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Editorial

IN ONE of the first numbers of the EVANGELICAL STUDENT, there was an article entitled, "The Human Apologetic", in which notable instances of conversion were related. Thus the League has ever stood for Christian life and living.

Buchmanism (discussed in this issue), like every false movement, has truth in disguise. It stresses "changed lives" and witnessing. Must the evangelical student be a living witness? Obviously. Our fellow-editor in the *Inter-Varsity Magazine*¹ of the British Movement rightly contends that it must be a *student* witness. Even in one's own college! Students to students—to their fellows who are just as lost and undone without Christ, as are others who are unbelievers.

It must be a balanced witness. It is ever a question of *both* doctrine and life; not one *or* the other; or one *before* the other! All the mischief in modern Christianity comes from confounding the Scriptural order. But the League thinks that it is a mistake to consider people as being converted by the good life of another, or even by his testimony for Christ. Witnessing is an instrument only. Its chief danger lies in one's telling about himself. Great things have been done for us; but He has done them—that is the marvel! There is an art in that sort of witness. There is a divine reticence in personal testimony which some of us have not yet caught. The Apostle Paul concludes his witness in 1 Timothy 1:12-17 with a *Te Deum*. To Him be the glory!

And it must be a personal, not an impersonal witness. Yet it must also be a corporate witness. That was wise counsel given John Wesley by one whom he traveled many miles from Lincoln College to see: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone: you must therefore *find* companions or *make* them: the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."²

There is ever a costliness attached to full and complete witnessing. What many League Chapters have endured, Wesley and his companions at Oxford suffered. They were called "Bible-bigots", "Bible moths", "the Godly Club". They merited such phrases only insofar as they were devoted to the Word of God, written and Incarnate. Wesley's devotion to the Scriptures took on added force by his life of holiness. But cross the Channel, and there observe the obloquy of a different type of witness by a reticent race. Recall the loyal fortitude of the oft-forgotten Dutch saints and martyrs of the seventeenth century.

¹Lent Term, 1933 number, Vol. V, No. 2.

²Quoted in the *Life of Wesley*, by Robert Southey, George Bell & Sons, London, 1901.

Facing the Problem*

CORNELIUS VAN TIL

EVERY class of people has problems that are peculiar to itself. But these problems, that every class of people has, are after all but particular forms of the problem that all people have in common. So, too, the particular problems of college people are but specialized forms of the problem that all of us must face.

To the average college student the question of choosing the right vocation for life is of great importance. Some students may have settled this problem for themselves. But if they have, this only means that they must push on to a further question. A vocation prepares for life. But what is this life, for which the vocation is to prepare? Strictly speaking, the student has to answer that question before he can make up his mind as to what vocation to choose. Why should one student choose to enter the gospel ministry and another prefer the medical profession? Is it because one profession offers a greater financial reward? If it does, what will one do with the money that he dreams of having in his possession?

Now to the question of what life is, there are seemingly many answers. There are many systems of philosophy and there are many systems of religion. It seems as though we are in a veritable labyrinth of conflicting systems. Yet it does not take very long before we begin to learn that certain systems are but compounds of the elements of other systems. And after we have studied for a little while, we realize that there are only two systems that can not be compounded. Just as we watch the physicist in the laboratory making all manner of combinations from a very few fundamental substances, so we soon begin to perceive that all the non-Christian systems are compounded out of two ingredients. These two basic ingredients are: (1) the assumption of man himself as the ultimate standard of judgment, and (2) the assumption of the universe as existing in its own strength and right. And even these we may, if we wish, reduce to one assumption, namely, the assumption of the self-sufficiency of the space-time universe.

Now if we have thus reduced the various non-Christian systems to one system, we learn to see very clearly the most central point of opposition between Christianity and non-Christianity. Christianity holds that God is the ultimate standard of judgment for men. Christianity also holds that the space-time universe was created by God and is sustained by God. And these two points we may also reduce to one, by saying that Christianity believes in the self-sufficiency of God.

Bringing the difference between these two philosophies of life in as pointed a contrast as we can, we may say that according to Christianity the universe must be interpreted in terms of God, while according to all other systems, God must be interpreted in terms of the universe. Chris-

*One of the addresses given at the Eighth Annual Convention of the League at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

tianity is the only system that speaks of the second Person of the Trinity, the Christ, God of very God, as coming to judgment, to bring into everlasting glory, or to condemn to everlasting punishment, as men *have*, or *have not* accepted His interpretation of life. Christianity, orthodox, historical Christianity, is the only philosophy of life that believes in God as self-sufficient.

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Unfortunately many students walk in the labyrinth of modern thought, as ladies are said to walk in large department stores, sampling this and sampling that, as though a day were a year. One of the most helpful things that we, as members of the League, can do, it seems to me, is to help men reduce the numberless systems that are offered them to the two of which we have spoken. This will greatly simplify their choice. This will also press the urgency of making the choice at once.

But is it necessary to make a choice at once? And is it scientific to make a choice at once? It may be well to preach to men in the slums that they must make a choice at once, but is it equally necessary to tell college men that they must make a choice without delay? It may be urged that college men, all of them, walk on the same road till graduation time. It is afterwards, so it is said, that they will have to make their choice.

Yet it is not true that we can put off the acceptance or the rejection of the Christian answer, till we have finished our course at college. Some of us may never finish our course at college. Many a time it happens that a student is taken out of life before he has finished his preparation for it. In such a case, Christ will not ask him in the Judgment Day, what he has done in life, but Christ will ask him for what sort of life he has been preparing. Or, in other words, for a student taken away in his student days, it is his preparation that is life itself, and it is of this that he will have to give an account. It is not more reasonable for any human being to put off the question of the acceptance or the rejection of Christianity, than it is for a man to go to sleep on a railroad track, unless he is positive that no train will ever pass on that track. It is as necessary, then, for every college student to make a choice at once as it is for the man that lies drunk in the gutter.

But it will be objected that this is certainly to go counter to common sense. It will be said that you can not expect a person to decide upon his permanent philosophy of life till he has grown to maturity. And it will be added that every child accepts his early outlook on life from his parents and teachers, and upon their authority alone. Is it not highly desirable and altogether necessary that such children should learn to develop independence of judgment? And how are they to develop independence of judgment if you press upon them prematurely the necessity of making choices for life and for death?

Now there is an element of truth in such objections. And we do not mean to advocate any policy of education that would hinder the development of young people's judgment. But we submit that it is in the best interest of a young person to grapple with the most ultimate problems of

life, as soon as he is able to do so. If we as children of Christian parents have at first received and accepted the Christian position on the authority of our parents, it is our business, as soon as we can, to ask ourselves whether we wish to accept self-consciously that which we have formerly accepted on the authority of others. So also, if we have received non-Christian teaching in our youth, it is our business to ask ourselves, as soon as we can, whether we wish to retain that non-Christian position or exchange it for the Christian position.

And this leads us also to face that objection so commonly made today, that we must by all means cultivate open-mindedness in young people. Now there is only one thing wrong with this ideal of cultivating the open-mind, and that is that there is no such open-mind anywhere in the universe to cultivate. It is all very well to hitch your wagon to a star, but it is foolish to beat the air. If something is inherently obtainable, it is well to strive for it; but if something is absolutely and forever beyond our reach, it is a waste of energy to strive for it. Or rather, I should use a figure which suggests that the open-mind is something that is past, instead of something that is in the far distant future. It is very discouraging to run in order to catch the horizon, because it has such a mean way of escaping our grasp by moving constantly ahead. But, if possible, it is still less encouraging to try to obtain something that is already past and out of reach. To see a man who will not put away childish things, but whose ambition it seems to be to return to childish things, is pitiable indeed. Yet it is this that men constantly try to do, in the name of science. Nothing is so common as to meet people, who tell you that they are quite open for conviction on the question of the existence of God. But if you ask them the question, whether they are open-minded on the argument for the existence of an absolutely self-sufficient God, they will have to admit at once that they are not.

To make this point clear, I may use again the illustration of the man who goes to sleep on a railroad track. What would you think of such a person, if he said that he was quite open-minded on the possibility of trains coming on the track? If he were perfectly open-minded on that possibility, he ought to allow for the possibility that after five minutes a train might come. So, then, the fact that he goes to sleep implies that it is his real conviction that it will certainly be several hours before any train will pass on that track. His much boasted open-mindedness has proved to be nothing but a negation. It is in this way that men will tell you that they are perfectly willing to be convinced that Christianity is true. In other words, they say they are perfectly willing to grant that any moment may be their last in life, and bring them face to face with the judgment. Yet their non-acceptance of Christianity, for the time being, proves that in their hearts they are convinced that death will not bring them before the judgment. Their much boasted open-mindedness has been negation only.

If it be said that such an analogy is forced, because it is certainly not the business of a sane man to go to sleep on a railroad track, while

there are plenty of beds at home, or while there is at least plenty of space to sleep in elsewhere, the reply is that if Christianity is true, your bed itself may at any time become the track on which the judgment comes to you, while you are asleep. If Christianity is true there is not one spot in this universe that may not bear us to the judgment. There is only one way in which one can sleep safely in this world, if one does not accept Christianity, and that is by proving that no judgment can possibly come. If a man could prove this he would have proved that this universe is self-sufficient, and that there is no need of the God of Christianity.

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What then does the so-called neutral attitude which is found so generally on the average college campus, mean? It means that men have accepted the non-Christian position, without so much as giving one serious thought to the possibility of the truth of Christianity. Men have accepted an answer to the most ultimate question in life, without having faced the meaning of the question. There are hundreds and hundreds of college men that have gone to sleep on the railroad track. If you touch them lightly with a feather to suggest that possibly a train might come, they smile and say, "Perhaps". They regard it about as likely as Conan Doyle would consider that the man in the moon was the real culprit in a mystery plot. If you pull them gently by the hand, and say to them quite seriously that the coming of a train is at least an hypothesis to which they should give scientific attention, they tell you frankly that no one considers the creation theory seriously any more, since William Jennings Bryan has died. If you pound them vigorously on the forehead with a hammer, and show them that it is their solemn, scientific duty to prove the impossibility of the existence of God if they wish to live as they now live, they may get furious enough to tell you that you are outraging reason, or they may look down upon you in pity for your idiocy.

Unfortunately most college men are of the first variety. Christianity has never been presented to them vigorously. They may have had baseballs flatten their nose, they may have had basketballs take their wind, they may have been all but dashed to pieces on the football field, but Christianity has never given them more disturbance than the sensation of a feather tickling them in their sleep.

* * *

And now let us go one step further and see what the situation is when men get beyond the college campus. Suppose that men continue their studies and go to the leading universities of the land for their graduate courses. There, surely, men will have to be truly scientific and will not answer questions before squarely facing them. True, there are a few of those hide-bound, conservative colleges and seminaries in which the professors take the truth of Christianity for granted, and never make any real investigation with an open mind. But surely in the great universities of the world, men try to face the facts squarely, and follow the facts wherever they may lead them. But this exactly, we believe, is not the case. We believe that it is as true of the average university and sem-

inary professor as of the average college student, that he has simply accepted the non-Christian answer to the problem of life without seriously looking at the Christian answer. In the nature of the case, we are not saying that such is true of everyone. There are exceptions to the rule. What we mean is that those scientists and philosophers, as well as those theologians in so-called neutral institutions which are most influential in our day, are very unscientific indeed with respect to their treatment of Christianity.

If Christianity is true, then it is of such fundamental significance that it determines the meaning of every fact at which one looks. It would be truly scientific, then, to look seriously at the question whether Christianity is a fact. Yet it is this that men fail to do.

* * *

I realize that in making such a far-reaching charge I shall be flooded with objections. And the strange part of it is that one meets objections not only from those who are opposed to Christianity, and who therefore are themselves involved in the accusation, but as well from those who accept Christianity. Many orthodox Christians have an "inferiority complex" when it comes to men of science. To presume to criticize Einstein, whose theory of relativity only ten people in the world are supposed to be able to understand, seems well nigh sacrilegious to them.

Moreover, men say, "What is the use of being so extreme? Why not be happy that science is drawing much closer to the Christian position today than it used to? Why not rejoice since idealistic philosophy has a concept of God which, though not altogether that of Christianity, or of Biblical theism, is nevertheless very much closer to it than the God of the materialist and pragmatist?"

Now in answer to this objection we would say that we greatly rejoice in the accomplishments of science. We greatly admire the genius and the perseverance of scientists, as well as the profundity of philosophers. We may be quite open-minded, too, on the question of the curvature of space. We may rejoice because some modern psychologists and physicists have returned from a mechanistic view to a sort of teleology.

But while we admire the scientists and the philosophers for what they have accomplished, we do not in the least modify our charge, that, as a whole, they have not even faced the question of Christianity. As a whole modern scientists and philosophers have been absolutely closed-minded on the possibility of the existence of God.

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Edward H. Cotton has recently published a symposium of scientific opinion under the title, *Has Science Discovered God?* In this symposium we have such names as Kirtly F. Mather, Heber D. Curtis, Edwin G. Conklin, George Thomas White Patrick, William McDougall, Sir J. Arthur Thomson, Harlan T. Stetson, Sir Oliver Lodge, J. Jeans, and J. Malcolm Bird. What do you suppose was the question that Cotton put to them? The question was whether they had, in their scientific researches, discovered God. But surely such a question is in itself perfectly meaning-

less. If such a question was to have any meaning, Cotton should have explained to them what sort of a God he was asking them about. Why did he not ask them whether they had discovered God as the creator and sustainer of this universe? The reason is not far to seek. Cotton himself does not believe in such a God. Cotton did not want them to find such a God.

But more than that, the question, even if put as we have suggested, whether science has discovered the God of Christianity, is misleading. It would seem, from the form of such a question, that it is quite possible to go along for a good while in making all manner of discoveries in this world, and not discover God. Again it means that perhaps you might discover God, but also, that perhaps you might not. Now neither of these matters is possible if Christianity is true. If God is the Creator of the universe then a scientist ought to meet God in the first fact he investigates. There is then no fact that exists except in total dependence upon God. The relation of any fact to God would be the most important aspect of any fact. Hence it would be impossible to go farther than the first fact without finding God. *If a scientist does not find God in the first fact that he investigates, there is no further hope that he will meet God in any of the other facts.* He may, of course, retrace his steps and then meet God, but he cannot go on in the way that he was going. If one fact can exist in independence of God, all facts can. Suppose that you invite six people to dinner. While the dinner is being served, you ask whether they have discovered a table. Now each one looks at you very seriously and goes out in search of a table. He looks through the meat, the vegetables, the salad, and the dessert. Some report that they have discovered no evidence of the existence of a table. The majority, however, report that there is, in the stability and the organization of the various dishes, convincing evidence of some sustaining principle within them, which, for want of a better term, they will call a table. It is in much this way that such a symposium about the existence of God is conducted. He that asks, and they that answer, have taken for granted that the only kind of God they will look for is a God who is Himself within the universe. That is, they have started with the assumption of the self-sufficiency of the universe.

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We need only to look at the gods that these scientists have discovered to be convinced that once a man starts out to discover God, in the way that they have started out, he is sure to find a finite God, a God which is within this universe. "There may be in the cosmos that which can actually be termed absolute, but all we know is relative".¹ Says Millikan, "The service of the Christian religion, my own faith in essential Christianity, would not be diminished one iota if it should in some way be discovered that no such individual as Jesus ever existed".² Eddington says that we can just as well ask the question about the existence of God, by asking

¹Kirtly Mather, in *op. cit.*, p. 4.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 23.

whether science justifies the "mystical outlook".³ Curtis speaks of a "super-cosmic entity".⁴ For Einstein God may be identified with certain ideals of goodness, beauty, and truth.⁵ Julian Huxley tells us of God that "as an independent or unitary being, active in the affairs of the universe, he does not exist".⁶ McDougall, speaking of theism, says that so far as he can see, the bearing of recent scientific opinion on theism would be permissive only.⁷ Sir J. Arthur Thomson says that evolutionary philosophy will allow for a God that may be spoken of as a "Creative Purpose" in the universe.⁸ Michael Pupin identifies God with a principle of "Creative Co-ordination" in the universe.⁹

All of these men simply take for granted that God cannot be anything but some sort of a principle within the universe. They never ask themselves the question whether the God of Christianity exists.

And if it be objected that men who are scientific experts cannot be expected to say much about religious matters, since that is out of their province, we answer that they seem quite ready to give an account of their beliefs about God when some modernist minister asks them. It seems that they are quite ready to speak of a finite God for fear that they might have to speak of an absolute God.

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A still more striking example of so-called ministers of the gospel asking scientists whether they have found the pagan God is found in the case of C. L. Drawbridge, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society in England. He sent out a questionnaire¹⁰ to all the Fellows of the Royal Society (with the exception of the Royal Princes) in order to discover their religious beliefs. The following are the questions asked of the scientists to whom he wrote:

1. Do you credit the existence of a spiritual domain?
2. Do you consider that man is in some way responsible for his acts?
3. Is it your opinion that belief in evolution is compatible with belief in a Creator?
4. Do you think that Science negatives the idea of a personal God as taught by Jesus Christ?
5. Do you believe that the personalities of men and women exist after the death of their bodies?
6. Do you think that the recent remarkable discoveries in scientific thought are favorable to religious belief?

It will be noted that in not one of these questions has Drawbridge dared to face these men with the Christian idea of God. Why did he not ask these scientists: "Do you believe in an absolutely self-sufficient God Who has created this universe, Who sustains it since creation, and Who

³*Op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 201.

¹⁰*The Religion of Scientists.*

will condemn you to everlasting perdition unless the guilt of your sins has been atoned for by the substitutionary death of Christ on Calvary?" Naturally he would not insult their intelligence by asking what would appear to them as foolish questions. Drawbridge himself dismisses the whole controversy about Darwin and the Bible as a farce, by saying that it was ended except, perhaps, in Tennessee.¹¹

It should be noted too, that no matter in which way these scientists would answer such questions, positively or negatively, they would be perfectly safe from considering the Christian idea of God. Anyone can believe in a spiritual domain, in human responsibility, in life after death, and not have a speck of Christianity in his thought.

* * *

And what is true of scientists as a whole is true of modern philosophers as a whole. They too, have taken for granted that God is within the universe or identical with it. I shall not weary you with many of their definitions of God. I mention only a few by way of example. According to S. Alexander, "deity is always the next higher empirical quality to the one presently evolved".¹² Whitehead speaks of God as a "principle of concretion" in the universe. With such a God religion is not quite the same thing you used to think it was. "Religion is a projection in the roaring loom of time of a concentration or unified complex of psychical values".¹³

And if it be said that I am quoting from the most extreme pragmatists, I would only add that every idealist includes the universe in his definition of God. He may speak of God as the Beyond for a while, but it will not be long before he speaks of God as the Whole.

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But now it will be objected still further that what these scientists and philosophers believe is the product of their maturest thought, and that it is not fair to say that they have never squarely faced the problem of the God of Christianity. And if it be true that these scientists are so far wrong, in their procedure, as not to have faced the most important question that any human being should face, what accounts for their magnificent structures of thought and accomplishment?

Let us begin with the last point. That the scientists and the philosophers of the ages and especially of modern times have reared magnificent structures of thought and of physical accomplishment, no one is interested in denying. But we can give God thanks for the accomplishments of the scientists, and at the same time maintain that they have accomplished what they have, not because of, but in spite of, their disbelief in God. In the story of the prodigal son, not only the prodigal son but the others too, were living on the substance of the father, though they knew and recognized it not. So too, it is because of God's common grace, that scientists

¹¹*Vid.*, Drawbridge in *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹²*Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 347.

¹³Joseph A. Leighton, *Man and Cosmos*, p. 545.

are able to do great things, even though they do not hold God in remembrance. A boy at college sometimes gets his monthly check from his father continually year after year, and spends his substance in riotous living. This son may almost, if not altogether, forget about his father, and take for granted that the checks will keep coming as a matter of course. Now if this is possible, why should it be deemed impossible that men, who have not been in contact with God for hundreds of generations, should assume themselves and this universe to be ultimate? If God comes in at all, it is as an after-thought, and then it is no longer God Who comes in.

And this is exactly what we mean by saying that scientists and philosophers have not faced the idea of God, namely that they have assumed themselves and the universe to be ultimate. They have taken for granted that the term *existence* may intelligibly be applied to them whether or not God exists. That means that the existence of the universe does not depend upon the creative act of God, and His present sustaining power. If the existence of any and every fact in this universe does depend upon God's creation and God's providence, as Christianity teaches that it does, one could not intelligently ask any question about any fact in this universe, unless one placed such a fact in relation to God. The most important question one could ask about any fact, then, would be the question of its relation to God. More than that, a fact would be a fact only because of its relation to God.

It is this question, then, that is in dispute between the Christian and the non-Christian, whether a fact can be a fact without God. Now if the scientists and philosophers had in any way attempted to prove to us that a fact can be a fact even though God does not exist, we should have no complaint to make. What we do complain of, however, is that they have taken for granted, before having begun their investigations, that facts can be facts without God. There is one refrain that runs through modern philosophy again and again, which is that we must take existence for granted. By that is meant that we must start with the facts and take their existence for granted. Now that is an innocent and obviously necessary thing to do, if nothing more is implied than that we must look at the facts that are here. But something more is very definitely implied, and that something more is that we must take the *ultimacy* of the facts for granted. What is meant is that we need not and cannot, if we wish to be scientific, ask the question about the origin of the universe.

Christianity, on the other hand, holds that it is quite reasonable to ask the question about the origin, not only of individual facts, but of the universe as a whole. We are not now concerned so much to debate which of these two positions is right, as to point out that the non-Christian position is, generally speaking, taken for granted and not proved, by modern scientists and philosophers. They have answered the problem without facing it.

* * *

Allow me to prove, by example, that the leading scientists simply dismiss the Christian idea of God without seriously looking at it.

This is often done when men arbitrarily give a definition of religion which leaves God out of the picture. So, for instance, Edwin G. Conklin, in true childlike faith, takes his *Century Dictionary* off the shelf to discover what religion is. "Religion", according to the *Century Dictionary*, "is faith in, and allegiance to, a superhuman power or powers."¹⁴ With this definition in hand, Conklin kindly makes room for Christianity among other religions, since Christianity, too, believes in a certain superhuman power. But with this definition in hand, Conklin has also succeeded in doing away with Christianity without so much as looking at it.

Again scientists quite commonly dismiss the Christian concept of God by saying that no intelligent man can seriously consider such an idea. To quote Conklin again, "No longer is it possible to think that man was created perfect in body, mind, and morals, or that in physical form he is the image of God. No longer is it possible to think of God as 'the Good Man' or of the devil as the 'Bad Man'. No longer is it possible to regard miracles—in the sense of suspension or violation of natural law—as of daily occurrence, nor magic, as the universal means of controlling nature or supernatural powers. To persons of mature minds, this faith of childhood is gone forever."¹⁵ Now aside from the simple misinterpretation of the traditional Christian position involved in the quotation, we may note that the Christian idea of God is not ruled out of court because of facts which have made such an idea untenable, but simply because none but the people of Tennessee believes in it.

And it seems that some scientists have for a long time been in this new frame of mind. One scientist replied to the questionnaire sent to him by Drawbridge, that he had not thought of such questions for sixty years.¹⁶ One wonders, then, for how long a time such a man has not thought about the *Christian* conception of God.

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Of course, scientists have their reasons for not looking at the Christian conception of God. They tell us that they have tried to face the Christian idea of God at some time or other, in their lives, but that they could not stand it for more than a fraction of a second. They feared lest they should be turned into pillars of salt. They feared lest all their intellectual operations would have to come to a standstill. By one glance in the direction of the Christian idea of God they see a dualism and annihilation of reason. Accordingly, sometimes, they dismiss the whole concept with a flourish of the hand.

At other times, however, they tell us that the idea of God lies in a realm about which the mind of man can say nothing scientifically. They wish to be humbly agnostic about the matter. So Conklin tells us, for instance, that nobody knows what lies back of evolution.¹⁷ What does this mean? It might mean just what it says. It might mean that both

¹⁴Quoted in *Has Science Discovered God?*, p. 77.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 86.

the scientists and the men of religion should respect one another's beliefs about God, because both know that they are really no more than uncertain speculations. It seems to be in some such sense that Heber D. Curtis is willing to play the game. He says: "As we look back over the discarded scientific theories of the past, once regarded as inspired, and now of only historical interest, we are more and more forced to the conclusion that in the final analysis any scientific theory is simply a matter of belief".¹⁸ Now if it should be taken in this sense, it would seem strange that Conklin should designate a guess on the part of a Christian as a childish thing, and the guess of a scientist as a badge of a mature mind.

But it is plain that Conklin does not wish to put the matter on the basis that one man's guess is as good as another's. The seemingly humble agnosticism that he expresses by saying that no one knows what lies back of evolution, or by saying that "science cannot deal with this mystery; it is a matter of faith alone"¹⁹ he discards, as we have seen, when he says that it is simply no longer possible to believe that man was created perfect. At one time Conklin tells us that nobody knows what lies back of evolution, and at another he tells us, as simply as though he could prove it to you in his laboratory, what *could not* have been back of evolution. If a Christian should affirm his belief that God is back of the universe, Conklin would stigmatize such a statement as dogmatism. If he himself, after first admitting that no one knows what is back of evolution, proceeds to tell us that God is not back of it, this must be taken for true on his authority.

Still further, we would note not only that Conklin tells us what is not back of evolution, but that he also tells us what *is* back of evolution, of which according to his own statement no one knows anything. Speaking of what lies back of the universe he says, "Undoubtedly chance has played a large part in the evolution of the worlds and of organisms, but I cannot believe that it has played the only part".²⁰

It is thus that in the compass of thirteen pages Conklin has, in addition to telling us many other things, told us (a) that nobody knows what is back of the universe, (b) that we may be sure that God is not back of the universe, and (c) that we may also be sure upon the authority, if not upon the argument, of scientists, that Chance is back of the universe.

Now in all this Conklin does not stand alone. He has, to be sure, succeeded in getting more contradiction in a short compass than any other man writing in the book referred to, but after all, his case is only typical. The humblest avowals of complete agnosticism stand side by side with the most sweeping denials of the existence of God. Our age has brought forth not only a paradox theology, but a paradox science as well.

Now when, in view of such a procedure, you beg the modern scientist, and also the modern philosopher, to abandon his unscientific method and to look at the concept of God seriously, he will turn to you and say:

¹⁸Cotton in *op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 86.

²⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 88.

"What do you mean by God? Put your idea of God in language that I can understand or you are asking me to outrage my reason."

Thus they would have us define God, Whom we present as the pre-supposition of the meaning of all human language, in language that presupposes the non-existence of God. If we could tell exactly what we mean by God, in terms which leave God out of the definition, we would be having such a God as the non-Christian takes for granted in his thinking. Even in the questions they ask about the Christian idea of God, the scientists and philosophers usually assume the ultimacy of themselves and the universe. They take for granted that any God, Who is to exist, must be definable in terms of this universe.

* * *

The pity of the whole matter, however, lies not so much in the procedure of scientists themselves, as in the imitation that they find on the part of those who profess to spread Christianity. Buchmanism travels far and wide. Many a student is told by men, high up in the Church, that it is a return to the spirit of first-century Christianity. Yet not only Christ, but God, occupies a subordinate place in the scheme of Buchmanism. A story told in the book *For Sinners Only* illustrates this point. Frank Buchman was about to change Bill Pickle, a famous bootlegger who was selling liquor to the students of Penn State. Now "Frank" soon made friends with a brilliant graduate student, who was a Confucianist. With this Confucianist friend he made an agreement, that if this Confucianist friend should fail to change a chicken-thief friend of Frank by his Confucianism, that then they would together try to change Bill Pickle, by applying Christianity to him. It did not take long before the Confucianist friend confessed his failure to change "Frank's" chicken-thief friend. This was fortunate indeed for "Frank". Accordingly they were ready to try Christianity on Bill Pickle. How did they go about it? "Frank" asks his Confucianist friend to pray that Bill Pickle may become a Christian. The latter seems to experience no difficulty in praying that men may become Christians. His prayer was, "O God, if there be a God, change Bill Pickle, Mrs. Pickle, and all the little Pickles." According to this, then, it makes no difference whether one prays to God or to a blank. The work that needs to be done can be done by a blank as well as by God. The question whether God really exists, was left out of consideration, and yet Bill Pickle was changed.

And this is only typical of the general attitude displayed by Buchmanism. The factuality of the truth of Christianity is regarded as only a matter of secondary importance, at best. For all one knows, Bill Pickle was changed into a Pharisee, against whom "Frank" so abundantly directs his wrath.

Is it any wonder that the average college student is at a loss when the great scientists of the day, as well as the religious leaders in the churches, combine in one great effort to erase the ideas of God and Christ from the thoughts and lives of men?

Again we remind you that our main concern is not to argue now the

question in dispute between those who believe in God, and those who take His non-existence for granted. Yet we may call attention to this, that those who take God's non-existence for granted, should at least be able to show that, by looking away from God, as they insist on doing, they do not see the dualisms and annihilation of reason that they think they see when they claim to be looking at God. It ought to be plain enough that if one refuses to look at God one has to look at an ultimate blank. Human reason is plainly derivative. If it is not derivative, in the sense of created by God, it is derivative from the void. If God is not back of our rationality, the void is. If we find that we would be handicapped if our reason should have to operate in the atmosphere of God's revelation, our remaining choice is to make our reasons operate in a vacuum. The choice is between God and chaos. If the mystery that surrounds us is not solved by God it is not solved at all.

"But", it will be asked, "do you mean to say, then, that only the orthodox Christian has seriously faced the question of the existence of God?" We answer that such is exactly our contention. We hasten to add, however, that the orthodox Christian has not faced this most profound problem of human thought, because of the fact that he is a better thinker in himself than others are. The orthodox Christian *has* faced the question because the Spirit of God has made him face it. The Spirit of God has round-about-faced him. No man can truly face God, unless he is made to face his God, by God. Where, then, is glorying? It is excluded. If men must call this vanity, we cannot help it. Before God, we know it is not vanity but true humility.

But where, then, is reasoning with men? Is it too excluded? Not in the least. We reason with men as we preach to men. We point out to them that unless they have faced God they have not interpreted one fact aright. We point out to men that unless they have faced God they have not faced the most fundamental questions that must be asked about all facts. We say to them that unless they interpret the facts in accordance with the interpretation of God, they are lost, just as they are lost for eternity unless the blood of Christ has cleansed them, and the Holy Spirit has regenerated them. And if we reason with men thus, we know that the Holy Spirit will honor our labor, and make men face the question of the existence of God.

Such, then, we believe to be the situation before the college student today. There are many institutions that claim to be open-minded. Of these, the students may be very sure that they are closed-minded on the question of the existence of God. Some of such institutions are public institutions. Others are pledged to uphold the confessions of the churches under whose auspices they function. This makes the confusion all the worse. How will the young man find his way? By watching thereunto in prayer? Yes, that first and above all. But by praying that he may be wide awake. By praying that he may be wide awake in his choice of an institution. By praying that he may be wide awake, if his choice should of necessity lead him in the midst of those who take the non-existence of

God for granted, however brilliant and accomplished they may be in the detailed knowledge of their fields. By praying that he may himself face the question of the existence of God, and that he may learn to recognize those who do and those who do not, even though they say and think they do. There are many gods and many Christs of which men speak, and to which they give allegiance. Yet there is only one God, and therefore only one Christ, Whom many reject, but Who is, nevertheless, indispensable for philosophy, for science, for all human interpretation, for life, and for death.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT AND AN APPEAL!

We regret that this Convention Number of the STUDENT has been delayed and that it has been combined with our Fall issue, necessitating a very scant number of the Annual Convention addresses. In a future number we may be able to print other messages delivered at that gathering.

In the interests of economy, we have taken this step; but still the magazine and work of the League itself need the support of Christian stewards. Most of our student members are helping magnanimously; but we cannot depend on them entirely—we must have the help of others.

The Apostle writes of having fellowship with him "in the matter of giving and receiving." The League values such fellowship in this grace of stewardship. To all who appreciate our position and can help us in any way, we commend the use of the business reply envelopes enclosed in this issue.

THE LEAGUE OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS,
Box 455, Columbia, S. C.

NEW ADDRESS!

The General Secretary has again been forced to change his residence, thus necessitating the use of a new address. For the coming year he will be serving Columbia Bible College of Columbia, South Carolina, as well as carrying on his duties as General Secretary.

While the old Wheaton address is still carried, and mail directed there will reach the League, it is suggested that all Chapter correspondence, all enquiries concerning the work, and contributions be sent to the General Secretary, at

BOX 455, COLUMBIA, S. C.