing to do with the immanent idealistic God of the liberals. At the end of the Twenties and in the early Thirties liberalism was outmoded. However, there were certain marks of Liberalism that survived. Liberalism believed in the scientific method, which means empiricism. Now liberalism was subjectivistic not by reason of the empiricism of its method but by reason of its Kantianism and Hegelianism. These two philosophies could be dropped, and empiricism retained, with the result that liberalism would be objective and realistic. This happened in America more than anywhere else. The result was Neo-Liberalism—a streamlined liberalism which dropped all Victorian gingerbread subjectivism. Hegel and Kant were the hidden props of the old liberalism, while John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead were the hidden stays of the new. It would be safe to say that among the leading Protestant theologians in contemporaneous America, the Neo-Liberals are prominent. As examples we may propose: John Bennett, Peter Bertocci, Edgar Brightman, Walter Horton, Albert Knudson, Bernard Meland, Henry Wieman and others. Not all Neo-Liberals can be reduced to groups, but among the Neo-Liberals there are two groups that are active and vital.

A—The Neo-Naturalists. Theological Neo-Naturalism makes one think of the University of Chicago, because there more than elsewhere was it formulated clearly. The outstanding name is that of Henry N. Wieman, associated with the University of Chicago until 1949, and with this name is associated that of Bernard Meland, still at Chicago. The forerunner of the movement was Douglas Clyde Macintosh (1877-1948) who taught at the Yale Divinity School, and who favored a thoroughgoing em-

piricism as the only legitimate theological method for our time.⁴

Wieman's conception of empiricism turns it into materialism, not the reductive materialism of the mechanists of old, but a new, non-reductive materialism. As Paul Tillich has pointed out, for Wieman empiricism is ontological. This means that the real and the empirical are identified so as to produce the following formula: the real is that which can be experienced, and all that is not capable of experience is unreal. This is a drastic proposition, but the Neo-Naturalists accept it. Since substances are not capable of experience, substances are unreal. In fact, all reality must be process, because only a process can be experienced. The sum total of all processes is called Nature, and then by a truism we must say that only the natural is real. We must also say that the real is empirically homogeneous, because its only characterizing note is that it can be experienced.

God as conceived by older traditions, i.e., as a transcendent substance, clearly cannot fit into this thought. Such a God in a naturalistic system must be declared unreal, but the Neo-Naturalists being theologians and Christians will not acquiesce in such a conclusion. Hence, they fall back on axiology, the consideration of values, to escape naturalistic atheism. Now it is a banal truth that man experiences values. The physical sciences do not deal with them, but man experiences them none the less. Since they are experienced, they are in nature, i.e., the real. Consequently nature includes a value structure which makes particular values possible. This basic value structure in nature is now called God, a God who can be experienced and as a fact is experienced. He cannot be called substance, nor should he be called a person, but he, or perhaps it, is yet a basic process in nature, and since process is reality, God is a basic reality, finite, of course, for he is only a partial aspect of total reality.

Theology, consequently, since it deals with God, is a branch of philosophy. A supernatural theology is a contradiction in terms. It can only be a natural first philosophy of values.

At first sight this makes Christian theology meaningless. On

⁴Douglas C. Macintosh, "The Logic of Constructive Theology," *Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium*, New York, Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1941, pp. 150-161. D. C. Macintosh, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge*, New York, Harper, 1940. D. C. Macintosh, editor, *Religious Realism*, New York, Macmillan, 1931.

reflection this conclusion is not necessary, for Christian theology can be considered as a study of Christian empirical tradition, especially the Christian Scriptural expression of the original Christian fact. Such a study can be made in the light of general axiology, and not by any other method. The historical aspects of the tradition must be turned over to the science of history, but the religious aspects, the value concern, are the consideration of the theologian. It is true that there can be other theologies, for the theologian must begin with some concrete religious experience. It is therefore also true that Christian theology is one theology alongside other possible theologies, all equally legitimate methodologically, and all equally valid in their points of departure. Yet Christian theology is the only relevant theology for a Christian community.⁵

The first reaction of the traditional theologian to this scheme of things is horror. It sounds like the very negation of God, or at best an atheist's indulgent concession of some ethical or symbolic utility to theology and religion. However, this is a misunderstanding of Neo-Naturalism. The Neo-Naturalist theologians are far from being atheists and far from selling religion short. They are merely overawed by the empirical method of philosophizing which has made a deep impression on them. They have not dropped God or piety because of this awe, but their genuine religiosity has forced them to accept the titanic challenge of expressing their faith in the very language and categories of naturalism. Whether they have succeeded is another question. As has been pointed out by other Protestant theologians, the Neo-Naturalist formula is not true to the common conception of God and religion, nor does it make agnostic or atheistic philosophers look more kindly on the Christian message. The Neo-Naturalists have fallen between two chairs. As fireworks, theological Neo-Naturalism is fascinating, but it has made little or no impression on the mass of believing Christians, and even the Protestant theological brotherhood as a whole is not moved by it.⁶

⁵ H. N. Wieman and B. E. Meland, *American Philosophies of Religion*, New York and Chicago, Willet, Clark, 1936. B. M. Loomer, "Neo-Naturalism and Neo-Orthodoxy," *The Journal of Religion*, xxviii (1948), pp. 79-91. B. E. Meland, "Interpreting the Christian Faith Within a Philosophical Framework," *The Journal of Religion*, xxxiii, April, 1953, pp. 87-102.

⁶ There is another form of naturalism called Naturalistic Humanism, or

B—Personalism. Another clear-cut form of Neo-Liberalism is Personalism. This doctrine finds its home in the University of Boston and its inspiration in the teaching of the late Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910). The leading exponent up to this year was Edgar Brightman (1884-1953), now succeeded by Peter Bertocci, both of Boston University. Their doctrine is complemented by the writings of Albert C. Knudson, an earlier expositor of the ideas of Bowne.

The Personalists are empiricists, no less than the Neo-Naturalists. For them theology is only a philosophy of religion, where religion is given in experience and considered to be a quest of values.

What distinguishes them from the Neo-Naturalists is their insistence that the impersonal God of Wieman is an insufficient explanation of value. God must be recognized as a person. This recognition is not direct, but rather a post-analytic hypothesis which is more satisfactory than any other. The value structure of the universe is more consistent with the notion of a conscious will as the basic force in nature than with any other explanation.

However, though God is personal in a superhuman way, yet we must not conceive him as omnipotent. He cannot eliminate evil from the world, since this depends on the free choice of persons, which choice God can in no wise control. Hence the personal God of the Personalists, though eternal and creative, yet is only finite.

Neo-Humanism. It deserves no lengthy comment here because it leads a meager life today. This new humanism must not be identified with the C. F. Potter variety which was publicized in the early thirties. It is a slightly different doctrine shared by a small group, perhaps best formulated by Roy Wood Sellers of the University of Michigan. According to this scheme, the universe of our observation is the uncreated absolute, so that all reality is material, though matter is not rigorously homogeneous nor reducible to mechanism. Knowledge and wisdom come only from scientific empiricism. There is no God in the theistic conception of the term, though the word is valid as a symbolic expression for the possibilities in life and evolution open to man in his hopeful and ideal efforts. The only true meaning for the word, God, is the religious-awe-inspiring Universe in as far as it can be influenced by man's ideal constructions to which he is emotionally committed. Man was not created by a theistic God, but rather man creates and re-creates God as a stimulus for his integrated action. Cf. Roy Wood Sellers, "Naturalistic Humanism," *Religion in the Twentieth Century*, V. Ferm, editor, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948. pp. 417-429.

A supernatural revelation is, of course, considered impossible, and theology as a science of revelation is only an illusion. The Bible and the Church are records of human experience in the search of value. They are not the voice of God, for God's only word is His axiological activity. Christ is divine in an accommodated sense only. His divinity means His successful solution of the human problem of values. Mahatma Gandhi may well have achieved the same degree of success for his community, and it is sheer arrogance for Christians to hold up their form of religiosity as the norm for all cultures and for all men. Bible and Church are human creations, valid because they are religious, but they must not be identified with religion itself.⁷

The Personalist group is very vocal, but its tenets are not widely shared. Its method is basically the old liberal method, and its dynamism is a desire to preserve the more characteristic features of Christian theology by the means of empiricism.

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THE CENTER

The collapse of nineteenth-century liberalism produced a quest among Protestant theologians for a non-liberal approach to the theological enterprise. Now the very heart of the liberalism was its naturalism. Consequently, the new theology had to move toward the supernatural. In fact, however, none of the Neo-Supernaturalist theologies believes in the supernatural in the way Catholic theology understands that term. In most cases the supernaturalism of those who are willing to use that word in their program, is only a subtle but definite naturalism. Perhaps this is not true of the Anglo-Catholics, but even with them it is hard to say if they are willing to be supernaturalists to the same degree as the Catholics. Certainly some definitely are not.

⁷ E. S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1949; P. A. Bertocci, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1951.

I—The Anglo-Catholics. At first sight, the Anglo-Catholics appear to be substantially in accord with Catholics in the method and content of their theology. Father W. Norman Pittenger, of the General Theological Seminary of New York, in his presidential address to the Protestant American Theological Society in 1949, in the light of his Anglo-Catholicism, proposed the following principles as normative for theology:⁸

1—The theological enterprise is primarily dogmatic in character, though there are other branches of theology which must be developed, such as moral theology, ascetical theology, historical theology, philosophical theology, and even natural theology.

2—The theologian cannot pick and choose among the Christian doctrines in order to construct his own theory of Christianity. He must retain the total depositum of the Church as manifested in Scripture and the Church's perennial tradition.

3—There must be no reintroduction of a double norm of truth: one norm valid in faith and a contradictory norm valid outside of it. Truth is one, and theology and the other disciplines of the mind must complement each other and not be mutually destructive.

4—This must not be understood in a Neo-Naturalist sense, namely that the method of natural empirical science must be the method of theology. The theologian uses reason as the tool of theology, but the data of theology are acquired by a mental activity that lies beyond the capacities of natural thinking.

5—A philosophic natural theology is possible and a necessary apologetic for dogmatics.

6—The theologian is not an isolated, autonomous thinker. He is essentially a member of the Church, and his work is ecclesiastical. The Church works in him, and he helps to edify the Church and by his theological endeavors he unites himself more closely to the life and soul of the Church.

All this sounds thoroughly Catholic and definitely contrary to the spirit of modern Protestant theology. However, we must not be too simple in the understanding of this program of Father Pittenger. As we see it work out in other Anglo-Catholics who would subscribe

⁸ W. N. Pittenger, "The Theological Enterprise and the Life of the Church," *Anglican Theological Review*, xxxi (1949), pp. 189-196.

to it, as for example, A. T. Mollegen of the Alexandria Episcopal Seminary and Charles Lowry of St. Alban's Preachers College, Washington, and as we see it work out in Father Pittenger himself, we must note that it is not identical with the Catholic theological rationale. There is still the tacit assumption that the "real" meaning of Scripture can be found only through naturalistic philology, though a "higher" meaning can be derived from piety and tradition; and although Tradition is accepted as a norm, yet there is a tendency to restrict the norm to the first seven Councils, nor is more to be taken from them than what is "nuclear," and, of course, the individual theologian will have to decide what is "nuclear." Later traditions in the various churches are also used, but these too must be sifted so that only what seems basic in each of them is used as an illuminating pointer. This procedure may be objective as against the subjectivism of the nineteenth-century theology, but at heart it is unavoidably individualistic. The supernatural as a term honored by the Pittenger scheme merely means "revealed," and whether revelation is supernatural in the Catholic sense of the word is a question discreetly unheeded. It is my personal opinion that the Anglo-Catholics, with the exception of those few who simply accept everything that the Roman Catholics do, including their method of theologizing, are anxious to *use* the consecrated formulas of the abiding Church, but give them a meaning foreign to their genuine intent in order to harmonize the Catholic propositions with the contemporary moods and movements. As a result, Anglo-Catholic theology is the only true Center theology in Protestantism, but it is also an elegant instance of "double talk" whereby the speaker can be understood simultaneously both as a Catholic and as naturalist. There is no insincerity in this position, but there is a voluntary ambiguity deriving from an indeliberate theological schizophrenia.⁹

II—Neo-Orthodoxy. One group of Protestant theologians, rejected both by Neo-Liberals and fundamentalists, are distinguished by the label of Neo-Orthodoxy, though they themselves have not chosen that name at all. The best known names in

⁹ W. N. Pittenger, "Anglo-Catholicism," *Religion in the Twentieth Century*, V. Ferm, editor, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948, pp. 273-386.

this group are the Swiss Calvinists, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, both of whom have published systematic theologies. These theologians are sometimes called Neo-Supernaturalists, but their supernaturalism is not what a Catholic calls supernatural. The distinctive note of these theologians is their existentialism, though again they refuse to admit that they are dominated by such a philosophy, and concede only that their language and preoccupations are existentialist. Other names given to this school are: Crisis Theology, because they consider man in his human and abiding critical condition, which ultimately is reduced to a consideration of man under the judgment, or crisis, of God. The other epithet frequently used is Dialectical Theology. That chameleon word, dialectical, in this context means dialogue, or polar, or paradoxical, thinking because there are two irreducible concepts that guide the debate, so that from the view of one concept one proposition must be made to accompany an opposing proposition made from the view of the other concept. Thinking is not in a circle with a central point as a determining locus, but in an ellipse, with two never-meeting foci. Consequently every meaningful proposition is paradoxical.

Though these theologians are Calvinists, we must not seek in them typical Calvinist theses, like Predestinationism or the subjection of the state to the Church. Both of these doctrines are rejected. Barth especially is interested in a return to the reformers, not to the content of their teaching but merely to their starting point. Against the liberals, Barth and Brunner go back to the Bible as the Word of God, and they free the theological enterprise from the chains of philological method in order to achieve the true meaning of the Scriptures, which philology cannot detect. Against the Orthodox, the Neo-Orthodox reject any Biblicism whereby verbal inspiration or literal inerrancy condemn the theologian to make affirmations that have nothing to do with God. Seemingly, therefore, the Neo-Orthodox are a Center theology, but a closer examination of their thought has led many critics to believe that they are basically liberals in a strange guise. In America Neo-Orthodoxy in the Barthian manner is not popular, though his work is sufficiently known. The paradoxical character of such thought is bewildering because the constant

linking of "Yes" and "No," with no possibility of bringing them into some kind of unified synthesis, leaves the student dizzy.

Barth's great light after the First World War was that Christianity is the courageous affirmation that God is God and man is man, and the two can never be subsumptions one of the other. God lies beyond the categories and conceptions of man. He is the "totally other," inconceivable and incomprehensible. The lot of man is utterly tragic, nor can he escape it. Man is "fallen," not because of Adam's sin, but because Adam and any man is "fallen" by structure. His being is threatened always, for death looms above him in every moment and it will finally swallow him into nothingness. Nothing can change this situation, not even Christianity. Yet in the torment of his polar mortality, man can see that the eternal is the other pole, but, of course, he cannot see the eternal. Yet God the Lord, the Creator, does reveal Himself to man. Such revelation does not change man's situation, but the sight of the eternal, strangely shining into man's soul, saves him in the sense that it makes him live his meaningless life in obedience to the meaningful creator God, whom he does not understand, cannot understand, but whose eternal lordship man accepts. This is faith, and this alone saves man, as the reformers dimly saw. Man moves on in his meaninglessness under the awe of God, the Lord.

Does this mean that Christianity is merely one of the various approaches to God, all equally valid? Barth answers a resounding "No." Christianity is the final and the absolute religion, not because God has not revealed Himself to non-Christians, but because the height of revelation comes in Jesus as the Christ. This last phrase is so typical of modern Protestant thought. Jesus as the Christ is not to be understood as Jesus of Nazareth as history manifests Him, but rather as He stands in the light of revelation, considered as manifesting God in an existential confrontation with Him. God is in Christ, and Christ is the Son of God, but this hardly means more than that in Christ, understood as portrayed by the Scriptures through the faith of the Church, we find the eternal Lord of all shining through. Jesus of Nazareth suffered life to its human end, death. His great human death cry was: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" He accepts His meaninglessness, knowing that mean-

ing is only in God, distant but near, inscrutable but present, and in the surrender of faith He goes on to die. This faith gave to Christ a life over and above the meaningless life of mortal man, and therefore He rose from the dead, for human men are men of death. In Him mankind is saved, and Christ died for all men—not by some legal formula or metaphysical consideration, but in revealing God to man absolutely.

Did Christ rise from the dead physically? Barth would answer that that question is historical in a naturalistic sense, and as such does not merit the consideration of the religious man. Christ certainly rose over the humanity of death, and because of Him we can also rise. The physical elements in such a resurrection are details concerning which revelation tells us nothing, for revelation is the existential meeting of God and not the communication of historical or scientific human knowledge. Ever since the days of his university teaching in the Twenties Barth sounds as if he believed in the physical resurrection of Christ, but there is nothing in his theology that really commits him to it irrevocably. He also defends stoutly the Trinity in God, and defines person as a mode of being, thus declaring that in God there are three modes of existence. Barth also makes his own the Chalcedonian teaching of the hypostatic union, but it is not at all clear what he believes by the formula, for it is certain that he despises the philosophy by which the formula was worked out.

Barth's great contribution to Protestant theology was his recovery of the reality of God on a plane above natural reality and outside of human consciousness. This most real God is the absolute, the creator, the basis of all, the meaning behind the meaninglessness of time, the totally other. Psychologism and historicism are rejected as invalid theological methods and in their place we use existentialism whereby an individual miserable man reading the Scriptures in fellowship with the Christian Church meets clearly but aconceptually the living God, manifested in Jesus as the Christ. Scripture is the word of God, not in the sense that its propositions are spoken by God, but in the sense that the vision of the men who wrote the words points efficaciously to the transcendent Lord God. Barth does

not give an exegesis of the Scriptures, but gives the existentialist meaning of the biblical narratives.¹⁰

Emil Brunner's name is usually associated with that of Barth, though the two men are not exactly colleagues nor do they see eye to eye on all things. Yet the gentle Brunner follows Barthian thought in its essentials and for our present purpose there is no need to delay on him. In America Barthianism never caught hold, because the doctrine is extremely pessimistic. Although it makes much of Christian fellowship, yet it is cold to any endeavor to make the world something like the Kingdom of Heaven, which, according to Barth, cannot be produced by man. Social amelioration is not at home in Barthianism, and American Protestantism is highly social in its activity.

This does not mean that we have no American Neo-Orthodoxy. Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary of New York has produced a Neo-Orthodoxy, "made in U. S. A." However, Niebuhr has not brought forth a complete systematic theology, though his works implicitly contain one. As he himself admits, he is closer to Brunner than to Barth, for Brunner admits that there is somewhere a point on the human plane where God and man meet, for without it man could not know God.¹¹ Hence a natural theology is somehow possible, not so much for the knowing of God Himself but for knowing the conditions in which He can be met. In Brunner the point is minute; in Barth, for whom God is the wholly other, there can be no such point; for Niebuhr, the point is more than a point, for it is an extensive but not clearly defined ethical area.

The Barthian Neo-Orthodoxy is dialectical—bi-polar—because there are two irreducible points that dominate theological thinking. The two points are the transcendental God as Lord and Creator, holy and perfect; opposite Him stands struggling, bewildered, sinful

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, transl. by G. T. Thomson, New York, Philosophical Library, 1949. Wilhelm Pauck, *Karl Barth*, New York, Harper, 1931. For a Catholic evaluation cf. H. Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, Köln, Hegner, 1951; G. Weigel, S.J., "Protestant Theological Positions Today," *Theological Studies*, xi (1950), pp. 552-562.

¹¹ Cf. Niebuhr's reply to Barth in *The Christian Century*, February 23, 1949, lxvi, 234ss, "An answer to Karl Barth." Cf. *ibid.*, Karl Barth, "Continental vs. Anglo-Saxon Theology," lxvi (1949), 201ss.

man. The result is irresolvable duality. Niebuhr also believes in the same polarity, but with a difference. It is true that man is a sinner, but he is not necessitated to sin totally in all he does. There is an area of his action where sin will not be utterly dominant, though man's own "fallen" humanity mixes up good and bad so that his actions are always morally ambiguous. Pride and sensuality are always at work; but even so they can be more or less corruptive, but not necessarily corruptive altogether. Social amelioration without optimistic ethical evolution is possible, and the Christian especially is called upon to further it, even though he will do so ambiguously. The reason why the Christian above all has such a mission is the meaning of Jesus as the Christ. Jesus as the Christ is the symbol of working out our lives and destinies by *agape*, a selfless love of God, righteousness, rather than *eros*, a love of another in order to enrich the self.

In Niebuhr there is no concession to biblical literalism. The Fall of Adam is not an historical event, but only the existential symbol of any man thrust into the choice between self and selflessness. Jesus of Nazareth was a man like any other. He cannot be the God of the Nicene Creed, because God is "totally other," and therefore Jesus of Nazareth was a sinner no less than the rest of us. However, through faith in God, *agape* was His norm of life, and *agape* is divinity working in humanity, and so Jesus as a symbol of *agape* is the Son of God. He did not physically rise from the dead, but death did not destroy Him because in Him *agape* became visible to men even after His death.¹²

To a Catholic audience it may be relevant to note that Niebuhr is friendly to Catholicism, but he has no inclination to accept it. The basic drives in Catholicism make it absolutize a relative, temporal, contingent institution. This is sinful, but Niebuhr appreciates the need of approaching all ambiguous human phenomena in terms of *agape*, and consequently he feels no passionate animus against the Church. If he criticizes her forcefully, it is also true that he criti-

¹²Niebuhr's works are too many to be named here. Synthetic approaches by Protestants: B. M. Loomer, "Neo-Naturalism and Neo-Orthodoxy," *The Journal of Religion*, xxviii (1948), pp. 85-91; E. J. Carnell, *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1951.

cizes all the Protestant Churches along with the reformers with equal force. However, all things considered, the Neo-Orthodoxy of Niebuhr is the nearest thing to the Left in the Center groups of Protestant theology.

III—Activist Evangelicalism. By and large, the average American Protestant theologian is not too impressed by any theological system. He is inclined to suspect systematics, though he is not opposed to them. He feels that a distinction should be made between "scholastic knowledge" and "evangelical faith," where the latter, and the witness to it, are undoubtedly the more important, though orthodox theology is not without some relevance. For this reason I have labeled this position as "Activist Evangelicalism." The current book of the theological missionary, John A. Mackay, of the Princeton Theological Seminary, *God's Order*, is the best presentation of the position.¹³ The vibrant journal, *The Christian Century* of Chicago, leftishly breathes the same spirit, and it is one of the most influential of the American Protestant periodicals. Winfred E. Garrison, formerly of the University of Chicago, in his *A Protestant Manifesto* moves along the same path.¹⁴

If the Anglo-Catholics look and sound like Catholics without really taking on the total Catholic commitment, then the Activist Evangelicals look and sound like fundamentalists without really being identified with that position. What distinguishes them from the Orthodox Evangelicals is the slipperiness of the formulas which they use. The Activist believes in the Bible as the sole vehicle of revelation, but he does not believe in Scriptural inerrancy. The Bible is a message, a *kerygma*. The Activist is quite willing to take lights and leads from historicist interpretations of the Scriptures. He professes a fiducial faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Incarnate Son of God, but his understanding of that phrase would perhaps satisfy the Nestorians rather than the Chalcedonian theologians. The Activists are in the tradition of Calvin, but they do not accept the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination. They are believers in "faith" and *agape*.

¹³ J. A. Mackay, *God's Order*, New York, Macmillan, 1953.

¹⁴ W. E. Garrison, *A Protestant Manifesto*, New York-Nashville, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952.

For them faith is the surrender of man to the God of the Bible, whose transcendent personal reality is strongly stressed. *Agape* is the urge to give witness to God and make known the saving work of Christ who had divine life in Him and gave that life to all sinful men who are willing to accept His leadership. Those who accept, form the Church which manifests itself concretely in congregations. There is, of course, an Ecumenical Church, but that is an invisible spiritual fellowship, not identified with, but only manifested in varying degrees in, different local congregations. As the source of theology, the Activist sticks to the Bible, but he insists that the Bible cannot be understood merely by knowing its words. It is a book of spiritual vision which only the eyes of faith can find. A spirit of objective detachment will never detect the vision. What is required is an enthusiastic inner spirit of witness which at once understands the spiritual message and guarantees its validity. This is, of course, an arational subjectivity, nor does the Evangelical think that objectionable. As an Evangelical, the important work is not the formation of doctrine and dogma, but rather the active rendering of ethical and kerygmatic witness to society in order that all men may know that there is salvation from sin through faith in the atonement of Christ Jesus, the risen Saviour. Did Christ physically rise from the dead? The Activist answers that He did, but this is a mysterious truth which cannot be explained in terms of biology and physiology, nor can the science of history deal with it.

The position of the Activist Evangelicals is the most typical of American Protestantism. They refuse to repudiate the perennial understanding of the Protestant message and simultaneously refuse to make that understanding too rigid or too clear. Another note that I find common in this group is their bitter anti-Catholicism, which they do not wish to admit and of which they are somewhat ashamed, but which they simply cannot overcome.

IV—Paul Tillich. Throughout our discussion we have dealt with groups, but there is one American Protestant Theology which belongs to an individual man. I refer to Paul Tillich, professor at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. There is no Tillich school in American Protestantism, but Tillich has influ-

enced all the Protestant thinkers from extreme Left to extreme Right.¹⁵

It is hard to locate Tillich. I think that he would prefer to be put in the Center though he is a foe of compromise in any form. He could be attached to the Neo-Orthodox, but his explicit rejection of that school outweighs any points of community he has with Neo-Orthodoxy. One thing can be said safely: he is the most impressive figure on the American Protestant theological scene, by reason of the vigor, clarity and amplitude of his doctrine.

Brunner taught in Princeton, but America did not radically influence his thought. Lutheran Niebuhr has his intellectual roots in German thought, but that does not continentalize his general outlook. Tillich, German-born and once prominent in Germany, has become thoroughly American, and his theology is a fusion of European and American drives.

He agrees with Barth, with whom his name at one time was associated, in the total otherness of God. He agrees with Barth that the essence of the Christian religion is the existentialist recognition of the awful reality of a transcendental God who is the ultimate ground of the real. With Barth he rejects any natural theology, for God can only be known by revelation: an encounter humanly achieved without philosophical categories of conception. Yet more than Barth, he thinks that God reveals Himself through nature and history, and thus can be met by any man anywhere. Man meets God when he faces his ultimate concern, for in that moment the ground of the real reveals itself. Yet the final and absolute revelation of God was in Jesus as the Christ. Once more we meet the idea that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is not an object of Christian faith, nor was He in literal trueness God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God. In literal trueness this would be blasphemy, for God is separated from historical reality by total otherness.

This total otherness, involved in the dialectic between God and man, is the key to Tillich's theology. Only God is God, and everything worldly is non-God and therefore nothing worldly can take His place nor be His materialization or incarnation. Yet Christ can truly

¹⁵ Cf. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall, editors, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, New York, Macmillan, 1952.

be called the Son of God and Lord because in Him God became transparent to all men. Again let us remember that this does not mean that the historical Jesus deserves these attributes. Such a doctrine for Tillich is a passé Jesusology. It is Jesus as the Christ that is the Saviour, the Christ depicted in the Scriptures by men who received the revelation of God. All men who share this revelation are Christians, and they form the Church, which is the bearer of that revelation for all times.

The Church is not an institution but rather the continuous existentialist transmission of the revelation of God in Jesus as the Christ. The churches have all been more or less untrue to their mission because they have invariably substituted something worldly for God. The Catholics are prone to substitute the Catholic Church for the transcendent absolute God. The Protestant churches in the past substituted a human book, the Bible, for the ground of all being. They also substituted their confessions and dogmas for the eternal truth of God, and in the days of liberalism they even substituted an idealistic or empirical construction in His holy place. Against all these idolatries Tillich raises the prophetic protest which is for him the characteristic note of Protestantism, and he thunders in favor of the adoration of God alone and the acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

This Gospel is the glad tidings of "new being." Jesus as the Christ lived and died in the acceptance of human finity and meaninglessness by faith in the meaningfulness of reality rooted in the incomprehensible God, its ground. He surrendered Himself to God by submitting to the meaninglessness, sinfulness, and inevitable ambiguities of human existence, and thus was a new being, and all who make that surrender in imitation of Him lead a new life, and are new beings in Christ. These are theonomous men, for they accept all the impositions of life and finite reality in search of the will of God. They have transcended autonomy, the persuasion that man by his natural powers and for his own purposes can lead the good life. They have rejected the idolatry of heteronomy whereby a finite, contingent, worldly thing is accepted as the ultimate in the place and name of God.¹⁶

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, Chicago, University of Chicago,

Tillich is not anti-Catholic and at one time of his life he considered entering the Church. He thinks that the substance of the Christian revelation is better preserved in Catholicism than in Protestantism. He merely objects to the strong tendency of absolutizing the Church, its dogmas, its morality and its sacraments. He denies vigorously any *ex opere operato* power in these things, though they can be legitimate as existentialist symbols. His Protestantism sounds strange to the Fundamentalists, but it is the most unified and most logical presentation of it in our time. It is true that its philosophic matrix is existentialism, but in this case a real organic Protestantism has emerged, total and intelligible.

V—The Lund School. It is strange that so remote a place as Lund in Sweden should have meaning for American Protestantism. However, Lund is important at least with a minor importance. Swedish life, at least in its metropolitan manifestations, is not impressive for its deep religiosity, but nonetheless at the University of Lund, theology is being cultivated with a solidity and sobriety that command attention. The theology is, of course, Lutheran, but it is Lutheran with variations. There is a strong tendency to interpret the Lutheran message in the light of the total Christian reality, and therefore there is a serious meditation of the Catholic substance in Lutheranism. The first name in this movement is Anders Nygren whose studies on St. Paul brought forth the distinction between *agape* and *eros*, which influenced both Niebuhr and Mackay. Another leader of this group is Bishop Gustaf Aulén, and the work of Nygren and Aulén has been brought to American attention by Nels Ferré, of the School of Religion, Vanderbilt University, in his *Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology*.

A good example of the excellence of Lund work is the recent symposium, *This is the Church*, edited by Anders Nygren.¹⁷ Here we

1951. For a Catholic synthesis and evaluation cf. G. Weigel, S.J., "Contemporaneous Protestantism and Paul Tillich," *Theological Studies*, xi (1950), pp. 177-202.

¹⁷Nels Ferré, *Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology*, New York, Harper, 1939; Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, two parts in three volumes, transl. by A. G. Hebert and P. S. Watson, New York, Macmillan, 1932-1939;

find the truly modern note of contemporaneous Protestantism: a recognition of the Church as an objective, structured fellowship with the supernatural dimensions of the Body of Christ. It is not merely spiritual but quite manifest in the world. The Catholic notion is not dominant in the studies, but elements of the Catholic notion which were formerly despised are once again considered and adopted. What is especially noteworthy is the deep knowledge of St. Paul common to all the Lund theologians.

* * * *

THE RIGHT

The Protestant Right holds no comfortable position in Protestant theology. In the orthodox, the ancient hostility to Catholicism is quite conscious, and yet they find that some of their most characteristic stands are defended by the Catholic enemy rather than by their Protestant colleagues. The Protestant theologians in general treat the Rightists with much condescension, looking on them as slightly dim-witted brethren with excellent intentions. Even the Activist Evangelicals, who are merely sophisticated fundamentalists, usually make disparaging references to the Right and are often apologetic about the presence of fundamentalists in their fellowship. Yet such an attitude is hardly just to the Rightists. In the first place, they hold what Protestants fought for during centuries. Secondly, the average Protestant churchgoer spontaneously considers the fundamentalists as the authentic representatives of Protestantism. All the new *isms* of our contemporaneous Protestant theology confuse the average Protestant even more than a Catholic. The adult Protestant churchgoer understands fundamentalism. He was taught it. He learned to identify it with the Protestant vision. Many of the new generation cannot swallow fundamentalism, but they do not take kindly to the newer reconstructions, for they do not consider them true to the genuine Protestant ideal. Such men and women either drop religion or become Catholics, though the latter choice is not a normal event. The Protestant theology of the Right can be divided into two broad groups: the Orthodox Evangelical and the Unorthodox.

Anders Nygren, editor, *This is the Church*, transl. by C. C. Rasmussen, Philadelphia, Muhlenberg, 1952.

I—Orthodox Evangelicalism. Orthodox Evangelicals are usually called fundamentalists, though they themselves do not use this term today. They will call themselves simply Evangelicals. However, the minimal signs of the fundamentalist movement of the second and third decade of this century are also the signs which reveal the present-day Orthodox Evangelical. These signs are usually reduced to four or five propositions:

1—The Bible in every proposition is the Word of God and is infallible according to the meaning of the words.

2—Christ was literally born of a Virgin.

3—Christ as the substitute for all men saved humanity by His atoning death in the literal sense of these words.

4—Christ physically rose from the dead.

5—Christ will literally come again to judge the living and the dead.

Now whatever may be thought of these propositions, at least it must be admitted that they state the doctrine of the reformers, and for that matter of the perennial Church. The fundamentalists, not without reason, accuse those who reject these doctrines of having dropped Christianity and substituted something secular for it.¹⁸

With the Neo-Orthodox the Orthodox Evangelicals teach the radical sinfulness of man. With the first reformers they teach the justification of man through faith alone, which is a fiducial experience of the reality of the historical Christ Jesus, true God and true man. They are rarely predestinationalists, but good works, they insist, do not justify a man, though justification through grace brings forth good works. Consequently there is no opposition to good works; on the contrary, the need of them is stressed, but they can derive only from grace through faith. Against the Neo-Orthodox whom the fundamentalists consider disguised liberals, Evangelicals consider sin a violation of the will of God made known by the propositions of the Scripture. They reject the notion that sin is only the inevitable finiteness of human structure. Jesus died for us vicariously so that our sinfulness could be covered up by His precious blood. The Bible

¹⁸ Cf. J. G. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, New York, Macmillan, 1923; C. F. H. Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans, 1951, pp. 145ss.

alone is the source of theology, and it must be interpreted by individuals enlivened by faith and grace, who form Christian congregations which manifest the invisible Church. It is clear from all this that all theology, even systematics, is ultimately only a biblical theology.¹⁹

The man who was prominent in producing an effective Evangelical movement was J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937). He opposed insistently the liberalism of American Protestantism in the Twenties, and for it was compelled to leave Princeton Theological Seminary. He helped to found what is known as Orthodox Presbyterianism and also helped to form its Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Today Evangelical theology is vital, but it is not taught in the better-known Protestant theological centers. Its home is in the many smaller denominational or interdenominational seminaries. One such seminary must be mentioned: Fuller Theological Seminary of Pasadena, California. Two writers of this school, Carl F. Henry and Edward J. Carnell, have published fundamentalist works manifesting high intelligence and broad learning. A characteristic of their thought is their decided rejection of the biological theory of human evolution. The Eerdmans Publishing Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, seems to be an outstanding center of fundamentalist publications.²⁰

¹⁹ Protestant theological schools usually divide the theological discipline into four parts. The basic course is Biblical Theology which includes hermeneutics, exegesis and biblical synthesis. Then comes History, which covers both Bible and Church History, and at times the history of dogma. In third place Dogmatic Theology is considered, and it is called indifferently: philosophic theology, dogmatics, systematics or symbolics. The fourth branch is called Pastoral or Practical Theology which deals with homiletics, liturgy and poimenics.

²⁰ There are certain publishing houses that specialize in the kind of theology they print. In general, the Protestant theologian, like any other, prefers to have his work published by the bigger editing companies on the Atlantic coast, or by the university presses, e.g., the University of Chicago, Harvard, or Yale. However, just as there are Catholic publishers, so there are Protestant publishers. Besides Eerdmans, named in the text, we should mention the Methodist Publishing House, New York-Nashville, which under the name of Abingdon-Cokesbury prints works not officially connected with the Methodist Church. This is the biggest religious publishing house in the world. The Presbyterians direct the Westminster Press of Philadelphia, and their titles are carefully selected to ensure high quality. Both of these houses will publish Center the-

II—Unorthodox Evangelicals. The liveliest manifestations of Protestantism in America can be found in the so-called "smaller Sects." These are the "store-front churches" which sprout up all over the land. They are usually begun by someone dissatisfied with one or other of the better-known churches to which he belonged. The "smaller sects" are marked by exuberance and unrestrained emotionalism in their services and preaching. As a rule there is no attempt to justify the existence of their Church except by a direct appeal to some phrase or phrases of the Bible. The founder often enough has had no theological training and does not bother about credentials to authorize his preaching mission. The Pentecostal churches are frequently of this type, with unrestrained frenzy characterizing their meetings, which is justified by an appeal to the charisms mentioned in the Pauline epistles. The Holy Spirit in these churches is something palpable for the believers, and when the Spirit comes, the effects are bizarre. Usually there is little attempt to formulate a theology in such groups. There is a strong faith in the sinfulness of man and the saving power of trust in the redeeming death of Christ. Those who believe receive the Spirit, who then takes over. To speak of Pentecostal theology is to speak of something that has not yet been developed. However, there are three other vibrant unorthodox groups that should be mentioned.

A—The Witnesses of Jehovah. One is impressed by the vigor of this corporation. Its total doctrine is contrary to the beliefs of all other Protestant groups, and it could be said truly that they are not Protestants, to which statement both the Protestants and the Witnesses would be glad to agree. Yet they are biblical literalists, for whom the literal Bible is the Word of God, understood by the reader through free interpretation. They have, however, formed a unified interpretation which relies on the work of

ology by preference. The Anglo-Catholics have an outlet in Morehouse-Gorham of New York-Milwaukee. The American Baptist Publication Society does not specialize in theological work. The Lutheran Lit. Bd. of Burlington, Iowa, publishes for the United Lutheran Church, but the Concordia of St. Louis is the press of the Missouri Synod. The Muhlenberg Press of Philadelphia prints Lutheran theology. The Association Press of the Y.M.C.A., New York, publishes popular expositions of Protestant theological positions and problems.

Judge J. F. Rutherford (1869-1942) who was not really a judge. Their center is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Brooklyn under the presidency of Nathan Homer Knorr, which society in the deluge of literature it prints has recently published an interesting translation of the New Testament. There is also a Bible Training School in South Lansing, N. Y.

The beliefs of this group are strange. They deny the Trinity in God and reject any source of faith other than the Bible, all of whose parts are on the same level. They deny the divinity of Christ, who as God's first creation, is nonetheless the appointed King of the New World. Manifested in time, He died in ransom for the obedient servants of Jehovah. He arose again and is waiting for the Battle of Armageddon. He did not die for all men, but only for the obedient servants of Jehovah. There is no Church, but only a select group of body-members of Christ Jesus, who form an invisible, spiritual union. Their number is restricted to 144,000 (not coterminous, therefore, with the Witnesses of Jehovah who here and now in the United States number some 300,000). After the great battle, which is coming soon, Christ with His body-members will reign over the faithful survivors, and multitudes of the dead obedient servants of Jehovah will rise again. This resurrection is really a new creation, because death is always total, for there is no survival of the soul, and consequently there is no place for any purgatory or hell, which latter term in the Bible means only the grave.

The Witnesses stress the priesthood of all believers, and they insist that all the Witnesses are priests, ordained by God. They want no churches, and yet they have meeting houses called "Kingdom Halls," where the Bible is studied. The Witnesses engage in the distribution of literature, and without invitation they visit homes where they explain their revelation.

What characterizes the Witnesses is their boundless zeal. They are also noted for their opposition to government, to all the churches and all organized religions. The Catholic Church receives the brunt of this animosity.²¹

²¹ Cf. N. H. Knorr, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Our Times," *Religion in the Twentieth Century*, V. Ferm, editor, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948, pp. 381-392.

Strange as this doctrine seems, it attracts many. There is no formal theology taught, for such a thing is despised by the Witnesses who look for light from the Scriptures alone. The whole phenomenon is incredible, but is one of the most striking features of contemporaneous American religion.

B—The Seventh Day Adventists. The Adventists are a logical combination of Protestant ethical holiness and Scriptural literalness. They are genuinely Protestant and agree with the Evangelicals in all but a few things. They insist that the Lord's Day is Saturday and not Sunday, and they believe in the prompt return of Christ who is truly divine. Death is an unconscious sleep, and all will rise on Christ's return: the good to live immortally in bliss while the wicked will be utterly consumed by fire.

Since the body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, they do not defile it with tobacco or alcohol. Some refuse to eat meat. They shun dances and the theater. They give a tenth of their incomes to the upkeep of the Church and in addition give generously for Church enterprises. Since they believe themselves to be the true Church, uniquely preserving the Faith of the Apostles and the reformers (which faith is lost in the other sects), they are great evangelists and missionaries. In South America they are ubiquitous, using the press, radio and schools for the propagation of their doctrine. They are obviously not as extreme as the Witnesses, but their method of achieving revealed truth is the same, and their emphasis on the prompt coming of the Final Judgment is also identical.²²

C—Christian Scientists. That the Christian Scientists are unorthodox all Evangelicals would freely admit; they might, moreover, resent their being called Evangelical in any sense. However, they are Evangelical, for they hold that the Inspired Word of God is a sufficient guide to eternal life, and the whole doctrine of Mary Baker Eddy is the fruit of a Protestant's privilege of private interpretation. Her work, *Science and Health*, is still the

²² F. S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, New York-Nashville, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951, pp. 16-17.

theology of the Christian Scientists, and it is the only accepted interpretation of the Bible which is read at the services.

The faith of the Church of Christ, Scientist, is expressed so obscurely that it is difficult to understand what precisely is being taught. There is an ambiguous profession of the Trinity in God. Christ, the Son of God, saved mankind by showing men how to overcome sin and death. He is the Way-shower, not a scapegoat. Sin and death are unreal, for they are the negation of God, the norm of all reality. Their only reality is that they seem real, and from this seeming we are released by scriptural gnosis and prayer which is the absolute faith that all is possible in God. The Body is real as an aspect of the self which is primarily mind. It is an error to think of Body as it is conceptually constructed by materialists, a substantial congregate other than mind. Since man is mind, he is immortal, and death is only a seeming, just as disease and sin are seemings. The seeming is overcome by the gnosis of Christian Science effective in prayer. Baptism is not used, but the Eucharist is celebrated twice a year.

Christian Science is a thriving religion all over the world. It has proved attractive to the bourgeois just as Pentecostalism and Millennialism has proved attractive to the unsophisticated. In this country alone, the Christian Scientists number about 300,000, while many more than that figure worship in the Christian Scientist Churches.²³

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With the exception of the last three groups we treated, all the other theological positions are not the positions of churches. One and the same church contains theologians of all the tendencies of theological thought. Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the most honored theologians of American Protestantism, is a slightly reconstructed liberal and a revered Baptist, though a great sector of that Church is extremely fundamentalist. The Presbyterians have their center, right and left wings. Methodism is proud of the teaching of Wesley who bequeathed his Church no theology, leaving that enterprise to the freedom of individual believers. Episcopalianism is notorious for

²³ A. J. Todd, "Christian Science," *Religion in the Twentieth Century*, V. Ferm, editor, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948, pp. 357-378.

its "comprehensiveness," with the result that every theological position is possible, ranging from extreme Anglo-Catholicism to extreme Low Church fundamentalism, or the extreme naturalism of Bishop Barnes of Birmingham. In general, however, we can say that the Baptists of the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as the Pentecostal and Holiness groups, are fundamentalist, while all the others, Lutherans included, uneasily stay in the center, sliding unwillingly to the left. Active Evangelicalism is the predominant tone of American Protestantism, numerically superior to a stubborn fundamentalist mass numbering millions. All other theologies, brilliantly conceived or expressed, do not touch the generality of Protestants, and only lightly touch the average minister and preacher.

There is no time to do more than mention the Ecumenical Movement which today is a ferment in Protestant life and thought. The last fifty years have evolved a dynamism toward the union of all the churches and sects. Only the extreme fundamentalists ignore the movement. The rest participate, but there are two tendencies: the Activist Evangelicals, for the purpose of a more efficient evangelical witness, want a cooperative confederation of churches in terms of a cordial fellowship of independent sovereign bodies; while the Anglicans seek for some kind of a united, unique sovereign church, permitting sectional diversity, in the hope of manifesting the *Una Sancta* with ever greater perfection. The movement has produced much theological thinking concerning the nature of the Church, as the Amsterdam and Lund meetings have clearly shown. The movement itself is still too amorphous to describe it precisely, and the product of the movement, the World Council of Churches, is too young to show any hard, permanent features. However, theologians of all faiths must watch this phenomenon because it is the most conspicuous fruit of contemporaneous international Protestantism.²⁴

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²⁴ For brief accounts of the Ecumenical Movement cf. W. M. Horton, *A Reborn Church*, New York, Harper, 1949; Report of the World Council: *The Ten Formative Years, 1938-1948*, Geneva, Switzerland, World Council of Churches, 1948; R. S. Bilheimer, *The Quest for Christian Unity*, New York, Association Press, 1952. For a brief Catholic consideration cf. Charles Boyer, S.J., *One Shepherd*, transl. by A. Bouchard, New York, Kenedy, 1952.

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DIGEST OF THE DISCUSSION

Dr. Edmond Benard of the Catholic University of Washington began the discussion by asking where the Society of Friends would fit into the divisional framework of the paper read. The lecturer answered that he was not attempting to divide current Protestant theology in terms of the sects. Moreover the Friends, or Quakers, occupied a peculiar position in Protestantism by reason of their rejection of sacraments. Yet they are genuinely Protestant, because they base their whole faith on man's freedom in his approach to

God and on his freedom to interpret the Scriptures with no other control than conscience, guided by the Spirit. An evolution is taking place in the Quaker groups. Formerly they were essentially charismatic in their assemblies with no pastor or minister. Today, however, many Quaker congregations have something like a minister who preaches in the same manner as the preachers of the other churches. Quaker theology could hardly be organized into a precise system. It is latent and tacit in Quaker activities rather than formulated by Quaker expositions.

Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., of the Catholic University of Washington then inquired how many Protestants today believed with the Council of Chalcedon in the divinity of Christ. The lecturer answered that it would be at least difficult, if at all possible, to answer that question, for the simple reason that no investigation has been made in this matter, and probably none could be made. The larger Churches in their confessional books: the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Augustan Confession and the Westminster Confession, are committed to the profession of the Chalcedonian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, in individual Protestants the position would not be so clear. Certainly the majority would believe in some kind of divinity in Christ, but their doctrines if rendered precise might come out either as Docetist or Nestorian. The lecturer hazarded a personal opinion that of the 40,000,000 Protestants in the country, at least 30,000,000 would profess faith in some kind of divinity in Christ.

Father Eugene M. Burke, C.S.P., of the Catholic University of Washington next asked if Neo-Orthodoxy was essentially a theology or a philosophy of Christianity. The lecturer answered that it was a theological enterprise but its dynamism was philosophic, and the directions of this theology were dictated by philosophic principles rather than by the perennial tradition of Christianity, which though zealously studied, is transformed into an existentialist vision.

The next discussant was Father Paul Palmer, S.J., of the Jesuit Seminary of Toronto, who urged Catholic theologians to study the documents of the Reform period and become masters of the thought of the Reformers. He gave as a motive the advantages this would bring to the modern dialogue between Catholics and Protestants,

since the Protestants were studying the Reform sources with renewed zeal and fervor. The lecturer commented that it was certainly good for us to know and know deeply the thought of the Reformers, but he could not accept the motive proposed by Father Palmer, because the Protestant return to the Reformation period does not mean a return to that doctrine, much less to its corollaries.

Father J. Courtney Murray, S.J., of Woodstock College, Maryland, continued these reflections by observing that the lecturer's distinction was important. Modern Protestant interest in the thought of the Reformers did not at all imply a return to the Reformation stand in theology. He added that the Catholics were in a better position to understand what the Reformers were saying, for to the modern Protestant, Reform theology is alien and strange. Protestant and Catholic conversations on the Reform mind could be fruitful points of departure for a different kind of dialogue. Such conversations are being held in Germany.

Father Bonaventure Schwinn, O.S.B., of Newark, N. J., gave a new turn to the discussion by asking what we are to understand by existentialism in as far as it is dynamic in modern Protestant theology. The lecturer answered that the question proposed supposed that existentialism can be precisely defined, but that such a supposition is not supported by the facts. There are many philosophies that pass under the label of existentialism. Heidegger, whose philosophy has been called existentialist for many years, objects to the name being given to the thought of J. P. Sartre, generally designated as a prince of existentialists. However, the Protestant existentialist theologians are aware of the importance of the question of Father Schwinn. In fact Paul Tillich has done an excellent study of the theme in: "Existential Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, C.C.N.Y., New York: January, 1944, pp. 44-70, and, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, New York, I (1946), 3-17.

Father Leonard McCann, C.S.B., of Windsor, Ontario, next asked what were the achievements of the Amsterdam assembly of the World Council. The lecturer answered that it manifested two tendencies which were not altogether reconcilable. One group, representative of Continental theological thought, wished to formulate a

common doctrinal basis for united Protestantism and longed for a religious service in which all could take part. The other group, manifesting Anglo-Saxon theological thought, was not interested in such an enterprise, preferring to make of the World Council a clearing house or central bank for the promotion and efficiency of evangelism, which is conceived as the true function of Protestantism. It is difficult to prognosticate how these two tendencies will develop in the course of the years.

Father Eugene B. Gallagher, S.J., of Georgetown University, Washington, was the last discussant and he inquired about the place of neo-rationalism in modern Protestant theology. The lecturer answered that there were neo-rationalists among the Protestant theologians but they do not use that name, nor are they a vital group in the total field. Modern Protestantism is far more interested either in empiricism or existentialism. Anything like the rationalism of the nineteenth century is discredited and discarded.