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Daniel Coyner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_coynerd@csel.edu

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BEHAVIORISM AND CHRISTIANITY

**A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary**

**in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Bachelor of Divinity

by

Daniel Coyner

**Concordia Seminary,
1926**

Behaviorism and Christianity

Christianity and psychology are like father and son set forth upon opposite paths until, their estrangement complete, they are met upon the field of mortal combat. The father has held a steady course, but psychology, won by every novelty, has wandered far afield. The science began as the study of the human "soul" or "self", which terms were then used in the Christian sense. This meant at least a tacit recognition of a common philosophical basis with Christianity, a dualism of matter and spirit. Psychology found room for the moral order of the universe and moral responsibility; Christianity found no reason to exclude an obedient child that threatened no harm to the family treasures. But the same influences that have begotten modernism in organized Christianity, namely, materialism in the form of evolutionary science and its application in the social view of religious and moral* development, have made of modern psychology the misnomer that it is.

As the name suggests psychology was originally the study of the human "soul". Its material was the phenomena of the "soul" or mind with little or no physiological correlation. Its method was introspection: the account that the subject himself was able to give of his mental experiences. Such a study which approximately described the phenomena of the human mind and was able to offer some prediction of events for practical use was doubtless a true and useful science.

But for two decades the "soul" has been thrown out of the "culture" as no proper subject for scientific study**. Instead*** the psychologist selected the mind or consciousness as an entity added to and presiding over the nervous mechanism. Then he began to study so-called states of consciousness, still using the introspective method; but he began also to take increasing interest in neurology. This study represents what to-day is called orthodox or traditional psychology. And although it is a genus with many species, and consciousness is defined in almost as many ways as there are writers, still European and a portion of American psychologists cling to consciousness as the only thing that will save their science from becoming a mere branch of biology.

There is the same variety among behavioristic psychologists. But the behavioristic psychology, as the continuation of the movement toward a materialistic and evolution-

* "The Psychology of the Other One", p. 403. Max Meyer.

** Op. cit., p. 406.

*** "Behavior", p. 20. J.B. Watson.

"The Freudian Wish", p.28. E.B.Holt.

istic science is almost wholly confined to the United States. Nor must it be supposed that the emphasis given to physiology by behaviorism in America is a necessary supplement to the psychological arc. Simply because the "soul" has given place to consciousness is no reason now to assume that consciousness must abdicate in favor of muscles, glands, and reflexes which are the stock in trade of behaviorism. Behaviorism is viewed by European psychology and by the orthodox men of this continent as a transient "dementia Americana", not without parallel in other fields. I am not so sure about the transient character of the "set" (to use a behaviorist term), that psychology has taken in this country. Whether or not behaviorism is the necessary logical step beyond traditional psychology it is certainly the step that is dictated by the materialistic forces that have brought psychology so far.

And unless there be radical change in this philosophical basis of modern psychology I believe that some form of behaviorism will be the psychology of the next decade. The widespread disagreement and discord among the behaviorists is hardly more significant than the similar discord among the mentalists of the last decade. We can hope nothing from strife in the ranks. The main ideas of the behaviorists continue to be emphasized by an overweaning biology. So long as these ideas obtain some form of behaviorism is almost bound to result. e l

Just what form it will take is hard to predict. But even now it is possible to define the chief features of behaviorism, in spite of the fact that there are semi-behaviorists, behaviorists only in the use of behaviorist terminology, and again men like Professor Watson who are true behaviorists from skin to marrow. This out and out behaviorism, as mentalism, or traditional psychology, has relegated the "soul" to the spheres of philosophy and theology, but, in contrast to mentalism, has not set up anything like consciousness to take its place. It looks upon all the phenomena of human activity as included in the functioning of muscles, glands, larynx, and the nervous system. If this be true, then all behavior is governed by the same physical laws that obtain in the rest of the natural order. Introspection*, then, will not be a valid method, for the subject cannot be supposed to know what is going on within himself. Rather we must have an experimental study of objective psychological phenomena that may be tested by mechanical laws. Hence the results of experiment upon animals in memory, habit formation, and association may be correctly applied to human psychology. In order to account for all psychological phe-

* "Behavior", p. 1. J.B. Watson

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nomena it is necessary to distinguish explicit behavior,* which is immediate or simple reflex action, and implicit behavior, which is to include all delayed sensations, deliberation, and reasoning processes - in short, not simple, but conditioned response. If we see a man going down the street in a motor car, says the behaviorist, and ask what he is doing, we do not consult him and discover that he is engaged in the business of earning bread and butter for himself and family, or that he is a doctor making a sick-call; but we rather observe the movements of his arms and legs and eyes as he handles the car, note the secretion and exhaustion processes of liver and glands when he narrowly avoids a scrape at the crossing, and when angered at a reckless driver we perceive the excitement of his heart and lungs and the sub-vocal activity of the larynx which may become vocal if the accumulated impulse is strong enough. In this way we are to get a truer record of what the man is doing. I suggest that we have here the application of a philosophical attitude to the subject matter of psychology, and that this attitude is materialistic. The result is the modern American product in psychology which reminds one of the physician's chart of the human body, a bare dissection of muscles, glands, nerves, ganglia, and brain. It looks very cheerless and anatomical. Let us see, on the other hand, what Christianity has to offer to-day.

Modernism is the latest phenomenon within the Christian church as behaviorism is the latest fad in psychology. The attempt to subject the Christian religion to the scientific creeds of the conservation of matter and energy and the impossibility of miracle has taken the mortal pound of flesh. Christianity cannot survive the operation. To try to fit the religion instituted by Christ into the Procrustean bed of so-called scientific law is bound to be fatal. To make religion a sort of crowning glory of evolutionary progress robs it of that authority and personal rather than social nature which are its marks of value.

I submit, however, that not modernism but the religion of an inerrant Bible is true Christianity. From the very nature of the claims the Bible makes it can be no other. The Bible not only claims absolute authority in the relation between man and God, but it also condemns as false the doctrines of any who teach otherwise. I submit also that we cannot distinguish between what Christ teaches and what the Bible teaches, because Christ has endorsed the Old Testament as well as what his representatives, the evangelists and apostles, were to say of him after his departure. This

* "Foundations of Psychology", p. 35. J.S. Moore

body of doctrine, then, which comprises the flesh and bone of Christianity, is a constant quantity. It is the same to-day as it was in the year 100 A.D.

But the first chapters of Genesis will suffice for the fundamentals which Christianity asserts or presupposes. We find a dualism in the creation: matter and spirit. These elements are distinguished in man's body and soul. Men are then placed in a moral order in which the moral order, concisely stated in the Decalog, is the standard of right and wrong. They are endowed with a will which is free to conform to or to transgress this standard; thus they are made responsible for their conduct and expect future rewards and punishments. It is true that the fall of man into sin and the consequent objective atonement of Christ are essential to the Christian system, but they need not concern us in the first part of our discussion.

We shall launch into some of the philosophical and scientific difficulties of behaviorism. Then, approaching Christianity, we shall compare the philosophical bases of the two systems, adverting to the moral order, responsibility, and faith as incompatible with behaviorist principles. Our conclusions may have some practical interest for ethics, education, and Christian faith.

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We may rightly expect of any doctrine so revolutionary as behaviorism that it examine its philosophical premises pretty well before entering court. The question of the relation of the mind and the body is fundamental to the behaviorist program. Yet its votaries have declared interaction impossible under mechanical law, have asserted parallelism to be inadmissible, and have denied materialism for sentimental reasons. Their attitude, whenever they consider the question, is rather a denial that any mind-body problem exists. This in theory - but practically they have reduced all psychology to matter and motion and are stamping in the same corral with Hobbes of old. If they wish to wear blinkers and see no mind-body problem, that is a matter of taste; but we, who dislike blinkers, would like to see just what position these men do take.

By referring all activity to physical stimulus and response they deny any causal relation between the mind and the body. Consciousness is simply merged into the stimulus-response arc. No credit is given to states of feeling arising from extra-physical causes and in turn causing motor-response. These states are referred to implicit or delayed response - to an accumulation of physical stimuli. This, however, is exactly the position of unblushing materialism, and it has the same vulnerable heels as materialism. After signing the red document as a materialist by denying the efficiency of consciousness the behaviorist is forced to

the Charybdis of identifying consciousness with energy in the form of physico-chemical processes. Even the behaviorist, I venture, would not care to identify the thought of Kant's mind with physical energy. It is to be noted also that if consciousness is not a superintending entity which can relate successively arising concepts, then there can be no logical connection between these concepts which spring up at the whim of physical stimuli. Take this chance syllogism: every new science is militant; behaviorism is a new science; therefore behaviorism is militant. Now, since consciousness is not causally present, propositions are like isolated mushrooms, one quite independent of the other, and we have proved nothing logically. More than that, we cannot logically prove or disprove any proposition - not even the fallacies of behaviorism.

Again, to identify consciousness with some phase of the stimulus-response process and to refer thought to the movements of the larynx, glottis, tongue, and lips, with certain gestural accompaniments, especially in the use of language: this is also a matter of opinion. But these bashful protestations seem apt. How about the observer in a behavior experiment? We somehow feel that whether the subject is registering conscious behavior or not, at least the observer must be consciously observing in order to correlate his facts. But if he is not "efficiently" conscious and his observing is only more behavior, then how does he know that he is observing or doing anything else. And how shall we think of ideas as related to language and words? Experience suggests that either ideas or words may change without necessarily affecting the other. How is it possible, then, to identify the single idea with the process of pronouncing half a dozen possible word formations that convey the same idea? The behaviorist will shout that the real question is whether ideas exist at all. When he does that he provokes us to make the unphilosophical but common-sense appeal to the fresh and untrod mind as to whether or not it feels that its ideas and thought are merely the unconscious processes of the language mechanism.* Someone has said that behaviorism is one of those doctrines that become absurd as soon as they become articulate.

As an interlude to the philosophical and scientific difficulties of behaviorism it were well to notice the uncertainty in the use of terms of which the behaviorists are sometimes guilty in their practical attempt to apply physical law to biology and psychology. The term energy may be used by them interchangeably to mean either physical or mental energy. The two are simply not the same quantity. In physics energy is "the product of a force and the distance a body moves under the action of the force"; it may be measured quantitatively. The law of the conservation of energy applies. Mental and nervous energy, however, as described by sensation, concept, or motor-response is not

* "The Dogma of Evolution" p. 242. L.T. More
 "Matter and Spirit" p.112ff. J.B. Pratt

quantitative at all, but qualitative; it is not capable of measurement, nor is it amenable to the law of the conservation of energy. The illustration has been used of a weight falling on a hand from the height of one foot. It is said to generate a certain amount of energy in the form of nerve sensation. If so, the weight falling two feet would generate sensation in exact ratio, and would continue to do so indefinitely. It simply does not do so. This sensation, or nervous energy, if agreeable to physical law, should be convertible into energy that would raise the weight one foot or two feet. Needless to say, we know of no process by which that can be done. It is quite plain that "energy" in physics and in psychology are not the same thing nor amenable to the same laws. Growth is the only phenomenon of living substance that can be measured by physical processes.* Yet the behaviorists have been using these terms interchangeably at our expense; of which practice someone has said: "They are talking in a Pickwickian sense and laughing in their sleeves at our gullibility."**

But there are other and unphilosophical difficulties which flit from this Pandora's box. The new psychologists are themselves the choosers of the name of their doctrine, behaviorism. They began by studying animal behavior and finished by making us all "behave". But if we shall discover that this fundamental concept, behavior, is an indefinite one, we shall have to call its sponsors to account for not accurately delimiting their charge. Behavior is a perfectly good word in chemistry and physics. In any chemical adjustment we may speak of the behavior of the elements. We also speak of the behavior of a physical body under the influence of a force. The behaviorist has used the term in biology and finally in human psychology to indicate adjustments of organic matter. If, then, behavior shall include the activities of both organic and inorganic matter, the study of behavior is no less than a synonym for the natural sciences. The situation loses its humor when we think of the decidedly materialistic color of this octopus.

If we should, however, grant the term behavior as applied to psychology a right to exist, we discover that the behaviorists have some difficulty in finding the classic example of behavior or the unit which shall be the basis of measurement in their objective study of psychological phenomena. It has been said that behaviorism differs from

* The behaviorists have thought that memory was fairly easy to explain in physical terms. We must think here of repeated sensation storing up in the brain a supply of energy, like a squirrel stores nuts. When some later stimulus causes the release of this stored energy in the form of motor-response, we should suppose that this supply of energy would be depleted and eventually exhausted unless recharged. But instead we find that every time we exercise memory the process seems to grow stronger and stronger. The law of the conservation of energy does not apply.

** "The Dogma of Evolution" p. 267. L.T. More

physiology in that it observes the complete organism while the latter is interested only in the functioning of the particular organ. Very well, let us observe a man chopping wood - as we would say. We ask, How is he behaving, i.e. What is the man doing? We may answer that he is - behavioristically - digesting his dinner (it is after lunch time), breathing air and beating his heart, swinging an ax while balancing his body with the nicest precision, and at the same time engaged in sub-vocal "thought" on the goodness of God as seen in the works of nature. Obviously we have too much to handle here. The several organs are engaged in these various processes, but the man as a unit is filling his wood-shed, or earning a livelihood, or supporting his family. But in these answers we find the ideas of intention and purpose which are clearly introspective data and cannot be allowed. If then it is impossible to discover by objective observation what the man is doing and how that behavior can be measured the whole method would appear useless.

It follows from this difficulty that behaviorists have become liable to the accusation of lack of objective evidence for their system, of forcing psychological phenomena into behavior strait-jackets, of injecting their own introspection into the interpretation of their observations, and of a gay indifference to and exclusion of all phenomena which do not support their hypothesis. Note, however, that the least requirement for an hypothesis is that it explain the phenomena before ever the proof be undertaken.

The purpose of our discussion, however, is not so much to reveal the weak features of behaviorism as it is to place it in juxtaposition with Christianity and point out the incongruities. We have seen that the philosophical basis upon which the superstructure of behaviorism has been raised is a problem that has not bothered many of the behaviorists. Most of them have chosen to remain indifferent to this groundwork - apparently because it is not objective enough for them. But whether it be objective or subjective, Christianity has a very definite philosophical basis* and our comparison of the two systems will not allow us to remain so indifferent to the problem as the behaviorists have been.

I believe we shall find the difference between the two bases to be that between a materialistic monism and a strict dualism. Behaviorism has reduced all activity to matter and force, all quite subject to mechanical law. Some have not gone the whole road and have kept something of the old mentalistic nomenclature of consciousness and states of mind. But logically having once put its hand to the plough

* Christianity asserts a dualism of matter and spirit. But in asserting this dualism it does not depend for its authority on philosophy but rather on the authority of the Bible.

it must give up all reference to the efficiency of consciousness. It cannot then refuse the sign of its profession - materialism. Even a parallelism of body and consciousness would destroy the cardinal principle of the objective nature of all psychological phenomena, which excludes behaviorism from any consideration of consciousness as an independent entity. And if consciousness is called a true entity, but yet only an epiphenomenon of nerve processes, the causal connection between it and the nerve processes is still denied and we have again - materialism.

Christianity, on the other hand, is irrevocably pledged to interaction, or the doctrine that both body and consciousness are present in man as incommensurable entities, there being a very definite causal nexus between consciousness and physical activity. Christianity asserts this efficiency of consciousness in the face of the law of the conservation of energy, saying simply that the law is not applicable to the mind-body relation, since the mind is a supernatural (in the literal sense) entity.

Evolution cannot admit such a supernatural entity. If evolution be defined as continuous progressive change according to forces resident in nature, such a thing as a supernatural mind could not be one of its products. Mechanistic evolution, which is the only logical evolution, cannot account for consciousness which by definition is non-mechanical.* Here evolution is fundamentally at odds with Christianity. It stands hand in hand with behaviorism and we must choose between these twins and Christianity.**

Behaviorism is the evolutionary psychology.*** It can begin its work in the very characteristics of undifferentiated protoplasm as seen in the amoeba. Beginning with sensitivity and the first stimulus-response process it may trace the evolution of psychological (?) processes in the gradually developed organs, nervous, glandular, and muscular, till it finds its acme in the "thinking" man from the brain cortex down. If natural processes are responsible for this development, there is no room for efficient consciousness. Now we can understand the behaviorist's emphasis on objective phenomena as also his use of large experimental armaments of pink-eyed mice and guinea-pigs in the study of human psychology. His disregard of consciousness or "soul" amounts to the denial of the existence of any such element in the human constitution.

Here Christianity goes further and demands even more than mentalistic psychology. Not only efficient consciousness is required, but its identification with a faculty

* "Evolution and Christian Faith" by H.H.Lane. See chapter on the Embryology of the Mind.

** "Matter and Spirit" p.186f. J.B.Pratt

*** "Genetic Psychology" p.8. E.A.Kirkpatrick

of a "self" or "soul" as housed temporarily in the body and existing independently beyond death is essential to the religion. Immortality is so inextricably bound up with the Christian system of forgiveness of sins and future adjustment of moral issues that it cannot be torn out without destroying the whole plan. Herein is the end of Christian faith, the urge to charities and mission work, in short, the central, pulsing hope of Christianity. Without such a felicitous future state in which the "soul" is to enjoy communion with God Christianity would be a grand fiasco. } 2

I believe we have said enough to show that behaviorism and Christianity have locked horns at first sight. Their philosophical bases, the one monistic the other dualistic, are irreconcilable. In spite of all the ignominy that seems to be attached to a profession of dualism and the accompanying difficulties of interaction, Christianity is pledged.

She is also pledged to a moral dualism, if you will, a dualism of good and evil. I believe it will appear that behaviorism, without intending to do so, has left no room for a moral order.** We may paint the Christian system as follows. God is goodness personified. All that is opposed to God is evil. Evil also is personified in Satan. God has created men as moral agents. For them the final standard of right and wrong is the moral law which God has set up concisely in the Decalog. The difficulties in applying this standard which we now find were not present in the sinless state before the fall. But the moral law is still binding in letter and spirit. Antithetically, no system of evolved morals, of hedonism, of utilitarianism, of self-realization, of pragmatism can be a Christian ethics. Transgression of this superimposed moral law is sin. Sin carries with it eternal penalties.***

* The Hebrew words here are nephesh and ruach; the Greek, psyche and pneuma. There are some Christian scholars who hold a trichotomy in human nature, viz. that man is body, soul, and spirit. Although such tri-nomialism can hardly be proved from the Bible, it is not incompatible with Christianity. For the "Scriptural Usage of Soul and Spirit" confer the Presbyterian and Reformed Review, April 1897; article by Wm H. Hodge. p. 262ff.

** It is proper to note here by way of explanation that in Christianity morality is inseparable from religion.

*** Christianity will have a pretty hard time getting rid of a personal devil. If she finds proof in the Bible for the personality of God, she is bound to find it for the personality of Satan.

**** It is hardly correct to say that Christianity holds a future assignment of rewards and punishments. The moral incentive of a Christian is neither hope of reward nor fear of punishment, but the sanctifying urge that comes from his relation to a personal Savior, Christ. Again, the deciding factor for future states is faith. *Allen*

The point of interest here for our discussion is that man is a responsible moral agent. The Christian system makes him accountable to God for every deviation from the chalk-line of the moral law. This element of moral responsibility is not only fundamental in Christian ethics but is the very foundation also of our whole system of jurisprudence. But what of behaviorism?

Most of the Behaviorists have not bothered about the moral application of their doctrine. Their carelessness here is hardly a virtue; but if they refuse to be disturbed we must make the application for them. We might ask the behaviorist if the star-fish is morally responsible for its behavior. I suppose he would deny with a smile. Of course, the stimulus-response processes of the star-fish can have no moral significance at all. The fish is a mechanism. It's made that way. It can't determine its "conduct." Its actions are mere mechanical adjustments to environment. The conclusion is to me inevitable that human activity, which is nothing more than the same physiological adjustment as in the star-fish, also has no moral significance. Man cannot be responsible for his actions because they are determined by mechanical law. We find ourselves in a mechanistic determinism in which the moral order of Christianity is throttled.* Moral perfection to the behaviorist can be nothing more than the perfect adjustment of reflexes. Logically, then, the beast that responds to his environment most easily and with least conflict will be the most virtuous being. If the body functions perfectly the organism will be good. Morality becomes synonymous with hygiene. But if not this, at least we may say that the most virtuous person, according to behaviorism, would be the simple, unthinking individual with fewest inhibitions, who responds with brutish regularity to three meals a day and pay. The conflict of a moral situation in which a person deliberates on the ends involved would be a poor adjustment. This moral conflict, which we have observed to become more pronounced the more sensitive and highly developed the person may be, behaviorism would regard as vice. Better far would be the unhesitating adjustment of the hardened criminal to the exposed wallet. Moral perfection would be attained when all activity becomes as simple as breathing and the beating of the heart. The perfect man is a Frankenstein and the millenium an age when all muscles and glands function perfectly, when the vocal organs speak only peace to the people, and jail sentences are commuted in favor of nerve remedies. How the behaviorist can see any moral value in reaction purely mechanical, I confess is beyond me. Why it should be thought better morally to respond mechanically to an ethical concept than to re-

* Cf. Article on Psychology in the Sunday School Times, Sept. 13, 1924. Also Spinoza's Ethics, Smith's edition, p. 80f. Some features of behaviorism may be traced to Spinoza.

spond mechanically to food in the stomach by digesting it, I do not know. It is pertinent, also, to ask from whence men have their so-called ethical "concepts", according to behaviorism. If all our ideas or implicit responses come through the five gates of knowledge as simple sensations, it is difficult to see how man has come by the "concept" of right and wrong. Without conscious deliberation on the phenomena of nature I do not see how he could derive such a "concept" from the natural order; and you must know that any innate knowledge of right and wrong would be very repulsive to the behaviorist.

So the issue is clearly defined. Christianity holds the moral responsibility of the individual; and responsibility requires consciousness. Behaviorism reduces conduct to mechanism and strips it of all moral significance. I propose that for a moment we turn pragmatist and find out how these two principles will work.

With all due allowance for nations and individuals who have not shown the proper fruits of Christian ethics, I believe we may yet maintain that Christianity has justified its existence in this field alone. The moral progress of the Christian nations during the last two milleniums has been slow and unsteady, but it is none the less real. Notable advances have been with regard to paternal power, the position of woman, marriage, slavery, property, free trade, and domestic and international law. Note, too, that these successes have all been in the field of civil organisation in which the Christian religion is not primarily interested. But whatever may have been the effect of Christianity since the first century it yet remains true that our fundamental ideas about all these civil relations, which have also been held in all ages, are the ideas which the Bible says were originally seared into the human constitution. So that the human race has had a groundwork of Christian morality from the very beginning. If behaviorism now demands a change of principles it is bound to have far-reaching consequences.

Behaviorism does demand such a change of principles. I know of no system of ethics so far devised which may by any stretch of the imagination be called behavioristic. The trouble is that they all have some idea of moral responsibility or free will. It may be responsibility to God, to oneself, or to anything in between; but so soon as the idea of responsibility is gone the idea of morality is gone. In short, under strict behaviorism there can be no such thing as ethics. Ethics is unknown to a deterministic world.

Now look at the panorama we have opened to view! Our whole civilization has been built up on the strength of moral obligations and responsibility. If these go, not least among the ruins will be our system of jurisprudence. For hundreds of years we have been holding men guilty and punishing them for malicious intent. It is not so much the breaking of law that involves guilt - that may be simple accident -; but the agent is held responsible for his intention at the

time the act is performed. According to the mechanistic doctrines of behaviorism every human act is "morally accidental". Intention, whether it be a desire (?) to conform to the legal standard or a feeling of recklessness and revolt, is a mental state and, as such, unknown to behaviorism. To the law it is that mental state only that is praiseworthy or culpable; to behaviorism the mental state does not exist, and therefore we have no use for law. The law cannot attach criminal imputability to physiological processes, but only to conscious intention. I submit that the only blameworthy feature that behaviorism can find in human activity would be the poor or slow "integration" of sensations which would result in an unnecessarily delayed or wrong response (according to what standard it should be wrong I know not). But if a man simply "integrates" poorly and his nervous adjustments are rusty the conclusion is that the accidental law-breaker and the insane man would profit by a jail sentence just as much as the intentional and intelligent law-breaker. In short, the behavioristic program would overthrow our whole jurisprudence.

So far with the consideration of the effects of behaviorism on practical Christianity in the field of ethics and law; it is not without bearing on Christianity considered as religious belief as well. We must distinguish between belief and belief. If we say that belief is a positive attitude toward a proposition we have only partly defined Christian belief or faith. Simply for the sake of temporary convenience let us think of rational belief as composed of the two elements, part of the traditional three, knowledge and assent; but to have super-rational belief, or Christian faith, we must add the element of trust.

This saving element of trust and confidence in Christian faith cannot be accounted for in behavioristic terms. We may say to begin with that the condition of mind denominated "conviction of sin" can itself be understood only as a mental state, since, according to behaviorism, one could not be conscious of the transgression of imposed moral standards. Not only this preliminary state but also the state of trusting - for eternal ends - cannot be explained without reference to consciousness and mental states. The necessity of this conclusion will appear without further argument when we shall have shown that behaviorism has not been able successfully to account for even rational belief; much less is it able to explain the highly complex phenomena of Christian faith.

The truth is that Christian faith takes us out of the domain of psychology into the unfenced field of metaphysics. Our definition of psychology as a science has been very loose, but even that cannot be extended to include the phenomena of Christian faith in which the individual "soul" reaches out for the "saving" spiritual realities of the kingdom of heaven.

Behaviorism has tried to say that belief is some sort of organic attitude* toward a proposition. This attitude (the very term has a mentalistic taste) is a positive reaction for belief and a negative reaction for disbelief. The idea at first blush might appear good, if we should look, for example, at the pagan gesturing and salaaming toward his carved idol and the disbelieving tourist turning his back to walk out. But I take it that the pagan is not leaning toward the proposition: This piece of carved wood exists, but his belief is directed toward some such proposition as: "The god whom this image represents will assist me in my enterprises." The Christian who has no image believes, say, that Christ is God, or, that Christ will forgive his sins. How is either the pagan or the Christian going to react positively or negatively toward propositions of this sort which are abstract and illocal? He can't lean toward it physically because it has no objective existence. It is impossible to imagine what distinctive method of organic, physical reaction he could adopt. The same is true of every phenomenon of belief when examined closely. The child believes the Santa Claus myth from the lips of the mother; the proposition is: A Santa Claus exists. How can the child react organically toward such an existential proposition? The general believes the courier who says: The army is beaten. How can the general react? Both the child and the general do react emotionally, as mentalism would say, but those emotions would arise from ideas of imagined toys or disappointed hopes. So even the simpler phases of belief have refused the behavioristic halter.

No one, however, means to deny that there are many physiological accompaniments to mental states and so also to the attitude of belief. These accompanying physical reactions are popularly recognized in the idiom of many languages which refer to the heart, the stomach, the liver, and the kidneys as seats of emotion. But the error of the behaviorist is to identify these correlates: the mental state and the physical accompaniment. William James has this to say: "To plead the cause of organic causation of religious states of mind,,,,,, is quite illogical and arbitrary."**

Our conclusion, then, is that behaviorism has failed to account for the phenomena of belief. But are we not asking too much? Has not orthodox psychology also failed to account for these phenomena? True, but the difference lies here: the traditional psychology is not so fundamentally inimical to the integrity of religious belief. Behaviorism

* "Behaviorism and Psychology" p. 156f. A.A. Roback

** "Varieties of Religious Experience" p. 14. Wm James

logically followed would rob belief of all value, for our beliefs would be determined merely by our physiological status at the time the proposition is presented and would fluctuate in exact relation to our physical condition. Especially would it be impossible to hold, as Christianity does hold, that Christian faith is the highest virtue. And if faith were thus robbed of all value, the objects of Christian faith, the person of Christ, his objective atonement, the forgiveness of sins, and immortality would all vanish into thin air. If behaviorism is not popular in the Christian church there is a reason.

Its unpopularity arises from a fear for the future. Christianity is concerned about what the men of the next generation are fed on. Christianity has always been interested in education. In spite of the celebrated and misrepresented treatment of Roger Bacon, of Bruno, and of Galileo, Christianity has been of great assistance to the progress of learning. The practical effect of behaviorism upon morality and Christian faith have before been touched, but Christianity now sounds a warning in the field of education. All over our country we are met by young men and women who are beginning, under the tutelage of evolution and behaviorism, to regard life as a matter of physical stimulus and response. We are breeding a race of infidels. They have been taught the ethics of the ape, to the imminent peril of our civilization. They learn to play a horrid game of bestial struggle, till it suits them to remedy their ennui by passing into hopeless night. Christianity is certainly taking the part of progressive and constructive thought when it demands a return from this materialistic and unscientific furore to the comparatively safe ground of traditional psychology. Our conclusion will certainly be conservatively stated in the words of Professor More*: "Unless it can be indisputably proved that man, with his infinite variety of thoughts and emotions, is but an aggregation of mechanical atoms held together and moved by physical forces - an hypothesis for which there is not the slightest proof -, there seems to be no necessity to deny the existence of a spiritual world not subject to the laws of mechanical energy or circumscribed by the space limitations of material or electrical substances."

* "The Dogma of Evolution" p. 387. L.T. More