

# CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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## The Central Significance of Christmas

CHRISTMAS commemorates the birth of a great man who spent His life doing good. It commemorates that but at the same time it commemorates so much more that we need to be on our guard lest we forget that it really does do that. This greater thing that it commemorates is the advent, the entering into the sphere of human life of the SON of God.

Those who deny that the BABE of BETHLEHEM was born of a Virgin and who maintain that the possibilities that slumbered in MARY'S SON were the result of a favorable heredity, in fact all but the few misguided individuals who think of JESUS as a legendary being, speak of the birth of CHRIST and with few exceptions regard Him as the greatest and best of those born of women. There are an increasing number today, however, who cannot bring themselves to speak of an advent of CHRIST; and that because such a mode of speech implies that He had existed previous to His birth in Bethlehem of Judea and that for the accomplishment of a definite purpose He had left that glory that He had had with the Father before the world was and entered into the conditions of earth. Unless we see in JESUS not only a man but the GOD-MAN it is hardly likely that we will think of Christmas as commemorating His advent.

No doubt it is possible to be so taken up with the divine in JESUS as to lead us to forget His humanity, the fact that He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. There is little danger of our falling into that error today, however. The

danger is rather that enamored of His humanity we will be forgetful of His divinity. Be this as it may those of us who regard Him as infinitely more than a man yield to others in no respect in our confession of His humanity. There is no hesitation at all on our part when we say that in all that goes to make a man, whether as regards his body or his soul, JESUS was and is a man. None the less Christmas commemorates not so much the birth of the best and most beloved of the sons of men as a "momentous event in the eternal life of God: a manifestation, a forth-coming, a mission, a redemptive movement, a visitation, a great descent."

The presence of a GOD-MAN in this world calls loudly and insistently for explanation—and that whether we consider this more than extraordinary, this supernatural being from an intellectual or from an ethical viewpoint.

From an intellectual viewpoint a diffi-

culty is raised by the fact that the presence of the GOD-MAN in this world involved a break in the order of nature, a miracle in the strict sense of the word. We live in an ordered world, a casually connected world; and yet on the assumption that JESUS was a GOD-MAN it is certain that the causes ordinarily operating in this world cannot account for Him. From a more ethical viewpoint, a difficulty is raised by the presence of one who was holy, harmless and undefiled in a world filled with sin and shame, in a world reeking with iniquity and blasphemy—and that as a result of His own choice. The ethical problem raised is similar to that which would be raised by the discovery of one distinguished for purity and good works in a night-club of the fastest sort. But whether we be concerned over the intellectual or the ethical difficulty, or both, that is raised by the presence of the GOD-MAN in this world of ours, the needed explanation for all those who have eyes to see is given in that "Faithful Saying" by which the early Christian community expressed its practical belief in the Advent of our LORD: "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." If sin had not entered this world, JESUS would never have come; but sin being here as an awful reality, His coming was necessary if men were to be saved, if a fallen race was to be restored to its GOD. JESUS did not come into this world because He was attracted by the ways of sinful men. Far from it. Sin was the one thing that He hated with perfect hatred. He was here on an errand of mercy. It was His love

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# Books of Religious Significance

## Book Notes

ONE of the most unusual books we have seen in recent months is entitled "The Prophetic Prospects of the Jews *Fairbairn vs. Fairbairn*" by the Rev. Patrick Fairbairn, edited by Prof. Albertus Pieters, D.D., of the Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, at Grand Rapids. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.) The volume is arresting and unusual in that it represents the contradictory views of an unusually keen mind at different periods in his life. As a young Minister of the Church of Scotland, Dr. Fairbairn delivered a lecture on "The Future Prospects of the Jews," taking strong ground favoring a literal fulfillment of prophecies relating to their return to Palestine. About twenty-five years later, as a famous professor of the Free Church, he published a book usually referred to as "Fairbairn on Prophecy" in which occurred a chapter on "The Prophetic Future of the Jewish People." He then championed the opposite position—namely, that everything promised to Israel was promised to God's people, and that Christians being now that people, all Old Testament prophecies and promises are typical of spiritual blessings to be received in Christ. Dr. Pieters takes no sides, but leaves the reader to make his own decision between two great arguments by the same man. . . . Presbyterian Scotland is justly famed for its great pulpit tradition—as is the Reformed family of Churches over the world. But too often our knowledge is confined to men who preached in cities, and who were much in the public eye. Recently two delightful volumes have reached our desk, volumes brimful of human interest, instruction and inspiration. They are *Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands*, and *Sermons by Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands*, and both books are from the pen of the Rev. D. Beaton, of Wick, Scotland,—the first as written and the second as edited by him. Sketches are given of the lives of thirty-three men who labored in the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, sketches which recapture the very atmosphere in which people and Ministers lived, struggled and believed for the sake of the covenanted faith. Of the sermons, the author says, "It is with wistful feelings we read these noble pulpit utterances from lips that were touched with a live coal from off the altar, and which ring so true to the Scriptures. Gone are the noble messengers that proclaimed the message—gone are the gracious men and women who drank it in, and in doing so forgot all their sorrows. We believe there are still some who value the Gospel as set forth in these sermons, and

trust all such will give a welcome to this book and make it known to their friends." Moving upon a high and spiritual plane these sermons are emphatically out of the ordinary, yet never pedantic, always breathing with life. Both books are 5 shillings net (\$1.25) and may be ordered from the Rev. D. Beaton, Wick, Caithness, Scotland. . . . The Rev. J. D. Leslie, D.D., LL.D., Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S.; has recently issued a volume on *Presbyterian Law and Procedure* in that Church. (Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va.) It is a work of almost four hundred pages, compact and succinct. It should be invaluable to all Ministers and office bearers of the Southern Church, and deserves circulation among those in all Presbyterian and Reformed bodies who desire to be kept informed of the law of a great sister Church. . . . Professor William Bancroft Hill, of Vassar College is the author of a volume entitled *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. (Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, \$1.25.) Dr. Hill approaches the evidence for the Resurrection from a novel point of view. "The Starting Point," says the author, "is the need of the disciples. In their state of mind,—their fear, dismay, ignorance and hopelessness—could anything other than what the Gospels relate have transformed them into the men we see on the Day of Pentecost? In other words, was there a need of the post-resurrection appearances; and if there was, can we doubt that it was supplied, unless we doubt all that the Gospels tell of our Lord?" The Book affirms the resurrection as historic fact. It deserves a wide reading. . . . *Christianity or Religion?* by the Rev. A. C. Gaebelein, D.D., ("Our Hope," 456 Fourth Ave., New York City, \$1.50 postpaid), has recently been issued in a third edition. It is a "study of the origin and growth of religion and the supernaturalism of Christianity" from a strongly conservative point of view. It is an instructive and inspiring work, breathing devotion and scholarship on every page. This is a book to put into the hands of any who may have dipped superficially into the well of "comparative religions." On one point only do we venture to disagree with Dr. Gaebelein. He distinguishes between Christianity and all religion, feeling that to call Christianity a religion would be to blur the line of distinction between the Gospel and the false hopes of lost humanity. It seems to us, however, that it is no concession to call Christianity a religion. It is a religion. But it is the only *true* religion,—the only way by which man may be reconciled to God. . . . *Eyes in the Dark* is the name of a new book from the pen of

Zenobia Bird, who will be remembered by many for her delightful story "Under Whose Wings" of several years ago. Miss Bird's stories are not, so far as we know, duplicated in any way by those of any other writer. She writes of Christian young men and women who find the grace of God more than sufficient for every need and problem. It is a story that will appeal to teen age boys and girls, interesting them with a fine, bracing tale, and leading them closer to Christ. (Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, \$1.50.) . . . W. Bell Dawson, M.A., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E., F.R.S.C., widely known author on scientific and religious subjects has written a booklet small in size, but mighty in theme, entitled, *The Hope of the Future*. This hope Dr. Dawson finds in the pages of the Bible to be nothing less than that "blessed hope" of the return of our Lord to earth. He believes that that coming will be preceded by apostasy, and that the coming of our Lord is now imminent. Dr. Dawson occupies the pre-millennial position. While in general agreement with him, the writer of these lines feels sure that this distinguished man of God would not wish to have differences regarding the manner of Christ's coming divide those who are contending for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. This is a booklet that will repay serious reflection and study. (Published by Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., London and Edinburgh. May be ordered from the author, 7 Grove Park, Westmount, Montreal, Canada.)

H. McC. A. G.

*THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.* By Albert C. Knudson, Dean of Boston University School of Theology, and Professor of Systematic Theology. Pp. 434. The Abingdon Press, New York, 1930.

THE book before us presents "the first of two independent volumes that together will cover the field of Christian theology." There are reasons for thinking of this book as of more than usual importance. The doctrine of God is of perennial significance. Yet many recent writers have so completely changed the idea of God that the term as used by them means nothing at all. One can scarcely enter a bookstore without noticing that some new deity is born. Usually these gods are born into the pragmatic family. As the space-time continuum advances in age she becomes the fruitful mother of gods. The immanence-idea is so overworked that it has turned into identity. Any "value" or "ideal," that strikes some one's fancy is promptly impersonated and deified. If the author of such a deity is a prominent scientist it becomes forthwith a sure token of bigotry to say that

such an author is not a Christian or a theist.

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

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

Moreover, the author is a leading representative and exponent of a movement in theology and philosophy that has considerable influence on the Christian church in America. An unpublished doctor's thesis in the University of Chicago Divinity library by Bernhardt on *Borden Parker Bowne and the Methodist Episcopal Church*, proves that the philosophy of Bowne has a controlling influence on the Seminaries of the denomination referred to. The writer of this thesis sees a great difference between the old method of instruction and the new method of instruction in these seminaries. The chief difference he finds to be the fact that the new method begins from human experience while the old method began with an assumed authoritarianism of the Scripture. We cannot but agree with Bernhardt that if this difference exists between the old method and the new, it is not a matter of detail or of emphasis. It becomes a question of which method is proper and which is improper for the subject of theology. More than that it becomes a question of which is true and which is false. Knudson maintains that his position in theology, based as it admittedly is upon Bowne's, philosophy, is the logical development of true Christian thought. "Personalism is *par excellence* the Christian philosophy of our day." (Doctrine of God, p. 80.) It is this claim of Knudson that we would call in question. Or if it be granted that personalism is "the most prevalent

Christian philosophy of our day" our interest will be to show that this prevalent philosophy is not identical with nor a logical development of Biblical Christianity or, more broadly, traditional theism. And secondly, our criticism may suggest some reasons why traditional theism and the "overcome position" of orthodox Christianity may still be the more defensible philosophy or theology of the two.

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

Beginning with the first point we find that in the chapter our author devotes to the Absoluteness of God, he is very insistent on the necessity of an absolute God. The fundamental demand for unity that marks human thought can be satisfied with nothing less. More than that, the unity that we seek must be a concrete unity. If God is not to be a "spectral woof of impalpable abstractions or an unearthly ballet of bloodless categories," He must be personal. An absolute, personal God is the most urgent requirement of rational thought. Of such pivotal significance does Knudson consider this point that he considers belief in such a God the only alternative to skepticism. "Either a theistic Absolute or completely philosophical skepticism would seem to be the alternatives that confront us; and as between the two a healthy reason ought to have no difficulty in making its choice." (p. 250.)

We are quite ready to subscribe to Knudson's alternative. The only alternative to a theory of reality of which God as absolute personality forms the controlling concept is a metaphysical relativism. Of course it is easy to find intellectual difficulties in traditional theism. It is quite customary to reject Biblical theism for no better reason than that we cannot fathom how an absolute God could create the universe or become actually incarnate. To purchase relief from intellectual difficulties in this fashion is too expensive a procedure. Where is the system that has no intellectual difficulties? We do not hold to Christian theism because it has no, or even in the first place because it has less of intellectual difficulty in it than other systems but be-

cause we hold that on the basis of a metaphysical relativism no knowledge whatsoever is possible. Parmenides was quite right when he said of Heraclitus's flux that if opposites do change into one another completely, there is no abiding subject about which we can say anything. For the Christian theist God is the ultimate subject of all predication. It is not as though we could sacrifice God and retain ourselves. If we sacrifice God we also sacrifice ourselves.

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

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

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

perience. If the God consciousness does not enter at the level of our lowest sensations, says he, it will never enter at all.

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

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

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

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

The author writes a good deal about the prolegomena to theology. Naturally in such a discussion the question of method is important. As to this he tells us that "authoritarianism" is an "overcome stand-

point." The infallible inspiration of the Scripture is, he thinks, easily shown untenable by evident errors in the Scripture. Here we could have wished that an eminent systematic theologian should at least not have descended to this easy method. As suggested above we have a right to expect that such doctrines as inspiration shall first be shown in their correlation to the central doctrine of an absolute God before they are lightly cast aside. But let that pass. The main point is that Knudson resolutely sets himself to an empirical investigation of the facts of the religious consciousness of man in order to determine what religion is before he goes to God. The assumption of this method is that the religious consciousness exists and functions or at least can function normally even if no absolute God exists. It is taken as a matter of course that this is the only scientific procedure. But what then of Hocking's demand that the God consciousness must come in at the very beginning of our experience lest it do not come in at all? A true theist must make God the highest interpretative category of experience and he cannot do so unless God interprets at the beginning as well as at the end of experience. To say this is not a way "of completely escaping subjectivity," (p. 104) as Knudson would have us believe. To have a truly empirical theology it is not necessary first to study religious experience apart from God. The truly theistic position is also the truly empirical position. We may say that Knudson has untheistically isolated human experience from God.

The so-called experiential method is definitely based upon "the autonomous validity of our religious nature." (p. 225.) Criticising the view of theology that teaches it as a "*doctrine de deo et rebus divinis*," he tells us that, "It fails to see that in our day theology must be anthropocentric in its startingpoint." (p. 192.) So also when the question of the origin of religion is discussed the author finds it a matter of total indifference what the origin of religion may have been. "One might, like the sage of whom Van Hugel tells us, trace the origin of religion back to 'the scratching by a cow of an itch on her back,' and yet not undermine the religious belief of the day; or, on the other hand, one might find the ultimate source of religion in a primitive revelation and yet leave it with as little rational justification as ever." (p. 217.) But surely this is most too strange for words. Only upon the assumption of a complete metaphysical relativism could one make such a statement consistently. If the universe has been created by God, man's religion is dependent upon and even defined by that fact, while if religion might have originated in independence of God its definition cannot, even eventually, be formed by a reference to God.

We would not be understood as saying that for Knudson religion needs no objec-

tive reference at all. On the contrary, he tells us that religion "involves a personal attitude toward an objective realm of values." (p. 48.) Again he says, "A submissive, trustful, conciliatory feeling toward the powers that be in the universe is primary in religion." (p. 40.) And once more, "Religion in its essential nature means faith in the rationality and purposiveness of the world." (p. 42.) The point of importance is that for Knudson the "realm of values" need not necessarily be personal. Religion "is unequivocal in attributing supreme worth to the spiritual realm, but whether the transcendent Reality is to be conceived as personal or not is left undecided." (p. 51.) Very definitely then the conception of an absolute God is not a *sine qua non* of true religion for Knudson. It is desirable but not indispensable.

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

It is this fact that God's personality can be no more than a species of the genus of personality that comes most definitely to the foreground when God's relation to time is discussed. About this our author says little and we wish he had said much. Yet he says something directly and more indirectly which enables us to conclude that for Knudson, as for all other non-theists, the Universe is a more inclusive conception than God. We have already seen that for Knudson religion consists of an attitude toward an ideal realm which is an aspect of the Universe. We may now note that for Knudson man partakes of the essential nature of eternity and on the other hand God partakes of the essential nature of time. As to the former it is involved in the contention that in personality as such, therefore human as well as divine, is contained the final unity that our experience needs. (Philosophy of Personalism, p. 83.) In the last analysis the finite personality does not need God for knowledge. "The reality of the soul or self or 'I' is the fundamental presupposition of personalism; it is even a more characteristic doctrine than the existence of a personal God." (Philosophy of Personalism, p. 67.)

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

As to creation he makes no very definite statement. He realizes that an eternally necessary creation would lead readily to pantheism. But he thinks that perhaps all the purposes of religion may be served by conceiving of creation as "eternal, yet free and actuated by love." (Doctrine of God, p. 369.) What this may mean I cannot fathom. More definitely, however, does he tell us that just as it was true that in man as well as in God, one can find the final principle of unity so it is equally true that in God's being as well as in man the rationale of change must be found. "If God be thought of as a changeless substance, there would be no way of accounting for the advancing cosmic movement. Changes in the world must be due to changes in its underlying cause. An unchanging cause could produce only an unchanging effect." (Doctrine of God, p. 316.) It is difficult to distinguish such a view from an outspoken metaphysical relativism. Time is made an ingredient element in God as well as in man; the absoluteness of God has disappeared.

In more direct connection with Christianity, the same inherent temporalism appears in the author's view of the incarnation. He tells us that no religious purpose is served by the Chalcedonian creed which endeavored to keep from intermixture the temporal and the eternal. The "impersonal manhood" of Christ by which the Church sought to safeguard the transfusion of God and man has for Knudson no significance. "We find it simpler and more satisfactory to think of him as 'a human personality completely and abidingly interpenetrated by God's indwelling.'" (Doctrine of God, p. 421.) If now in this connection it be realized that Christ is considered to be no less divine for His being a "human personality," it becomes still more difficult to call Knudson's position Christian or theistic, and to distinguish it from metaphysical finitism.

It is upon the basis of this metaphysical relativism that Christianity is regarded as standing in no more than a climactic relation to other religions. (p. 109.) Christ is no longer the incarnate Son of God suffering in His assumed human nature for the sins of man, but God Himself in the human person of Christ is the "chief of burdenbearers." (p. 413.) If this is not to mean that God is responsible for evil it must mean that evil is at least as original as God in which case one has a finite god. And this accords with the author's statement that the "unsurpassability" of Christianity has no more religious significance for us. (p. 114.) This is true if God as well as we are brethren fighting side by side against an evil that exists independently of both in a Universe that is greater than both.

Finally in the last chapter, on the Trinity, the author once more reveals to us that, to him, God is brought down into the temporal flux. He says, and we believe rightly so, that the Christian church has in its doc-

trine of the Trinity not a useless super-additum, but that it forms the foundation of philosophy and theology. In the Trinity unity and plurality live in eternal harmony. But now note that according to Knudson one of the members of the Trinity is or may be a "human personality." Thus the diversity factor consists of a temporal element. The unity is no more than a unity within a Universe that is inclusive of both time and eternity, of both God and man. Knudson has thought to make the Trinity do genuine philosophic service by bringing it very close to us, but he has brought it so close to us that it does us no service at all. Worse than that, Knudson has brought the

Trinity into the flux with the result that no unity of any sort can ever be obtained.

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

CORNELIUS VAN TIL

## Letters to the Editor

[The letters printed here express the convictions of the writers, and publication in these columns does not necessarily imply either approval or disapproval on the part of the Editors. If correspondents do not wish their names printed, they will please so request, but all are asked to kindly sign their names as an evidence of good faith. We do not print letters that come to us anonymously.]

To the Editor of CHRISTIANITY TODAY:

SIR: I am sending you my check for a year's subscription to your paper. I have been preaching the kind of Christianity its columns express for over sixty years. During the last nearly fifty years I have been preaching it as the pastor of one of the oldest and most historic churches of America, The First Baptist Church, New York City. I feel I should like the monthly tonic which the paper gives. May God bless you in meeting and antidoting, the brilliant and superficial cynicism and square infidelity which operates under the false pretense of "Scholarship."

Sincerely yours,

I. M. HALDEMAN.

New York, N. Y.

called you to a task, and my prayer is that He may strengthen you for your labors, crown your efforts with victory, and may your cry ever be "I am doing a great work therefore I cannot come down."

Sincerely yours,

F. McAVOY.

Geneva Presbyterian Church,  
Chesley, Ontario.

To the Editor of CHRISTIANITY TODAY:

SIR: Those who are loyal to the Westminster Standards in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., may awake to a more threatening, though obscure danger than anything that has occurred for a generation. It is in connection with negotiations for union of Presbyterian denominations. There is the possibility that the Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church may be proposed as a substitute for the Westminster Standards, for the doctrinal basis of union of the two denominations, United Presbyterian, and Presbyterian U. S. A. This appeared sufficiently clear, in a joint meeting of United Presbyterian and Presbyterian ministers in Pittsburgh, Nov. 24. The chief speaker disparaged the Westminster Confession, slighted its statement of the doctrine of reprobation, and emphasized the Confessional Statement of the U. P. Church, as a basis of the union of these two denominations.

Be it observed that this brief Confessional Statement omits the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation or preterition. Here might come into play almost the whole series of masterly articles by that famous former New School theologian, Dr. Shedd, republished in his "Calvinism Pure and Mixed," a "Defence of the Westminster Standards," particularly those unanswerable discussions