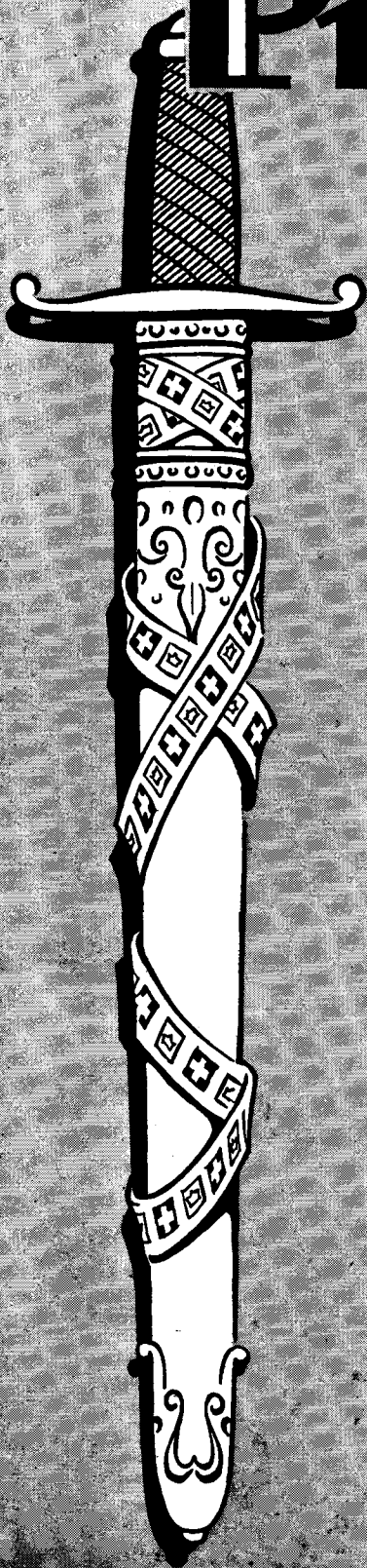


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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD

THE ATONEMENT

YOU ask me what my hope is; it is, that Christ died for my sins, in my stead, in my place, and therefore I can enter into life eternal. You ask Paul what his hope was. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." This is the hope in which died all the glorious martyrs of old, in which all who have entered heaven's gate have found their only comfort. Take that doctrine of substitution out of the Bible, and my hope is lost. With the law, without Christ, we are all undone. The law we have broken, and it can only hang over our head the sharp sword of justice. Even if we could keep it from this moment, there remains the unforgiven past. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." He only is safe for eternity who is sheltered behind the finished work of Christ.

—D. L. Moody.

**THE PRESBYTERIAN
CONSTITUTIONAL
COVENANT UNION**

Two Significant Books

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METHODS OF PRIVATE RELIGIOUS LIVING, by Henry Nelson Wieman, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931.



Dr. Van Til

PROFESSOR WIEMAN is well known as a writer in the field of the philosophy of religion. In general he represents the pragmatist school of philosophy.

Professor Wieman's pragmatist views appear plainly in his conception of God. In this book, as in his other writings, he speaks of God as the integrating process of the universe. "God is the integrating process at work in the universe" (28). "What is God? God is the integrating process at work in the universe. It is that which makes for increasing interdependence and co-operation in the world" (47). For some mysterious unknown reason this planet seems to have "a constitutional tendency toward integration" (54). "All good is derived from the process of integration. It is derived from God, the integrating behavior of the universe" (58). "God, the progressive integrating process, is the movement toward richer and more intensive integrations" (58). "God is not identical with society but he is the integrating process which has reached in society its highest historical achievement" (79). "There is a process which works to make the whole universe more organic. It is God" (47).

Now it is this integrating process *within* the universe that, according to Wieman, we are to worship. "The first step in the act of worship is to relax and to become aware of that upon which we are dependent . . ." (22). "Jesus expressed this first act of worship by the words: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. It is not a state in which one is thinking about anything in particular. One is simply relaxed, waiting and endeavoring to be filled with the consciousness of that encompassing and sustaining and integrating reality which, if he is psychologically capable of using the word God, he calls God" (23). "The second step in worship is to call to mind the vast and

unimaginable possibilities for good which are inherent in this integrating process called God" (24). "Jesus expressed this second act of worship by the words: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (25). There are, according to Wieman, other steps in the act of worship but with these we are not now concerned.

When we thus worship we are taken into God. "Religion releases maximum energy when the individual becomes fitted into this integrating process as one function of its working, with some sense of the scope and might of that which thus works in him and through him" (60). Moreover, since society is "the fullest expression of God in the actualized historic achievement accessible to human experience" we may worship ourselves in worshipping society. "This community of need and interdependence is, then, a proper object of religious devotion" (80).

The result of this worship of the integrating principle of the universe, of which we ourselves may be a part, is that we joyfully submit to the inevitable. This is as we should expect. If there is no absolute or transcendent God the evil in this universe is ineradicable. Religion must then be the joyful submission to the inevitable. "One is free of demoralizing fear just as soon as he is ready to accept the facts precisely as they are" (110). "Now this state of complete self-committal, this total self-surrender to reality, with consequent command over all resources of personality, is possible when one fills his mind with the thought that underneath all other facts is the basic fact upon which all else depends. This basic fact can be called the structure of the universe or it can be called God" (112).

We need make no further comment. It is scarcely conceivable that even young people should mistake Professor Wieman's position for Christianity. Those who should follow Professor Wieman's advice in matters of worship would surely worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

PERSONALITY AND RELIGION, by Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Borden Parker Boune Professor of Philosophy in Boston University. The Abingdon Press.

IF ONE should ask Professor Brightman whether he is in general agreement with the position of Professor Wieman he would no doubt reply that he is not. Professor Brightman thinks that before we can speak of worshipping God we must think of God as personal. He thinks we cannot worship a process of integration within the universe. This seems to imply that his position is quite the reverse of that of Professor Wieman. Yet at bottom there is very little difference between the two positions.

In the introduction Professor Brightman tells us that he is among other things giving us in this book a "restatement of the idea of a finite God." Brightman is well aware of the fact that his doctrine is opposed to that of historic Christianity. He calls the position of Christianity "theistic absolutism." He holds that "theistic absolutism is undoubtedly impressive" but untrue to the facts of experience (p. 96-97). "Nevertheless it seems to many, including the present lecturer, that the ideal God of traditional theism is open to some of the same sort of objections in principle as are rightly urged against the hypothesis of naturalism" (96). Brightman holds that we must think of evil as ultimate, and therefore of God as suffering with us because of this ultimate evil. "Hence he who would learn his lessons from experience would be likely to avow faith in a God who is suffering and struggling, not merely on account of human sin, but on account of cosmic problems and obstacles which he did not choose, but found in his eternal experience and controlled" (94).

If we had to choose between the philosophies of Wieman and Brightman we should certainly choose the philosophy of Brightman. Yet the philosophy of Brightman is as subversive of Christianity as is the philosophy of Wieman. Both of these men oppose the God of Scripture who is "infinite, eternal and unchangeable." Of the two books the one of Brightman is the more dangerous. Brightman believes in a personal God. This might lead people to think that he believes in the God of Scripture. Nothing could be further from the truth.