Introduction to Theology

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In memory of my wife and my mother

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Introduction

Introductory Remarks

Theology is sometimes held in contempt. Even devout Christians, who should be its friends, may dismiss is as hair-splitting; and some of them contrast dead orthodoxy with pulsating Christian life. Its enemies are more severe. The Logical Positivists call it nonsense. Devotees of scientism call it bigotry. Political leftists attack it as a reactionary hindrance to social advancement. But before anyone can properly adjudge it as good or evil, he must know what the word theology means.

The English word comes from two Greek words: *theos*-*logos*. As biology is the study, knowledge, or science of *bios*, life; and as anthropology is the study of *anthropos*, man; and as sociology is the study of society, and physiology, geology, and the rest; so theology is the study or knowledge of God (*Theos*).

Theology is not the only strange word the student must learn. He must be willing to meet and conquer *federal headship*, *immediate imputation*, *premillennialism*, and even *Trinity*. Some people are afraid of long words; but not everyone. The people of Germany seem to like them. One of their longest is Constantinopolitanischerdudelsachspfeiffenmachergesellschaft. It means a firm in Constantinople that manufactures bagpipes. The longest English word I can think of, if you rule out 'supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' on technical lexicographical grounds is, Antidisestablishmentarianism. It is even more useless than the German word.

Another technical term, though an easier one, is atheism. Atheists are people who assert that there is no God to study. They may say that atoms in space make up the sum total of reality. Or in more modern science the atoms may be analyzed into neutrons, or finally into energy. But whatever the analysis, these people assert that there is nothing else. Physical reality is all there is.

It is not surprising that atheists deride theology. Since they deny that there is any God at all, they naturally consider theology false, useless, and harmful. In this they are indubitably consistent. There is, however, another group who also can consistently object to theology. These are religious people who really believe in a God of some sort, but who are convinced that he cannot be known. Atheists deny God; mystics deny knowledge. The religion of the latter is based on, and limited to trances, indescribable experiences, or inexplicable emotions. In these experiences no knowledge is obtained. It is wholly a matter of subjective feelings. There are indeed some semi-mystics who allow a theology. Schleiermacher, a German theologian of the early nineteenth century, the founder of Modernism, constructed a "theology" based on feeling. Strictly speaking, it was not theology; it was the psychology of religious experience. God himself was not the object of study; feelings were. Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian of the mid-twentieth century, also wrote books on theology; but his "theology" is not knowledge of God. God and the medium of conceptuality, are mutually exclusive. If we talk *about* God, he says, we are not talking about *God*. But he does indeed formulate a theory of religion and tries to find some sort of use for it. Then, of course, there are the purer and more consistent mystics who, though they may write literature, do not claim to write theology. These two groups, atheists and mystics, are probably the only two groups that can consistently object to theology. True Christians, because of immaturity and ignorance, may disparage theology, but their antagonism is not consistent with the Christian faith.

Another group deserving mention, presents a puzzling appearance. They indeed assert the existence of God and their theories can properly be called theology. They do not want to be known as atheists or as irreligious, but they define God as all that exists. Spinoza used the phrase, *Deus sive Natura*, God, that is, Nature. Some may use the term *Pure Being*, or Tillich's phrase, the *Ground of All Being*. Thus God is the universe itself. He is not its Creator. Since they say, God is the All, these people are called *Pantheists* – another technical term.

Logically there is no difference between atheism and pantheism. To deny that there is a God and to apply the name God to everything is conceptually identical. It is as though I should assert the existence of cats and try to prove it by pointing to giraffes, stars, mountain ranges, and books: they are all cats, I would say, and therefore cats exist. The pantheists point to giraffes, stars, and so on, and say, therefore God exists. But this sort of argument has no more application to God than to cats – the small domestic animals that cry meow. Those who deny God, atheists, and those who say God is everything, pantheists, are asserting that nothing beyond the physical world is real. In Christian language, and in common languages around the world, God is different from the universe as a cat is from a giraffe, and more so.

Other people are *agnostics*. They do not assert that there is a God; nor do they assert that there is no God; they simply say they do not know. They claim ignorance. Ignorance, however, is not a theory that one has to argue about. Ignorance is an individual state of mind. An ignorant person is not required to prove by learned arguments that he is ignorant. He just does not know. Such a person needs to be taught.

Probably most people in the United States today are atheists of a sort. If you should ask them, they might say they believe in God. But they might as well not believe in God for all the good it does them. Unless someone mentions God to them, they never think of him; they never pray to him; he does not enter into their daily plans and calculations. Their lives are essentially no different from the lives of atheists and agnostics. They are practicing atheists.

But do all these technical terms, and more to come, have anything to do with prayer and 'heart-felt' religion? Doesn't Christianity consist in singing gospel choruses to rock music and electric guitars? What good is theology, what good are pedantic terms anyway?

Young students are often impatient, and they unthinkingly brush aside even important matters. But their question concerning the value of theology is proper, pertinent, and important. It has three answers. The first is: God, if there be a God, is someone we should know. If we should know stars (astronomy) simply because there are stars, and copper and iron (chemistry) simply because they are there and useful to us, so too if God is there, and if he impinges on our life in any way, we ought to know him. This first answer needs further elucidation; but before continuing with it, and before beginning the second answer, the discussion will briefly consider how it might be possible to know God. Where do we find out about God? What is the source of our knowledge? To these questions there are two answers. Some people accept the first answer and reject the second; some people accept the second and reject the first; and some use both.

The first method of finding out something about God, according to a large number of respectable authors, is to study the growth of a plant, the motion of the planets, and the fall of a stone. Now, if it should prove possible to learn something about God by this method, it nonetheless has two disadvantages. First, it is a very hard method; and, second, not much can be learned this way. Suppose we can get a microscope and examine the internal phloem of the *lykopersikon esculentum*(L.). Oh me, oh my, these words are too long. Well, the study of botany is still longer; and it is not immediately clear what we can find out about God in tomatoes. Or, you may observe the

motion of the planets. If you look at them very carefully, you will see that the squares of their periodic times are proportional to the mean distances from the sun. But you have to look very closely. This is not easy. If we should succeed in getting this bit of information, we may conclude that God is a great mathematician and that salvation depends on majoring in math. Such was essentially what the ancient Greek philosophical school of the Pythagoreans said. They believed that a happy life after death was the reward for studying arithmetic and geometry. A somewhat similar view is held by people today who think that all the problems of this world can be solved by science. But unlike the Pythagoreans they do not believe in a life after death, nor do they think that the laws of astronomy can prove there is a God. To convince them by deducing the existence of God from the laws of science would be extremely difficult and perhaps impossible. If by some other method we first know there is a God, the study of astronomy might show that he is a mathematician. But we would have to know God first.

There is a second method, different from the science, by which we may learn about God. Where the first method had two disadvantages, this second method has two points in its favor. Instead of being hard, it is easy; and instead of providing only a little information, it furnishes us a great deal.

This second method consists of simply listening to what God tells us. If God should say to some man, "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect" (as he said to Abraham in Genesis 17:1), then this man would know something about God and he could tell other men. Neither he nor the others would have to study science or mathematics. All we would have to understand would be a few short words, the longest of which is Almighty.

Each of these two ways of learning about God has its own name. The first is called *natural theology*. Its contents are what we can know of God by studying nature. It is the hard way. It may be an impossible way. However, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle thought he could prove the existence of God by this method; and the Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, copied him. But their arguments are extremely complicated. Of course the Psalms say that the heavens declare the glory of God; and the apostle makes the paradoxical statement that the *invisible* divine attribute of omnipotence is clearly *seen* in the things that God has made. Such verses as these, however, do not guarantee that Aristotle made no mistake. The apostle Paul does not so much say that men prove the *existence* of God by studying the stars, as he says that the *omnipotence* of a God previously known to exist is displayed in the stars. This omnipotence is manifest to men, not by means of a complicated argument, but because "God hath showed it unto them." At any rate, in contrast with Roman Catholicism, Reformation theology, as found in Luther and Calvin, made no use of arguments from nature.

If the name of the first way to learn about God is *natural* theology, the name of the second is*special revelation*. It is the easy way of simply listening to what God says. There is no point in trying to prove God's existence, for if he tells us something, he obviously exists. A non-existent nothing could not tell us anything. What is more important, if God speaks to us, in addition to knowing that there is some sort of God, we begin to learn what sort of God there is.

At first it may seem strange that knowledge of what God is, is more important than knowing there is a God. It may seem strange that his existence is less important than his nature. Nevertheless, this is the case, for two reasons. First, we have seen, a few pages back that pantheists identify God with the universe. The mere fact that they use the name God for the universe and thus assert that "God" exists, is of no help to Christianity. The late Professor Wieman insisted on the existence of God; but for him "God" is not even all the universe – he or it is only some parts of the universe. Christians are not so much interested in the existence of God as they are in what kind of God exists.

The second reason for not being much interested in the *existence* of God is somewhat similar to the first. The idea of *existence* is an idea without content. Stars exist – but this tells us nothing about the stars; mathematics exist – but this teaches us no mathematics; hallucinations exist too. A predicate, such as existence, that can be attached to everything indiscriminately, tells us nothing about anything.

When God speaks, he tells us something about himself. He tells us what sort of God he is. If then our knowledge of God does not come from mathematics and astronomy, but consists in what God has told us about himself, theology as a formal study of God will be essentially a survey of what God has said. He told Abraham that he was Almighty. Almighty means omnipotent. We are now no longer scared of long words like omnipotent. It simply means that God can do anything. But God did not tell Abraham everything about himself, either on that one occasion or on all the occasions taken together that God spoke to Abraham. To find out what sort of God God is, a student must collect and summarize all that God has told us about himself.

The mention of Abraham may lead us several paragraphs back to the question of an impatient student who asked concerning the value of such an abstruse subject as theology. There are three answers. The first answer was only started. Even at the cost of a little repetition, it may be worthwhile to retrace our steps and begin again.

First, God, if there be a God, is someone we should know. Everyone likes to receive information about their best friends, at least if the information is good news. We even want to hear bad news, such as an injury or accident, though it saddens us. If now someone like Abraham is a friend of God, news about God is welcome; and more welcome in proportion as God is a better friend than one's classmates. To put it in a more Biblical way, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There is more in this verse than appears to a hurried reader; but enough appears to show that one cannot be a Christian without theology – a knowledge of God.

This first point in answering the question about the value of theology is so overwhelming that any other reasons seem trivial and unnecessary. However, the American temperament, more activist and "practical" than the relatively more contemplative European mentality, may be further impressed by the necessity of theology for evangelism. To say, "Christ died, for our sins, according to the Scriptures," is to talk theology. In fact this verse sums up a great amount of theology; and only knowledge of what is "according to the Scriptures" can insure a Biblical evangelism. Then too, when a Christian tries to evangelize college students, he meets all sorts of objections. It is fatal to dismiss these as hypocrisy, even though sometimes they are; but more often they are the deep seated opinions that have been inculcated by a humanistic education. The college student has been taught that science conclusively refutes all claims of miracles, and that it is no more possible for a man to rise from the dead than for a cow to jump over the moon. Science has put a man on the moon; maybe science sometime in the future will discover how to raise the dead; but it has never happened yet. Unfortunately some "evangelists" avoid this objection by dropping Christ's resurrection out of their "gospel." Either they never mention it, or as is the case with the dialectical theologians they existentialize it and define *resurrection* as that happy feeling of confidence when one rises out of the depths of frustration. Students under such instruction, if they had a college course in religion, believe that the Pentateuch is a compilation of several authors (dating perhaps from the time of David onwards) botched together by an unknown editor about 500 B.C. These students are possibly behaviorists in psychology, and one college girl said openly in class, "Well, I am only an animal." In view of such evangelistic challenges it is unfortunate if the Christian knows the Bible less thoroughly than the college student knows his humanism.

There is a third reason for studying theology, a broader reason of which the second was doubtless only a part. The religion of Modernism which flourished from 1875-1925 was initiated by Friedrich Schleiermacher about the centennial year of 1800. Many Americans, people who had never heard the name Schleiermacher, came to disbelieve the Virgin Birth and the vicarious Atonement because of his influence. The great thinkers, either in theology, philosophy, or science, set a pattern that millions of people will fall into in the following century. The works of a Danish theologian, Soren Kierkegaard, about 1840, through Karl Barth from about 1920, and Emil Brunner a few years later, have produced in America as in Europe a "Christian Existentialism" that is far more existential than it is Christian.

These men and their theories are no doubt a wrong place to begin a study of theology; but after some first lessons in the Biblical system of thought, it is capitulation to ignore them. Only from strong students of theology can there arise another Athanasius to defend the Deity of Christ, an Augustine to maintain the doctrines of grace, and a Luther and Calvin to reject tradition and mysticism and defend the first principle of "Scripture alone."

It should now be clear that the methodology of the present volume is Biblical. Neither natural theology derived from science, nor mystical theology derived from so-called 'religious experience,' plays any part. The content of this theology comes entirely from the Bible. The importance of methodology cannot be overemphasized.

To illustrate: Assuming that there is a God of some sort, many people, even glibly, make statements about him. One such statement might be, God loves everybody. Another statement, made in conversation by a Presbyterian elder, no less, was that Hinduism has "redemptive value." The statement itself does not contain the word *God*, but it reflects a belief as to what God is and how he operates on a world-wide scale. People are making statements about God all the time. In talking with such people the basic question to ask, especially for the Christian who disagrees with the statement, is, How do you know? How do you know that God provides redemption through Hinduism? How do you know anything at all about God? How do you know? An atheist will put the same question to an orthodox Christian. He will say, You believe there is a God; how do you know, what is your evidence, why should anyone accept such a notion?

In the history of Christian theology many authors at the outset have tried to answer the atheist by constructing an argument that validly demonstrates the existence of God. Aquinas' attempt was mentioned a few paragraphs ago. But though this seems such a logical place to begin theology, reflection shows that it is hardly helpful, from a Christian viewpoint, to prove merely the existence of some sort of God or other. Every serious mind wants to know what sort of being God is. Is he a person who loves everybody? Is God a person at all? Spinoza had an argument more complicated than Aquinas'; but the God whose existence he claimed to have proved was just the universe itself. Suppose a Hindu proved the existence of Shiva. In this case the proof of God's existence would be the disproof of Christianity. This is why the Westminster Shorter Catechism, right near the beginning, asks, *What* is God? Not just any god will do.

This is one reason why methodology must be carefully considered. Is it the right method to begin with sensory experience, or with a mystic trance, and conclude with the type of God that later appears? In particular, will anything at all appear later concerning sin, atonement, resurrection, and so on? The Christian needs a method that arrives at all this. He needs a single method. Two methods produce a bifurcation that cannot be unified. Theology then would be schizophrenic. A theory of knowledge must cover all knowledge. If it does not, and if a person uses two methods he cannot answer the question, Where should the one be used, and where the other? He cannot use theory number one to define the place of theory number two, nor conversely, and hence he has no ground for

choosing one rather than the other at any point. This means that he really has no theory of knowledge at all. What theory then will give us the knowledge that Christ was raised for our justification?

After World War I Karl Barth introduced a theological method that captured many seminaries and produced a voluminous literature. The method may be somewhat difficult to describe, but Barth unequivocally states what it is not: “In dogmatics it can never be a question of the mere combination, repetition, and summarizing of Biblical doctrine” (*Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, p. 16; Thomson tr.).

The two pages of immediate context are confusing. If Barth meant merely that the books men publish on theology are not infallible, an orthodox theologian would agree. But since Barth holds that the apostles, even in their official capacity, made a number of mistakes, this is not what he could have meant. On a later page he says, “The fact that the theology we favor is purely and solely evangelical [thought the present writer would never recognize Barth as evangelical], we can as little discuss and account for, as for the fact that we are baptized and believe” (p. 37). This sentence combines two incongruent parts. The fact that we believe, if not the fact that we were baptized, cannot be accounted for, except by a reference to God’s regenerating power and his gift of faith to us. But the fact that the theology we favor is evangelical, if it is indeed evangelical, requires a different form of accounting. This accounting can be nothing else than the method Barth forbids dogmatics to use: viz., exegesis of Scripture and logical systematization. Without this, no liberal can prove that he is an evangelical; with it he only proves that he is not an evangelical; nor can he justify his choice of which Scriptural propositions are true and which are false, let alone which non-scriptural doctrines are. For an evangelical, in the historical sense of the word, theology is – of course not “the mere combination, repetition” of Biblical texts, but – certainly a summarizing and especially a logical arranging of the main Scriptural doctrines.

The method used in this book and the theology that necessarily results are Biblical. The principle is to take the Bible as a revelation from God. In it he gives us the information he wants us to have. Our task is to collect this information, “understand” it in a preliminary way, and then systematize it. Unless God be irrational, we cannot be satisfied with disjointed, unrelated data. To understand the data in more than a preliminary way, they must be fitted together, systematized, organized. Wallpaper, a keg of nails scattered around, a kitchen sink standing on end, a heap of bricks, and some bags of cement are not a house. They must be put together, if we want something to live in. So too a Christian may have memorized a few or even many verses from several books of the Bible, he may know which is the shortest verse and the longest chapter, he may even have some elementary knowledge of the Atonement, and yet his mind can be largely the confusion of building materials scattered around loose. Well, it is good to have building materials. Indeed, they are indispensable. But it is better to live in a house.

Contrasting with the concept of theology here maintained is the very first paragraph of *The Evangelical Faith* by Helmut Thielicke (William B. Eerdmans, 1974). “To do theology is to actualize Christian truth, or, better, to set it forth in its actuality and to understand it afresh thereby. To that extent theology is by nature, and not merely in its pedagogical implications, historical. It has nothing to do with timeless truth. Hence there can be no timeless or supertemporal theology (*theologia perennis*).”

That an author, like myself, must understand theology afresh, is hardly worth saying. Of course my father knew some theology and I as a young man had to begin afresh. Knowledge is not transmitted by heredity. Furthermore, it goes without saying that I was influenced by my father, by the books I read, and by whatever other factors there may have been. But it does not follow that this “has nothing to do with timeless truth.” The aim of every orthodox theologian is to arrive at some timeless truths. In doing so, he may make some mistakes. But if he learns that God justifies some men by the

imputation of Christ's righteousness, he has grasped timeless truth. Even the mere historical statement that Christ died in the first half of the first century is a timeless truth. My learning it, the pedagogical implications as Thielicke calls it, does not make it temporal, relative, or doubtful. It is the truth, and it is the truth we learn.

But Thielicke's meaning is not exhausted in such pedagogical trivialities. What he has in mind is a completely different idea of what theology, or at least Christian theology is. On page 66 he writes, "Part of the intellectual honesty of adult man is that in the area of faith he will accept no truth-claim that conflicts with scientific knowledge."

To this we immediately reply that so-called 'scientific knowledge' is no fixed irrevocable discovery. Virtually none of the physics that I was taught in my undergraduate days is now taught in physics classes. Science is tentative; it constantly changes. What is taught today will be discarded within a decade or two. The theories of light are a well-known example of scientific change. The theory of phlogiston is by now forgotten. As Einstein has replaced Newton, so a succeeding genius will replace Einstein – as he himself knew so well. Therefore Thielicke's proposal to test every theological truth-claim by the physics of the day is foolish. It is more than foolish. The idea that science can decide in advance what God can and cannot reveal is utterly unchristian. Furthermore, his branding Christians as dishonest because they believe God instead of swallowing the presently held laws of physics is arrogant.

At this point it may prove wise to consider an objection that some reviewers are sure to make against the present volume. But it is not an objection that first year seminary students are likely to raise. The objection is that so little attention is paid to the great theological developments of the last half of the twentieth century.

There is very good reason for these extensive omissions. Briefly the reason is that they have little to offer in the advancement or explanation of Biblical theology. Karl Barth has already been cited. If a student wants to know what God said, the best source is not a man who believes that the apostles erred even in their official capacity as canonical writers. Now, it is possible and it is true that once in a while Bultmann or someone can come up with useful analyses of a verse or two. Indeed the neo-orthodox commentators are better than the old modernists. The modernists had some respect for the Bible, and they tried to twist the Bible to make it mean what they believed. But men like Bultmann are quite willing to make clear the exact meaning of a verse; for though the meaning accords with historic evangelicalism, Bultmann dismisses it as mythology. On the other hand, so pervasive are their existential presuppositions that one must wearily wade through a swamp of nonsense to find these good examples of exegesis. It is hardly worth the time.

Other authors are even more useless for our purpose. For example, James H. Cone has published three volumes, the last being, *God of the Oppressed*. It is a volume of so-called black theology. The title indicates and the content makes it certain that for him black theology and some other kind are not the same. This resembles the medieval theory of two-fold truth: what is true in philosophy is false in theology and conversely. That is to say, Cone's black theory resembles two-fold truth, if he will admit that there is any truth at all in white or yellow theology. Naturally the author is not greatly interested in the Bible. Sociology, a particular form of sociology, is his canon. On this basis a wealthy American, like Abraham and Job, simply cannot have God's truth. That eighteenth and nineteenth century slavery was reprehensible, and that injustices have been perpetrated even since 1865, does not justify the proposition that "any theologian who fails to place that question at the center of his work has ignored the essence of the gospel" (p. 9).

For us the essence or center of the gospel is the Atonement; the basis is the Trinity; the source and only source is the Bible.

Other contemporary works on theology may not be so perverted, but they are equally anti-Christian. One of them wants to replace verbal proclamation with music. Others are more mystical. But all reject the Scripture and put their whole trust in some form of experience. Since the present volume aims to give the main points of Christianity, it is only occasionally profitable to refer to theologians, better, religious philosophers, of this type. We do not aim to satisfy their values and assumptions; our contest with them is the contest between two incompatible, antagonistic religions. We do not intend to cooperate with them in a search for God's message. Indeed, we cannot cooperate because their starting point and ours are different. What they appeal to, we reject; and the Scripture we appeal to, they reject. What we can and must do is to preach the message to them and pray for their regeneration.

With these preliminary remarks on methodology, remarks that the next chapter will expand and explain, remarks too that apply in a general way to all orthodox textbooks on theology, something about the present volume in particular needs to be added.

Written on an elementary level, this attempt has at least two defects. First, none of the great subjects receives adequate treatment. A minister's personal library should contain several volumes on the Atonement alone. Stephen Charnock's *The Existence and Attributes of God* extends through a thousand pages. And eschatology offers more books than anyone can bother with. The beginning student may not believe it, but the present volume is very elementary.

Yet even an elementary theology can and ought to discuss some opposing views. A student will never have a satisfactory view of the Deity of Christ without knowing something about Athanasius' struggle against Arius and the resulting Nicene Creed. This book is not a history of theology; but who can write a chapter on justification by faith without paying his respects to Martin Luther, and his disrespects to the Pope and the canons of Trent? Such material is not only historically interesting, it is necessary logically. It is simply impossible to discuss the Atonement or Baptism conscientiously without considering objections and opposing views. Negative and positive are correlatives. To know what something is, one must know what it is not. A cat is not a dog. An even number is not an odd. And a completely wrong idea of the Atonement actually helps the student understand the truth.

The second defect of the present volume is similar to the first. To keep the discussion on an elementary level, a great deal of, let us say, philosophy has been omitted. But be it known that theology and what is commonly called philosophy are inseparable. Any discussion that eliminates philosophical problems simply hides beneath its ambiguous lines. Most unfortunately, however, the greatest philosophical difficulties occur in the early sections of a book on theology. There they are right at the start. This easily discourages the young student. For example, the ontological argument for God's existence, which Aristotle formulated in less than four hundred words, has produced more than four hundred volumes of exhausting analyses. Students may well skip such material at first, jump forward to something easier, and return to these matters later. If newlyweds, beginners in adult life are buying a house, they must of course be interested in the dining room, the bedrooms, the kitchen, and even the wallpaper. And they may look at these first. But it would not be wise to ignore the foundation, even though they may look at it last. In building the house the foundation comes first. If buying a house already built, the examination of the basement may come last. So too a beginner in theology may consider the foundation less exciting than the wallpaper. If necessary then let him skip it and start with sin or salvation. He can return to God later on. He better had!

Now, to approach the end of these introductory remarks, the author directs the reader to the numerous Scriptural quotations in the following pages. Their purpose is not to give an exhaustive list of all the Scriptural passages on the particular subject under discussion. It is rather to remind the reader of many others by means of the quoted samples.

The actual translation more or less follows a general rule. If the quotation is simply to jog the students memory, and this is usually the case, the words will be those of the King James Version. When it is not the King James Version, the motivation is some point of meaning, some emphasis, that the King James did not sufficiently bring out.

Thus endeth the Introduction. Or, better, the introductory remarks on methodology will now be expanded in Chapter One.

Chapter 1 – The Scriptures

1. Methods in Apologetics

Basically there are only three answers to the questions, How do you know that there is a God, and if there is, What sort of being is he? The first answer is experience. There are two sorts of experience, and the religious tone of their conclusions is considerably different. The first type of experience is ordinary sensation: we see a black, round stone rolling down an inclined plane. The second type is often called "religious experience." This ranges from feelings about morality, Rudolph Otto's *Idea of the Holy*, to mystic visions and trances. The second answer to the question is the dictates of the Church, the infallibility of Councils, and since 1870 the infallibility of the Pope. The third answer is Biblical revelation.

The next chapter, under the title GOD, will analyze the argument for God's existence based on sensory experience. Logically it fits in better there, for the emphasis will be on the being of God and the validity of the argument, rather than on the nature of the method; and this chapter has to do with method. Mysticism, which may be described as all method and no results, will find a place later in this chapter. Similarly Romanism, because its methods and results intertwine, is to be considered here. But because the aim of this volume is to expound the Christian system positively, using objections and contrary theories only for the sake of contrast, the method of Biblical revelation is the first topic of study.

2, The Method of Revelation

If God is the sort of God that Christians believe him to be, if, that is, God is the sort of God who has planned redemption from eternity, it is*prima facie* unlikely that any man could discover the facts without a revelation. This revelation might come through the Pope, or it might come through the Bible; but it is not likely to be discovered in sensation or mystic trances. But if we can learn of the Atonement only through a revelation, it is also clear that we can learn what the revelation is only through the revelation itself. That is to say, revelation is self-authenticating. To unbelievers this sounds like a circular argument, and they accuse Christians of committing a logical fallacy at this point. Yet a witness in a jury trial swears that he will tell the truth. He witnesses to his own truthfulness, not only to the truth of the evidence he will present, but first of all to the truth of his oath. Is this circular? Someone will say, his testimony as to the facts can be tested by other evidence and so his oath can be tested also. This avoids the circle. But it is sometimes impossible to test the truth of the witness's assertions. The jury may believe him, or it may disbelieve him; but there is no evidence for or against his testimony. This is often the case with a witness in court. It is always the case with God. The Pharisees saw Jesus nailed to the cross, but there was no visible evidence that he died for sin. The disciples themselves, instead of deducing the doctrine of the Atonement, concluded that his claim to be Messiah was false. The truth had to be revealed.

The prophets and the apostles were the recipients of a direct revelation. We today have their writings. Under oath, so to speak:

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness ...

Rom. 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie

Gal. 1:20 What I write to you, look, before God, I am not lying.

I Tim. 2:7 I speak the truth, I do not lie.

They swear to tell the truth, not the whole truth, for not all truth was revealed to them, but the truth nonetheless, and nothing but the truth. The Bible claims to be true. Is this circular? If so, how is it not circular when the Logical Positivists assert that a sentence is meaningless unless it is verifiable by sensory experience? Can sensation prove its truthfulness by appealing to sensation? The philosophical issues here will be discussed at slightly greater length in the next chapter. What this chapter must do is to determine what precisely the Bible claims as it takes the witness stand. Does it really tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

3. The Biblical Claim

Nearly everybody who reads this book knows, and when he comes to the subject of the Scriptures, will think of-

II Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired of God, and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for improvement, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, completely equipped for every good work.

But even seminary graduates, when they take their ordination examinations, will forget almost all the rest of what the Bible says about itself. The Bible says a great deal more than most people realize when they read it quickly. Here then begins our first lesson in theology: What does the Bible say about itself and how much does this one verse tell us?

The very first word of this verse, the word *All*, introduces the doctrine of "plenary inspiration." Just as the word *theology* is a technical term, so too the student must learn some other technical terms. Atonement is a technical term; so is regeneration; and Trinity. There are many others, not so well known: incommunicable attributes, federal headship, justification, immediate imputation, the millennium. An important part of the learning process is the understanding of the terminology. Serious technical terminology is not a hindrance, it is rather a great help in any subject. If the term *federal headship* could not be used, it would be necessary to write a paragraph every time we wanted to speak of Adam's relationship to his posterity. If the word *Trinity* should be deleted from our vocabulary, it would be necessary to repeat the entire Nicene Creed whenever we wanted to talk of the Godhead.

Now, the term *plenary inspiration* means that the Bible is inspired from beginning to end: *all* of it is inspired. And while other verses will be quoted on this point, the word *all* in II Tim. 3:16 is an indisputable assertion of plenary inspiration.

However, one must ask, What is it that is inspired? Many theological books, in their discussion of revelation, begin with the inspiration of the prophets and apostles. Now, there is a sense in which these holy men were inspired. Even King Saul was inspired and prophesied on one occasion, but who knows what he said, and who could believe everything else he said? Were his fulminations against David true? No doubt Paul himself in some of his daily conversations made mistakes. But the verse under analysis says nothing at all about the apostles' being inspired. Let the student be warned and note carefully that the verse says that the Scriptures are inspired. The subject is not the writers, but the words written. The term *Scripture*, as an ordinary word in the Greek language, means something written. As a technical term in the Bible it means the divine writings, the Hebrew canon in the first instance, and we shall see whether or not it refers to the New Testament as well.

Note that the verse does not distinguish between what the writers thought and their perhaps inadequate written expression of their thought. Some early liberals, the modernists of pre-World War I, adopted such a distinction because it permitted them to alter the sense of the text so as to conform to what they thought God ought to have said, but didn't. This method allows of no control. Each person can for himself, to suit his own preferences, select whatever he wishes the apostles had said; and since the appeal is to the unknown thought and is not restricted by the actual wording of the text, one man's alteration is as good as any other's.

However, for all II Timothy says, the apostles may have thought nothing. In fact, sometimes the writers did not think, or, more accurately, they did not understand what they wrote.

Dan. 12:8, 9 And I heard, but I did not understand ... And he said, Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end.

I Peter 1:10, 11 Concerning which salvation the prophets enquired and searched, who prophesied about the grace [that came] to you, searching into what or what sort of time the Spirit in them meant...

For this reason one must disagree with a contemporary theologian, popularly known as a conservative and evangelical, who wrote, "We contend for the inerrancy of the meaning which the inspired writers intended to convey in their original manuscripts." First, the verses above show that sometimes the writers themselves had no meaning to convey. Second, the subject before us is not the inspiration of the writers, but, to repeat it for emphasis, the inspiration of what was written.

A Christian must insist that it was the words written on the parchment that god inspired. The doctrine therefore is not only that of plenary inspiration, but also that of verbal inspiration. Plenary refers to *all* the words; verbal refers to all the *words.*

So far the first two words of II Timothy 3:16 have been discussed: "All Scripture." Both the adjective and the noun have been emphasized. It is necessary now to go on to the third (in Greek) word of this verse: "inspired of God." Of course the idea of inspiration had to occur in the foregoing discussion; but it was not there satisfactorily defined. Here we must ask, What is inspiration? *Inspiration* is really a poor word to express in English what Paul wrote in Greek.

The English phrase "given by inspiration of God" is one word, *theopneustos.* On its meaning nothing better can be quoted than B.B. Warfield's tremendous paragraph.

"The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of /«spiring or of /«spiration: it speaks only of a 'spiring' or 'spiration.' What it says of Scripture is, not that it is 'breathed into by God' or is the product of the Divine 'inbreathing' into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, 'God-breathed,' the product of the creative breath of God.... No term, however, could have been chosen which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed. The 'breath of God' is in Scripture just the symbol of His almighty power, the bearer of His creative word. 'By the word of Jehovah' we read in the significant parallel of Psa 33:6. 'were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.' ... God's breath is the irresistible outflow of His power. When Paul declares, then, that 'every Scripture' or 'all scripture' is the product of the Divine breath, 'is God-breathed,' he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation."[1]

That the words God breathed out were true words and not false or erroneous may easily be supposed; for God would not lie, would He? This result of the divine activity, however, and its purposes, will be

discussed in the analysis of other Scripture passages.

4, Another Text

Although II Timothy 3:16 is the best known, and for some people the only one remembered, the other texts on the nature of Scripture are extremely numerous and in many cases more compelling and informative. There are so many in fact that not very many will be given; and it is hard to decide in what order to quote them. It may not be the most logical procedure, but there is some pedagogical value in selecting the next most commonly known verse on the subject.

II Peter 1:20, 21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes through individual initiative; for prophecy never was brought by human volition, but borne by the Holy Spirit men spoke from God.

Peter, facing imminent death (v. 14) wants his addressees to know that the gospel is not a myth (v. 16). The English word *fable* (KJ, ARV) or *tales* (NAS), is the Greek word *myth.* This has some point in connection with Rudolf Bultmann's theory that the Bible is entirely mythology and needs to be demythologized. Peter insists that he had not devised clever stories, but that he reports historical events which he himself had witnessed, in particular the Transfiguration (v. 17). The Transfiguration, however, was momentary, and Christians have "the more durable (or, permanent) word of prophecy." It is a misinterpretation to say the "more certain" word of prophecy, for surely the Old Testament is not more certainly true than God's own declaration in the cloud. But the Old Testament was written and therefore permanent. God's voice was momentary - although it was later written in the Gospels. At any rate, the reason we know we have the more permanent revelation, or better, the reason we know the Old Testament is a revelation, is first of all that no written prophecy ever came by human initiative. Knowing this *first,* emphasizes the importance of what follows. If there are other reasons, they are secondary; but *first* we know that no "prophecy of Scripture," i.e. the prophecy written on the manuscript, came into existence by human initiative. The last two words in Greek are *idias epiluseds,* which KJ and RV translate as "private interpretation," while the NAS says, "a matter of one's own interpretation." This translation, however, does not fit the context. To say that Scripture is not a matter of one's own interpretation is not a reason why the Old Testament is a revelation. More particularly the next verse, which says that prophecy did not come by the will of man, is not a reason against private interpretation. However, the denial that Scripture was written as a result of human volition and the assertion that it was initiated by the Holy Ghost is most certainly a reason for translating the phrase in question as "no written prophecy is of human initiative." *Epilusis* can mean release or solution, as well as interpretation. The verb has two main sets of meanings: (1) loose, untie, set free, release; and (2) solve, explain, confute. The second set of meanings is poor for this verse. We should therefore choose the first. The prophecy was therefore released by God, not man. Isaiah did not get out of bed one morning and say, I have decided to write some prophecies today. On the contrary, god picked Isaiah out of bed and carried him along; and so supported, Isaiah spoke words from god. Nothing can be clearer than v. 21, "For prophecy was never brought by human volition, but holy men, brought along by the Holy Ghost, spoke from God"

Emphasis has been laid on the fact that the words written in Scripture are the words of God. Since this is so clear, it may be acknowledged without reluctance that the prophets and apostles were also inspired, especially the Old Testament prophets. Not all their conversations were inspired, but what they first spoke and then wrote down by God's command was. Many verses referring to them support the previous conclusions, and since they hardly need any explanation, just a few will be quoted.

5. Additional Verses

Num. 23:5 And Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak and thus shalt thou speak.

Deut. 18:18 I will raise them up a prophet... like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth.

II Sam. 23:2 The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue.

Jer. 1:9 Then Jehovah put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and

Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth, (cf. 9:12, 13:15, 30:4, 50:1).

Ezek. 3:4 And he said unto me, go, get the unto the house of Israel, and speak my words unto them. (cf. 3:1, 11).

In addition to these pointed expressions there are more verses that can be quoted, which say, Thus saith the Lord, The word of the Lord came unto me, or phrases to the same effect.

From the New Testament three verses will now be quoted because they are very clear as to what the Bible claims to be.

Acts 1:16 Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David.

Acts 3:18-21 But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the

prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. ...

Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old.

Acts 4:25 O Lord ... who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage ...

These verses in Acts are unambiguous. One need not draw inferences or go to any length in interpreting them - though inference and interpretation are always legitimate - they say explicitly that God spoke through the mouths of the Old Testament prophets. The words which issued from David's mouth, and which he wrote in the second Psalm, were God's words.

Some devout theologian of an earlier century, who had a touch of the poetic about him, used a flute as a picturesque illustration. David and Moses were like a flute, and God blew notes (words) through them. Unbelievers have objected both to this illustration and to the doctrine of verbal inspiration on the general ground that they conflict with the inviolability of human personality and with the obvious differences in literary style in Moses, David, and Isaiah. Now, it is always unwise to take illustrations too seriously and to press them beyond their function of literary embellishment. Nevertheless, this illustration is not too bad; and so far as the doctrine of verbal inspiration is concerned the following rejoinder is sufficient for the critics' objection.

First, human personality is not inviolable as these critics think.

Ex. 4:11, 15 Who made man's mouth? Or who made him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord? ... I even I will be with your mouth and his [Aaron's] mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.

The doctrine of God and of the creation of man, in which God's role is that of a potter making a clay pot to suit his own choice - doctrines that must be discussed in later chapters -show that every man's personality is controlled by God. Man did not make himself, nor does he control himself. Second, neither the illustration nor the literal truth conflicts with the obvious stylistic differences between Moses and David. If a musician blows B flat on a flute, the note is B flat; if he blows B flat on an oboe or trumpet, the note is still B flat, but the tonal quality is different. Similarly God can speak truth through Moses and also through David - does not God always speak the truth? - but the literary style conforms to the instrument used. And why not? It is God who made the instrument to suit his purposes. If God wants a man who has had experience with sheep, he not only calls such a man, he first created and trained David and Amos as such. When God needed someone with executive ability, he saved the life of little Moses, raised him in Pharaoh's court, and eventually Moses used the literary style God wanted and administered the affairs of a new nation.

6. New Versus Old Testament

Through these instruments, musical or otherwise, God breathes out the notes of truth. Before the matter of truth is further emphasized, there is another matter that should not be left dangling. Most of the discussion so far has referred to the Old Testament. Even the main two verses from the New Testament have to do with the Old. When Paul says, "All Scripture," does he not mean the Jewish canon? Similarly does not Peter have the Old Testament in mind when he says, "No written prophecy *ever* came by human initiative"?

Yet the unbelievers show themselves awkward if they press this as an objection against the inspiration of the New Testament. The regular liberal position is that the New is an improvement over the Old. The Old, they say, describes a God of wrath; the New gives us a God of love. The morality of Abraham and David left something to be desired. The Sermon on the Mount expressed the highest moral principles that had ever yet been heard. But if so, would it not follow that the New Testament is more inspired than the Old? Certainly not less. Of course the liberal deny that either Testament is inspired in the Biblical sense of plenary and verbal inspiration. But they have no ground for asserting that the New Testament claims are inferior to the Old. If some liberal wryly reply, It is one of the improvements of the New Testament that it does not make the outrageous claims the Old Testament does, the Christian meets him with a substantive examination of what precisely the New testament claims.

One of the best books on inspiration is *Theopneustia* by Louis Gaussen (1790-1863), a Swiss theologian who was censured, suspended, and deposed by his unbelieving colleagues. B.B. Warfield may be better in several respects, but no student learns very much about inspiration unless he reads one of these two authors. In honor of the Swiss reformed author there follow here some passages from his section entitled, *All the Scriptures of the New Testament are Prophetic.*

"The whole tenor of Scripture places the writers of the New Testament in the same rank with the prophets of the Old.... In the lifetime of the apostles the book of the New Testament was already almost entirely formed, in order to make one whole together with the Old. It was twenty or thirty years after the day of Pentecost that St. Peter felt gratified in referring to ALL THE EPISTLES OF PAUL, his beloved brother, and spoke of them as sacred writings which, even so early as his time, formed part of the Holy Letters *(hieron gramma ton),* and behoved to be classed with THE OTHER SCRIPTURES *(hos kai tas loipas graphas).* He assigns to them the same rank, and declares that unlearned men can wrest them but to their own destruction.

Mark this important passage: Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him hath written unto you; as also IN ALL HIS EPISTLES, speaking in them of these things; in which

are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the OTHER SCRIPTURES, unto their own destruction.' (II Peter 3:13, 16.)

"The apostle, at the second verse of the same chapter, had already placed himself, along with the other apostles, on the same rank, and assumed the same authority, as the sacred writers of the Old Testament, when he said, 'That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken BEFORE by the holy PROPHETS, and of the commandment OF US the APOSTLES of the Lord and Savior.'"

Instead of further quotations from Gaussen, whom every student should read for himself, there now follow some verses which Gaussen uses to show that the New Testament is not merely on a level with the Old, but superior to it, not that it is truer or more inspired, but that it completes and fulfills the Old.

Matt. 28:19-20 Go ye therefore and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, Io, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses ...

John 20:21 As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

II Cor. 5:20 We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Luke 10:16 He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

These are only five of the some forty verses Gaussen uses to show that the New Testament is as much the word of God as is the Old. And as the Old says that God put his words into the mouths of the prophets, we can say no less about the words of the apostles.

7. The Claim to Truth

Now that Gaussen has shown both Testaments to be equally inspired, it is time to return to the question of truth. One of course can argue: the Scriptures are the words of God, God always tells the truth, therefore the Scriptures are inerrant. Such an argument could well be put in the next chapter on the nature of God. But since the nature of God is discovered only in Scripture and not in religious experience, a good methodology requires the truth of the Scriptures to be put first. Therefore instead of deducing the truth of God's words from the character of God, the explicit claims of Scripture will be quoted. There are many such verses, and it is not obvious how many should be quoted and how extensively they should be explained. They vary in weight and application to the subject at hand. Some are definite and universal assertions; others are less basic and apply to just one book or one speech, though they are useful as supporting evidence.

As a sample, and to get them out of the way first, here are a few less definite verses. Since John, both in the Gospel and in his epistles, emphasizes truth, this list comes entirely from John.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh ... full of grace and truth.

John 1:17 Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 4:23 The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. John 8:31 If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.

John 8:40 Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God.

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of Truth.

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.

John 17:19 And for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

John 18:37 To this end was I born ... that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

The second verse on this list can stand a little explanation and will lead on to verses that apply more strictly to the inerrancy of all Scripture. John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” From this someone might conclude that Moses said nothing of grace and that nothing he said was the truth. But the last nine verses of chapter five say:

Search the Scriptures, for you think you have eternal life in them; and they are they which testify of me.... I come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me.... How can you believe? ... For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?

This is a most important passage, first for stating the Bible’s claim about itself, and second, for showing Christ’s view of the Old Testament. The Pharisees professed to believe the Scriptures. They misinterpreted them, but since they claimed to revere Moses, Christ appeals to him. Christ does so because Moses testified of him. Though the Pharisees recognized some prophecies as Messianic, they had missed many others, and applied none at all to Jesus. But as he showed later to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Old Testament is full of Christ.

Here the student would do well to make a list of all the New Testament passages that interpret specific verses in the Old. These verses accuse the Pharisees to the Father; for had they believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus. Here Jesus identifies Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. There is no hint that those five books are a compilation of the Babylonian era. Moses wrote them: “he wrote of me.” If a person does not believe Moses’ *writings*, how can he believe Christ’s *words!* The hardly disguised presupposition is that both Moses and Jesus spoke the truth.

There are other verses also that assert the inerrancy of all Scripture. Here are two: one from Matthew that calls for no comment, and one from John again, to which a comment will be added.

Matt. 5:18 Until heaven and earth pass away, neither a single iota nor a single serif shall pass away from the Law until everything be fulfilled.

John 10:35 The Scripture cannot be broken.

The comment on this verse is motivated by the fact that many Christians have a high regard for the Psalms, but no so much for Π Chronicles or the prophecies of Nahum and Zephaniah. For this reason there may be a latent thought that perhaps the Psalms are indeed inspired but maybe not the others, or

not so much. Christ's argument, however, does not depend on the excellence of the Psalms. It is the other way around. Christ deduces the authority of the Psalms from that of the other books, the whole Old Testament. It is not that Psalm 82 is superior to Job or Lamentations. The psalm tells the truth because the Law in its entirety cannot be broken. The Psalm is a part of the Jewish canon: "It is written in your Law." Note that the term *Law* does not refer only to the Pentateuch, but to the Psalms as well, to the whole Old Testament. The whole is inviolate: it cannot be broken at any point.

A final verse from John's Gospel is:

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth. Thy word is truth.

There can hardly be a simpler or clearer verse than this to show that the words God breathed on to the manuscript are true. Although only a fraction of the passages Gaussen used have been quoted here, these, with this last one, are a sufficient basis for the doctrine of plenary and verbal inspiration. God's word is truth.

8, Is the Claim True?

Unbelievers, however, will quickly say that even if these verses are so understood, they only express the claim the Bible makes. They do not prove the claim.

In reply many contemporary Christians point with pride to the astounding archaeological discoveries of this century which support the historical accuracy of various Bible passages. Indeed, these corroborations of the Biblical account are often amazing. One of the most crushing defeats administered to the liberals had to do with the Hittite nation. The defeat occurred some seventy five years ago now, so that it is no longer fresh news for the front page of a newspaper; but it was so tremendous that it must never be forgotten. In the nineteenth century there was no evidence that a Hittite nation ever existed, except for the statements in the Bible. And the Bible pictures them as a nation existing from Genesis to Nehemiah - a period of fifteen hundred years. Now, is it not strange that a nation, if it endured so long, should have left no record, no monuments, no trace of itself - except in the Bible? Well, the Bible, say the critics, is an historical novel, and a bad one too, for the authors really knew nothing of the earlier ages and simply imagined what they needed for their story. Since no evidence corroborates the Bible, it follows by rigorous logic (does it not?) that the Hittites never existed. Today an ambitious student can go to the Oriental Institute in Chicago, learn the Hittite language, and translate the books that were in the Hittite libraries.

More recently, on a smaller scale by far, yet considerably embarrassing for dedicated liberals, was a discovery made in 1962. The critics had argued that Moses could not have written Exodus because the book mentions a seven stemmed lamp; and seven stemmed lamps were not invented until the late Persian Empire. The Bible, you see, is an historical novel, written without a knowledge of the times it is supposed to describe. But now there is on display a seven stemmed lamp that dates from five hundred years before Abraham, a thousand years before Moses wrote the book of Exodus. Speaking of Moses, Christ was right, and the critics were wrong.

However, though archaeology is an intriguing subject, and though a Christian worker ought to know a large number of these gratifying results, archaeology, so far as the inerrancy of the Bible is concerned, is seriously defective. In the first place, if archaeology could show that the history of the Bible were correct in a hundred instances, this would not prove it to be always correct. J.B. Bury's *History of Greece*, not to mention Grote's multivolume work, may be accurate most of the time; yet it is possible, and likely, and even certain, that they are mistaken on some points. In the second place, archaeology at best can corroborate only historical assertions. The doctrinal material, which makes

the Bible a religious and a Christian book, cannot be deduced from an observation of broken pottery and rusty weapons.

In fact, there simply is no possibility of demonstrating the Bible's infallibility.

9. Axioms

Students are supposed to study geometry in High School. In doing geometry the student should learn what a demonstration is, and when it is legitimate to put Q.E.D. after an argument.

If the course is better than usual, the student learns that the theorems are demonstrated on the basis of axioms. But the axioms are never demonstrated. Every argument, every system of thought, whether the subject is geometry, botany, or sociology, must begin somewhere; but because the beginning is the beginning, it cannot have been preceded by a demonstration.

Take for example the philosophy of Aristotle and John Locke. Both of these men assumed that all knowledge is based on sensory experience. But it can sensory experience demonstrate that the sole source of knowledge is sensory experience? Logical Positivism, a more modern and more advanced form of empiricism, asserts that any sentence (particularly metaphysical and theological sentences) is nonsense, that is, has no meaning, if it is not verifiable by sensation. But has sensation, even the most intricate laboratory experimentation, ever verified the truth of this basic assumption? It is simply impossible for sensation to verify the principle that meaning depends on sensation. So it is with all basic assumptions. Because they are basic and first, they can never be verified or demonstrated.

Yet every system of philosophy depends on a basic assumption, or it would never get started. Therefore the unbeliever cannot object on principle to a Christian who chooses a basic assumption. It is at least as legitimate for the Christian to choose the Bible as his basic assumption as for the empiricist to choose experience.

This procedure, which may seem strange to some Christians who never studied geometry, and outrageous to unbelievers who hold tenaciously to their own faith but deny Christians the right to theirs, was well outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith. This document, in which the most learned theologians of the seventeenth century more accurately summarized the main teachings of the Bible than anyone before or since, speaks as follows.

"The authority of the Holy Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore, is to be received, because it is the word of God.

"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all parts ...; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts" (I, 4, 5).

Is it not most wrongheaded to base the truth of the Bible, all the doctrines of grace, and our hope of heaven, on the work of Miss Kenyon and Dr. Albright?

10. The Pope

At this point someone might remark, perhaps a Roman Catholic, if indeed the remark fits in with their theology, that so far as a self-authenticating source of revelation is concerned, the Pope is

logically as good as the Bible. The Pope can swear to his own truthfulness; his encyclicals make their claims to infallibility; and they provide the content necessary to a recognizable religion. To know God, revelation is indubitably needed; but why should not the revelation come through his Holiness, Pope Julius?

This is a case, however, where the witness on the stand must face external evidence. History does not incline one to take the Popes as holy men of God borne along by the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, there is an embarrassing logical difficulty. If the Popes claimed self-authentication and nothing more, their position would be better. But they also claim that the Bible is infallible. This causes an insuperable logical difficulty when it becomes clear that their encyclicals contradict what the Bible teaches. Some of this contradiction will be brought to light in the next few pages, and for the rest further studies in theology will be sufficient. We shall therefore immediately contrast what the Bible says about itself with what the Pope says.

The Biblical position maintains not only that the Scripture is the truth, as has now been made clear, but also that there is no other source of truth. Romanism and at least some Anglicans (Lutherans also with reference to some details of worship) hold that tradition somehow completes the Scriptures. The Council of Trent, whose decrees remain till today the main statement of Roman religion, in its fourth session, stated:

“The gospel ... of our Lord Jesus Christ... first promulgated with his own mouth ... [the Synod of Trent] seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books and the unwritten tradition ... which have come down to us ... receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament... as also the said traditions ... If anyone receives not... and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid, let him be anathema.”

This statement puts unwritten tradition on a level with the words of Scripture. In practice, however, the Pope is superior to both, for he claims to interpret both infallibly. Before the Pope was declared infallible, the theory was that the Councils were infallible. No doubt they remain so. In any case, Romanism does not depend on the Scripture alone, but rather on the living voice of the church. Thus on the authority of the church the immaculate conception of Mary and her assumption into heaven are made binding dogmas.

Later some attention will be paid to such dogmas, at least to the Romish view of the Atonement and Justification. The claim that the Apostles transferred their full powers to the Popes as their successors, including some powers the Apostles themselves never claimed to have, is a matter of interest and importance. But not to get lost in other issues, the point here taken up is the Scripture as the sole source of truth. This point is expressed clearly in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 4:2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you subtract from it.

Deut. 5:32 You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Deut. 12:32 What thing soever I command you, that shall you observe to do; you shall not add thereto nor diminish from it.

Deut. 17:11, 20 and Deut. 28:14 say the same thing.

Isa. 1:12 When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand?

The verses from Deuteronomy are as explicit as words can be. They say that in worshipping God, his servants are not to add ceremonies to what is commanded, nor are they to omit anything that God has commanded them. The context in Isaiah gives some details.

Although these Israelites were desecrating the sacrifices and prayers by engaging in them while they were polluted in gross sins, the verse quoted shows that God requires certain things, and it further implies that if God does not require a certain service, it is not to be performed. We are to do what God has required. But if we make the sign of the cross, genuflect, observe lent and Good Friday, or anything else that God has not commanded, he will denounce us by saying, Who has required this nonsense from you?

The verse with which this study of inspiration began also implies the same thing.

II Tim. 3:16, 17 All Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for doctrine ... that the man of God may be able to meet all demands (*artios*), completely equipped for every good work.

If, now, the Scripture equips us completely for every good work, and if the Scripture does not command us to pray to Mary or to walk on our knees across the plaza in Guadalupe to the cathedral or such like things, we may be assured that God detests our doing them. John Gill, a learned Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century, wrote several pages on this subject in his *Body of Divinity.* Here is a small excerpt that overlaps the present point.

"Seventhly, This may be argued from the sufficiency of them to answer the ends and purposes for which they are written: as *for doctrine, for reproof for correction, andfor instruction in righteousness* (II Tim. 3:16). They are sufficiently profitable and useful *for doctrine.* There is no spiritual truth, nor evangelical doctrine, but what they contain. They are called the *Scriptures of truth,* not only because they come from the God of truth, and whatsoever is in them is truth, but they contain *all truth,* which the Spirit of God, the dictator of them, guides into, and that by means of them (see Dan. 10:21, John 16:13). Every doctrine is to be confirmed and established by them ... Every doctrine proposed by men, to the assent of others, is not immediately to be credited; but is to be tried and proved, and judged of by the holy Scriptures, which are to be searched, as they were by the Bereans, to see whether those things be so or no."

Some other deviations from the Bible are these: The Bible prohibits the use of graven images in worship, not only in the second commandment but also by implication in Acts 19. The Bible teaches justification by faith alone, and does not condone flagellation. Marriage is not regarded as a sacrament; the Bible permits divorce; which the Roman church forbids, only to open an escape hatch in annulments. In this century we see a new development. Like the decadent Protestants who deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Romanists, in a new translation of the Bible, *The New American Bible* (with a *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*), advocate the documentary of JEDP theory. Its introduction to the Pentateuch says, "The grandeur of this historic sweep is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historical traditions or sources. These are primarily four: the so-called Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, and Deuteronomic strands that run through the Pentateuch. ... Each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material. The Yahwist was himself a collector and adaptor. ... This is not to deny the role of Moses in the development of the Pentateuch. It is true we do not conceive him to be the author of the books in the modem sense..Nor in Christ's sense, either; for "Moses ... wrote of me." Christ said they were Moses' writings. But in this documentary theory, while Moses may have had a "role ... in the development of the Pentateuch," he is not supposed to have written much or even written at all.

The denigration of Scripture is also found in the notes of this version. On Gen. 6:1-4 it says, “This is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology.” The account of the flood in the following chapters is called “an intricate patchwork.” And all this is asserted even though there is no extant manuscript of any of these alleged source documents, nor any mention of such in the ancient literature. The Old Testament mentions the book of Jasher; and Herodotus mentions Thales, whose works have all vanished; but there is no evidence for a Yahwist or Elohist or a redactor to make the patchwork.

The notes on the New Testament are not so radical; but John’s Gospel is also pictured as a patchwork of several authors, and the authenticity of the prison epistles, II Peter, and Revelation is at least called into question. However, if the Pope is infallible, he can establish doctrine on his own authority, and the infallibility of the Bible will not be missed.

This idea is clearly expressed in a pamphlet designed for distribution among the laity.

The Bible Today by Frederick L. Moriarty, S J. (Liguorian Pamphlets and Books, by the Redemptorist Fathers, with the Imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ritter, Fifth Printing, June 1872) says this:

“However, on hearing that some sections of the Old Testament are now considered by scholars to be parables or dramatic poems, instead of strict history, some Catholics may feel uneasy and ask: ‘What does this do to the New Testament? How far is this true history? We have heard doubts expressed about the story of the Magi and the real appearance of an angel to Mary at the annunciation.’

“This is a good question and we will try to settle it as best we can, But we must always remember that no Catholic need be fearful or disquieted by the new advances in Scripture study. God has left His Church on earth as the guardian and authentic interpreter of the Scriptures. He has promised her the unfailing guidance of the Holy Spirit until the end of time. The Church will never let us be led astray in matters that concern our salvation.”

11. Perspicuity

In opposition to this degrading the Bible to second place, subject to the authentic interpretation of Rome, there is another point in Reformation theology that needs emphasis. This is often called the perspicuity of Scripture. The Roman church has long opposed the translation of the Bible into the common languages, though its ability to do so has been curtailed in this century, and has condemned Bible Societies for distributing the Scriptures among the laity. But the Reformers argued that the Scriptures were addresses to “*all* that be in Rome;” that is, to the members of the congregations. Paul addressed the Corinthian letters:

I Cor. 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified by Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all* who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ *in every place.*

II Cor. 1:1 To the church of God which is in Corinth, with *all* the saints that are in all Achaia.

The Scriptures were definitely not restricted to an authoritative hierarchy, for the Bereans were more noble than some others because they searched the Scripture to see whether what Paul himself had preached was true. The next words are, “Therefore many of them believed.” Their searching the Scripture convinced them.

It should not need to be said that there are some things in Paul’s epistles hard to be understood. Nor need it be denied that the servants of Satan wrest the Scripture to their own destruction. And it is agreed that a reading of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is most helpful. But note well, the epistles

were addressed to people who had less than a good high school education. Some of them could not read or write, and had to have their friends read Paul's letters to them. More studious people are under obligation to explain the Scripture to those less educated; but the latter are under obligation to search and study and see whether or not the explanations are correct. Again, we refer to the initial verse of II Tim. 3:16-17. All Scripture is profitable for the man of God, any man of God, and we must read it because we all can understand some of it.

12. The Method of Experience

The questions with which this chapter started were: How do we know there is a God; and if there is, what sort of a being is he? One answer was Biblical revelation; the second answer was the Pope or Councils. The third answer listed at the start was experience. But under this heading there are two groups of people, or perhaps three groups, for the first can be subdivided. The first of the two subdivisions is represented best by the major philosopher, Thomas Aquinas. He used the basic thought of Aristotle to construct an argument that began with the simplest sensation and by unimpeachable and demonstrative reasoning came to the conclusion that God exists.
This cosmological argument will be discussed in the next chapter. The second subdivision of the first group differs from the first, not in any basic appeal to experience, but in widening the concept of experience, with the result that these thinkers are not so sure that they have really demonstrated God's existence with the logical necessity that Aquinas claims.

For example, in *Experience and God* John E. Smith forcibly repudiates the restriction of "experience" to sensory perception. His reason is that purely sensory empiricism leads to subjective idealism. After the time of Aquinas the British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, showed that if knowledge is based on "experience" alone, there can be no knowledge other than images in the individual mind. Smith therefore wishes to extend experience to include something other than sensation and perception. Experience, he says, is encounter; it is objective, not subjective; it is a critical product of the intersection between reality and a self-conscious being. Experience does not reside uniquely in the person who has it. Indeed, experience is not mental at all (p. 36); it has a social character. "The experience of being a self distinct from a world of events and other selves is itself an event, and one that is usually accompanied by a shock" (p. 32).

The present writer cannot recall any such shock. He seems always to have realized that he was not the little boy who lived next door. Perhaps before this is called unusual, a poll should be taken. The present writer also remembers being hit by a baseball bat at an early age, as the batter slung the bat and ran for first. The game was no doubt a social situation, but the hurt and bruise were private and individual. So, too, when the law required vaccination against smallpox, the doctor vaccinated this little boy; he did not vaccinate the social situation.

There are further difficulties. Even if "experience" is broadened beyond sensation, and is called *encounter*, there is no guarantee that it escapes the subjective idealism of the former. The term *encounter* may seem to escape subjectivism because it connotes an encounter with Reality. But does not *perception* also connote a perception of Reality? What information does an encounter with a tree give us that a perception does not? What is there about the term *encounter* that prevents its being analyzed into subjective states of mind? What does the word mean? Professor Smith leaves a gap between his "experience" and any object, whether it be a tree or God. He provides no continuity between his undefined experience and his assertion of the reality of a religious object. Neither the being of a God nor the obligation of any moral norms can be derived from the encounter.

Instead of justifying real objects and norms, the author asserts, reiterates, and begs the question. For example, "To ignore the religious dimensions of experience in favor of a wholly dogmatic approach

to God through revelation is an errof ’ (p. 64). But why an error? Could not dogmatic revelation itself be the religious dimension of experience? Then he continues, “The attempt to present God as a being who breaks into the world and human life entirely *ab extra* through sheer self-disclosure must always fail to convey to the would-be believer a proper understanding of his belief.” Just what the words “entirely *ab extra*” are intended to mean is difficult to say. But why *must* the sheer disclosure of a verbal revelation *always* fail to convey a *proper* understanding? This one sentence begs the question three times over. To support the “always” the author has not taken the poll previously suggested. Nor has he shown how he can justify his notion of what is “proper.” And would Abraham agree with the “must”? If the author believes Abraham to have been deceived or without proper understanding, something more is needed than the sheer statement, “This is an error.”

To do Professor Smith justice, one must report that he acknowledges a gap between his start and his conclusions. It is impossible, he agrees, to derive any positive religion from the “religious dimension of experience.” This leaves unsupported, not so much his denial that Christianity is final and exhaustive (p. 74), as his assertion that Buddhism and Hinduism contain true revelations from God. One would like to see a step by step account of how experience justifies this or that truth in Hinduism. If the alleged truth is definite, even the author admits the gap; but if the “truth” is vague enough to be found in some form in all three religions, then “God” is the common characteristic of Jehovah, Shiva, and Nirvana; and this is nothing at all.

There is a third type of empirical religion. The first two, the first more than the second, acknowledge that something can be known about God. This third view claims that God cannot be known. This is the view of mysticism. Mysticism is an English word with a wide variety of meanings. In its purest or most extreme form it is a religion of trances. Certain people claim to have been temporarily absorbed into the divine being. Time, space, and sensation disappeared; so did knowledge; and they were one with God. On the other end of the scale are people who may be merely playing hunches. These persons might have been philosophical, if their first and second hunches had been logically developed into a system. But their education or lack of it prevents them from being systematic, and there is a general disinclination to speak very accurately or logically. Between these two extremes there are all shades and degrees. In the nineteenth century Soren Kierkegaard insisted that to be a Christian it was necessary to believe both of two contradictory propositions. It was necessary to abandon reason. Knowledge was useless and impossible, unless it be the knowledge that an eternal being could not possibly become incarnate and yet did. The content of belief made no difference. Belief in Jehovah and belief in Shiva are equally profitable, provided only that one believe with passion, infinite passion.

This is no place to give a history of mysticism. It is sufficiently characterized as denying the possibility of knowledge, or at least knowledge of God, and in general holding intellect in low esteem. One ancient example was Dionysius the Areopagite. This author was not the disciple that Paul gained in Athens. It was a man who used that name in the fifth century and included in his writings some sections from Proclus the Neoplatonist. He opens his work of *Mystic Theology* with this prayer:

“Triad supernal, both super-God and super-good, Guardian of the Theosophy of Christian man, direct us aright to the super-unknown and super-brilliant and highest summit of the mystic Oracles, where the simple and absolute and changeless mysteries of theology lie hidden within the super-luminous gloom of the silence, revealing hidden things, which in its deepest darkness shines above the most super-brilliant, and in the altogether impalpable and invisible, fills to overflowing the eyeless minds with glories of surpassing beauty.”

A mild form of mysticism, purportedly Biblical, is defended by R.W. Dale in his *Christian Doctrine*, chapter one. He describes a man who, after strolling a mile or two on a glorious Sunday afternoon, lay down on a grassy bank. As he looked at the meadows and orchards and the cloudless sky behind them, he saw the very glory of God. We know God, he concludes, not by deliberate search, not by inferring God's existence from the observation of the universe, but by "immediate perception" (p. 15). "His everlasting power and divinity ... are not reached by logical deduction: they are *seen*, they are *perceived*, by the organs of the mind; how, we cannot tell ... it is a direct perception" (pp. 16, 18, 19). "God's existence is made certain to us — not by reasoning — but by experience. God is perceived and known by the organs of the mind just as the material world is perceived and known by the organs of sense" (p. 22).

Such ecstatic utterances assume that perception is *immediate.* Hegel is not the only one who denied this possibility, and R.W. Dale should defend the assertion that probably most psychologists deny. Note too that our senses are notoriously deceptive; and if so the comparison Dale depends on is faulty. Further, no doubt the eyes and ears are organs of sense. What are the organs of the mind? A number of philosophers have said that the mind has no organs. Dale's language is not so extreme as that of Dionysius, but it is equally empty.

Since the last third of the twentieth century has witnessed a notable upsurge of mysticism, both in the so-called Pentecostal charismatic movement and also in the influx of Zen Buddhism and other oriental trends, the student may wish to consider a few additional points.

For one thing the absorption of the individual into the primal Being is essentially a pantheistic construction. John Scotus Eriugena tried to avoid the accusation by saying that although iron in the fire glowed with the fire, it still remained iron. But others lose or explicitly deny continued individual existence.

For another thing mysticism regularly minimizes doctrinal truth. This is the case, not merely with Zen, but even with Pentecostal ism. The Pentecostals were oveijoyed when the Romanists at the University of Notre Dame spoke in tongues. They welcomed them as brothers and were oblivious to Mariolatry and justification by works. It is natural that when subjective experience is made supreme, historical events, like the death of Christ, and intellectual doctrines like Justification are obscured.

This of course is why Pentecostalism, which was once evangelical, can now accept Romanism, and perhaps Zen also. It is the experience that is important, not the theory. No doubt Pentecostals vary as to what lengths they should go, but the principle of mysticism unites all who have the experience. Therefore mysticism must be intolerant of evangelical Christianity because the latter restricts the way of salvation to Christ's name alone.

On this point some words from Professor William E. Hocking are appropriate. In his *Living Religions and a World Faith,* he commences by saying, "In its nature religion is universal and one." In the later volume, *The Coming World Civilization*, Professor Hocking repeats his vigorous assertions of unity. In effect he says that the Christian faith and *a fortiori* the Buddhist doctrine do not offer themselves as hypotheses competing with other hypotheses. Each one says, This is a Way to Peace; and such an affirmation does not exclude other ways. In a sense there is an Only Way, but it is not the Only Way of a Particular religion. The essence of the precepts and doctrines that mystics in all religions have discerned is the same. The agreements are not even mere similarities; they are identities. Thus the Only Way is not the Way that marks off one religion from another, but "it is the Way *already present in all. ...* The several universal religions *are already fused together, so to speak, at the top*" (p. 149; ital. his).

13. Knowledge is Essential

In opposition to mysticism it will be sufficient to show how the Bible is profitable and profitable by the knowledge it gives us. To be sure, this could hardly be absent from what has already been discussed, for the parts of theology all fit together to form a system. No verse is intellectually or logically unrelated to the rest. Now, the initial verse or two verses in subsection three state the purpose, or at least the main purpose of Scripture. It is that the man of God should be completely equipped for every good work. Another verse, already quoted, says that Christians are sanctified by the truth (John 17:17, 19).

Several verses, which Christians seem never to think of, place great emphasis on knowledge.

II Peter 1:2, 3 Grace and peace be multiplied into you by knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, in proportion as his divine power has granted us, by the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue, all things that tend to life and piety.

This sentence, not completely quoted here, is complicated in construction; it must be read twice; and if read slowly, one will see that all of God's gifts that tend to life and piety come by means of knowledge. As John Trapp wrote in his Commentary, "There is not a new notion or further enlargement of saving knowledge, but it brings some grace and peace with it. All the grace that a man hath, it passeth through the understanding; and the difference of stature in Christianity grows from the different degrees of knowledge." Peter's stress on knowledge, which can only be had by studying the Bible, continues on to his conclusion in 3:17-18.

Peter's emphasis on knowledge, which presupposes the perspicuity of Scripture, is not unique in the New Testament. Paul stresses the idea by using it five times in two lines.

Eph. 1:17, 18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you [a, or, the] spirit of *wisdom* and *revelation* in the *knowledge* of him, the eyes of your heart [i.e. mind] being *enlightened* in order that you may *know* what is the hope of his calling ...

Further stress on wisdom, knowledge, and revelation for the purpose of edification and sanctification occurs throughout I Corinthians. There is the extended argument of chapters two and three. Then also in the chapter on tongues Paul prefers to speak five intelligible words than ten thousand in a foreign language because the aim of speaking in a church service is the edification of the congregation; and the congregation cannot be edified without an intellectual grasp of what is said.

So far the evidence that knowledge is essential to a godly life, and for this purpose God gave us his revelation, has been taken from the New Testament only. The Old Testament is hardly less explicit.

Psalm 119 Blessed are the undefiled ... who walk in the law of the Lord ... Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently ... Wherewithall shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word ... Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

Is it really necessary to quote all one hundred seventy six verses of this Psalm, plus another hundred seventy six from other Old Testament passages to justify the position that the Scriptures are perspicuous in order that the servants of God be edified, sanctified, and prepared for that eternal kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness?

Unfortunately in this age knowledge and scholarship are frequently disparaged by self-styled religious people. The "heart" is superior, far superior, to the "head." Confusion of mind is

confounded with spirituality. Emotions are alive, but logic and theology is cold and dead. But this is not what the Bible says, as one may see in the two verses that follow the next paragraph.

Liberal ecumenism sometimes, Pentecostalism usually, and Romanism always contrast the Reformation position on the Bible as the sole source of knowledge with “the living voice of the church.” The Pentecostal!sts want nothing to do with “dead orthodoxy.” The liberals

misinterpret the verse, the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life, as if the letter of the Bible was one thing, usually wrong, and the spirit of the Bible was another, often right. Of course the verse means that the Law imposes the death penalty on sin, and the Spirit, not the spirit of the law, but the Holy Spirit, regenerates and gives life. As for the living voice of the church, let us indeed insist that there is a living voice, but it is not what Romanism or Pentecostal ism thinks it is. The living voice of God is the Bible itself.

Acts 7:38 Moses ... who was in the church in the wilderness ... received living oracles to pass on to you.

John 6:63, 68 It is the Spirit who gives life ... the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ... Simon Peter answered him ... You have the words of eternal life.

14. A Neo-Calvinistic View

Recently some professedly Reformed scholars, mainly with a Christian Reformed background, and taking their cue from Professor Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, have organized the Toronto based American Association for Christian Scholarship. Their view of the Bible derives from their more general concept of the Word of God. That the Bible and the Word of God are not synonymous terms may be granted by the most orthodox of theologians. God spoke to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the prophets. This speaking is not the written word, even if all that was spoken — and this is doubtful — was later written in the Bible. Then too the most orthodox of theologians admit that Jesus, the Word of God, was not literally the ink symbols written on a piece of papyrus or vellum. Furthermore, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, as identified in I Cor. 1:24, as well as the creative Word in Prov. 3:19-20, are not the Hebrew characters on a page. Hence one may legitimately say that the Bible is the Word of God, even though the Word of God is not the Bible.

But other ideas, not so legitimate are also found in the writings of the Toronto group. There is a disconcerting tendency to refer to the Bible as a physical object consisting of paper with ink spots on it. There is a tendency to concentrate on words, printed or spoken, rather than the thought and message of which the ink spots are merely symbols. Thus Hendrik Hart *(Can the Bible be an Idol*, pp. 9-10) can say, “These writings are not that Word, they reveal it.... We may call the Bible *in an analogical sense* the Word of God. But when we lose the analogy, the pointing beyond itself for its original meaning, the revelational witness out of sight; when we identify the two meanings, then we shall never come to Christ, as he himself said (John 5:39, 46). The Word of God is God, it was in the beginning, creator, wisdom, truth ... We cannot say all of this about the Bible ... The Word of God is not a book at all.”

One must note the confusion, the mixture of truth and error, the ambiguity in this quotation. If “these writings” are regarded as a book in the paper and ink sense, they are indeed “not that Word.” But if the term *Bible* is used to designate the meaning of these writings, the message, the intellectual content symbolized in ink spots, it is indeed that Word. These writings do not merely reveal that Word. They are not that Word in some undefined “analogical” sense. They do not point to some original meaning behind the meaning of the words, something “out of sight.” No, these writings *are*,

or more pedantically, if you wish, this message is itself the very Word of God. Hart may say that in this way we shall never come to Christ; but the verses he cites do not support him, and other verses continue to refute him.

John 5:39 does not disparage searching the Scriptures. Even if the first verb is declarative, "you search," Hart's implication cannot validly be drawn, for the last phrase is, "they are they which testify of me." If the verb is imperative, as is more likely, still less does Hart's implication follow. Furthermore, Jesus does not say or imply that the Pharisees were wrong in thinking that eternal life was to found in the Scriptures. The other verse Hart cites explicitly states that if the Pharisees had understood and believed the Scriptures they searched, they would have believed Christ. Unbelief of Moses' writings, even on parchment as they were, precludes belief in Christ's words, spoken in the air.

In addition to these two verses that Hart quotes and misunderstands, John (8:32) also said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Once again John (17:17) says, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Such verses as these assert that the message of the Bible is true. It is not some "analogy" of the truth outside itself to which it points. It is itself the truth that sanctifies.

The Bible then is the truth and wisdom of God, the mind of Christ, the Scriptures that cannot be broken. Orthodoxy easily admits that the Bible does not reveal all the mind of Christ. The Wisdom of God contains secret things (Deut. 29:29) that God has not revealed and may never reveal. But when James Olthuis (*The Word of God and Hermeneutics*, p. 5) says, "It is not that the Scriptures are one part of the Word of God and that there are other parts," he seems to deny the distinction in Deuteronomy. At any rate, this distinction plays no role in the AACS theory. But the Biblical teaching concerning the Bible on this point seems to be satisfied by maintaining that the propositions that make up the Bible are only some of the propositions in the divine system of truth. Thus the Bible is indeed a part of the Word of God and there are other parts.

Furthermore, although these people allow that the Bible is in some sense the inscripturated Word (cf. Hart, *The Challenge of our Age*, p. 119), their antipathy toward propositions would seem to make inscripturation impossible. What else can possibly be inscripturated except propositions? Of course, questions and commands can be written down. These are not propositions. But does the Bible consist only of questions and commands? I Samuel 25:42 says, "Abigail ... went after the messengers of David and became his wife." This is a proposition, a declarative sentence, a piece of information. Can anyone explain how this could possibly be an inscripturation of something non-propositional, non-cognitive, meaningless? Perhaps the answer is that Hart (ibid. p. 118) inscripturates unintelligible nonsense when he writes, "The Word of God, God's revelation, has been inscripturated without *becoming* a Scripture."

If the above is not quite enough to show how far the Toronto theologians are from the Calvinistic position, perhaps this concluding point will suffice to exhibit the Neo-orthodox nature of their thought. In *Understanding the Scriptures* (pp. 9-10, and 2) Arnold De Graaff writes, "To treat the Scriptures as if it did contain such general theological statements and propositional truths, therefore would be to distort the very nature and purpose of the Word of God. The Bible wants to proclaim, not explain! It is only in his actions that God's being and his attributes are revealed" (pp. 9, 10).

De Graaff s statements are so obviously false that further comment is unnecessary.

15. The Proof-Text Method

To conclude this chapter two more subdivisions seem helpful. The first is a defense of the so-called proof-text method, and second, although external objections are to be kept to a minimum throughout this volume, a refutation of the theory that human language is so imperfect that not even God can tell us the truth.

It is hard to discover any honest reason for opposing the proof text method. The well-worn-out joke — Judas went out and hanged himself; Go thou and do likewise; and what thou doest, do quickly — can hardly be taken seriously enough, even by a liberal, to justify the objection. Of course it is possible to quote verses and by a disregard of their context apply them improperly. Nor need one deny that some theologians have made mistakes, even blunders, in quoting and drawing implications. The liberals can easily point to many such examples. No method guarantees itself against all misuse. Physicists in the laboratory, with the best of intentions, have gone astray. And surely the liberals, who used their so-called scientific method and concluded that the Hittites never existed are in no position to cast the first stone.

Secular scholars do not disdain the proof text method. Examine the old issues of the *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophic*, the *New Scholasticism*, or the *Philosophical Review* and read some articles on Plato and Aristotle. The more scholarly such articles are, the more obviously they depend on citing texts. The excellent French educational system prominently featured the *explication du texte.* How else could one grasp Aristotle's views on any matter? Or beyond articles, take books. *Das Problem derMaterie* by Clemens Baeumker, an example of the highest scholarship, is studded with footnotes citing the texts that support his assertions. Then the liberals sneer, Judas went out and hanged himself.

For a first lesson in theology, however, the student must learn to use the text properly. Some students have memorized verses here and there and have forgotten, if they ever knew, what the contexts are. It is not surprising if they misapply them. The present volume quotes a great deal. The author hopes he has not violated his own precept, but the student is encouraged to see if he has. This examination also include the question whether the author has quoted enough verses. Back a page or two, where Gaussen was mentioned, five verses were quoted from his forty on a given point. Enough verses should be quoted to make whatever point is under consideration; but the student will find it useful to make extensive lists of verses on each point for convenient reference during his later ministry. Granted, the proof text method is not fool proof, but it would take more than fools to bring dishonor on the method itself.

16. Language

Now, the final point for discussion in this chapter has to do with theories of language. This will be somewhat technical and a bit difficult. If a young student gets bogged down, let him skip to chapter two. However, even though this textbook is supposed to be a summary of Biblical teaching, and even though theories of language do not seem to allow for substantiation by proof-texts, yet recent developments necessitate this subject. Nor is the Bible altogether silent on the nature of language. Earlier critics have attacked some historical detail in the Bible; or maybe they have tried to show that the Biblical text does not teach verbal infallibility. But more recent critics, instead of attacking this or that point, have argued that the nature of human language prevents any meaningful discussion of religious topics. Thus it is not a point or two, but the whole Bible that is discarded.

The history is briefly as follows. Early this century Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, greatly exercised over the frequent confusions and ambiguities in metaphysical discussions, proposed the invention of an artificial language that would avoid all the difficulties of ordinary English. After World War I the Vienna Circle initiated Logical Positivism with its sensory verification principle,

making nonsense of theology and metaphysics. This view quickly spread to America — partly because several of its exponents fled here to escape Hitler. In England A. J. Ayer wrote his *Language, Truth, and Logic* in 1936. These men were thorough-going secularists. Later some philosophers of religion modified the extreme secular Positivism so as to provide some legitimate sphere for religion.

But what is not so well known is a catena of early nineteenth century theologians who anticipated, in substantial respects, the late twentieth century theories of language. Perhaps the most influential of these was Horace Bushnell (1802-1876). Conservative theologians took note of and argued against his Moral Influence theory of the Atonement, and to a lesser extent his view of the Trinity; but with perhaps the exception of Charles Hodge they paid little or no attention to his language theory, on which those views of the Atonement and the Trinity were based.

In 1975 Bushnell's theory of language was brilliantly resurrected by a younger scholar, very competent, even if toe enamoured of his nineteenth century forerunner: Donald A. Crosby,

Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language.

Prior to Bushnell Calvinistic and Lutheran theologians pretty much restricted their remarks on language to the assertion that God gave language to Adam at creation. Bushnell countered, though evidence seems impossible to obtain, that God gave to Adam, not *words*, but an *instinct* for language. Genesis, however, records conversations between God and Adam, and hence any alleged instinct must have produced a large vocabulary in a very short time.

Bushnell, having rejected Genesis as literal truth, taught that language began by the attaching of sounds to physical objects. It was at first a language of nouns. All words, he held, originate in physical images. In time — an impossibility often seems possible if diluted by a lengthy time — intellectual terms came into use. Thus physical objects furnish the ground, the only ground, for symbolic and metaphorical words of intellectual discourse. But since words cannot properly represent even physical shapes, for in fact they name only our subjective sensations, the inexactitude of physical language is greatly increased when words are used for intellectual concepts. There is no way to eradicate this distortion. Since logic is grounded in grammar, and since grammar comes from relations in nature, language can apply to truth only in an analogical sense. Understanding requires "poetic insight;" we come closer to the truth only when it is offered "paradoxically." Poetry is better than prose; the poet's contradictions are all facets of the complex truth; poetry furnishes images; inconsistency is a positive good; and the truth resides in feeling.

At this point a preliminary remark comes to mind. If one can assert that varied and inconsistent images approximate the truth, one would have to know the truth in order to judge the approximation. A passenger cannot know that the plane from New York is getting nearer to Los Angeles, unless he first knows where Los Angeles in located.

Disregarding such logical considerations, Bushnell thought it silly to debate whether faith precedes repentance, or other theological niceties, because these details ignore the many faceted whole. The Gospel of John, for example, is the greatest of the four, since it contains the greatest number of contradictions. In his *God and Christ* (p. 96) Bushnell wrote, "The principle difficulty we have with language now is, that it will not put into the theoretic understanding what the imagination only can receive, and will not open to the head what the heart only can interpret." Theology or at least true religion is a matter of metaphors and images — not logical definitions.

In fact the Unitarians are as bad as the Trinitarians because they both use logic. Really, the Unitarians are worse because they use logic better. But faith is feeling, not thinking; it is imaginative and

poetical, not literal and prosaic. “The grand test of orthodoxy is in what the heart receives, not in what the head thinks” *{Christ in Theology*, p. 77).

In several places Bushnell contrasts the head and the heart. This contrast is based on his own aesthetic and emotional experience. It has no basis in the Bible. On the contrary, it is distinctly anti-biblical. The Bible does indeed contrast the lips and the heart: that is, hypocrisy versus sincerity. But in the Bible it is the heart that thinks. Thinking is the function of the heart. Dozens of verses can be and later will be cited. To contrast heart with head is to reject the Biblical teaching on the creation of man in God’s image; and we shall see how it affects the task of evangelism, for these philosophical theories, remote as they first appear to be, impinge on all matters of faith and practice.

One of Bushnell’s admirers, George H. Hastings, puts the matter nicely in metaphorical terms: “It is much to be regretted that, to the mass of readers, the Bible is all prose ... a homoeopathic medicine box ...” *{Lyrical Poetry of the Bible*, in the Biblical Repository, 1847, p. 323). Because of such views Bushnell insisted that preaching should be oratorical, designed to produce an emotional effect, not to teach truth, the notions so frigidly and distortedly aggregated in our doctrinal compends. Instead of dull, prosy dogmatism, supercilious authority, and merely traditional answers to traditional questions, the preacher should be eloquent and express his personal involvement with rich imagery. And according to reports this is how Bushnell actually preached. He was extraordinarily effective in undermining Biblical truth.

To all this a Bible-believer may make several replies. First, while admitting that the Psalms are poetry, and that many books contain figures of speech and metaphors, such as the difficult visions in Revelation, the believer must insist that without literal language the body of the Bible, to use some metaphors of our own, however cosmetic it might appear, would have neither skeleton nor muscles. That Moses delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery is literal history. Or consider a chance paragraph in the New Testament viz., Mark 6:1-6: "And he went out from thence and came into his own country ... and when the sabbath was come he began to teach in the synagogue ... And they were offended at him ... And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.” All this is literal language; there is not even a parable in the paragraph. Above all, what about the book Bushnell calls the most contradictory of all? John 19 reads, in part, “The soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head ... They crucified him and two other with him ... When Jesus therefore received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.” Straightforward, literal, intelligible propositions, sentences, pieces of information. Without such the Bible’s poetry would be a sham. Equally indispensable is the literal language of the Ten Commandments. A command is not an historical sentence, it is not true or false as propositions are; but it is not poetry either; and unless the commands, Thou shalt not steal *etal* are literal and intelligible, the Christian is left without moral norms. Bushnell in his dependence on existential experience and personal preferences is hard put to it to justify any objective type of morality.

These criticisms presuppose that Christianity requires literal historical information and clear-cut moral principles. This necessitates a language that is capable and adequate to express such meanings. If the Scripture says, “men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust toward one another” it is not to be taken as a symbolic justification of the ordination of such men and women to the ministry. Not only history and ethics, but doctrines also — the Deity of Christ, the perseverance of the saints, and so on — must be put in understandable language, for there is a great difference between the idea of earning heaven by one’s own merits and receiving salvation on the basis of Christ’s merit, or between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism.

The theological student, however, if satisfied by this appeal to the Bible, should not ignore more general, philosophical objections to BushnelTs theory of language. Here are some brief samples, and

more will come later.

A linguist or at least a mathematician may well point out that the concept of the square root of minus one, or the concept of the general conic, has no sensory content and cannot be produced from sensation. One of BushnelTs acerbic critics, David Lord, taunted, “The difficulty with him is not at all ... that there are no words that are adequate to convey the thoughts with which his mind teams; but instead, that he has not the thoughts which it is the office of the words he uses to convey.” No doubt this approximates the truth; but it may be more witty than accurate. One can say simply that his presuppositions against logical Calvinism led him to erroneous analyses of language.

Clearly the basic objection to BushnelTs theory of language is its implicit denial of all distinction between truth and error. Unitarianism and Trinitarianism become the same thing. For him doctrine is the metaphorical formulation of subjective experience. To escape complete subjectivity Bushnell sometimes appeals to church history or to (western) society. Social experience, however, cannot supply the needed objectivity, for to use it the individual must first judge one society more acceptable than another. The Chinese, the Bantus, the Hindus, and the hippies do not share BushnelTs preference for nineteenth century Americanism. Society therefore can furnish no objective defense against personal proclivities.

Bushnell had a certain leverage against his nineteenth century critics because they too operated on a philosophic empiricism. Empiricism results in total skepticism, even if Locke, Edwards, and Hodge did not recognize it. Yet the whole early nineteenth century controversy took place within empirical limits.' A more thorough-going and fundamental refutation of Bushnell, his Unitarian trinity, and his moral influence theory of the atonement, can be made on the basis of a non-empirical realism. Such was Plato’s theory of Ideas, which Philo and Augustine altered for the better. Later chapters will discuss its relation to immediate imputation, the intermediate state, and other doctrines.

The twentieth century,s most prominent theory of language, as the beginning of the present sub-section noted, is that of Logical Positivism. It is more consistently empirical than Bushnell and leaves no more room for his emotional religion than for theological Calvinism. Briefly the Logical Positivists hold that language is an evolutionary development from animal cries, and that more complicated organisms found it useful for their immediate needs. With this empirical origin language cannot be properly extended to non-empirical metaphysics, philosophy, or religion. A sentence is meaningful only if it can be tested by sensory perception. Since religion purports to express the trans-phenomenal or transcendental, the language is meaningless.

A quotation from Leonard Bloomfield, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Vol. I, p. 227) will serve as an example of Logical Positivism.

“Language creates and exemplifies a twofold value of some human actions. In its *biophysical* aspect language consists of sound-producing movements and of the resultant sound waves and of the vibration of the hearer’s ear. The *biosocial* aspect of language consists in the fact that the persons in a community have been trained to produce these sounds ... They have been trained to utter conventional sounds as a secondary response to situations and to respond to these slight sounds in a kind of trigger effect.” On page 233 he continues, “Language bridges the gap between the individual nervous systems ... The movements of speech [lip movements of young children] are replaced by internal movements ... This inner speech accounts for the main body of vaguely bounded systems of actions that in everyday parlance goes by the name of ‘thinking’” (p. 235).

This quotation contains three parts. First is a description of the purely physical production of noises, but not really noises, only vibrations in the ear drums. Can such physical motions be identified with

sensations or perceptions; or, if not identified as the Logical Positivists wish, can they so much as produce a mental event? The second part of the quotation leaps to a society that has trained people to make conventional sounds. How a society could be organized and how several people could give a sound a conventional meaning, merely on the basis of physical motions, are questions behaviorism cannot answer. Physics and chemistry produce no basis for making a motion refer to something else. Reference is strictly mental. Bloomfield depends on a "trigger effect." Thus conventional references are produced the way a spring snaps. The third part of the quotation is equally impossible. If conventional signs are merely trigger effects, their snappings may indeed "bridge the gap between individual nervous systems," just as an electric shock can stimulate the gastrocnemius muscle of a dead frog; but the frog never succeeds in understanding the philosophic beliefs of the electricity.

Difficulties inherent in Logical Positivism have forced extensive alterations in the theory. Then, too, other authors have broached other theories of language. Wilbur Marshall Urban was not a defender of Calvinism; but neither was he a behaviorist. His exceedingly interesting volume, *Language and Reality*, proposes a different theory of language that allows for a type of religion and revelation. Since his engrossing book is about seven hundred pages long, it is obvious that what follows is utterly inadequate; but some slight view of a non-behavioristic theory can be had.

Against behaviorism Urban notes that Darwinian naturalism makes language merely an instrument of adaption and control, and therefore incapable of application to whatever is non-physical (p. 31). This includes both mathematics and religion. The great flaw in naturalism, which holds that language is "natural" rather than divine, and has evolved from grunts and screeches, is its inability to account for meaning (p. 67). Stick a pin in a dog and it yelps; but how on an evolutionary view can a yelp become a symbol for something else, as the sound d-o-g is a symbol for the animal stuck? Mere animal noises do not *symbolize*, *indicate*, or *represent* objects (p. 75). When behaviorism depends on the causal theory of meaning, that is, on the theory that the meaning of both the thing and the word are identical to our mode of reacting, it does away with representation and correspondence. A sound does not become a word until detached from the causal context, and this detaching cannot be a function of the physical environment (p. 129).

Urban is to be admired. He attempts to give a positive theory of language in addition to his critical arguments against Logical Positivism. But it may be questioned whether or not his positive procedure is as good as his negative.

Urban lays great stress on the fact that language is meaningful. This is the quality by which he refutes Darwinism and behaviorism. To this end he builds a masterful argument over many pages (185-225). By the concept of meaning he also tries to build a positive theory. Some sounds, he says, though not with great plausibility, are self-authenticating. The words *ache* and *buzz* sound like their meaning. Then he seems to skip from a few such words to a metaphorical extension of them. The word *kid* (though who would say it sounded like a goat?) means a young goat, but by metaphor it is transferred to a human child; and from this Urban concludes that metaphor is the primary law of speech construction (p. 112 ff). In conformity with this he instances the primitive word *ouatou*, which means stream. Then *ouatou-ou-cu* comes to mean ocean. This, he says, is intrinsic expressiveness. It is more than indication; it is representation. The symbol is imitative and conjures up the thing itself.

But how many readers, when they first came to the letters *ouatou* above, conjured up the idea of a stream? Do an experiment on some friends. Tell them you have learned a new word in a primitive language and ask them to guess its meaning. Will twenty-five percent guess *stream*? Probably less than five percent, or less than one percent, would guess correctly. Could it not be the Navajo word for *agave*?

At any rate Urban would have language grow by metaphor, and metaphor is closely connected with mythology (p. 176). Although no evidence is given that metaphor is more closely connected with mythology than it is with love poems, the point is interesting for the Christian student because recent liberal theology usually takes revelation to be mythological.

In his efforts to avoid behaviorism, and further to do justice to non-sensory objects of knowledge, purposes that strain both metaphor and mythology, Urban launches into a long metaphysical section, the consistency of which is not apparent. He holds that language develops from the perceptual stage, through the metaphorical, and on to the symbolic. In the symbolic stage we discover logic; and logic leads to a metaphysic of categories (p. 305). If this metaphic is false, as positivism insists, logic cannot show that it is false; only another metaphic could; but since positivism repudiates all metaphysics, its theory of language fails to disprove the opposing theory. Further, logic is normative. Psychology may tell how we actually think; logic tells us how we ought to think. And presumably Urban wants to show that positivism has no place for universal norms.

After a long discussion of poetry and physics Urban comes to consider religion. Religion and poetry, he says, are almost identical. The language is emotive and dramatic; and he refers to the Psalms and John 17 as examples. But whereas poetry is not seriously "evocative," religion is evocative, invocative, and has the quality of the holy. Therefore religion has a personal God, and this is dramatic (pp. 573, 574). But for this very reason religious language is also mythological; that is, it seeks a non-scientific intelligibility which dramatic language alone cannot express. Therefore religious language communicates something other language cannot. All religions speak a common language and are immediately friends. The words of all religions have a common reference.

All symbolism is distortion; but religious symbols are distortions of intuitable [sensory] realities for the purpose of expressing what is infinite and transphenomenal. Urban uses the example of the many arms and legs of a Hindu idol; and he should have added that the idol and the cross signify the same thing. The passage is thoroughly idolatrous (pp. 582 ff). Such myths, he says, represent the noumenal world, but they never are literal pictures of that world. "The essence of the religious symbol ... is that it both is and is not the truth about the object symbolized" (p. 585). The Lord's Supper, for example, expresses ideas too great for ordinary language; but when we ask the meaning of the symbols, the reply is given in words. Therefore the language of religion must be theology, and rather obviously Urban considers this inadequate, a distortion, and not prosaically true.

The Genesis account of Adam and Eve, for example, is not true literally. Like a fable it represents the separation of man from God, and this is a phenomenon of religious life. But if one separate the "belief-content" from the mythical language, there is no religion left. Myth is indispensable to religion because (1) myth is the only source of religious symbolism, and (2) myth is a unique way of apprehending reality (pp. 590-593). What religion tells us implicitly is of more importance than what is says explicitly. Religion is the belief in the conservation of values. The ideas of a Creator and a final judgment mean that values have cosmic significance. Therefore science and mathematics can never contradict religion because they do not speak the same language (pp. 619-624).

To all this a Christian can reply that the explicit meaning of Almighty God's creating the universe by the word of his power is of far greater importance than a vague belief in the conservation of some undefined values. The literal resurrection of Christ from the dead may conflict with science or scientism, but so much the worse for scientism. The prose statement of justification by faith in Romans 3:24-26 outweighs all mythological poetry. Urban will reply: you have lost all religion and we do not speak the same language. We answer: Correct, we do not speak the same language and neither do we accept your unintelligible religion.

At the beginning of this sub-section on language the student was warned to skip it if he found it difficult. But any student who did not take this good advice, and has read to this point, should by now try to realize that the subject matter is not foreign to the most important doctrines of Christianity. It is fundamental, for if language is inherently incompetent to express theological truth accurately, then no doctrine can be accepted. The whole is poetry, myth, or nonsense. Wittgenstein held that language is an ill-fitting mold of thought. Bergson and Whitehead say that language distorts reality because the purpose of language is practical. Urban we have just completed; and Brunner insists that not only language, but thought itself cannot grasp God.

Another example, though not so intricate, of the relation of religion and language, is found in Frederick Sontag's *How Philosophy Shapes Theology.* After ending chapter two with the remark that the philosophies of Spinoza, Hume, and Kant are all "verbal patterns of crucially defined terms," Sontag begins chapter three with the additional remark that "it is possible to lead a religious life without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it." Although these statements are literally true, as in the case of a mute moron, they seem to invite misunderstanding. First, many contemporary books on religion, or even on philosophy as a whole, reduce the subject matter to "verbalizing," with the result that the test of acceptability, not to say truth, is simply grammatical. If the language used is "ordinary" English, then the speaker cannot be criticized. So far as the avowed "ordinary language" philosophers are concerned, there seems to be no question beyond the determination of whether or not the speaker conforms to some relatively wide linguistic usage. The *thought* behind the words has evaporated. In the second place, no one will deny that a religious life can go on "without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it." In addition to the deaf and dumb, the whirling dervishes are good examples. Even some devout Christians, uneducated and bom unintelligent, may fail to verbalize and even to think very much. But one must doubt that it is possible to lead a Christian life without some thinking. Sontag's use of "religious life," and not Sontag's only, depends on classifying all professed "religions" in one category. This results in confusion. Such philosophers may claim that all religions believe in some sort of God, and thus find a unitary, all inclusive religion. But the term *God* is an excellent and fatal example of verbalizing without thought. Spinoza constantly speaks of God — *Deus sive natura* — and means the universe; Moslems have a fairly definite concept of Allah, quite distinct from Spinoza's concept; and Christians mean the Trinity. If Buddhism is a religion, as it is usually supposed to be in "ordinary" language, then it is false to say that all religions believe in some sort of God. Perhaps, however, all religions believe in some sort of "heaven." Again, this is verbalization without thought. Nirvana, the Islamic heaven, and the Christian heaven, not to mention Spinoza's *species aeternitatis,* have no common intellectual content. Hence a discussion of "religious life" must be vitiated from the beginning by radical ambiguities. Clarity of thought, not similarity of words, can be achieved only by explicit discussions of the Koran's view of life, or the Bible's, or Spinoza's. The ambiguity of classifying them all together allows Sontag to say, "if this is true, then religion as a way of life can be quite independent of philosophy" (p. 46). But the Christian way of life cannot at all be independent of thought. From the ambiguously true statement quoted, Sontag draws the unambiguously false statement that "in order to understand either religion or philosophy, the independence of the religious life must be realized." It should not be necessary to add, but to avoid unintelligent criticism let it be said, that Christianity does not regard the inarticulate and unintelligent devotion of a disadvantaged child as the ideal Christian life. Athanasius, Luther, and Calvin seem to be better imitators of Paul.

I Cor. 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.

A final and last example of theories of language and their application to religion will be *Words and the WORD* by Kenneth Hamilton (Eerdmans, 1971). Although the theory is basically the same, Hamilton differs from Urban in two points: he is a theologian and not a secular philosopher, and he carries his theory beyond the stage of mythological language in his attempt to explain religious

language. Like Urban he rejects Logical Positivism, for it turns theology into nonsense; and he also judges idealism as inadequate because in extending language to cover transphenomenal reality it loses the world of sense where history takes time and space.

Although the author rejects idealism, he retains a somewhat similar view of mythical language. On page 86, where he has left off his descriptions of other views and is totally engaged in explaining his own, he says, “Nevertheless, as we have seen, all language grows out of mythic thinking and still bears the marks of its origin.” This is a surprising statement for two reasons. First, the words, “as we have seen” are surprising because the reader has nowhere seen it. Hamilton has provided no reason. In the second place, it is equally implausible to assert, without evidence, that all language still bears the marks of its mythological origin. True enough, Hamilton admits that scientific thought “tries as much as possible to escape from the subjectivities of language by using the sign-language of mathematics" (p. 87). But it is not enough to brush mathematics aside with such a brief admission. What is needed is evidence that the words *two* and *three* bear the marks of their mythic origin. What are these marks? They should be specified. For that matter Hamilton makes no effort to show that even the word *cat* has a mythological origin and still bears discernible traces of the same.

Chapter two, where Hamilton apparently tries to justify his mythical view, is replete with ungrounded assertions. Examples are: (1) “Myth then is not in the first instance a fiction imposed on one’s already given world ...” — I should think it is; (2) “each life reenacts in part the history of the human race” — sufficiently vague to be true in some sense or other, but does Hamilton mean ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,’ or that each boy sometimes suffers a Napoleonic complex; (3) “The close relationship between the mythic and the religious consciousness is very visible *here* [italics mine],” i.e. in the fact that children’s “personal excursions into myth making result in their being accused of being deliberate liars!” — where is there *here* any relationship between the religious consciousness and myth; (4) similarly to a previous thought, “Being something [like a cat] has been given a name, it remains unknown ... Naming it causes it to ‘be’ in the sense that it now enters into human consciousness as an entity existing in its own right...” — was this true of the planet Neptune after it was discovered and before it was named, or the continent now named America?

Here then are four instances in which Hamilton has given no reasons for asserting that “all language grows out of mythic thinking and still bears the marks of its origin.”

Although mythology is the basis of Hamilton’s theory of language and inspiration, one must not suppose that he is a simple “mythologist.” He is far from endorsing Bultmann’s program of demythologization. To arrive at Biblical language, two steps away from mythology must be taken. The first is to dilute, or refine, myth into poetry. This advance, he says, gives us a God who really exists, as opposed to mythological gods who do not.

In any case, poetry cannot give us any literal truth about God. It still retains too much myth. Of course, the retention is not all bad. Myth, says the author, is not merely superstition (p. 63). “The true religion is born in the midst of the many false religions.” From which one may conclude that mythology had to work toward a concept of Jehovah before Adam could have had this idea. No evidence for the quoted statement is given. It apparently depends on the evolutionary principle that monotheism is a late development.

Even so, the influence of the old mythological language continues, either in poetry or in Hamilton’s second step. ‘The Scriptures did not fall down from heaven ...” (p. 63). Well, of course, not even the tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments fell down from heaven. Moses used a pen to write them. Therefore what the author expressly says is literally true. But does he not mean to suggest that the verbal message of the Scriptures did not come from heaven? “The Word of God

comes to us as the words of men, men rooted in their times and speaking the language of their country." Again, true literally, apart from its context. The Scriptures come *to us* in the twentieth century translated into English. They did not fall down from heaven to us in our life time. But what about revelations to Adam, Abraham, and even to Moses before he wrote them down? Could not God have used Hebrew? Must God have used language formed by mythology? Is God incapable of revealing the literal truth? Hamilton clearly holds that human language is incapable of expressing literal truth about God. His last sentence in chapter two would have been unnecessary and impossible if he had thought that Scriptural language was literal. The last sentence is: "How human language, formed on patterns that have grown out of myth can convey to us the truth of God's own revelation: this is the subject of my next two lectures" (p. 63)

Before summarizing chapters three and four, one can well pause to consider the phrase *human language.* When Paul in human Greek says that God justifies believers, did he speak the literal truth or some other, unknowable kind of truth, that is not truth at all? A phrase similar to "human language" occurs frequently in other authors. They contrast "human logic" with "divine logic." But do they dare make explicit what this phrase means? Human logic says, If all men are mortal, and if Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal. But if divine logic is different, then all men can be mortal and Socrates can be a man, yet Socrates will not be mortal. Or, again, if human mathematics says that two plus two is four, and if divine truth differs from ours, then for God two and two are five or ten or anything but four. The point here is that human logic and divine logic are identical. Human logic is a part of the divine image in man. It is God's trademark stamped upon us. Only by rejecting the Biblical doctrine of God's image can one contrast human language with divine language and divine logic with human.

Finally, if human language cannot be literally true, any assertion "language is not literal" cannot be literally true. The position is self-refuting; and one can have little hope of explaining how "language formed on mythical patterns" can convey God's truth.

At this point Hamilton begins to take his second step away from myth. He goes from myth to poetry to parable. "Christian faith ... gladly admits that better knowledge of the objective world has made religions founded upon the literal acceptance of myth untenable" (p. 67).[2] Yet he will have man, by reason of symbolic language, remain a "myth-making creature." Then, he continues, Christian faith gives "no privileged instruction about 'what the case is' in the created world," e g. that David was King of Israel, "nevertheless [it] gives him essential knowledge about the world as divinely created. It also gives him assurance of the human meaning of his existence. It mediates this meaning beyond the reaches of his own consciousness But if faith or revelation cannot tell us about David, how can it tell us about the divine creation of the world? Surely the latter is harder to discover. Then too, how can faith "mediate" any meaning beyond consciousness? Is not faith an element of consciousness?

But let us get on with the second step away from mythic language, to parabolic language that supposedly reveals divine truth better than plain literal statement can. Why and how does Hamilton arrive at parable? The how is not at all clear. No theory is worked out to show that language, assumed to originate in myth, must by the laws of evolution become poetry, and then by those same laws become parabolic. Hamilton's *why* is clearer than his *how.* The reason is that he does not want to get so far away from mythology as to arrive at literal truth. He wants to prepare the ground by rejecting plenary and verbal Inspiration. "'Dictation' theories of revelation sometimes seem to assume that God communicates His Word through vocables,[3] so that understanding the exact sense of an aggregate of propositions is to receive the Word of God.

This is surely to bind the divine Word to the measure of human words ..."

This type of argument is essentially similar to the Pentecostalist charge that those who repudiate speaking in tongues 'bind the divine Spirit to the measure of their human theology.' This is irrelevance. It is not a question of the Spirit's omnipotence. It is a question of what the Spirit will to do. If God has restricted the working of miracles to the age of the prophets and the apostles, it does not limit his power to say that there are no miracles today. Similarly, when we say that God spoke Hebrew to Abraham and Greek to Paul, we do not bind God at all; we simply resort what he did. It is rather Hamilton who binds God by denying him the ability to speak literal language to his creatures.

This impoverished view of the Bible seems to lead Hamilton to expect revelations outside the Scripture. The remainder of his sentence half quoted above is:

"for it is to say that we already have the words that can state all that God can possibly want us to know." "Can possibly" is the language of propaganda. The question does not concern what God can possibly do: it is a question of what God has actually done. The Reformation view is that the Scriptures give us all the information about salvation that God wants us to know. As Π Peter 1:3 says, God's "divine power has [already] given us everything pertaining to life and piety." And the well-known II Timothy 3:16-17 says that Scripture furnishes a man *completely* for *every* good work. Nothing else is needed. For this reason Hamilton's word "state" is also a propaganda device. It was never the Reformation view that the Bible states, explicitly, all that God wants us to know. But as the Westminster Confession says, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture," i.e. by human logic that is logical because it is first divine logic.

Therefore, what Hamilton objects to seems to be Biblical divine truth, viz., "faith in God consists essentially in the believing reception of..." not perhaps of "each and every scriptural statement," for this would require a prodigious memory, but at least of the basic theology "as objectively true" (p. 75).

It is quite clear that Hamilton does not accept the Bible as the Word of God. "The fact that words are in the Bible ... does not mean that our reading of them necessarily must yield authoritative statements that we can proceed forthwith to identify with the Word of God." Well, of course, not *necessarily*, for some people some of the time do not understand the words they read; so that "our reading" the words, if we are such people, does not necessarily yield correct propositions. The *phraseology* here is again propaganda, for the important question is not whether some people misread the Bible, but whether the words and sentences of the Bible are authoritative statements because they are true because they are the words of God. It is obviously poor thinking to attack a theory of the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures on the ground that some people do not understand the words. Must one take a textbook on calculus as mythological, poetic, or parabolic and not literally true, because some high school students cannot understand it? It is by such invalid reasoning that Hamilton rejects the Scripture as revelation. He says, "Were this the case [identifying the words of the Bible with the word of God] then the Bible, rather than being that inspired record ... would be the written law of God."

Now there is a sense in which the Bible is an inspired record. It inerrantly records God's revelation to Abraham and the wars of David King of Israel. But in addition to being a record of divine revelations, it is itself the complete revelation. As the opening section of the Westminster Confession (determinative of the evangelical position) says, "it pleased the Lord ... to commit the same [earlier revelations] wholly unto writing ... those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." Thus in contrast with Hamilton's denial, the Bible is indeed the written law of God.

It must be emphasized that Hamilton has rejected the historical position of Protestantism, and in doing so has misunderstood what that position is. He speaks of “a lapse into legalism among those followers of Calvin who had gone beyond Calvin’s robust practical grasp of Christian faith to erect, *as he did not* [italics mine], theories of verbally inerrant inspiration.”

Now, besides the pejorative use of the words *lapse* and *legalism* in contrast with *robust,* one must note the historical reference in the words “as he did not.”

Calvin’s position, which is somewhat different from what Hamilton would have us believe, is set forth at length by Kenneth Kantzer in the E.T.S. publication, *Inspiration and Interpretation* (edited by John F. Walvoord, Eerdmans, 1957) chapter four, *Calvin and the Holy Scriptures.* Here Kantzer quotes Calvin’s *Institutes,* “God ... was pleased to commit and consign his word to writing ... he commanded also the prophecies to be committed to writing, and to be held part of his word. To these at the same time were added historical details, which are also the composition of prophets but dictated by the Holy Spirit” (p. 137).

In fact, as Kantzer points out, Calvin frequently asserted that God “dictated” the text. True enough, Calvin did not use the verb as it applies in a modem business office. But its frequency should warn everyone against attributing to Calvin a view that God dictates errors. Kantzer refers to Calvin’s calling the prophets “clerks” and “penmen,” “sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit; and therefore their writings are to be considered as the oracles of God.” He also calls them “organs and instruments.” He refers to Scripture as the “sure and infallible record,” “the unerring standard” — here is inerrancy, — “the pure Word of God” and “the infallible rule of his holy truth.” Quoting no less than thirteen other passages, Kantzer remarks, “The merest glance at Calvin’s commentaries will demonstrate how seriously the reformer applied his rigid doctrine of verbal inerrancy to his exegesis of Scripture” (p. 142).

May I also add a quotation from the Institutes I, vii, 1: “Believers ... are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard *the very words* pronounced by God himself.”

In spite of the fact that Hamilton wants to escape myth through poetry to parable, he continues to say, “The language of Scripture ... would have been incomprehensible otherwise ..." i.e. unless mythic patterns had been used. Ananias would not have understood the directions to Straight St, had it not been mythological in form. “Sumerian, Babylonian, Phoenician, and Egyptian myths [were] taken up into the biblical accounts of creation” and "Gnostic myths [are] present in the N.T. descriptions of Christ[4]... The biblical language employs the imagery of myth, while transforming its content.[5] Creation myths in which the gods wrested apart earth and heaven out of the body of the monster Chaos account for some of the phrasing of the biblical account of creation” (p. 89).

Clearly, however much Hamilton may want to go beyond myth, he does not seem to get very far away, for on the next page he says, “Lacking the mythic pattern [of Gnosticism] that originally produced the necessary terminology, we should not be able to speak of Christ’s death and resurrection” (p. 90).

Is this not complete nonsense? Am I dependent on Gnostic or other myths when I speak of Roman soldiers laying Jesus on a cross and pounding nails into his hands and feet? Certainly I understood this in childhood long before I ever heard of Gnosticism. Nor am I at all sure that Matthew knew anything about Gnosticism. If anyone now replies that Matthew and I did not need to have known Gnosticism because we use language already formed, let him explain to us how mythology formed the words: nails, soldiers, cross, spear, and death. Similarly what mythology is needed for Peter to see that the tomb was empty and later to see Jesus in Galilee and talk with him? Is it not therefore

complete nonsense to say that we could not talk about Christ's death unless mythology had given us these words?

One hardly escapes the impression that the author does not treat his opponents fairly. He says, "Yet because revelation is given in human words, it cannot be more precise than language allows. [How true! A perfect tautology. But is God, who' produced language, unable to use it with perfect precision?] The belief that the Bible consists of statements of *literal truth* [italics his], therefore, is ill-conceived. [The *therefore* is a logical fallacy.] The notion of literal truth is quite correct if we oppose literal to the mythical ... In this sense we must say that God *literally* created the world .... It is quite another matter, though, if we insist that all the statements of Scripture are literally true ..." (p. 91). This sort of argument is hardly fair to the Reformation view because no one from the time of Moses to the present ever said that all statements are strictly literal. Did Luther; Quenstedt, Gaussen, or Warfield ever say so? Of course there are figures of speech, metaphors, anthropomorphisms, and, the like. But these would be meaningless if there were no literal statements to give them meaning. For example, II Chronicles 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth," is ludicrously ridiculous if taken literally: little eyeballs rolling over the dusty ground. But unless the statement, God is omniscient, is literal, the figure has nothing to refer to. Surely Hamilton did not publish his book to remind us that the Bible contains some figures of speech. And yet his argument here depends on the alleged fact that someone said "all the statements of Scripture are literally true."

Consider the footnote on this page: "'Literal' is not synonymous with 'historical.' Inspiration does not imply that what is inspired must be understood literally, and even less that everything must be viewed as having actually happened ... To put it bluntly, to accept everything reported in the Bible as having actually happened, one must tamper with the text." These words, which Hamilton with approval quotes from H. M. Kuitert are unclear. The language is typical of liberals who want to appear conservative to orthodox people, while they undermine the truth of the Scripture. When Kuitert says "everything reported," does he refer to metaphors, to statements made by Satan, or does "everything reported" refer to everything reported as having actually occurred? The first two possibilities are puerile. The third is a repudiation of Evangelical religion. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the latter is the meaning intended. For example, II Peter claims that it was written by Peter. About such a claim Hamilton writes, "For a long time now, every author has been considered to have a proprietary right over his works. But the biblical books came out of a milieu in which such a concept was unknown, and where there was no issue of truth or falsehood involved in using a revered name in connection with writings by other hands." This statement is not true even of pagan scholarship, for the Alexandrian philosophers carefully distinguished between thirty-six genuine. Platonic dialogues and ten spurious. See also E. M. B. Green, *Second Peter Reconsidered* (Tyndale Press, 1960), where he writes to the effect that forgeries were not cordially received as the critics maintain, but that the sub-apostolics distinguished themselves and even Apollos from the apostles, and deposed the author of *Paul and Thekla* for his imposture. Another instance was Serapion, who banned the *Gospel of Peter* from his church because by careful investigation he had discovered it was a forgery.

After his remarks on the authorship of spurious writings, Hamilton comes quickly to his solution to the problem of how language with its mythical inheritance can express divine truth. It is done by parable. The book of Jonah, he says, does not report actual occurrences. Its literary form shows that it is a parable. [There never was a Jonah. I guess there was no Ninevah, either] Everyone acknowledges that Christ taught in parables.[6] Not everything in the Bible, Hamilton acknowledges, is a parable; the apocalyptic visions are not. But "if we are to look for a 'key' mode of language-usage in Scripture, then parable fits this position much more suitably than myth does" (p. 100).

Let us immediately agree. There are also other sentences in the book, which, if detached from their context, can be understood in an orthodox sense. So, it is true that parable is more suitable than mythology. But is parable more suitable than and a substitute for literal language? Hamilton has made the wrong comparison. He has here avoided mentioning the weak link in his argument; for if there is no literal truth of which the parable is an illustration, it has no referent and becomes pointless.

In conclusion, first, Hamilton's theory of language is destructive of Christian truth. Surely language, as God's gift to Adam, has as its purpose, not only communication among men, but communication between man and God. God spoke words to Adam and Adam spoke words to God. Since this is the divine intention, words or language is adequate. To be sure, on occasion, even on frequent occasions, sinful man cannot find the right words to express his thought; but this is a defect of man, not an inadequacy of language. The Bible does not countenance a theory that originates language in pagan mythology with the result that divine truth is unintelligible. Similarly, second, on Hamilton's theory God remains unknowable. The chief difficulty with myths is not that they are literally false, but rather that their alleged non-literal "truth" is meaningless. Hamilton fled from myth to poetry to parable in order to arrive at some sort of revelation, but he never succeeded in showing how parables convey truth or what truths parables convey. Their "message" remains unintelligible.

Third, Hamilton has rejected the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration and places himself outside the bounds of historical Evangelicalism.

The Scriptural refutation of Hamilton's theory of parabolic language, as well as that of other theories depending on poetry, myth, or other non-literal expressions, is very plainly and literally stated by Jesus himself, as recorded in

John 16:25, 29 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs; but I shall show you plainly of the Father ...

His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speaketh thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

This concludes the chapter on the Scriptural doctrine of Scripture. As for these theories of language, their self-refuting quality is enough to discredit them. Even if they were not self-refuting, their futility in the practice of any intelligible religion makes them worthless. But for the establishment of a positive theory of language it is necessary to consider the nature of God as a rational being, the nature of man as a created being, the nature of the revelational message as an intelligible communication; and these matters are properly considered in their places in the following chapters.

Notes

1 *Revelation and Inspiration,* p. 79. Oxford Univ. Press, 1927.

2 By *objective world* here Hamilton seems to mean *sensory world,* as if the world of meaning or intelligibility were subjective. Yet on p. 68 he speaks of the Word Himself- surely not a sensory object -as objective. It is hard to say precisely what his argument is on these two pages.

3 For instance, God directed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, or, God directed Ananias to go to the house of Judas on Straight St. and ask for a man named Saul of Tarsus. Or are not these passages, with their specific directions, the word of God?

4 For a definitive refutation see *The Origin of Paul* 'v *Religion,* J. Gresham Machen.

5 Does it? How? With what result?

6 A common criterion for distinguishing a parable of Christ from something he reports as having happened is the absence in the first and the presence in the second of names: a man that was a householder went out early to hire laborers, or a certain king made a marriage feast for his son, versus, the blood of Abel ... of Zachariah, son of Barachiah, whom ye slew, or other references to OT events.

Chapter 2 – God

As chapter one explained, it is the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, that provides mankind with the contents of Theology. These books, this Book, the Holy Scripture gives us an enormous amount of information. It is information, no less. Liberals frequently show a dislike for information. They reduce the history of the Old Testament to the levels of Aesop's fables — interesting, even profitable, but not true. Or if some of the historical accounts are true, they are no more than good examples and psychological reactions to religious experiences. This is not the Christian position. The Bible gives information. It contains uninteresting genealogies and hair raising histories, as well as lyric poetry and puzzling prophecies. All of it in one way or another relates to God. Where should one start? Well, since the word theology means the account, the study, the theory of God, it is best to postpone everything else, even the saving activity of the incarnate Christ, and begin with God as he is in himself alone. "In the beginning, God."

Question four in the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is God?" The catechism then answers, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." The last several words are usually called the attributes of God. They are his characteristics. If we know God's characteristics, we know his character. We know what sort of being God is. Who can say that such knowledge is unimportant? Theology is the most important knowledge there is.

The term attribute, and the question what an attribute is an attribute of, and some similar matters, have given rise to extremely intricate discussions of difficult philosophical problems. They can hardly be called elementary. Hence they seem out of place here. Yet, since every minister of the Gospel ought to know something about them, they cannot be completely omitted. To compromise, they will be reserved for a concluding section of this chapter, and the very young student can skip them, if he wishes.

Now, then, the bible begins with God. It says that God was in the beginning. This may not quite say that God is eternal; at any rate such is not the emphasis. The emphasis is that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Creation, of course, is a divine action. It is something God did. In this sense it is not directly a statement of what God is in himself alone. Nevertheless the idea of creation presupposes the attribute of omnipotence. It might require considerable power to move a ten ton rock. But how much power is required to produce one tenth of an ounce of rock from absolutely nothing? Creation and omnipotence therefore seem to be the first thing the Bible wants us to learn about God.

1. Omnipotence

In addition to the fact that the Bible begins with the divine omnipotence, there are probably more verses in the rest of the Bible that assert this attribute than there are asserting other attributes, omniscience for example. Following are a few, only a few, that ascribe omnipotence to God.

Gen. 17:1 Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said, I am God Almighty.

Gen. 28:3 God Almighty bless thee.

Gen. 35:11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty.

Job 24:1 Why are not times stored up by the Almighty?

Job 42:2 I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained.

Psa. 135:6 Whatever the Lord pleased, he did.

Jer. 32:17 There is nothing to hard for thee.

Dan. 4:35 He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitant of the earth, And none can stay his hand or say unto him, What does thou?

Matt. 19:36 With God all things are possible.

This brief list, to which scores of more or less explicit verses could be added, is sufficient to show that the Bible represents God as Almighty. Nothing is too hard for him; he can do anything, and he actually does everything he wants to. No power can stop him.

Does not the Bible so teach? Strangely, Geddes MacGregor, professor in Bryn Mawr College, in his Introduction to Religious Philosophy (p. 269) says, "There is no suggestions anywhere in either the OT or the NT of the notion of omnipotence in the sense of 'the ability to do anything whatsoever.' Nor... was it implied in the use of the word pantokrator in the ancient Creeds."

The question here is not whether God is omnipotent. The question is simply, Does the Bible teach that God is omnipotent? Another question answers this last one. Do not the texts just quoted show with sufficient clarity that MacGregor has seriously misunderstood a great deal of the Bible? Let the professor and all other secularists believe in whatever sort of God they wish to, or in no God at all; but let scholarship determine accurately what the Bible says instead of altering the Bible's message to suit the scholar's notion of what the Bible ought to have said, but didn't. As for the main question, Does the Bible teach omnipotence? let one ask, what could possibly be beyond the power of a Being who could create something, even the least thing, from nothing?

Some people who do not think very clearly have objected that omnipotence is a self-contradictory concept. If God can do everything, he ought to be able to create a stone so heavy that he could not lift it. Or, he ought to be able to draw a Euclidean plane square with only three straight lines. However, it is not the concept of omnipotence that is self-contradictory; it is these two examples. A square by definition is a four sided figure. To speak of a square with only three sides is to talk nonsense. The sentence does not mean anything. A three sided square is nothing. Therefore to challenge God to draw a three sided square is not to challenge him at all. Similarly, if a bit less obviously, a stone so heavy that omnipotence could not lift it is not a stone. Stones by definition are things that omnipotence can life. Or, in general, what omnipotence cannot do, when expressed in words, is a sentence that has no meaning. The objection therefore is empty because it proposed nothing that can be understood. It does not present an intelligible problem.

There is another and more pointed form of this objection. Can God sin? One answer is that God can sin, if he wished to, but he will never wish to. This answer, however, is rather poor because it allows the next question, Can God wish to sin? If God can do everything, cannot he wish to sin? The reply must be the same as that given to the more obviously faulty objection about a three sided square; namely, that it disguises a self-contradiction. For one thing, it depends on the definition of sin. Later on sin will be defined as "any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God." These laws, however, apply to man, and not to God. God cannot dishonor his father and mother because he has none. He can, of course, kill a man, and he did so in the case of Ananias and Saphira; but he cannot commit the crime of murder because he is the Potter and has every right to do anything with

the clay. Man has no rights in his dealings with God. Similarly God cannot steal because he owns everything. Behind these particulars there is a deeper reason. God wills the moral law much as he wills creation. His command, the law he promulgates, is ipso facto the norm of right and wrong. Hence whatever he does is by definition right. To suppose that God can wish to sin because God can do everything is to bog down in self-contradiction. Concerning this point more needs to be said in later connections, for everything in some way fits into everything else. Therefore it is best to continue enumerating the attributes.

2. Omniscience

A second attribute is omniscience. It is related to omnipotence and to the remaining attributes; but the relationships cannot be discussed without first looking at the Biblical data for each one. As for omniscience some passages in the Bible are perfectly general statements that God knows everything. But there is also such a variety of particular items of knowledge mentioned that when compiled they support the widest generalization. The first group is smaller in number.

I Sam. 2: 3 The Lord is a God of knowledge.

II Chron. 16:9 The eyes of the Lord run to and for through the whole earth, cf. Zech. 4:10

Psa. 147:5 His understanding is infinite.

I John 3:20 God ... knoweth all things.

The first of these verses, since it does not specify how much God knows, is better adapted to supporting the point that God is spirit, than that he is omniscient. The second is picturesque, and in a way suggests that God knows at least what takes place on earth. The fourth is completely general and conclusive.

The third in the above list may need some exegesis. Is God infinite? Is God's knowledge infinite? What does the term infinite mean? Subject to later qualifications, we may ask, and some theologians have asked, whether there is an infinite number of propositions for God to know? God may be omniscient, i.e. he may know every truth that there is to know, but is all truth a finite or an infinite number of propositions?

If the verses that assert omniscience in all its generality are only a few in number - few but sufficient - the number of verses that specify particular items of God's knowledge are very numerous. The list here is long and yet it is only a sample.

I Cor. 2:10 The Spirit searcheth ... the deep things of God ... the things of God, none knoweth save the Spirit of God.

Ex. 4:11 Who hath made man's mouth ... is it not I the Lord?

Psa. 90:4,8. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past... Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.

Eccl. 3:15 That which is hath been long ago ... and God seeketh again that which is passed away.

Isa. 43, 44, 45 I have given Egypt as they ransom. ... Yet now hear, O Jacob .. whom I have chosen. ... I have made the earth ... I, even my hands, have stretched the heavens.

Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him.

Job 38:41 Who provideth for the raven his prey, when his young ones cry unto God.

Psa. 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Psa. 139:1-6 O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me ... Thou understandeth my thought ... thou knoweth it altogether ...

Prov. 5:21 The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord.

Matt. 10:30 The very hairs of your head are all numbered, (cf. Acts 27:34)

Acts 15:18 The Lord, who maketh these things known from of old.

Gen. 3:15 I will put enmity between thee and the woman ... he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

I Kings 13:2 A son shall be born to the house of David.

Isa. 45:11 Ask me of the things that are to come.

Isa. 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning.

Dan. 2:47 Of a truth, your God is the God of gods ... and a revealer of secrets.

John 6:64 Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who believed not, and who it was that should betray him.

Heb. 4:13 There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Some of these verses may seem irrelevant, and it is certain that they do not all carry the same weight for the subject at hand. Exodus 4 and Isaiah 43 were not written primarily to teach God's omniscience; but they indicate that God knew, in the time of those prophets, what he had previously created. Similarly Job 38 and Psalm 103 emphasize God's providential care; but to do so he must know the ravens and us. Thus each of these verses, with a hundred others, has its point and contributes to a cumulative description of God as all-knowing.

That God knows himself might seem to go without saying. Its usefulness, however, lies in the fact that, since I Cor. 2 shows that God knows his own mind, and these other particularities also, we are warned against the dialectical or neo-orthodox theologians (Barth, Brunner et al) who claim that God is "Wholly Other". If God were wholly other, then since man is rational,

God would be irrational. Since too man knows one or two truths, it follows that a God totally different could not know anything. What is wholly other cannot be an object of knowledge: since man is an object of knowledge to man, himself and others, God could not be an object of knowledge, either to himself or to us. Such is one of the unfortunate results of Neo-orthodoxy.

That God made man's mouth and, so to speak, remembers that he did so; that man's iniquities are before his mind; that he knows he gave Egypt for a ransom, and so on — that God knows past events also seems hardly worth mentioning. But it serves to distinguish the Christian position from that of

Aristotle. This philosopher argued that since God was the best of all being, and to be best included having only the best thoughts, thoughts of the best things, God could not degrade his mind by thinking of men's evils. Nor could God know the events of history, for even if they were not positively evil, yet they were trivial and beneath his notice. For Aristotle therefore God could know only himself. The God of the Bible knows how many hairs we have on our heads. God also knows our secret thoughts. He knew that the men of Keilah wanted to kill David. It is impossible for man to close his mind to God. Some people have an exaggerated notion of the inviolability of personality. In their view God must respect our individuality, our thought, our rights, our so-called freedom. But Jehovah penetrates our minds and understands our thought altogether.

All the predictions in the Bible certify that God knows the future. He prophesied the birth of Josiah some three hundred years ahead of time. He predicted that Cyrus would favor the Jews. It is not as though God said: I shall manage this somehow; if Cyrus does not want to favor the Jews, I can get someone else who will be willing. The future event was the action of Cyrus.

There are also predictions of events that are still future to us. Aristotle said that this was impossible. His reason was not only that these events are too trivial for God to bother with; but more particularly that future events cannot be known because the future does not exist. Only what is, can be known. The future not only is not, but it is uncertain. It may turn out one way or the other. Now, Christianity will admit that only the fixed and determined can be known. To say that the future may turn out one way or another surely makes the future unknowable. But Christianity teaches that the future is inevitable. Judas was chosen as a disciple because he was the one to betray Christ. And Christ's betrayal and death were known from eternity. God can declare the end from the beginning, for he made the beginning in order to bring about the end. Thus the list of quotations above refers not only to what is present, but to all things, past, present, and future: all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of God.

3. Eternity.

The next attribute for discussion is God's eternity, for eternity and omniscience are closely related. Maybe they are identical! The first thing to do is to see whether the Bible teaches that God is eternal, and whether the notion of eternity is well defined. The items in the list will require some explanation.

Gen. 21:33 There he called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

Ex. 3 :14 I AM THAT I AM.

Psa. 41:13 Blessed by the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting, cf Psa. 90:2

Isa. 9:6 His name shall be called ... Everlasting Father.

John 5:26 The Father hath life in himself.

Rom. 1:20 his everlasting power and Godhead.

With the possible exception of Ex. 3:14 - where the French version translates God's name as L'Eternel - these verse may say merely that God is everlasting, that his years are numberless, but that they are years nonetheless, and that therefore God is not eternal. In philosophy and theology eternity has usually been regarded as something different from endless time. Popularly, however, most people do not make such a distinction. It would appear that J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. in A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (pp. 40 ff.) holds to the popular view and denies timeless eternity. He

writes, “The Bible writers explicitly teach ... that the being of God is eternal, both as to the past and as to the future. God has always existed and always will exist...

In discussing the cosmological argument for the existence of God, we shall show that all systematic thinkers are obliged to postulate some uncaused eternal being. If anything does now exist, then something must be eternal, unless something can come from nothing. Materialists generally hold that the material cosmic system is itself eternal as a system, and as a chain of causality.” Since no materialist ever held that the universe is timeless, this comparison between God and the universe as, in the respective systems, both eternal, shows that Dr. Buswell considers God to exist extended in time. In other words, God is everlasting but not eternal.

Below he has a subhead, Eternity is not Timelessness.

Parmenides, an ancient Greek philosopher, argued that origin, absolute origin, is impossible. Since his day probably no one has ever maintained that something comes from nothing. Therefore either there is an eternal, timeless, unchanging reality and nothing else ever comes into being (and this was Parmenides’ conclusion), or there is an everlasting series of events (which is the position of so-called materialism); or there is an eternal reality and a temporal series of events. The latter is the standard Christian position, which, if it is to be defended, must be shown to be an implication from the Biblical data.

This implication cannot be based on such phrases as “before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24, Eph. 1:4). Such verses, if there are clear implications of eternity in other places, can be interpreted as human phraseology like “the eyes of the Lord,” but they cannot be the primary ground for a belief in God’s eternity. There are other verses, however; and they have to do with omniscience, already discussed somewhat, and immutability, yet to be considered.

The question may be put in several ways. One may ask, is eternity qualitatively different from time? Or, is there time in God’s own being, or is it a created something? And one should surely ask, what is time? Unless we know what time is, we cannot begin to consider whether or not it was created and has only a finite past. The same is true of space.

If the beginning student of theology had a few courses in Physics before entering Seminary, he may have come across arguments refuting the Newtonian theory of space and time as independent frameworks. Modern physics talks about a four dimensional continuum, called space-time. Prior to the physics of the twentieth century, the philosopher labored with great diligence over the problems of space and time. This material might be included in an Appendix, but let us not clutter up the present paragraph. Yet, one must insist that unless we have some notion of what time is, we cannot decide whether God is temporal or not. It would be like trying to decide whether God is spalificerous or doriconimous.

The great Christian philosopher, Augustine of Hippo, connected time with the succession of ideas in a mind. We know some things today; tomorrow we learn more; the next day we forget some. Even in any five minute or one minute period, ideas come and go. This, says Augustine, is time.

Now, God is omniscient. He does not learn what he did not know, and he never forgets. There can be no succession of ideas in the divine mind. Therefore, God is not a temporal being. Omniscience requires eternity, and eternity is timelessness.

4. Immutability.

Corroborating this argument is the Biblical teaching on immutability. Some verses are:

Num. 23:19 God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent, cf. I Sam. 15:29

Dan. 6:26 He is the living God and steadfast forever.

Mai. 3:6 I, the Lord, change not.

Matt. 5:48 Your heavenly Father is perfect.

Heb. 1:10-12 the works of thy hands, they shall perish, but thou dost continue... they shall be changed, but thou art the same. c.f. Psa. 102:27.

Heb. 6:17 the immutability of his counsel.

James 1:17 the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow cast by turning.

First, a few comments on these verses. In the section on language in chapter one above, it was pointed out that figurative language does not conflict with inerrancy, for it can always be translated into common prose. One striking verse has been alluded to several times now: the eyes of the Lord run to and from throughout the whole earth. The first verse in the last list says quite literally that God does not repent or change his mind. The words are repeated in I Sam. 15:29. A remarkable contrast occurs in this chapter. Verse II says, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. Verse 35 says, The Lord repented that he had made Saul over Israel. And between these two verses, I Samuel quotes Numbers and says, “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent.”

There are two technical terms that name these types of figurative expression. When arms, legs, or eyes are ascribed to the Lord, the figure is called anthropomorphism. It means that bodily parts are figuratively ascribed to God. But when mental passions are ascribed to God, it is called anthropopathism. The Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England and the Westminster Confession deny that God has body, parts, or passions. The words are “God ... a most pure Spirit ... without body, parts, or passions.” The proof test in the Westminster Confession is Acts 14:15 where obviously mental or psychological passions are intended. Note that these Confessions do not say that God is without “bodily parts and passions.” These words could mean, though they would not have to mean, bodily parts and bodily passions. This ambiguity is avoided. There is no mention of bodily passions. God is without body, parts, and passions.

The verse in Acts 14:15 and its implications deserve some examination. Paul had just healed the lame man at Lystra. The multitudes then jumped to the conclusion that Barnabas was Zeus and that Paul was Hermes. They prepared to sacrifice oxen to them. Then Paul said, “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.” The main meaning of the word pathos is suffering, and it used with reference to the sufferings of Christ. It is also used to designate lustful sexual passions, anger, emotions, and in general however one is affected by anything. Paul asserts that he experiences these mental changes, and for that reason he is not God because God has no emotions, no sudden mental changes, no gradual changes either, and is completely impassible.

In a very elementary volume such as this it is perhaps wise to acknowledge here, as well as later when the incarnation is discussed, that Christ in his human nature suffered and experienced passions. But as Athanasius says (in his Discourse III of his Select Treatises In Controversy with the Arians. chapter xxvi, paragraph 13) “Let no man stumble at these human affections, but rather let a man know that in nature the Word himself is impassible. ... He himself, being impassible in nature, remains as he is, not harmed by these affections.”

What is true of the Son in this regard is surely true of the Father. God is impassible. This is not to deny God's wrath and anger against sin. But wrath and anger in God, like repentance, are figures of speech to make vivid to us God's immutable will to punish sin.

To return now to the list: Mai. 3:6 is literal and conclusive. Matt. 5:48 implies immutability because a change would mean that either God had not been perfect before, or is now no longer perfect. James 1:17, in spite of some flowery language, is essentially literal, obvious, and conclusive: there is no variation (parallax) in God, nor any shadow caused by change (as occurs when the heavenly bodies change their positions).

5. Relation Between Omnipotence and Omniscience.

Perhaps enough has now been given to begin considering the relation between omnipotence and omniscience. Augustine in his Confessions (XII, 53) wrote, "We see those things thou hast made because they are; they are, however, because thou seest them." Aquinas more clearly wrote, "The knowledge of God is the cause [the formal cause] of all things, for the knowledge of God is to all created objects what the knowledge of an artificer is to things made by his art. ... Hence the form in the intellect must be the principle of action. ... Now it is manifest that God causes things by his intellect, since his being is his act of understanding." (I, 14, 8).

Charles Hodge takes these two quotations to mean that omnipotence and omniscience are identical. Hodge himself denies this identity. One of his reasons is that when they are identified, "the possibility of knowledge in God is virtually denied." (I, p. 394) This is hardly a logical inference. To say that two names refer to the same thing, is not to deny the thing. The identification of knowledge and power no more denies knowledge than it does power. And surely those who identify these attributes do not mean that God is neither knowledge nor power. Hodge admits that the Lutheran and Reformed theologians generally assert the identity. Against the Reformation view Hodge objects, "To know a thing is, and to will it, are the same undivided and perpetual act. From this it would seem to follow, that as God knows from eternity, he creates from eternity" (p. 395). And this according to Hodge is pantheism.

Well, of course, it is not pantheism at all. Even if creation were from eternity, the created universe would not be God. Aristotle held that the physical universe never had a beginning; but his God who sits on the circle of the universe, ignorant of what goes on below, is not equated with the universe. Whatever this is, it is not pantheism. Furthermore, it is strange that Hodge, after quoting Aquinas, should here have ignored Aquinas' reply, for Aquinas in the same section from which Hodge quotes answers Hodge's objection: "The knowledge of God is the cause of things according as things are in his knowledge. But that things should be eternal was not in the knowledge of God; hence although the knowledge of God is eternal, it does not follow that created beings are eternal."

Let us observe some caution, however. The subject is complicated. Not to anticipate later considerations, let us note here that the word cause does not mean today what it meant in the fifth, thirteenth, and sixteenth centuries. For Hodge cause probably meant some sort of physical force. Gravity, for example, forces a heavy body to fall. But this idea is repudiated by all physicists. Gravity was intended to be a description of how two bodies move. It was never intended to explain what it was, if anything, that made them move. When Augustine used the word cause, he meant the Christian counterpart of the Platonic Idea. For Aristotle and Aquinas the cause intended here, distinguished from the material cause, was the formal cause. To untangle all of this, the student will need considerable philosophy. Certainly the Bible does not make God the cause of the world in the Kantian sense of a preceding event, which in turn has a cause in a still previous motion.

Hodge's rejection of the identity of omniscience and omnipotence contains another very surprising statement. He quotes a theologian who takes pains to reject pantheism by defining omniscience as "So far as we conceive God as comprehending the world in his consciousness, we call him omniscient." Now, this is a poor definition of omniscience, for God knows much more than the physical universe. Not to mention the angels and the devil, who may perhaps be included in the term world. God knows all theology including himself, and this is hardly the "world" in any ordinary sense. But aside from this objection, which Hodge does not consider, he not only calls the language unintelligible by saying, "Whatever such language may mean to those who use it," but goes on to wax indignant in the phrase, "to the ordinary mind it conveys the revolting idea that all the sins of men enter into the consciousness of God." But this indignation is Aristotelianism, and it is an explicit contradiction of the Biblical assertions, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee;" "Thou understandeth my thought altogether;" "Your new moons ... my soul hateth, ... they are a trouble unto me ... your hands are full of blood;" and as well every prediction of evil such as the future activities of the anti-christ. Surely the Bible teaches that God knows all.

The problem of this sub-section, the relation of omniscience to omnipotence can well be concluded by a comparison between Charles Hodge and Stephen Charnock.

Stephen Charnock, a great Puritan divine of the seventeenth century, wrote a book well over a thousand pages on The Existence and Attributes of God. Among the other excellent chapters he has one on God's omniscience. Whereas the present elementary volume restricts itself to a few verses and urges the reader to look for more, Charnock provides such a long list of the items of God's knowledge that one is tempted to think it is complete. The student is urged to become acquainted with the Rev. Stephen Charnock.

The comparison of Hodge with Charnock is not meant to imply that Charnock is always right and Hodge always wrong. Neither of them was infallible as the Bible is; but both of them are to be considered as much as any other writer on theology, and more than most. The first quotation from Charnock is not so much on the relation between omniscience and omnipotence; but to provide a foundation it asserts the doctrine of eternity. So then, Charnock wrote, "If eternity were anything distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not God, necessary to perfect God. ... God is essentially whatever he is, and there is nothing in God but his essence. Duration or continuance in being in creatures differs from their being; ... they are not therefore their own duration, no more than they are their own existence. And though some creatures ... may be called everlasting ... yet they can never be called their own eternity ... but as God is his own necessity for existing, so is he his own duration in existing; as he doth necessarily exist by himself, so he will always necessarily exist by himself."[1]

6. Are All Attributes One?

There is a second quotation from Chamock. But in the progress the subject matter broadens. It is no longer a question whether omnipotence and omniscience are identical, but whether all attributes are one.

If in the previous quotation Charnock has correctly understood the implication of the Scripture, then all the attributes of God are identical because each one is necessary to the essence of God. Chamock says that God is his own duration (though this word may be unfortunate); God then would be his own power and knowledge. In fact he says (Vol. I, p. 318), "In our notion and conception of the divine perfections, his perfections are different... but immutability is the center in which they all unite. ... All that we consider in God is unchangeable; for his essence and his properties are the same, and

therefore what is necessarily belonging to the essence of God, belongs also to every perfection of the nature of God."

In conformity with this, he also writes (p. 325), "The will of God is the same with his essence. If God had a will distinct from his essence, he would not be the most simple being. God hath not a faculty of will distinct from himself; as his understanding is nothing else but Deus intelligens- God understanding, so his will is nothing else but Deus volens. God willing, being therefore the essence of God; though it is considered, according to our weakness, as a faculty, it is as his understanding and wisdom, eternal and immutable; and can no more be changed than his essence."[2]

A few pages back comments were made on a list of verses, relating to the eternity of God, with the exception of one. That verse was, "I AM THAT I AM." It is hard to say how much can be drawn from this name, or how much can be read into it. Probably one cannot validly infer from this verse alone that God is pure simple being, and that his essence and attributes are all one reality; but it would be harder to show that this verse ruled out Chamock's position. It rather supports it.

7. The Infinite and the Finite.

The Shorter Catechism, quoted earlier, defined God as a spirit, infinite in his being, wisdom, power, etc. Wisdom and power have now been sufficiently discussed. But in addition to God's being infinite in his wisdom and knowledge, the Catechism asserts that God is infinite in his being. This needs further explanation.

A quotation from H.B. Smith makes an appropriate starting point. One of the aims here is to show that even a good theologian sometimes flounders in confusion. To quote:

"God is unconditioned and unlimited by space and time. This is defining God in contrast with the finite. The infinitude of God has in it two elements... The limitations of the finite, being comprehended in the two particulars of time and space, the infinitude of God may be resolved into two points, which are defined and described as two attributes, eternity and immensity. By the very necessity of our thinking we are obliged to conceive of all that is finite under the limitations of space and time. We cannot define anything except in reference to space and time" (System of Christian Theology, p. 17).

There seem to be some inaccuracies in this statement. For those who believe that time and space are both infinite, it is suspicious that "This is defining God in contrast with the finite". Although some who believe that time is infinite assert an infinite past time, and this volume does not, the observation still applies, for while this volume denies an infinite past, it asserts an infinite future. Since then time is infinite, Smith's "defining God in contrast with the finite" is a phrase he might well have omitted. Furthermore, it is not true that the limitations of the finite, such as a dog, a mountain, or a star, are exhausted in the two particulars of time and space. A dog has a tail, and though comets do too, stars do not. Tails are surely limitations of some sort, but tails are neither time nor space. Nor is it correct to say, "We cannot define anything except in reference to space and time." The Catechism defined God without mentioning space or time. For that matter the number two is a finite number, but space is not a term in its definition. Then there is zero, not to mention the square root of minus one. Dr. Smith was a good theologian; but when theologians indulge in philosophy or mathematics they sometimes make mistakes.

Thus many of the infelicities in theology books do not arise from a definite rejection of the Biblical data. The trouble is that the author fails to pay attention to the usage of words in secular philosophy and scholarly publications. Another example is the word cause. From the time of Thomas Aquinas on

to the eighteenth century, theologians could use the term in the four Aristotelian senses. From the sixteenth or seventeenth century to the very recent past, the idea of mechanical causation grew in popularity and submerged the four Aristotelian causes. About 1752 Hume showed that the idea of cause resulted from a confusion of mind, and that science could neither support nor use such a concept. With the advent of evolution, the ancient cause that was always greater than its effect, and the modem cause that was always equal to its effect, turned into the contemporary cause that is always less than its effect. Therefore when the educated public is asked to read theology, the author is obliged to inform his readers what he means by his terms. Infinite is another one of these terms.

Now, H.B. Smith's reference to infinite time and space brings Spinoza to mind. He held that God is absolutely infinite: "BY God I mean a being absolutely infinite — that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality. Explanation: I say absolutely infinite, not infinite after its kind; for, of a thing infinite only after its kind, infinite attributes may be denied; but that which is absolutely infinite contains in its essence whatever expresses reality and involves no negation."

In earlier theology, even in the pagan philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, not to mention the Jew Philo, and the Christian Augustine and Aquinas the attributes of time and space were denied to God because somehow these attributes were considered imperfect and unworthy of God. Even when Anselm and Descartes argued: God is the being who has all attributes or perfections, existence is a perfection, therefore God exists; they denied that space was a perfection. But Spinoza attributed space as well as knowledge to God and concluded that God is an extended being, the universe.

Since Spinoza has had considerable influence on the subsequent history of thought, a Christian theologian, if he wishes to be understood, must deny that God is absolutely infinite. God is "infinite" only after his kind, or in certain particulars. The God of the Bible may know an infinite number of propositions; but, with all due respect to the Shorter Catechism, written by men who had never heard of Spinoza, we today dare not say that God is infinite in his being. There are many predicates that must not be attached to God, such as green, feline, and extended in three dimensions.

Turn now to a quotation from Charles Hodge (Vol. I, p 380.):

"He is infinite in his being and perfections ... In all ages wrong views of what the infinite is, have led to fatal errors in philosophy and religion. ... When it is said that God is infinite as to his being, what is meant is, that no limitation can be assigned to his essence. ... The infinite, although illimitable and incapable of increase, is not necessarily all. ... The sense in which Spinoza and Mansel make this assertion is the fundamental principle of Pantheism. ... A thing may be infinite in its own nature without predicating the possibility of the existence of things of a different nature. ... There may even be many infinities of the same kind, as we can imagine any number of infinite lines. ... "

It is obvious that Hodge has tried to distinguish between the absolutely infinite God of Spinoza and the Biblical God who is only infinite after his kind. The last half of the quotation is unexceptionable. But should we say that the infinity of the Biblical God means that "no limitation can be assigned to his essence"? The difficulty lies in the pejorative ambiguity of the word limitation. When we "limit" the concept animal by attaching the predicate canine, we limit it to dogs, wolves, foxes. Limitations of concepts are predicates. All predicates limit or delimit their subjects. Thus we limit God by attaching the predicate spirit. God is spirit. Furthermore; other limiting predicates must be attached to distinguish this God from other alleged Gods. Zeus was not omnipotent. If no predicate can be attached to a subject, that subject is unknowable. But the Biblical Deity can be known. Therefore predicates or limitations must be attached. At the same time there are predicates that must not be attached. God not only is x, but he is also not y.

This highlights the necessity, not only of specifying what in God is infinite, but more importantly of defining infinity, i.e. of limiting infinity! Hodge writes, “Notwithstanding the conflicting statements of philosophers [about space], and the real obscurity of the subject, every man knows clearly and definitely what the word ‘space’ means. ... It is much the same with the idea of infinity. If men would be content to leave the word in its integrity, as simply expressing what does not admit of limitation, there would be no danger in speculating about its nature.” (Vol. I, p. 381). But this is pernicious nonsense, and it contradicts what he so well said about Spinoza and the “many infinites of the same kind” in the previous quotation. No one should object to the reference in the present quotation to “the real obscurity of the subject;” but how can he immediately continue by saying, “every man knows clearly and definitely what the word ‘space’ means”? Consider Plato’s receptacle, Aristotle’s place, Locke’s hesitation between a simple idea and an idea of relation, Kant’s a priori intuition, Hegel in the first chapter of his Phenomenology, and Nietzsche’s finite space. Would Hodge agree with Einstein that Space is curved? It is foolishness to leave the word in its non-existent “integrity”. If as Hodge admits, “wrong views of what the infinite is have led to fatal errors,” is it not the part of wisdom to avoid errors by searching for a clear definition? If we fail, at least we shall avoid using a definition we concluded to be bad.

At this point an appeal to Scripture should be made, if we cannot find in Scripture the correct definition of space, at least we can see what it says about the infinite. There are in fact only three verses in the entire Bible (KJ version) where the word infinite is found. The RSV will also be given here.

RSV There is no end to your iniquities.

Psa 147:5 His understanding is infinite.

RSV His understanding is beyond measure.

Nahum 3:9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite.

RSV and that without limit.

These three verses provide very fragile support for a doctrine of the infinitude of God. Two words, not one, are used. Job and Nahum use a root that means to chop off, to cut or destroy, from which come two similar nouns for an extremity, border, and, brink, edge, or frontier. Since it is clear that Egypt’s strength was not infinite, the word is better translated extreme, or simply, very great. In any case, the word is not applied to God. The word applied to God in Psa 147 is a different word. The verbal root is to score, to tally, or to enumerate; and the noun means a number, either innumerable or a few. Song of Solomon 6:8 uses the word when it says, “There are three score queens, and four score concubines, and virgins without number.” This shows that the Hebrew word does not exactly correspond to the English word infinite. It is better translated “very many.” Certainly the virgins were not without number. Two of the very many occurrences of this word are:

Joel 1:6 A nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number.

I Chron 22:4 Cedar trees without number.

Obviously there was an exact number of soldiers who came up against Israel and Judah; and obviously the cedars were not infinite in number. The Hebrew words therefore must be regarded as they were in ordinary conversation. They clearly do not bear the meaning of the term infinite in modem English. Infinite is a wrong translation. The Hebrew expression simply means “very many”.

To prove that God is “infinite,” theologians regularly use verses in which the word itself does not occur. For example,

Job 11:7-10 Canst thou be searching find out God... The measure thereof is longer than the earth.

Psa 145:3 His greatness is unsearchable.

Matt 5:48 ... as your Father in heaven is perfect.

These verses are irrelevant. The first two are repudiations of the cosmological argument; but they do not specify how “long” God is, or how great his power. The last verse is ethical and little to do with infinite being. In fact, if pressed, it seems to suggest that man be equal to God in this respect.

Charles Hodge uses Eph 1:23 to prove that God is infinite in his being. The verse is extremely difficult to exegete. Students may consult several commentators: the Puritan Thomas Goodwin, T.K. Abbott in the International Critical Commentary series; Francis Foulkes in the Tyndal Press; and Charles Hodge himself. They differ as to whether pleroma means that which fills or that which is filled; as to whether ta panta means the universe or the Church; and as to whether pleroumenou is active, that which does the filling, or passive, that which is filled, or middle, he who fills something for his own advantage. But regardless of the many complexities it can easily be seen that nothing in the verse asserts that God is infinite in his being.

Another verse Hodge uses is Acts 17:28. If this verse had said that God extends throughout the universe, it would no doubt have suggested a great spatial extent, not necessarily infinite, for it does not say that the universe is infinite in extent. One should not suppose carelessly that the universe is infinite. At least Aristotle and Nietzsche denied that it is. Furthermore, God is not an extended object at all; he is a spirit. In any case, the verse does not say that God extends through the universe: it says that the universe “extends” through God. More accurately, it says that human beings, the pagan poet as well as Paul and Luke, live and move and have their being in God.

Hodge of course recognizes that the term infinite gives us some difficulties. The trouble is that he does not seem to take his own recognition seriously enough. Certainly we must reject his previously quoted sentence, “When it is said that God is infinite as to his being, what is meant is, that no limitation can be assigned to his essence.” Now, God’s essence is his definition. Esse is the Latin for the Greek einai: and the einai of anything is its definition. The definition is what the object is. The God of the Bible is definite. He is not a subject to which every predicate can be attached. He is not heavy, white, tall, or sweet. The number of appropriate predicates is definitely limited.

Nor is it easy to understand why Hodge said, “The infinite, although illimitable and incapable of increase” etc. The number of series is illimitable precisely because it is always capable of increase. Indeed, whatever is illimitable must be capable of increase. For such reasons we must reaffirm the first sentence quoted, “In all ages wrong views of what the infinite is have led to fatal errors in philosophy and religion.” Unless one is ready to define what the term infinite means, it would be better not to use it.

It is possible, however, to defend the proposition that God is infinite even in his being. The wording of the Catechism can be retained, if the word being is taken as a participle instead of as a noun coordinate with the nouns that follow it. The argument would be: God is spirit, mind, truth. God is what he thinks Since what he thinks is an infinite series of propositions, as the mathematicians grant us, God is infinite in his being these truths. God is truth. Doubtless this would puzzle the Westminster authors of the Catechism. Were is not for the indisputable authority of professional mathematicians,

who assert an infinite number of theorems deducible from the mere definition of a plane; were it not for the acuity of Spinoza in providing an infinite number of propositions deducible from each of God's infinite number of attributes; were it not for the unsurpassed Biblical scholarship of our fathers at Westminster, we could think of truth as a closed and complete whole, in which case God would be entirely actual and perfect, without any unrealized potentiality. His knowledge then would not be infinite, but he himself would be, even more clearly omniscient.

8. A Finite God.

If caution about the infinite causes hesitation over this mathematical defense of the Catechism, and if therefore all the previous confusion continues, it is still possible to discuss and reject theories about a finite God because these theories do not concern the concept of an infinite being. Here the term finite refers to just one or two particularities. William James and consistent Arminians limit God by denying his omnipotence and omniscience. They say that there are certain things God cannot do and cannot know.

Though it may be unnecessary to inform anyone that William James was a vigorous antagonist of Christianity, three citations from his Pluralistic Universe follow to document the two points mentioned. Contrasting the nominalist point of view that regards the universe as a collection of discrete "eaches," with the idealistic view that the universe is a whole and that parts must be understood in terms of the whole, James writes, "Whereas absolutism thinks that the said substance becomes fully divine only in the form of totality, and is not real self in any form but the aU-form, the pluralistic view which I prefer to adopt is willing to believe that there may ultimately never be an all-form at all, that the substance of reality may never get totally collected, that some of it may remain outside the largest combination of it ever made." (p. 34). James, of course, has Hegelian absolutism chiefly in mind, but since he says that theism is worse, it is clear that this is a denial of omniscience.

Later he writes, "When John Mill said that the notion of God's omnipotence must be given up, if God is to be kept as a religious object, he was surely accurately right . . . I believe that the only God worthy of the name must be finite ..." (pp. 124-125). Here James rejects omnipotence. In the last of these three quotations the language is broad enough to cover both omniscience and omnipotence. "The only way of escape, I say, from all this [Hegel's absolutism] is to be frankly pluralistic and assume that the superhuman consciousness, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite ... it is not all-embracing ... he is finite in power or in knowledge or in both at once" (pp. 310-311).

9. Finitude and Knowledge.

Lutherans are inclined to deny omniscience. Bishop Martensen of Denmark attracted the ire and vituperation of Soren Kierkegaard, but the good bishop was far from being the scoundrel Kierkegaard thought he was. Let us admit that the gentleman was a devoted and sincere Christian; but on the matter of omniscience he was woefully mistaken and virtually contradicted the Christian position. Here is a passage from his Christian Dogmatics, (tr. by Urwick, 1880) pp. 218,219.

The contradiction which has been supposed to exist between the idea of the free progress of the world and the omniscience of God, rests upon a one-sided conception of *omniscience*, as a mere knowing *beforehand* and an ignoring of the conditional in the divine decrees. An unconditioned foreknowledge undeniably militates against the freedom of the creature, so far as freedom of choice is concerned; and against the undecided, the contingent, which is an idea inseparable from the development of freedom in time. The actual alone which is in and for itself rational and necessary,

can be the subject of an unconditional foreknowledge; the Actual which is not this, cannot be so; it can only be foreknown as possible, as eventual, but such an unconditional foreknowledge not only militates against the freedom of the creature, it equally is opposed to the idea of a freely working God in history. A God literally foreknowing all things, would be merely the spectator of events decided and predestined from eternity, not the all-directing governor in a drama of freedom which He carries on in reciprocal conflict and work with the freedom of the creature. If we would preserve this reciprocal relation between God and His creatures, we must not make the whole actual course of the world the subject of His foreknowledge, but only its eternal import, the essential truth it involves. The final goal of this world's development, together with the entire series of its essentially necessary stages, must be regarded as fixed in the eternal counsel of God; but the practical carrying out of this eternal counsel, the entire fulness of actual limitations on the part of this world's progress, in so far as these are conditioned by the freedom of the creature, can only be the subject of a conditional foreknowledge ; i.e., they can only be foreknown as possibilities, as *Futurabilia*, but not as realities, because other possibilities may actually take place. In thus asserting that God does not foreknow all that actually occurs, we by no means imply that every event is not the subject of his all-penetrating cognizance. God is not only *before* His creatures - "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth was made," - He is also *in* and *with* His creatures, in every moment of their development. While God neither foreknows, nor will foreknow what He leaves undecided, in order to be decided in time, He is no less *cognizant* of and *privy* to all that occurs. Every movement of His creatures, even their most secret thoughts, is within the range of His all-embracing knowledge. "Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there " (Psalm cxxxix). His knowledge penetrates the entanglements of this world's progress at every point; the unerring eye of His wisdom discerns in every moment the relation subsisting between free beings and His eternal plan; and His almighty hand, His power, pregnant of great designs, guides and influences the movements of the world as His counsels require Arminians also limit God’s knowledge, if they are consistent. Not all are. Whedon vacillates, but it is clear that he inclines to a denial of omniscience: “Our view of free agency does not so much require in God a foreknowledge of a peculiar kind of event [i.e. a single particular event?] as a knowledge of a peculiar quality existent in the free agent. ... If any power be planted in an agent, God, who placed it there, must know it. And if that power be ... a power to do otherwise than the agent really does do, God may be conceived to know it and to know it in every specific case” (D.D. Whedon, The Freedom of the Will, pp. 271-272). Now, this quotation certainly means that God does not know what the free agent will do; he only knows that the agent is free to do an one of several possibilities. Whedon continues, “As a corollary resulting from these views, we note that an agent may be supposed to possess a power of acting otherwise than the way that God foreknows he will act.” But then he surprises the reader by saying on the next page, “As the impossibility of performing a contradictory act is no limitation of Omnipotence, so the impossibility of a contradictory knowledge is no limitation of Omniscience. ... If by the absolute perfectness of God’s omniscience that one train of free events, put forth with full power otherwise, be embraced in his foreknowledge, it follows that God foreknows the free act.” In this paragraph Whedon attempts to preserve the omniscience he denied on the previous page; but that his attempt fails becomes clear in the difficulty he cannot escape: “the real difficulty which we distinctly profess to leave forever insoluble ... is to conceive how God came by that foreknowledge.”

A.H. Strong ('Systematic Theology. Vol. I, p. 285) quotes an author, Daniel Curry, who said, “The denial of absolute divine foreknowledge is the essential complement of the Methodist theology.” Now, Whedon is unable to conceive how God came to know the future because the Methodist theology makes foreknowledge and therefore omniscience impossible. On Arminian principles the problem of retaining omniscience is insoluble. But if one reject the Arminianism, the problem

presents little if any difficulty. First of all, God did not "come by" his foreknowledge. Eternal knowledge is an eternal attribute of the eternal God. Perhaps it s not fair to stretch Whedon's unfortunate expression "come by" beyond its disclosure of Whedon's habitual state of mind; but even so it reveals the tendency to explain God's knowledge of the world as empirically based on observation. Since there can be no causes in the present to determine the future action of human free will, there is nothing now for God to look at, if he wishes to know the future; and of course the future event, until it occurs, is an unknowable non-entity.

The Bible, however, says that every event is caused or determined, and that the determiner is God. God therefore knows what is future to us because he determined it to happen. Otherwise prediction would be impossible. Take for example Cyrus' restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem. The event predicted was not an isolated event that could have occurred under nearly any condition. It required the consolidation of the Medes and Persians into one empire; it required the defeat of Croesus, and, obviously the destruction of Babylon. This latter depended on Nabonidus' neglect of his own interests and the irresponsibility of Belshazzar. It also required changes in the policies regarding the treatment of captive peoples. The prediction therefore is not limited to Thursday at 10:33 A.M. when Cyrus stamped his seal on a document. The event depended on multitudinous matters, every one of which God knew because he had planned the whole thing.

Charnock (p. 443, 444) has a humorous description of a similar situation. Gen. 15:16 predicts that "in the fourth generation they [the posterior of Abraham] shall come hither again [into Canaan], for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Continues Charnock, "If Abraham had been a Socinian, to deny God's knowledge of the free acts of men, had had not a fine excuse for unbelief? What would his reply have been to God? Alas, Lord, this is not a promise to be relied upon; the Amorites' iniquity depends on the acts of their free will, and such thou canst have no knowledge of; thou canst see no more than a likelihood of their iniquity being full, and therefore there is but a likelihood of thy performing thy promise, and not a certainty."

With respect to God's knowledge, theologians usually try to give an account of the divine psychology. They say that God's knowledge is intuitive, not discursive. The words are not altogether appropriate. Psychology is hardly the term for a study of the immutable divine mind. If intuition means merely that there is no temporal succession in God, the term can be used, but it is useless; if, however, it means the immediate perception of a sensory individual, as in Kant, but not the understanding of a general principle or even a concept, the term is worse than inappropriate. Similarly, if discursion means a temporal sequence, it may be properly denied of God; but if the term is intended to assert God is ignorant of the relationship between premises and conclusions, it cannot be denied to God.

Most simply, God's knowledge is eternal and immutable. God knows the end from the beginning because he created the world and controls it according to the eternal plan.

Psa. 104:24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.

How could this be true, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so prior to his knowledge, and therefore antecedent to his action? Does God act in ignorance and then discover what he has made? If the divine perfection in knowledge were gained from things external to God — and inferior to him, unless there be objects superior to him — God would not be self-sufficient or independent; whatever perfection of knowledge he had would be derived from these inferior things. Such a conclusion, however, would be both queer and unbiblical. It follows therefore that God is essentially omniscient. There is no truth outside of his mind. And there is so because God himself is truth. Truth is what God thinks or knows.

10. God is Spirit.

For many pages now the discussion has dealt with the attributes of God. There was eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, and infinity. Because they so much overlapped it was necessary to consider their mutual relationships. This went further perhaps than an elementary exposition is supposed to go. But one point, in a sense the most important point, was omitted, even though implicitly it underlay them all. These attributes that were discussed are predicates or characteristics of a subject. Traditionally it is said that the "attributes" attach to a "substance." In simpler terms the question could be, what are the attributes attributes of? Speaking in ordinary language one may say that a man has wisdom or courage. The man is one thing, and wisdom or courage is something else he has. One may also say, the man is wise or courageous; and now the sentence seems to state what the man is, rather than what he has. Since, however, theology for centuries has discussed attributes and substance, the question will be, What is this God who has knowledge, power, goodness, and truth?

The Catechism answers in its first phrase, "God is a spirit." Spirit is not something God has; Spirit is what he is. Had this chapter on God proceed logically, the idea of spirit would have been discussed before the attributes. Should not learn what x is in itself before learning what characteristics it has? Do we not first decided what a dog is, and the add that dogs have tails? If we did not first know dog, what would the tail attach to? But perhaps tails are essential to dogs, and if we cut off Fido's tail, he no longer remains a dog. Can we really know what a thing is without knowing its characteristics? Is it possible to study what God is in himself without explicitly describing his attributes? Maybe it was necessary to begin with the "attributes" and only later arrive at the "substance." However that may be, the Catechism says that God is a spirit. What is spirit? Well, surely, spirit is distinguished from non-spirit by attributes of life, consciousness, and in higher forms, knowledge.

Although the concept of spirit is of such tremendous importance, or, better, because it is of such tremendous importance, it is utterly easy to find Scriptural evidence to justify the statement that God is spirit. Of course, there is Jesus' brief assertion in John 4:24. But the massive evidence permeates the Old Testament. There is no point in listing a number of verses. God spoke to Adam and Eve; he spoke to Noah, Abraham, and Moses; to David, Elijah, and Isaiah. The continuous denunciation of idolatry repeatedly asserts

"They have mouths, but they speak not; they have ears, but they hear not... They hire a goldsmith and he maketh it a god ... they bear him upon the shoulder ... yea one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer."

Our God is a God of truth; he knows; he speaks; he is alive; he is not a body, he is a spirit. Unfortunately not only in Old Testament times did some people turn from the living God to worship dumb idols; even today there are unhappy theologians who teach that God is dead.

11. Philosophical Difficulties.

Although this elementary textbook promises to restrict philosophical diversions to a minimum, there are some that ought not be avoided. Students who are not ready for them may skip this section, but it would not be fair to others slightly more advanced if philosophy were omitted completely. Nor should this material be considered "philosophy" in sharp distinction from "theology." For years, in fact for centuries, these subjects have filled many pages in theological textbooks. This is then a part of the history of theology.

Some theological textbooks, using as their first principle something other than the Bible, begin by asking, Can God be known? But if there is no God, there can be no point in asking whether he can be known. Should we not therefore begin by proving the existence of God? But if God is not knowable, how could one prove his existence? These two questions are so intertwined that one cannot be answered without the other. We cannot prove the existence of an object without knowing what it is we have proved; and cannot know an object without knowing that there exists such an object. The medieval theologians began with the existence of God, and their example is as good as any to follow here.

Augustine (354-430), if he did not absolutely introduce it into Christian theology, elaborated a type of Platonic philosophy by which he worked out a proof of God's existence.

Augustine's writings on many subjects are extremely valuable; but Anselm about A.D. 1100 gave a twist to Augustine's proof that was brilliant in the extreme. It is called the Ontological Argument. Strange to say, it possibly is not an argument at all, but rather a postulation of a first principle, an explanation of the ultimate axiom, a setting down of the base on which everything must be built. At any rate, it is so intricate and profound, it has caused so much discussion, and its opponents think it is supreme as an example of plausible confusion, that it must be omitted here. The second attempt to prove God's existence will be difficult enough.

(a) The Cosmological Argument.

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) rejected the Platonic cast of Augustine's theology and based his thought on Aristotle. Therefore he had no time for the ontological argument, but reconstructed the cosmological argument. To refer again to the question of knowledge, the difference between these two arguments is basically a difference in epistemology: For Augustine it was not necessary to start with sensory experience, for one could go directly from the soul to God; but Aquinas wrote, "The human intellect ... is at first like a clean tablet on which nothing is written" iSumma Theol. I, Q 97, 2). It is sensation that writes on the tabula rasa. The mind has no form of its own. All its contents come from sensation, on this basis Thomas gave five arguments for God's existence; but the first four are almost identical, and the fifth is so little different, that only the first will be reproduced here.

"The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God."[3]

The first thing to be noticed is that this is a formal argument. Thomas intended it to be a conclusive demonstration that God exists. It is not a collection of evidences that make it plausible to believe in God. It is an analysis of sensory experience with the conclusion that only God can explain it. Far from being a list of evidences, it appeals only to a pebble that rolls down the hillside or a marble that rolls across the floor. It claims to prove conclusively that on this basis God must of necessity exist. It is a matter of logical necessity.

The syllogism is the most common form of necessary inference. There are twenty four valid forms of the syllogism. Any other form, and there are two hundred fifty six in all, is invalid. An example of the valid form is the ancient illustration: All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal. But if one say: All dogs are mammals; some mammals are cats; therefore all or even some dogs are cats; the argument is a fallacy. Even if we say: All dogs are mammals; some mammals are fox terriers; therefore some dogs are fox terriers; the argument is invalid. The conclusion happens to be true, but the premises do not prove it. It is fallacy of the undistributed middle. To estimate the value of Thomas' cosmological proof, we must see if the premises necessitate the conclusion.

(b) Five Objections.

Five objections can be made against this cosmological argument. First, the original premise says, "It is certain and evident to our senses that in the world some things are in motion." This premise is an acceptance of empirical epistemology. In Thomas, if not elsewhere, it requires the assertion that the mind has no apriori forms, that it is actually nothing before it receives sensory impressions, and that more advanced knowledge is developed through images and abstraction.

Empiricism is perhaps a common sense view. It has also been the view of many philosophers. But it faces insuperable objections. In the first place the senses of men and animals produce conflicting data. Dogs, for example, are supposed to be color blind, but they have sensations of sound when men hear nothing For that matter, men differ among themselves. Esoteric artists see colors in grass that no common man finds there. Which then of these sensation correctly represent the color of the object seen? In some cases the sense contradict each other, as when a stick half submerged looks bent but feels straight. Then there are mirages and other optical illusions. While they last, we cannot tell that they are illusions; and we cannot tell whether our present sensations are illusions. Again, are we dreaming or not? An elementary textbook on psychology will describe many of these phenomena, with the result that it is impossible trust what we call sensory perception. Beyond this, the theory of imagination, by which these sensations are supposed to be preserved and later raised to concepts, collapses on the fact that some people do not have images. Many people lack olfactory or tactual imagery; some also lack visual imagery as well. Empiricism then would have to say that these people can know nothing. But some of them are accomplished scholars.

This first objection, however, does not test the validity of the argument. It disputes the truth of the premise. Yet the skepticism which Hume showed so well follows upon empiricism is fatal to this approach.

The second objection will also be somewhat disappointing as given here because it can only be partially developed. The objection notes that the quoted passage is more a summary than a complete argument. In fact the argument would include a great amount of physics and metaphysics. For example, the second, third, and fourth sentences in the quoted argument need lengthy substantiation. The extent would cover hundreds of pages, as it does both in Aristotle and Aquinas. For the final cosmological argument to be valid, all the subsidiary arguments must be valid. Now, while this is theoretically possible, it is not probable. Surely Aristotle and Aquinas must have made a mistake somewhere. And one mistake breaks the chain of consequences. Of course, someone is sure to

complain that this unfair and begs the question. To avoid this accusation, it may be pointed out that the two philosophers use the concept of potentiality. Aristotle needed the concept of potentiality in order to define motion. But in the third book of the Physics, where Aristotle takes up this problem, he not only defines motion by potentiality, but he also explains potentiality by the concept of motion. If the student wants to spend the time, he may study Aristotle's Physics to determine whether the argument is circular and whether there are any other flaws in books four to eight.

The third objection can be seen in the summary itself. Toward the end Aquinas talks about a series of motions and movers, and says that this series cannot go on to infinity. The reason it cannot go on to infinity is that if it did there would be no first mover. But unfortunately the argument as a whole claims to prove that there is a first mover. Therefore Aquinas has used for one of his premises the very proposition that he wants as the conclusion.

The fourth objection is more complicated. Because Aquinas holds that God's existence is identical with his essence, which is not true of any other object of knowledge, he must assert that no predicate can be attributed to God in the same sense that it is said of created beings. When both man and God are said to be good, or rational, or conscious, or anything, the words good and conscious do not mean the same thing in the two cases. If God is a mover and man is a mover, the word mover does not mean the same thing. Not only so, but since God's existence and essence are identical, the verb to be does not have the same meaning in the two cases. If we say God is good, neither the good nor the is means what it means in the created world. Hence when we say God exists, this existence does not mean existence in the same sense we use it for pebbles or marbles. Now, in a valid argument the only terms that can occur in the conclusion are those that occur in the premises. If some additional element is added in the conclusion, the syllogism is a fallacy. But the cosmological argument begins with the existence of a pebble or some sensory object that moves. It ends, however, with an existence that is different. Therefore the argument is fallacious. The different meaning of the word in the conclusion cannot be derive from the original meaning in the premises.

Now, finally, the fifth objection is directed against the last sentence of the argument, which is, "and this everyone understands to be God." But this is not what everyone understands to be God. Particularly Christians deny that this is God. Aquinas claims to have proved the existence of a first mover, a primum movens. an ens perfectissimum. or even a summum bonum. But these neuters are not satisfactory for a concept of the living, self-revealing God of the Scriptures. It can even be said that if the cosmological argument were valid, Christianity would be false. The God of the Bible is a Trinity of Persons. No forms of the cosmological argument has even claimed to demonstrate the existence of this only true God.

(c) A Reconstructed Argument.

Despite these objections Roman Catholics continue to depend on the cosmological argument. So do most Lutherans, as may be seen from Leander S. Keyser's A System of Natural Theism (1917); and some Calvinists defend it too. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. was one of these, at least in his earlier writings, though he seems to have agreed later that it is not strictly valid. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, makes very strong statements on the validity of the argument. Buswell had accused Van Til of disparaging the objective evidences for Christianity and of rejecting the cosmological argument. Van Til replied in A Christian Theory of Knowledge (pp. 291-292) and charged Buswell with formulating the argument improperly. Quoting partly from one of his earlier works, Common Grace, he says

"The argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity is objectively valid. We should not tone down the validity of this argument to the probability level. The argument may be

poorly stated and may never be adequately stated. But in itself the argument is absolutely sound. ... Accordingly I do not reject the theistic proofs, but merely insist on formulating them in such a way as not to compromise the Scripture. That is to say, if the theistic proof is constructed as it ought to be constructed, it is objectively valid."

This assertion that the cosmological argument is valid, absolutely sound, a formal demonstration, and not merely a probability argument does not hold true of any cosmological argument published in any book. Van Til pays no attention to the fallacies embedded in Thomas Aquinas. The argument he defends is one that no one has ever yet written. But how does he know that it is possible to formulate this ideal argument? What is the argument he defends? He says he insists on formulating it correctly. For many years some of Van Til's contemporaries have been challenging him to produce this reformulation he insists upon. He has not done so.

Thomas Hobbes is reported to have squared the circle. When the mathematician complained that in his proof three lines should have crossed at a point, but did not, Hobbes replied that they came so close together that a point could cover them all. He might have added that a slightly better reformulation could be made, and therefore the circle could be squared by an absolutely valid argument, and that an angle could be trisected too. But such appeals to an unknown ideal are irrelevant and incompetent.

A cosmologist, eager to squeeze out of a tight spot, might reply: But an angle can indeed be trisected. So it can, but by no geometrical (straight edge and compass) method. All the geometrical arguments are invalid. So too here: perhaps the ontological argument is valid; it is not touched by any of this criticism; but the cosmological argument is a fallacy.

A better example than squaring the circle is Fermat's theorem because, while no one agrees that the circle can be squared, many mathematicians have supposed that Fermat's theorem could be demonstrated. Only recently have some begun to have doubts. But no reputable thinker, regardless of his anticipation, will pronounce an argument valid and sound without having seen it.

Since Van Til and Buswell in the passage cited are engaged in recommending a method of preaching the gospel to unbelievers, it is doubly unfortunate that Van Til cannot justify his position, for unbelievers cannot be expected to be impressed with an argument that the evangelist himself is unable to present to them.

(d) <u>Does Scripture Require an Argument</u>?

The Christian need not be disturbed at the impossibility of proving God's existence. In fact, he should never have expected to demonstrate it, for two reasons: (1) a secular proof must adopt some principle more ultimate than God from which God can be deduced; and (2) the Bible makes no attempt to prove God's existence. It starts right off with God in Genesis 1:1. To be sure there are such verses as

Psa. 8:1 Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who has set thy glory upon the heavens.

Psa. 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Rom. 1:20 ... because what is known of God is apparent in them; for God has

made it clear for them; for his invisible [attribute] since the creation of

the world are perceived, being understood by the things made, namely his eternal power and deity ...

The last verse, here translated somewhat more literally than in the standard translations, with which the student may compare it, consulting commentaries also, has actually been used to defend the validity of Aquinas' argument. But none of these verses are arguments, nor do they validate any argument. God has indeed set his glory upon the heavens, and the filaments of the underside of a tiny leaf display through a microscope God's amazing geometrical handiwork; but neither an ancient polytheist nor a modem humanist recognized it. To see the glory of the heavens as the glory of God, one must believe in God first. The verse in Romans sounds more like an argument than the others; and while it cannot be used to guarantee Aquinas against all mistakes, it can plausibly be interpreted to mean that there is a valid cosmological argument if only somebody could find it. Nevertheless such an interpretation seems mistaken: mistaken because it is unlikely that anyone, after the profound labors of Aristotle and Aquinas, not to mention the lesser contemporaries like Hartshome, Tennant, and others, can do what they could not. Mistaken also because sensation replaces God and the Scriptures as the first principle. The verse in Romans then is best understood as an equivalent of the Psalms quoted.

Furthermore, although Romans can seem to approve an unknown cosmological argument, there are other verses that give the opposite impression. One such passage is

Job 11:7-8 Canst thou by searching found out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do?

Although these two verses may state the truth, and imply that there is no valid cosmological argument, one should observe a little caution because at the end of the book (Job 42:7) the Lord expresses his wrath against Job's friends and condemns them for having said some false things. Hence it is not certain that what Zophar said some false things. Hence it is not certain that what Zophar said is true. In any case a doctrine should never be based on one verse alone; not because God might be mistaken, but because we might be mistaken. When many verses say the same thing, and we compare them all, then we may have confidence that we have understood; but when there is nothing with which to compare a verse (such as a phrase in Gal. 3:19 or I Cor. 15:29) we remain in doubt. Therefore in addition to Zophar one may hopefully add:

Psa. 145:3 Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Isa. 40:18 ff To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him? ... Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? ... To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? ... Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?

Rom. 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!

I Cor. 2:9 What things the eye did not see and the ear did not hear ... to us God revealed them through the Spirit.

These verses, even the last, teach that sensory perception cannot form in our minds the idea of God. God cannot be searched out or discovered by empirical philosophy. Therefore, since the arguments used by the philosophers are logical fallacies, since the Bible gives no cosmological argument of its own, since it begins with God and insists on revelation, it seems best to reject all natural theology and posit divine revelation as the first principle and basic axiom of our system of thought. The task then is to show how the Bible describes God, as the first half of this chapter has tried to do.

(e) A Meaningless Word.

An additional reason for rejecting natural theology is the utter uselessness of asserting that God exists. If I should say, This cat is black, it would not be useless because some cats are white or some other color. But if all cats were black, and especially if everything, completely everything, were black, it would be useless to say that this cat is black. Or, again, most words have four or five different meanings. In English we speak of domestic animals and domestic as opposed to foreign policy in government. German has two different words here; we get along with the same word, and all languages have words of several meanings. But the meanings must be finite in number. Suppose a word had an infinite number of meanings. We would look up the word tamig in Merriam Webster's unabridged dictionary and see that the meanings of tamig included all the words from A to the end of Z. Tamig means not only cat and dog, it also means long and sharp, as well as run and fly, as well as iodine and uranium, as well as all the other words in the dictionary and then some. As an adjective it could be attached to any noun, and it could be substituted for every verb. But a word that means everything means nothing. An adjective that can be attached to every noun carries no information. The word existence is such a word. Cats exist. Dogs exist. So does the square root of minus one. Dreams exist. They are real: they are real dreams. And God really exists too. But to say that God exists does not distinguish God from a cat or a dream. We want to know what God is. The Westminster Shorter Catechism did not ask, Does God exist? It properly asks, What is God? Proving the existence of God therefore, even if possible, is a useless task.

(f) Can God be Known?

This is another standard question in Christian theology. Yet there is something peculiar about it. Should it precede or should it follow the question, What is God? Suppose we ask, Can rachis be known? Nearly everyone - it is a genuine English word - therefore nearly everyone would immediately reply, what is rachis? How can we tell whether or not it can be known, if we do not know what it is? Or, similarly, suppose we ask a non-mathematician, Can the side of a square and the diagonal be exactly measured by the same ruler? Or, can the square root of two be known? But to answer these two questions, which are in reality identical, one has to know what a diagonal is. Is it not the same with God? Unless we know what God is, we cannot decide whether he is a knowable object. But if we already know what God is, what is the use of asking, Can we know God?

Yet it is not all that simple. There are complications. Complications should have been expected. If geometry requires some careful argumentation, and if the finest mathematicians have not yet been able to solve the Fermat Theorem, would not a serious student expect theology, whose object of study is God, to be even more complicated? If Christianity tells the truth when it says that God created the world, must not theology be more profound than physics? If physics can legitimately claim the intensest efforts of the most brilliant minds, should not a young student of God be willing to do his best?

Well, then, can God be known? It is doubtless obvious enough that a Christian theological must answer this question in the affirmative. Does not the Bible give us a great deal of knowledge about God? Is this not enough? No, it is not enough. There are people who deny that the Bible tells the truth. Like William James they have arguments designed to prove that God is not omniscient, or that the world was not created and is not governed by a transcendent spirit. Ordained theologians, if not communicant lay members, have the obligation of dissecting these anti-theistic theories. We must not shirk our task.

Some of the arguments that deny all possibility of knowing God depend on taking the Christian concept of God and showing that some of its features make God as completely unknowable as the unit that measure the diagonal and the side, thus convicting the Christian view of self-contradiction.

For example, one might say: God is regarded as omniscient or infinite; mankind has not the remotest notion of omniscience or infinity; accordingly, if there were such an object, it could not be known.

So far as non-Christian material is concerned, Plotinus, motivated by the philosophic need for unity, posited a One so unitary that it transcended the duality even of subject and predicate. Yet Plotinus had subjects and predicates, i.e. propositional arguments by which to arrive at this conclusion; and he, no doubt inconsistently, made a few assertions about the One; but he tried conscientiously to restrict man's connection with the One to a mystic trance in which he knew neither it nor himself.

A more modern variation (of the) unknowability theme is the theory that human knowledge is entirely based on sensory experience. If so, then God, who is ordinarily regarded as a non-sensory object, cannot be known. Recent Logical Positivists makes sensory verification not merely the criterion of truth but even the criterion of meaning. From which it follows that metaphysical and theological statements are not so much false as completely meaningless.

The Christian must rebut these two views, no doubt with the assertion of a revelation epistemology, but also, with reference to Plotinus, by insisting on the metaphysical impossibility of deducing plurality from an absolutely undifferentiated One; and with references to Logical Positivism by pointing out that their criterion of meaning is by its own assertion meaningless.

Although all orthodox theologians must assert that God is in some way knowable and known, yet they have also affirmed that he is "incomprehensible." This term is a poor one. It may have been properly understood centuries ago; but if it were, it carries fatal connotations today. Since the time of Kierkegaard, and even before, the incomprehensible has been identified with the irrational. For example, philosophers have said that all things can be "thought away," but that the absence of space is inconceivable. Now, obviously, the Bible presents a God who understands or comprehends himself. Therefore God is not incomprehensible. He may doubtless be uncomprehended by mankind; but in himself he is of all objects the most comprehensible. The actual problem is, as above, whether man can know God. Because Christianity must affirm such knowledge, the idea of "incomprehensibility" must be limited to the question of how much a man can know of God. The Biblical position is of course that we can and do know some things about God and do not and by God's decree cannot know some other things. However, this simple argument, which really comprehends everything about incomprehensibility, has been adumbrated by considerable theological confusion.

Louis Berkhof (^Systematic Theology. 4th ed., p. 30) states correctly that "Reformed theology holds that God can be known, but that it is impossible to have a knowledge of him that is exhaustive and perfect in every way. To have such a knowledge of God would be equivalent to comprehending him, and this is entirely out of the question." So far so good. But the reason he gives for this, viz., "Finitum non possit capere infinitum." is not so good. Descartes was not a Reformed theologian by any means, yet one does well to consider his view that men must know the infinite before they can know anything finite. Calvin himself in the first chapter of his Institutes had earlier said that God is our first object of knowledge, and only after we know God is it possible to know our finite selves. Then too mathematicians know Aleph null — a type of infinity - and other infinites. Infinite series can be added; and though infinite, their limits can be determined with accuracy. It would seem therefore that the pompous Latin phrase Finitum no capax infmiti- if false.

This should be enough so far as the idea of infinity is used for denying the possibility of man's knowing God. The next sub-heading will introduce the delayed questions, What is God? If infinity is to be made an attribute of God, it will again be discussed in this different connotation.

(g) The Nature or Definition of God.

To state the nature of God is to answer to question, What is God? Some theologians have denied the possibility of defining God because definition is always in the form of subsuming a species under a genus. Thus, to use only a partial definition, a cactus is a succulent. There are various species of succulents, and the cactus is one species of this genus. But if we make God a species of a higher genus, we seem to place something above God. This is impossible, so the objection runs, because nothing is superior to God. If, on the other hand, God is the supreme genus and not an inferior species, it follows that men, plants and rocks are species of God. Man is one type of God, as a cactus is one type of succulent, and a rock is another species of God.

Louis Berkhof (Systematic Theology. 4th ed., p.41) writes, “It is quite evident that the Being of God does not admit of any scientific definition. In order to give a logical definition of God, we would have to begin by going in search of some higher concept, under which God could be coordinated with other concepts: and would then have to point out the characteristics that would be applicable to God only. Such a genetic-svnethetic definition cannot be given of God, since God is not one of several species of gods, which can be subsumed under a single genus.”

There are, however, certain unfortunate expressions in this quotation. The words higher, under, co-ordinated, genetic-synthetic, species of gods suggest misleading connotations. Higher and lower give the impression that the genus ipso facto must be more valuable, stronger, more witty, more cuddly than the species or an individual in the species. But only kitten is more cuddly than the genus animal, and the species mercury is more effective for some purposes than the genus metal. Higher and lower are spatial terms, and when used figuratively are likely to mislead. The term co-ordinate also suggests an equality that might not exist. Man, elephant, and mouse are co-ordinate in the sense that they are all species of animal; but they are no co-ordinate in other senses. The term genetic-synthetic hardly applies to the Aristotelian method of definition plus difference. One should note that Berkhof s argument depends on this Aristotelian method. This method of genus plus difference seems to work well in biology. But it does not work so well in arithmetic. The number two is hardly a species of a higher genus number. Prime numbers might be a species, but hardly two. Some mathematicians do indeed define two as the name of the class of all pairs, and this somewhat resembles genus plus difference. But, first, it is hard to understand what a pair is before we count to two; then, second, other mathematicians, following Leibniz, define two as the number that comes after one, or in figures, 2=1+1. This definition does not seem to fit the genus-plus-difference formula (incidentally, plus in this phrase is not +), and those who use it naturally think it is technically superior to the other. To continue: in Physics F=ma, and Newtonian gravitation may be a species of force; but Einsteinian Energy — well, perhaps physics is a difficult subject. In theology, however, is justification a species of something? Is an “act of God’s free grace” a genus of which justification is a species? Then sanctification would be a species of the genus work. Accordingly, if there be an alternate method of definition, Berkhof s objections to defining God have no weight.

Berkhof s difficulties multiply. He had said, “God is not one of several species of gods, which can be subsumed under a single genus.” But neither is apple tree one of several species of apple trees. It can, however, be subsumed under the rose family; but this does not make every species of that family apple trees. And of course, on Aristotelian principles, a single apple tree is not a species at all, yet it can be subsumed under the species apple tree and under the genus roseaceae as well. Furthermore, to classify God “under” some “higher” species does not imply that God is less real than that from which he is “deduced.” Aristotle never deduced a single apple tree from the species; and, more to the point, he assumed that the individual is a primary reality, whereas the species is a secondary reality. Hence if God, the individual, or the three individuals, could be subsumed under some concept or other, it

would in no way minimize the divine perfections. But perhaps it is not necessary to rely so greatly on Aristotle.

Buried beneath the surface of this argument lies Plato's Parmenides. Those theologians who dislike Plato forget that Plato's spokesman in the Parmenides gently reminded the youthful Socrates that the theory requires Ideas of hair and mud and filth. However disagreeable this logical extension of Realism may have been to Socrates' idealist sensibilities, it removed some objections to an incomplete theory. Then there follows the Third Man argument. Note that Plato himself as the author of the Parmenides stated this objection with great clarity. Note also that this was one of the objections Plato did not answer: he answered only one of the series. Was he unable to defend his own theory? Or did he think the omitted answers too obvious to state?

Would it now be too bold to suggest that the difficulties with the Aristotelian theory of definition and the Third Man objection to Realism can be solved by the Christian doctrine of the image of God in man? It will be shown in chapter five that God created man in his own image and likeness. Hence both God and man can be classified "under" or, better "by" the concept of spirit. Body is something that is extended but does not think. Spirit is that which thinks but is not extended. The previous material on omniscience showed that God is a thinking being. He has knowledge. This is the sort (species?) of being he is. To respect:

John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

It is interesting to note that this profound theological pronouncement, with all its intricate Aristotelian and Platonic implications, was not made to the learned Nicodemus, but to an uneducated Samaritan woman. This verse, and perhaps

II Cor. 3:17 For the Lord is Spirit

seem to be pertinent and pointed; but though not so obvious there are hundreds of others representing God as thinking, talking, revealing himself, teaching his doctrine, that equally well support the identification of God's essence, nature, or reality as spirit because they all say that God thinks. Later on, in the chapter on Man, some reasons for rejecting behaviorism will be outlined. Thought is not a function of the brain, the larynx, or the muscles. Thought is a spiritual or intellectual activity. God thinks; he is not and has not a body; he is not extended in space; he has no "parts." Therefore God is to be defined as mind, intelligence, intellect, spirit, let species and genera be as they may.

This disposed of Berkhofs objection that "God is not one of several species of gods." God is one of several "species" or types of spirit. Man too is a type or form of spirit; but man is not a species of gods.

For a final ad hominem remark, let us note that any theologian who inveighs in general against the pagan Plato - as if Aristotle were not also a pagan - is for that reason singularly disqualified from using this objection. Rejecting ancient Greek pagan theories of definition, a theologian who can classify carpet tacks with cactus thorns because both can stick you, cannot object to classifying both God and man "under" the concept of spirit.

Perhaps some devout persons would prefer to call God a person. To be more accurate, as the next chapter will try to make clear, God is three persons. At any rate, God is personal. The nineteenth century modernists, influenced by Schleiermacher and Hegel, sometimes denied the personality of the Deity, or sometimes tried unsuccessfully to maintain it. However unorthodox Karl Barth may be, he has a fine analytical section describing why the modernists could not logically defend the

personality of God and had to substitute man in his place. At any rate, God thinks and communicates his thought to men. God therefore is a mind or spirit.

(h) Substance and Attributes.

After the Shorter Catechism says that "God is a spirit," its next words are "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being... " The Biblical account of "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable was given in the first half of this chapter. These are differentiae which, where added to the genus, give the species. They are the predicates attached to the subject: this Spirit is eternal. But what has hardly been touched upon is the term "being." The word being is perhaps not the most usual word in this connection. Theological books usually discuss substance and attributes, rather than being and attributes. The doctrine of the Trinity too is expressed in the words substance and persons. But what does the word substance mean? No one is puzzled by the statement that the cat is black. The color black is an attribute or characteristic or quality that the cat has. The judge is just. Justice is a quality of this judge. The judge is the substance in which the justice inheres. Or is he?

The concept of substance is the first of Aristotle's categories. There are two kinds of substance: primary and secondary. Primary substances are things like cats and judges, individual cats and individual judges. Secondary substances are the concept of cat and the concept of judge. These are not individual things, but abstract concepts or forms. The chief difference between the two is that the individual is a composite of matter and form, while the concept is the form and is immaterial. Since matter is actually nothing, for only forms can be seen or touched or thought, and since God is perfect, God can have no matter; therefore God is not an individual person but an abstract form. Well, this is Aristotelianism, but it does not sound like Christianity. Furthermore, Aristotle may not have quite avoided all confusion in his theory of qualities, relations, and quantities. In fact, it may be that finally his distinction between primary substance and quality, his distinction between quality and quantity, and the very notion of an individual fade into nothingness.[4]

The modem philosopher, John Locke, also defends the concept of substance. He insists, as seems so much like common sense, that there must be something standing under qualities such as shape, motion, hard, thinking, and willing. Under the first three of these qualities stands matter; under the last two stands spirit. Matter and spirit are abstract ideas, abstracted out of sensations and introspections respectively. But they are so abstract, and so far from actual experience that Locke calls them "something I know not what." No one has ever seen or touched matter. It is far more abstract than justice, not to mention feline. In short, matter and spirit are not only unknown, but unknowable, Would it not seem therefore that the concept of substance, either material substance for physics, or spiritual substance for theology is a rather useless concept?

Of course the theologians could reject the Aristotelian and Lockean philosophies and give their own definition of substance. But most do not. Charles Hodge, even though he strenuously insists on the necessity of substance, is forced to say, "we have no definite idea of substance, whether of matter or mind, as distinct from its attributes." (Vol. 1, p. 367). H.B. Smith is not so explicit, but what he says amounts to much the same thing. "We start from the position that there is a divine substance, or essence; and an attribute, in distinction from the substance, is any necessary predicate that can be applied to this essence. ... The essence and the attributes are not separable. The attributes express the essence, the essence is the ground of the attributes. It is one simple spiritual essence in these different modes" (System of Christian Theology, pp. 12, 14).

Athanasius, who finally was successful in defending the doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene Creed (which will be studied in the next chapter), while he insists on Substance for the purpose of unmasking the Arian heresy, is, surprisingly, not greatly enamoured of the term. At least, he

recognizes that it will sound foreign to some devout ears. In his De Decretis (V, 22) he says, “If then any man conceives as if God were compound, so as to have accidents in his substance, or any external development, ... or as if there is aught about him which completes the substance, so that when we say ‘God’ or name ‘Father’ we do not signify the invisible and incomprehensible substance, but something about it, then let them complain of the Council’s stating that the Son was from the substance of God; but let them reflect that in thus considering they commit two blasphemies, for they make God material, and they falsely say that the Lord is not Son of the very Father, but of what is about him. ... Therefore let no one be startled to hear that the Son is from the substance of the Father. ... For they [the church fathers’ considered it the same thing to say that the Word was of God, and ‘of the substance of God,’ since the word ‘God,’ as I have said already, signifies nothing but the substance of Him Who Is.”

At this juncture the point in question is not the doctrine of the Trinity, which was of course Athanasius’ main interest, but the identification of God with the substance of God. God is not a compound of substance and attributes, the substance standing under the attributes, supporting them lest they fall to earth; nor are the attributes some addition to the substance, completing it. Today we might have difficulty in seeing that the distinction between substance and attribute is blasphemy, but Athanasius specifies why it is double blasphemy. It makes God material because the substance would be matter and the attribute form, and this results in saying that the Son is not the Son of the Father himself, but the Son of only a part of the Father.

Berkhof is a contemporary example of one who denies the distinction between substance and attribute. His Systematic Theology (p. 62) says plainly that attributes are not distinct from essence. It is possible that the driving force in distinguishing substance from attribute is Romanism, for this distinction is necessary to the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation. In the Mass the miracle is located in the continuing presence of the sensory attributes of bread and wine, while the priest has changed the substance from the natural to the divine. It might prove difficult to find so compelling a reason in evangelical theology for maintaining this distinction.

God therefore is his substance; his substance is his attributes; all his attributes are one; and this One is God.

(i) The Glory of God.

All the material of this chapter can be referred to under the title of the glory or transcendence of God. Because of the mention of Cyrus a few paragraphs above, a conclusion can be formed out of that well-known prophecy.

“Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus whose right hand I have holden. . . . I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight... and I will give thee the treasure of darkness .. that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. ... I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me; I girded thee though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things. ... Woe to him that striveth with his Maker... Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? of thy work, he hath no hands? ... I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded ... I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth ... that unto me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear. ... Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne ... for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

Notes

1

The Existence and Attributes of God. Vol. II, pp. 285-286, misplaced in the edition of 1873 from Vol. I.

2

Cf. later, James Daane's attack on this position

3

Summa theoloaica. Part 1, Qu. 2, Art. 3

4

G.H. Clark, Thales to Dewey, pp. 108-112, 143-144.

Chapter 3 - The Trinity

Anyone who has ever attended even a mildly orthodox evangelical church must have heard something about the Trinity. If the congregation did not sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, God in three Persons, Blessed Trinity,” the pastor probably closed the service with the apostolic trinitarian benediction. But even a regular worshipper has probably heard very few, if any, sermons on the Trinity. Over a period of thirty years the present writer has attended services in many places between Philadelphia and San Diego: Indianapolis; St. Louis; Vinita, Kansas; Minco, Oklahoma; Grand Junction; Alamagordo; Las Cruces; Tucson; and Seattle. In the churches, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and independent, I never heard a sermon on the Trinity.

But one morning in 1979 I turned on the radio and found myself in the middle of a sermon. It sounded good. Then it sounded better. The preacher, yes, he was preaching on the Trinity. It was a remarkable presentation. Who could the preacher be? What was his denomination? At the end the announcer gave the man’s name and his position as a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. Well, there are many things wrong with the Greek Orthodox Church, but I wish a million Protestants could have heard that sermon.

What our seminaries teach may be hard to ascertain, but their graduates do not seem much interested in this subject. Unfortunately so, for this doctrine was the first the early church had to work out, and it is the indispensable basis for the doctrine of the Atonement and all that follows.

To introduce the subject this treatise will begin with a chronological or historical approach, though eventually it will perforce become more logical than historical. At any rate we start with the Old Testament. This historical approach is not only convenient; it is pedagogically necessary also. Seminary students today, unless they came from Christian grade schools and high schools, have had little Scriptural or catechetical instruction. Accordingly, since the material out of which the doctrine of the Trinity is constructed is the Scriptural data, such passages must of necessity be kept in mind or else the discussion loses significance. Like any other treatise on the Trinity this one does not profess to give all the relevant mate- rial; it does profess to give more than some other volumes on Systematic Theology give. But the student must do some spade work of his own and is urged to search the Scriptures, for in them ye think (and think correctly) ye have eternal life.

During Old Testament times, at least until the Babylonian captivity, idolatry and polytheism were constant temptations to which the chosen people unfortunately often succumbed. It was therefore necessary to emphasize monotheism. Not only did the first commandment forbid the worship of other gods, and the second commandment the use of idols, but also the great Shema, repeated week by week, insisted

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord

(*Deuteronomy* 6:4).

The needed emphasis on the unity of God precluded any understanding of the Godhead as a Trinity. There were hints, however. The plural *Elohim* might have suggested some sort of plurality in the divine being; but with the idea of *three* absent, and no explanation given, it was natural to understand the word as a plural of majesty. But may we not suppose that the use of the name Jehovah three times and three times only

in *Numbers* 6:24-26 and *Daniel* 9:19 is something more than a rhetorical or liturgical flourish? The same phenomenon occurs also in *Isaiah* 33:22.

Some theologians see more Old Testament anticipations of the Trinity than others do. I. A. Dorner (*System of Christian Doctrine*, Volume I) surely overdoes it. He not only takes the frequent use of *Davar* as indicative of the *Logos*, he even sees this Word in*Genesis* 1:3, 6, 9 (God said). He also mentions *Psalm* 33:6, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;" *Psalm* 107:20, "He sent his word." Rather obviously the ancient Hebrews could not see the Trinity in *Genesis* one; but *Psalm* 107 indeed suggests some sort of plurality.

Old Testament anticipations of the Trinity seem to divide into three groups. Though this division may not be much questioned, the allocation of individual passages among the three will occasion some debate. But the three are: (1) passages which so clearly anticipate the Trinity that not only will all Christians agree, but which could have initiated some puzzlement among the Old Testament Jews; (2) passages which the Jews could hardly have suspected, but which Christians today can with some show of plausibility argue that God intended the anticipation; and (3) passages into which too confident Christians read back Trinitarian ideas, though it is highly unlikely that God so intended them.

One might suppose that God, as he increased the scope of his revelation from Adam to Malachi, might have given stronger hints at the end than at the beginning. Yet the clearest of Trinitarian hints, not merely hints of some sort of plurality, but of tri-unity, come in*Genesis*. One of these passages has to do with three mysterious strangers who visited Abraham in *Genesis* 18:1, 2, 9, on to 16. Note the strange wording. The

Lord appeared, and Abraham addressed him as “My Lord” (verse 3), and yet he saw three visitors. In verse 9*they* ask for Sarah; then after Abraham says that she is in the tent, the three men are designated by the singular *he*. Verses 13, 14 have “the Lord,” but in verse 16 the *men*, plural, end their visit.

One should not press the Old Testament too far, but with the peculiarities of *Genesis* 18 before us, we dare not ignore or underestimate them. In *Genesis* 20:13, “God caused me to wonder,” the verb is plural, though the plural *Elohim* usually takes the singular. So also *Genesis* 35:7. Consider also the use of the pronoun *us* in several places (Genesis 1:26, 3:22). Other verses of some import in *Genesis* are 24:40, 31:11, 12. One wonders whether Moses, when he wrote the book four centuries later, stopped to consider the significance of these peculiarities.

Moses himself received some strange revelations. They are, however, not so clear as those to Abraham. *Exodus* 33 has two peculiar sections. Verses 2,3,20-23 and *Numbers* 12:8 speak of an angel of the Lord, whom we might think is the Messiah. Then, second,*Exodus* 33: 14, 15 and *Deuteronomy* 4:37 have the plural word *faces*, though it is translated by the singular, *presence*. See also *Psalm*27:8, 9. The use of these instances is doubtful, however, for *Genesis* 1:2 has the same word. Yet one might suggest that even the deep and the waters had several faces. After Moses, see *Judges* 6:11ff. and 13:3ff., where the angel of the Lord appears. Then later there is*Isaiah* 63:9.

Job 35:10, *Psalm* 149:2, *Ecclesiastes* 12:1, *Isaiah* 54:5 all have the word Maker or Creator in the plural. Certainly this suggests that there was more than one Person who was the Creator. The *Psalms* have a number of similar anticipations. The student, for practice, might begin with *Psalms* 2 and 110. Even these *Psalms*, which seem so clear to us, were not clear to the

Jews; but subsequent to the New Testament revelation one can hardly miss their implications.

Yet, strange as it may seem, the New Testament with its explicit portrayal of the Three Persons, places us at a disadvantage the Jews never faced. We are obligated to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity, and this is no easy matter. How can three be one and the one three? The Old Testament is by no means abrogated. We are not polytheists or tritheists, but monotheists; and Gregory of Nazianzen well said, "I cannot think of the *one*, but I am immediately surrounded with the splendor of the *three*; nor can I clearly discover the*three*, but I am suddenly carried back to the one." Christians are monotheists and trinitarians. As Calvin said, "While he declares himself to be but One, he proposes himself to be distinctly considered in Three Persons, without apprehending which, we have only a bare empty name of God floating in our brains, without any idea of the true God" (*Institutes*, I, xiii, 2).

For this very reason it seems that Calvin overdoes his warnings against vain curiosity. No doubt people waste time in idle curiosity; but they must be few in number, for the general populace spends very little time considering the Trinity or any other part of Christianity. Of course it is also true that all of us make mistakes in our theology. No one is inerrant. Therefore, as Calvin says, we should be prudent, careful, and reverent. We must consider every doctrine, not the Trinity only, from every angle. We must ask: Is our exegesis correct? Are our summaries as complete as required? Are our inferences valid? But with all due caution, it still seems that modern man should be urged to be more curious about the faith, rather than less.

If however, we today face problems dimly appreciated by the Hebrews, we have the benefit of explanations of Old Testament passages which are even less clear than those referred to earlier. For example:

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye...the way of Jehovah.

This verse could hardly have meant much to the Jews of the eighth century before Christ; but

Matthew 3:3 This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice....

shows to us that John the Baptist was preparing for the coming of Jehovah. The verse therefore identifies Jesus as Jehovah, and clarifies the confused Jewish opinions as to the nature of the Messiah.

Similarly *Psalm* 24 could not identify "the Lord of Glory" to the Old Testament saints; but *1 Corinthians* 2:8 tells the New Testament saints that the Lord of Glory was Jesus. There must be a dozen verses in the New Testament that identify Jesus as Jehovah. Compare, for another example, Jehovah as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense in *Isaiah* 8:14 with *1 Peter* 2:5-8, where the rock of offense is Jesus Christ.

The remarks on Calvin's warning against curiosity, a few paragraphs back, ended with some questions, one of which was, Are the summaries as complete as required? Few, if any, discussions on any subject are entirely complete; but the student cannot fail to profit by a few additional New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament. Here is a most impressive one from Calvin:

When it is said in the forty-fifth Psalm, "Thy throne, 0 God, is for ever and ever," the [modern] Jews endeavor to evade its force by pleading that the name Elohim is applicable also to angels, and to men of dignity and power. But there cannot be found in the Scripture a similar passage which erects an eternal throne for a creature; for he is not merely called God, but is also declared to possess an eternal dominion. (*Institutes*, I, xiii, 9)

Although these New Testament explanations of Old Testament prophecies are clear to us, the Christians of the second and third centuries found them almost if not quite as difficult as did ancient Israel. The idea of one single God, now contrasted with Greek polytheism, and the baffling relationship between the Father and the Son puzzled and disturbed the church into the

middle of the fourth century. If we today are not so puzzled, it may be not only because the problem was solved for us by Athanasius, but also because some of us tend to forget the unity of God and lapse into a sort of tritheism. Certainly, this is Islam's chief objection to Christianity and the missionary's hardest problem with those people. Without additional training most evangelical ministers would not do very well in Arab countries. The Trinity is not a frequent sermon topic in American churches. Conservative pastors who are wise enough to combat modernism will preach on the Deity of Christ, and sometimes on the personality of the Holy Spirit; but the intertrinitarian relationships, the filiation of the Son and procession of the Holy Ghost, are mostly ignored.

Perhaps these matters are ignored, or avoided, because of the inherent difficulties. The Scriptural material itself is sometimes puzzling. The sharp trinitarian distinction between the Father and the Son, in conjunction with the full deity of the second person, seems compromised by verses which identify the Father as God, and the Son as something else. Even the apostolic benediction seems to separate the Lord Jesus Christ from God, although the word *father* is not there. Paul in *1 Corinthians* 1:3, *Galatians* 1:1,*Ephesians* 1:2, *Philippians* 1:2 and else where seems to confine the term *God* to the Father. This might seem to indicate that Christ is not precisely God.

There is an historical reason for this. In the Old Testament, where the Trinity is not clearly delineated, God is sometimes called Father. Implying that God is Father, though not the Father of a second Person, *Exodus* 4:22 says, "Israel is my son, even my first born." *Deuteronomy* 36:6 says, "O foolish people and unwise, is he not thy Father?" In *1 Chronicle*s 29:10 David prays, "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever." *Psalm* 100:3 is not so clear. But Isaiah has several passages: "The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (9:6);

43:1, 15 are unclear; 45:11 with the word *sons* is clearer; 63:16 is the well-known majestic declaration, “Doubtless thou art our Father...Thou O Lord art our Father....” The next chapter also, “O Lord, thou art our Father...we are all thy people” (64:8, 9).

The point to be made is not, not, I say, to show anticipations of the doctrine of the Trinity; but on the contrary to show that God, not recognized as a Trinity, is called Father. Hence, when the distinctions among the Persons are given in the New Testament, the designation Father is by tradition attached sometimes to the Godhead, sometimes to the first Person alone.

Further explanation is also possible. Even with the full Trinitarian distinctions in view, the Father and not the Son is only God; that is to say, the Father never became incarnate. He is only God, not both God and man. The Spirit, likewise, is sent, as the Father is not. Recognizing or establishing this distinction, the epistles here and there specify, “God the Father.” (See the verses some paragraphs back, and *Ephesians* 3:14, 6:23; *Philippians* 2:11; *2 Timothy* 1:2; *James* 3:9.)

This is perhaps also the best place to say something about the Holy Spirit. Elementary textbooks often state, and correctly too, even if simplistically, that the doctrine of the Trinity chiefly concerns the deity of the Son and the personality of the Spirit. The Nicene Creed emphasized the Deity of Christ, as we shall see, but said little about the Holy Spirit. Here then is the place to give some Scriptural material that must be used in formulating the complete doctrine. It is not so easily understood as a junior in seminary would at first suppose.

One such passage is *1 Corinthians* 2:10, 11, “Eye hath not seen...the things God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” Perhaps we should not

say that the Spirit plumbs the depths of Deity which the Father himself barely recognizes; but the passage clearly states that human knowledge of God is engendered by the Spirit. Does this imply that the Spirit is a Person, does it prove his Deity, or does it perhaps prove both?

But then the Son is also called the Spirit: “The Lord is the Spirit” (*2 Corinthians* 3:17). In addition to *Romans* 1:3, 4 where Paul states some sort of connection of the Son with the Spirit, *Matthew* 1:20 and *Luke* 1:35 almost make the Holy Spirit the father of Jesus. Then does *John* 4:24 mean that the whole God-head is the Holy Spirit? Of course there are other passages: In *Galatians* 4:6 God sends forth the Spirit of his Son. *John* 16:7 says that Christ will send the Spirit, in which respect see also *John* 7:39. These references are only samples of the material which must be logically arranged so as to formulate an intelligible doctrine of the Trinity.

2

Sabellianism

The Jewish failure to see more than one Person as God carried over into the Christian churches – with this all-important difference: They had to say something about Christ. The possible views are these: There are three independent gods; there is only one God who appears and operates in three ways; there is but one Person who is God and Christ was his first creation; and finally there is one Godhead existing in three Persons. This treatise will spend a few pages on Sabellianism and then expand on the clash between Arians and Athanasians.

So far as Sabellius is personally concerned, the only fact that needs mentioning is that he was condemned in A.D. 263. His theology, however, ought not to be ignored, even though echoes

of his views have only sporadically sounded here and there through the later centuries.

Sabellianism is the view that God is a single Person; there is not a second Person called the Son, nor a third called the Spirit. Rather, when God is active in creating the universe and controlling it, he should be called Father; when he is active in redemption, he should be called Son; and when active in sanctification he is called Spirit. The three names signify three different activities of the same Person. Of course the Sabellians could recognize Christ as God, very God of very God, and this sounds very good to the Christian public; but *Son* was only a name for one of God's three types of activity.

Sabellianism, if even superficial justice is to be done to the New Testament – and this was more of a concern in the 200s than in the 2000s – implies or at least overlaps what was called Patripassianism, namely, that it was the Father who suffered on the cross. This is not actually a logical deduction from Sabellianism, for the Sabellians would say that God suffering on the cross is properly named Son, and not Father; and a historian might wish to keep certain groups distinct; but one cannot be surprised at the confusion in the third century. Tertullian caustically commented that these people "put the Paraclete to flight and crucified the Father."

In reply to such views, one of the New Testament evidences to be cited that God is not one Person comes in the Baptismal formula of *Matthew* 28:19, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *Romans* 6:3 and *Galatians*3:27 use *Christ* only and do not mention either the Father or the Spirit. The latter two references do not harmonize with Sabellianism, for it is rather senseless to baptize into one function of a three-function person. As for the trinitarian formula one may ask, if the Father is simply a function, as Son and Spirit

are also functions, what are these functions functions of ? On the Sabellian interpretation there is in the verse no mention of any divine Person. A Sabellian baptism would require something like "I baptize thee in the name of creation, redemption, and glorification." Obviously this is not the Christian formula, and the latter can in no way fit into Sabellianism. One should note that in the New Testament the term *Father* in the pertinent passages does not express a relation to man. The Father is the Father of the Son. But activities, such as creation and redemption, cannot be fathers and sons. In other words, the three-fold formula lays no stress on what God does; it stresses God himself as three-fold.

In addition to the baptismal formula there is the Apostolic Benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen." The order of names here is peculiar. Sabellianism would require *God*to be mentioned first, and then, strangely, they would find only two of his three activities in the formula. Even a trinitarian is surprised that the Father is not first mentioned. In fact, the Father is not mentioned at all. Can Trinitarianism allow an identification of *God* with*Father* and thus separate the Son and the Spirit from *God*? Hodge strangely does not even mention the difficulty in his *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*. One can, however, understand that as Christianity began to appear distinct from the continuing Judaism, and yet did not altogether emerge from Old Testament phraseology, that the term *God* should be retained as the designation of the Father, rather than applying it uniformly to the Son and the Spirit. See, for example, *Galatians* 1:1, 3; *Ephesians* 3:14; *et al*., where Paul uses the phrase, "God the Father." Indeed this is somewhat the reason that forced Athanasius, in the next century, to insist on the Deity of Christ.

In addition to these two formulas the New Testament contains many longer or usually shorter indications that there are three Persons, not just three activities. One of the longest passages is the High Priestly prayer in *John* 17. A function cannot pray to a function. Besides which, the passage in many places distinguishes the Son from the Father. Take for example verse 5, "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world began." Personal distinctions could hardly be more clearly stated. Or below in verse 18, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." But functions do not send functions.

One should note, and it will be mentioned later in the section on Augustine, that the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* do not express three relationships to created human beings. The Son is the Son of the Father. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. He was the Spirit before he was sent. Even when Christ says, "I and my Father are one," we have not only a distinction between "I" and "Father," but also the *one* is a neuter and not a masculine. The Father and the Son address each other as "I" and "Thou." The Son prays to the Father. These distinctions, which can hardly be denied to be personal distinctions, are conclusive against Sabellianism. A short list of some pertinent verses is *Matthew* 3:17; 11:27; 26:53; *Luke* 2:49; *John* 2:16; 5:22, 23; 8:54; 14:2, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26; *1 Corinthians* 12:3; and *Hebrews* 1:5.

Sabellianism is now extinct. Recent theologians who categorize this or that heretic as Sabellian, Servetus perhaps, are incorrect. Shedd (*History of Christian Doctrine*, 377) charges Scotus Eriugena with Sabellianism and adds that other theologians make the same charge against Abelard. Caroli accused Calvin of Sabellianism! Strong (*Systematic Theology*, I, 327, 328, notes) cautiously and confusedly twice refers to Horace Bushnell. The reason Sabellianism is extinct is that since the fourth century

unbelievers have regularly admitted that Christ was a person. They deny that he was a divine Person. Nor do they now much try to defend their views on Biblical grounds, for they have repudiated inerrancy. Hence the nineteenth century Unitarians and the twentieth century apostate bodies are not Sabellian. Both in history – for Athanasius paid little attention to Sabellius – and in logic the next step is to show that Jesus, the person who walked around Palestine, was God incarnate. We come therefore in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity to the defense of the Deity of Christ, and this Athanasius undertook in the Nicene Council.

3

The Deity of Christ

Regardless of what phase of the doctrine of the Trinity is being discussed, the Deity of Christ is involved and the Scriptural material now to be adduced is pertinent. Even if one wishes to write on the Holy Spirit alone, the Deity of Christ is always in some way presupposed. Indeed, historically, the doctrine of the Spirit had to await a decision on the Son. It was the peculiar puzzle of the person of Christ that forced the church of the second and third centuries to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in the early fourth century. The following list is some of the material that the early theologians had to study. To most good Christians today these verses seem unambiguous; but they caused the sub-apostolic church a great deal of trouble. That is to say, the verses themselves historically follow the Old Testament, but the common understanding of them comes centuries later.

Matthew 11:27 All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son save the Father, neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Acts 20:28 ...to feed the Church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

Romans 9:5 ...of whom is Christ...who is over all, God blessed forever.

Philippians 2:6 Christ Jesus, who existed in the form of God and thought equality with God nothing to be grasped at.

Colossians 2:9 ...in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily.

Titus 2:13 ...the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To begin a study of the Trinity, and of the Deity of Christ in particular, it is good to point out what these verses say. In *Matthew*11:27 the “all things” most probably refers to the preaching of the seventy who went out two by two, and to perhaps more of the Gospel than they knew. Hence the verse begins by asserting that the Father delivered the contents of revelation to the Son. So far this could be true of an angel, or even of a man. Nor does the next phrase seem so very surprising: Whoever the Son might be, an angel or even a man, no one except the Father would know him in all completeness. Or even in relative completeness; for that men should be ignorant of a mysterious Son, or that they should be ignorant of the planet Neptune, causes no surprise. But these apparently simple statements become surprisingly significant when the next phrase is added to them. Not only does no one know the Son save the Father, but also no one knows the Father save the Son. This puts the knowledge the Son possesses of the Father on the same level with the knowledge the Father has of the Son. Since the Father’s knowledge is complete, divine, and eternal, so must the Son’s be.

Furthermore, if we remember that some to whom the seventy preached did not accept the preaching as a revelation, this verse asserts that it was the Son who exercised the divine predestinating authority to decide who would and who would not believe. The Son therefore is God, equal with the Father.

The exegesis of the next verse, though the verse is historically first century, touches upon a very contemporary situation. Sometimes history repeats itself, and then history becomes theology. At any rate, John 1:1 is a favorite verse church members use when Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking on the door. The Witnesses quickly reply that there are many gods (as *John* 10:34 and *1 Corinthians* 8:5 say), and that the Word is a god. Indeed the Witnesses have produced *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.* In it *John*1:1 reads, "Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."[1] An appendix sup- ports this translation, first by a reference to James Moffatt's New Translation of the New Testament, where he attacks the Deity of Christ by translating the verse as"...and the Word was divine." Secondly the Appendix explains the grammar behind the translation: "The reason...is that it is the Greek noun *theos* without the definite article, hence an anarthrous *theos*. The God with whom the Word or Logos was originally is designated here by the Greek expression *ho Theos*, *theos* preceded by the definite article *ho*, hence an articular*theos*. Careful translators recognize that the articular construction points to an identity, a personality, whereas an anarthrous construction points to a quality about someone."

The zealous Jehovah's Witness who comes to your front door will repeat all this to you in the best pedagogical fashion approved for professors of Greek. Then if you have a copy of the Greek New Testament beside the door, you can hand it to him and ask for further explanation. A friend of mine did just this. I never quite had the opportunity. When a Witness caught me once

with a Greek book in my hand, it was one of Plotinus's *Enneads*. The *Enneads* are very difficult Greek, and it was a dirty trick to ask a Witness to show his knowledge of Greek by translating Plotinus. But it is not reprehensible to offer a Greek Testament to one who presumes to teach you about anarthrous predicate nouns in John's *Gospel*. So my friend put a Greek New Testament in his hand. The man looked at it carefully. Then he turned it upside down and examined it again. Then, *mirabile dictu* (pardon me, that is Latin, not Greek), he turned the Testament on its side and looked at the lines now in vertical columns. Then he asked, What is this? My friend replied, That is a Greek New Testament about which you have been talking.

Probably my friend did not quote *Goodwin's Greek Grammar*, which says, "A predicate noun seldom has the article." I am fairly sure he did not quote Aristotle 403 b 2, "The definition is the form." Here *form* is anarthrous. He might have quoted *1 John* 4:16, "God is love." Or, *John* 1:49, "Thou art the King of Israel" where, as in all these cases, the predicate noun is anarthrous
(compare*John* 8:39, *John* 17:17, *Romans* 14:17, *Galatians* 4:25, and *Revelation* 1:20).

Since the time of Goodwin, Ernest C. Colwell has done more work on predicate nouns; and he proposes the following rule for the New Testament – "A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb."

Colwell's studies and their application to Jehovah's Witnesses have been well written up by Robert H. Countess in the *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1967).

With this much contemporary material already set down to convince the student that remote history is repeated today, the

patient reader will perhaps accept another page of the same before returning to Athanasius and the early centuries.

Acts 20:28 in many manuscripts has the word *Lord* instead of *God*. This would make the pertinent sense ambiguous. But the preferred reading identifies the blood that Jesus shed on the cross as the blood of God. It even says, “his own blood,” so as to emphasize it. Jesus therefore was God.

Modernists used to translate *Romans* 9:5 as an exclamation: “God who is over all be blessed forever,” disconnecting the term God from Christ. This is a most strained method of punctuation. The meaning clearly is, “Christ...who being God over all is blessed forever.”

It is also a strained effort that interprets *Philippians* 2:6 otherwise than an assertion of equality between Jesus and God. But can anyone by any straining remove the assertion of Deity from *Colossians* 2:9?

Similarly *Titus* 2:13. The King James version has it: “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” This allows the objector to separate the great God from our Lord Jesus Christ. But the sense, even in the King James version, and even more so by the usual rules of Greek grammar, does not permit this separation, for the subject matter is the glorious return of our Lord. One person returns: not the Father, but the Son. Hence the great God and Jesus is the same person. In the list of verses above, the New American Standard translation was used. This is a better translation of this verse, for it is difficult in Greek to separate “of us” (our) from “the great God.”

Now, these are by no means the only verses that assert the Deity of Christ. There are many others. Nevertheless, no matter how clear these verses are by themselves, they raise tremendous problems when taken with the remainder of the Scriptures. The

first has already been mentioned: How can there be two or three Gods? What is the relation of the second to the first? The early Church faced a second problem also. The New Testament describes Jesus, not merely as God, but also as a man. He had a body, he ate, he walked, he got tired, he wept, and he died. How then can he be God? A man cannot be God, can he? Not only did the early Church have difficulty in thinking so; but Kierkegaard assures us that it is absolutely impossible. To say that God is eternal and that he became incarnate is to contradict oneself.

[1] Narrowly speaking, Greek has no indefinite article and sometimes a noun without any article is correctly given an indefinite article in English. Nevertheless Greek can explicitly indicate the indefinite idea: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho: *anthropostis*” (*Luke* 10:30).

4

Athanasius

With our fifteen hundred years of history behind us, we should make some effort to be sympathetic with Athanasius, with the Council, and even with Arius himself. We should be sympathetic with Athanasius because the main body of bishops in the Council were only with difficulty persuaded that the theology involved was of much importance. They were like many well-meaning but not very intelligent pastors today who emphasize “practical” Christianity and deprecate Theology. We can even generate some sympathy for Arius himself, if we believe him to have been sincere, as he surely was, at least in the beginning, and maybe at the end too.

Besides the eliciting of our sympathy because of the humiliation and defeat at the hands of the Council, we should remember that at first sight, and especially in the second and third centuries, the Arian position is very plausible. If the Jews had a hard time

recognizing Christ as the Old Testament Messiah, the main body of Christians, who had so recently been pagans, were terribly confused as to the position of Jesus in the hierarchy of intelligences. Cannot all the Scriptural statements be harmonized by taking Christ as a created angel – the first of all begotten creatures? In this way the problem of two Gods would evaporate in pure monotheism; and it would be doubtless easier to admit that an angel could become incarnate than the Supreme Being himself. But though Arianism seems to ease the two latter problems, it eventually fails to harmonize all the Scriptural passages. How then did Athanasius meet what we now call serious heresy?

The great battle for the Trinity began in the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. This Council, composed of 317 eastern bishops and one from Spain, produced the shorter form of the Nicene Creed: “We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the essence (*ousia*) of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (*homoousion*) with the Father....”

In AD 381 the second ecumenical council was convened in Constantinople. It amended the first part of the Creed so as to read: “We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten before all worlds [*aiönes* = Gnostic aeons?], Light of Light,very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom [the Son] all things were made . . .”[1]

From 325 on the life of Athanasius can hardly be called peaceful. He had been the secretary to Bishop Alexander of

Egypt, who died in 326; and the young secretary was consecrated Bishop the same year. Egypt had been troubled by a schism, and Athanasius' decided stand against the Arians made enemies for him. The arguments by which he had won in the council will be sampled in a moment. But after the Council, Emperor Constantine demanded the readmission of Arius into the Church. Athanasius refused, and the storm broke. He was falsely charged with sabotage of grain exports, and it required a long trial to prove his innocence. Then he was accused of murder and of using the bones of his victim for magic. The investigators found the supposed victim alive. The Council of Tyre condemned him. He proved to the emperor the illegality of the Council. But the Emperor considered him an obstacle to peace and banished him to Treves in 335. The Emperor died in 337, and Athanasius returned home.

His enemies then accused him of graft. Though a synod cleared him, the new Emperor Constantius exiled him in 339. He was permitted to return in 345. Duke Syrianus with 5000 soldiers attempted to arrest him in his church. He escaped and began his third exile. During this absence Arians were appointed to many important posts.

Julian the Apostate recalled all the exiles, hoping thereby to throw the Church into confusion. But Athanasius proved too powerful for Julian, who then exiled him again the same year he had returned, 362. This fourth exile ended in 364 by decree of the Emperor Jovian.

Valens reversed Julian's general recall of the exiled bishops, and a mob broke into Athanasius' church, and he had to flee. But now the people began to demand the return of Athanasius, and Valens brought him back in 366. The final seven years of his life were peaceful.

Before proceeding with the doctrine at the basis of this turbulent life, it is wise to learn some lessons from the struggle. In the first place many men want peace at any price. They automatically flee from trouble. With them it is virtually a principle never to oppose anyone. In contrast, Athanasius is honored because he stood firmly against something. He opposed somebody. For this reason his epitaph, engraved on the soul of history, is *Athanasius contra mundum*.

One should never forget that theology cannot be divorced from church history. And it may be appropriate to remark that there would have been no Nicene Creed, had there been no heresy. God brought good out of evil: The enemies of the faith unwittingly taught believing Christians the true meaning of the Scriptures. Contrast and even controversy are good teachers. They force the attention of indifferent "practical" Christians.

With the exception of the formal principle of the Reformation, namely, the truth of the Scriptures, the basis of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Trinity. Nothing is more fundamental. The Atonement, which is always central in our preaching, gains significance only from the Person who made atonement. Divergent views concerning that Person and his relation to the Father completely alter one's view of the nature and value of his work on Calvary. Against the Council's many bishops who were more or less indifferent, who failed to see the importance of the matter at first, Athanasius pressed the question, Who is this Son of God? What is meant by the term*Son*? And it is the idea of Son, not the ideas of pagan Greek philosophy, as some critics assert, that controlled Athanasius' argument.

Since unfortunately so few people read Athanasius and are therefore defenseless against the charge that the basic doctrine of Christianity is mostly pagan Greek philosophy, it may serve a good purpose to give a brief summary of De Decretis. This is not

Athanasius' only or longest work, but it gives a good idea of his arguments and method.

Who, then, he asks, is this Son of God? Remember that *De Decreti*s was written after the creed had been adopted and that therefore Athanasius could and did press a legal charge against the Arians. In the capacity of present day theologians we are not concerned with the Arian insubordination to the council. It was important then because the Arians had considerable political support for some fifty years.

The main argument begins in chapter three. The Arian position, Athanasius points out, denies that the Father has always been Father because the Son did not exist before his generation. The Son was created *ex nihilo*. As a creature and a work, unlike the Father in substance, he is not the Father's only and true wisdom, but by a strong figure of speech is called Son. The Son is not true God.

Later it will be necessary to explain the eternal generation of the Son, but right here the twentieth century Christian should try to realize that what now seems so obviously false was in those days very plausible. In opposition to polytheism, with which those Greek fathers were so well acquainted, a strong monotheist would naturally be attracted to Arianism.

For the Arians, then, the term *Son* is an extreme figure of speech. The controversy therefore turns on the meaning of the word Son. Is Jesus a son in the sense in which all Christians are sons of God? There is such a sense, for *Deuteronomy* 14:1 says, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." So also *John* 1:12 says, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Such is one sense of the word son. But there is another sense: Was Jesus the son of God as Isaac was the son of Abraham? If moral or religious sonship is meant, than Christ does not differ from us and would not be God's only begotten.[2]

Since the Arians held that the Son “was not before his generation” (it was one of their favorite phrases), and that he “came from nothing,” they must concede, Athanasius insisted, that the Father was not always Father, and that God was once wordless and wisdomless. For the Arians the Word was a creature and a work, and therefore necessarily not the same in substance with the Father. The difference between Christ and other creatures lies in the fact that Christ alone came into being by God alone, whereas all other things came into being by Christ and God together.

But suppose moral sonship is not meant and that Jesus was the son of God as Isaac was the son of Abraham. Athanasius cites two verses to explain this natural sonship: *Genesis* 17:21 says, “My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee,” and *Genesis* 22:2, “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac.”

If Christ were a moral or religious son, rather than a natural son, and if his *raison d’être* was to help God in the creation of everything else, the implication would be that God needed an agent to help him.

The bishops in the Council all knew of recent theories that provided God with some mediator or other in the work of creation. Usually the motivation was to protect God from immediate contact with lesser, finite, imperfect, and possibly evil objects. But the highest mediator himself was *ipso facto* lesser, finite and therefore imperfect. Finiteness itself was imperfection, indeed a sort of evil. The theory of mediators therefore is lost in an infinite regress. In order to be guarded from contact with the imperfect, and since the first created mediator must be finite, for he is a creature and not God, he cannot have been the first because God needed a prior mediator to protect himself...and so on *ad infinitum*.

If Athanasius could have justifiably assumed that the bishops knew all this, we can understand why he used a different objection. Instead of the moral motivation for assuming a created mediator, he examined a physical motivation. He asked whether the work of creation was so tedious and tiresome that God needed an agent to protect him from either boredom or weakness.

Isaiah 40:28 Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, The everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.

Quite the contrary to either of these suppositions, creation is ascribed to the Father and to the Son so similarly that the Son is no mere external instrument. The Scriptures do not distinguish between what the Father did and what the Son did. The Son is more the*Hand* of God in creation, than an agent or instrument.

Isaiah 66:2 For all these things hath my hand made.

1 Corinthians 8:6 There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.

If Christ were the first creature and we follow through him, then we would be sons of Christ, rather than sons of God; and Christ would separate us from God rather than uniting us with him. Consider: Adam may have a prerogative of *honor* because he was the first man; but he has no prerogative of *nature*, for we are all men. Similarly Christ would be first in time, but not different from other creatures in nature. Therefore Christ is the Son of God as Isaac was the son of Abraham: not a *moral* but a *natural* sonship.

Athanasius also pays attention to some verses the Arians quote in defense of their view.

Proverbs 8:22 The Lord hath created me a beginning of his ways.[3]

Athanasius replies, We have already shown that the Son is not a creature, for if he were a creature, he would not be a son; hence this text must be interpreted in conformity with *Genesis* 1:1, *Psalm* 110:3, *Psalm* 2:7, and so on. Actually, Athanasius adds positively that *Proverbs* 8:22 refers to Christ's incarnation and the human nature in which he suffered.

In connection with Proverbs 8:22 one must note that in addition to the *De Decretis*, Athanasius published, along with much else,*Four Discourses* in the second of which, chapters XVI-XX, he discusses this verse at length. The Arians had given several somewhat inconsistent interpretations of this verse. Athanasius scrutinizes them all. To support his interpretation he quotes at least nineteen other verses in chapter sixteen alone. Not only should we notice the absence of Greek philosophy in Athanasius, but also we should notice the absence of sermons on the Trinity in contemporary pulpits.

One notable exception to the common indifference of supposedly orthodox ministers, from World War I to the present, was J. Gresham Machen. Though the subject was not the Trinity, still it was a matter of pagan, somewhat philosophical, Greek and middle eastern religious thought. Reitzenstein tried to explain Paul's theology of the Atonement as a borrowing from *Poimander* and other tractates in *Hermes Trismegistus*. Machen so demolished Reitzenstein that no one today defends him.

But now back to the *De Decretis*. Athanasius begins his fourth chapter by noting that Scripture calls the Son Word and Wisdom. This implies, though the Arians try to soft-pedal it, that before God created Christ he was without Word (Logos, rationality) and wisdom.

To diminish the importance of the one Word, the Arians say that God spoke many words. If so, which word was the Son? To conceive God as speaking many words is to conceive him as a man, a later word reversing a prior word, as if the first word were not sufficient for all creation and providence. Many words imply feebleness. One word shows the power of God and also the perfection of the Word. To show that all the titles assigned to the Son or Word are consistent among themselves Athanasius at the end of chapter four quotes *Isaiah* 48:13: 51:16; *Psalm* 104:24; *Proverbs* 3:19; *John* 1:1; and *Colossians* 1:12-17.

Chapter Five discusses the use of non-scriptural terms in theology. The Arians complain that the Council invented and imposed the term *substance*.[4] This Arian complaint is peculiar, for they themselves use unscriptural terms or phrases. What is the tradition, Athanasius asks, behind their statements that Christ was created out of nothing, or Christ was not before his generation, or once Christ was not? Today we all recognize that the term *Trinity* is not a Scriptural term, but we reply with Athanasius that the bare word is not important. What is important is the sense in which it is used.

The use of the non-scriptural term *substance* resulted from the Arians' persistent and perverse misinterpretation of scriptural terms. They understood the phrase "from God" in the sense in which all the universe comes from God. Of course all things are from God, as*1 Corinthians* 8:6 and *2 Corinthians* 5:18 say. But the Son is not from the Father in that sense. To preserve the distinction the Council said, "from the substance of God." Note that *1 Corinthians* 8:6 explicitly distinguishes Christ from the "all things" which are from God.

The phrases, *like the Father, Power and Image of God, always, etc*. can be understood of man, and hence the Arians were

willing to accept them. First Corinthians 11:7 says that man is the image and glory of God. *Second Corinthians* 4:11 applies the word always to man. “In him” is found in *Acts* 17:28. They say we are “unalterable” (immutable) because nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. These are the reasons why the orthodox used the phrase “one in substance with the Father.” This avoids the ambiguity of the word *like*, which can refer to vague similarity.

If some of this phraseology seems unfamiliar to those who have not read much theology, an authoritative document should help to clarify the Arian position. In an *Epistle* Athanasius quotes a doctrinal statement drawn up by Arius and sent to Bishop Alexander, Athanasius’ predecessor in Alexandria. Here is an excerpt:

> We acknowledge one God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unoriginate...who generated an Only begotten Son before eternal times, through whom he has made both the ages[5] and the universe...perfect creature of God, but not one of the creatures; offspring, but not as one of things generated...not as Manichaeus taught that the offspring was a portion of the Father, one in substance;...created before times and before ages.... Thus there are three Subsistences...the Son was not before his generation...for he is not eternal or co-eternal or co-ingenerate with the Father...wherefore also he is before the Son....

The Arians therefore, continues Athanasius in the *De Decretis*, are in no position to complain about non-scriptural terms, and even less about their use. They use the pious term *Unoriginate* of the Father to disguise their heretical belief that the Son was originated. If anyone wishes to distinguish between the first and second persons of the Trinity, Father, not Unoriginate, is the term to use.

This material from the *De Decretis* is easier to understand than nearly anyone would anticipate. Almost at the end of the treatise, however, are a few pages which are more like intricate philosophy than simple Biblical exegesis. Even so, it is neither the philosophy of Aristotle nor of John Locke. Though it uses some Aristotelian terms, it is rather anti-aristotelian than

otherwise, and its further explanation of *substance* seems to have been misused, not only by Roman Catholic theologians, but even by some Reformed scholars.

Chapter V, paragraph 22 reads as follows.

> If then any man conceives as if God were compound, so as to have accidents in his substance,...or as if there is ought about him that completes his substance, so that when we say "God," or name "Father," we do not signify the invisible and incomprehensible substance, but something about it, then let them complain of the Council's stating that the Son was from the substance of God; but let them reflect that thus considering they commit two blasphemies; for they make God material, [6] and they falsely say that the Lord is not Son of the very Father, but of what is about him. But if God is simple, as he is, it follows that in saying "God" and naming "Father," we name nothing as if about him, but signify his substance itself.

Some more recent theologians, seen in the Reformed tradition, assume that there are attributes, essentially or definitionally different from each other, somehow inhering in a nondescript, quality-less, unknowable substance. Athanasius makes the attributes, the substance, and God identical.

[1]Other verbal changes in the remainder of the Creed, especially some additions relative to the Holy Ghost, do not concern us here. See *The Creeds of Christendom*, Philip Schaff. Vols. I and II.

[2] The fact that *monogenes* means *only*, and not *only-begotten*, strengthens rather than weakens the argument.

[3]The King James has it. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." The Revised Standard Version gives a strongly Arian translation. "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old." This is in keeping with the Revised Standard Version's practice of making difficulties between the Old Testament and the New. The New American Standard translates it as did the King James. The verb is not *bara*.

[4] Substance is the Latin mistranslation of the Greek *ousia*. The latter is indeed a technical term in Greek philosophy. It is also

the ordinary verbal noun from the verb *to be*. When in English today one refers to a human *being* or to the *substance* of an argument, we are not justified in concluding that he is a disciple of John Locke, whose philosophy asserted substances, or of Hegel who made use of *being*.

[5]*Ages* here may possibly mean celestial beings, like the Gnostic eons; certainly not divisions of human history.

[6] The unphilosophical reader needs to be informed that *matter*, whether in Aristotle, Aquinas, or Locke, is neither three dimensional, visible, nor tangible. In Locke it is an abstract idea of "something I know not what;" in Aquinas and Aristotle it is pure potentiality, without any qualities, and actually nothing.

5

Three Intermediates

During Athanasius' turbulent life there were younger contemporaries who defended his doctrine against the Arians. In overlapping chronological order therefore we shall consider Marius Victorinus, Hilary of Poitiers, and Gregory of Nyssa. The personalities of these three men contrasted among themselves and with Augustine also. They were all very orthodox, but otherwise very different. Marius Victorinus was actually older then Athanasius, by about ten years; but he was not converted to Christianity until somewhere around 356. By that time he had become a profound scholar, too profound according to some present day standards. But he meant well and was the first Latin author to defend the doctrine of the Trinity. In doing so he produced a new Christian vocabulary, or, as many would like to put it, he adapted the Neo-platonic lingo, more from the inferior Porphyry than from the truly great Plotinus. Here is a random sample.

What therefore do we say that God is, the existent or the non-existent? We shall certainly call him existent because he is the father of existents. But the father of existents is not the existent. For the things of which he is the father do not yet exist, and it is not permitted to say and it is impious to think and to call the cause of existents existent. For the cause is prior to what it causes. Therefore God is above existent, and insofar as he is above, God is called non-existent, not through privation of all that is his, but as another existent, the very one which is nonexistent. In relation to what is yet to come, he is the nonexistent; insofar as he is the cause for the beginning of those things which are, he is the existent. [1]

Presumably Marius Victorinus was fairly orthodox, though a modern fundamentalist might wonder; but in any case Hilary, in contrast, was a very devout, very orthodox, but not very intelligent theologian. Much that he wrote is true, edifying, and exceedingly elementary. Born in AD 315, ten years before the Council of Nicaea met, he preceded Augustine by a generation. About 353 he was consecrated Bishop of Poitiers, and, in the face of the rampant Arianism supported by Emperor Constantius, Hilary set himself the task of defending the doctrine of the Trinity. No one doubts that he contributed to the complete acceptance of the Nicene Creed in the Latin West.

The contrast between the lower level of Hilary's academic proficiency and the towering greatness of Augustine's genius is by no means needed to defend the latter's reputation. The contrast has one purpose only. Like many contemporary theologians Hilary back then did not define his terms, and hence he fell into inconsistency. Augustine, even when he could not define his terms, recognized the difficulty and was careful to avoid confusion.

The one example, now to be used, of Hilary's lack of discrimination is the term *incomprehensible*. A later section in this treatise will consider the matter more fully; nor is incomprehensibility the main point in Augustine's material. It just happens that it is the best example that Hilary affords. Keep in mind that the subject is not incomprehensibility but ambiguity.

Stephen McKenna in his Introduction to Hilary's *The Trinity* (xi) offhandedly used the phrase "the Trinity is incomprehensible and

must be accepted by faith." This would seem to indicate that what can be learned through sensation or aprioricategories is not incomprehensible, and that incomprehensibility means only that a certain truth must be learned by revelation. Hilary himself says (I, 7, 9), "Since the work [God's work in creation] surpasses even our comprehension, so the worker [God] must far exceed our comprehension." The implication seems to be that God is not the only incomprehensible object, but that the world of physics and chemistry is so as well. There are other phrases that are more puzzling. For example, in the same context Hilary also says, "He is not included within the thoughts that we comprehend, nor is he beyond the comprehension of our thoughts." This twice contradicts the preced ing quotations. If ordinary chemistry is incomprehensible, all the more Christ's miracles are. Hilary mentions Christ's turning the water into wine and his feeding the five thousand (III, 5, 6). No doubt these were works of God, and yet Elijah, who was not Christ, also multiplied the flour and the oil. If anyone reply, "But it was God who did it,"we must note that God just as truly makes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust alike. Therefore on this basis God is not alone incomprehensible, everything is. Later Hilary again refers to the feeding of the five thousand and characterizes the event as "indescribable" and "unutterable" (III, 18,79). Of course he had just described it. He concludes Book III by asserting that "nothing in the actions of God is to be treated in accordance with the reasoning of the human mind." This would mean that we must not take the miracles as evidence of Christ's divine power, for this inference is only an instance of the reasoning of the human mind.

Nor are God and his revelation so incomprehensible as to prevent us from understanding them. "I do not imagine that anyone can be so unreasonable as not to understand God's

revelations about himself...or who does not wish to understand them when he has learned to know them" (VI, 8, 174).

Near the beginning of Book VII he refers to the "indescribable mystery" which he then proceeds to describe. Or, again (VII, 35, 264) he says the apostle Philip "asked for a manifestation that would enable him to comprehend Him." And below on the same page Jesus "rebukes the Apostle's lack of knowledge in not comprehending Him;" yet in the next line Hilary repeats that the miracles were "incomprehensible."

Now, it would seem that if anything in Christianity is incomprehensible, or even difficult to understand, theologians would nearly always stumble into vagaries and ambiguities. But contrary to this plausible supposition, and contrary, so it would seem, to much else that Hilary wrote, he asserts that "The Lord...leaves nothing vague in the consciousness of the faithful" (VIII, 13, 284). But at least one theologian finds Hilary's distinction between will and nature, in this very paragraph, distressingly vague. Perhaps he is not one of "the faithful." It would have been better had Hilary himself been more vague on the next two pages where he confidently teaches the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Later (VIII, 31, 299), speaking of Paul's "argumentation," Hilary states that "it is most difficult for our human comprehension."Now, if "comprehension" means an understanding of some object including all its relations to the whole universe and to God as well, then whatever Paul said, for example, "I baptized also the house of Stephanus," would not be merely "most difficult for our human comprehension," but absolutely impossible. One can only conclude that Hilary changed the meaning of the word from one chapter to the next.

A comparison of these items as cited is enough to show that Hilary is not at all precise. But to balance off the many pages

where he insists that both the heretic and the uneducated Christian can and should understand a great deal about the Trinity, one more example will be quoted.

In XII, 25 and 26 (519) Hilary asserts the incomprehensibility of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father on the ground that anything eternal is beyond the comprehension of temporal creatures. This argument he expands for several pages. Nonetheless Hilary seems to comprehend what he is saying.

The point to be made is that unlike Augustine, Hilary is not aware of the ambiguities of his language. He does not define incomprehensibility. Could we not say that Botany in one respect is similar to the doctrine of eternal generation? *Botany* is the name given to a collection of several thousand or more propositions. These are all known and understood. Presumably no one botanist knows them all; but all are known. However, since science always progresses, or at least changes, we believe that scientists will come to know propositions not now known. One might even suppose that some botanical truths will never be discovered. Therefore Botany, with a capital B, is incomprehensible. But though Botany is unknowable – I mean that Botany is not an object of knowledge at all, and I mean to suggest that this example can prove to be a pertinent suggestion for some of these theological problems – though Botany is unknowable, many botanical propositions are commonplace, *e.g.*, roses grow on bushes. So too theology consists of many propositions. Theology may be incomprehensible, but the several revealed propositions are not.

Of these three intermediaries Gregory of Nyssa is by far the most important. He was a native of Cappadocia, born about ad 335 and lived sixty years. In a footnote to Augustine's *De Trinitate* (4), Shedd insists that Gregory of Nyssa defined ousia and *hypostasis* "with great clearness." This may be somewhat

excessive praise, but no one can ever deny that this Gregory wrote more on the Trinity than anyone before or after him. What he wrote is not always of the highest quality. For one thing, he has columns of invective. This offends twentieth century taste. Even so, Paul's denunciations of the Judaizers in *Galatians*, and those of Peter against false prophets, not to mention Jude, show that the modern spirit of complacency and compromise is foreign to the Biblical ideal. Another defect in Gregory of Nyssa is his lengthy analogies. He tries, hardly successfully, to defend the doctrine by illustrations from zoology, astronomy, and natural science in general. He could not, of course, rise above the scientific level of his own day. But had he been able to, we would have found that modern science too has no meaningful analogies to the Trinity. Discarding all these lengthy and overwrought arguments, and omitting much else, we can still find useful and profound considerations in his arguments.

The first selection in the *Post-Nicene Fathers* (Volume V, 33-314) is *Against Eunomius*, almost 300 pages of double columns. The reader will be glad that only some parts of it are reported here. Gregory maintains that he can easily refute Eunomius' slanders against Basil, his older and erudite brother, because Eunomius is not very competent: "a congeries of words on a very slender nucleus of thought."

In I, §13 Gregory quotes Eunomius' position: A Supreme and Absolute Being, a second existing by reason of and after the first; a third Being inferior to the second as to its cause, and inferior to the first as to its energy; therefore three ranks of energy; these energies can be distinguished in the rank of their production; it is the same energy that produced the stars and that produces man. Gregory notes that Eunomius suppresses the names Father, Son, and Spirit.

This refusal to say Father and Son is serious because these names themselves convey what the relationships are. Eunomius' words might indicate that he denies the personality of the Three, at least a denial of three Persons. Why does he make the first alone of the three the supreme Being?

To begin his refutation of Eunomius' vague and misleading statement, Gregory notes that every Christian, however low in academic standing, knows that the personalities of the Son and Spirit lack nothing of the goodness and power inherent in the first Person. Surely the first Person is not prior in time. Even in temporal beings, such as father and son, their beings are identical in nature. David was as much a man as Abraham. There is not greater or less in pure being. Humanity is not possible to that which does not possess the complete connotation of the term *man*. So also in every other case (such as cat and star), including the Trinity. For example (§16, 53), Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are mentioned in this order, one, two, three; but they are equal in nature, *i.e*. they are each Man.

Even with the many ambiguities in Eunomius' language, which allow orthodox interpretations in some instances, it is clear that he speaks of three Beings instead of three Persons. "He makes the actual substantial Being of each different from that of the others"(I, §19). Orthodoxy maintains that the Three Persons are equal in power and goodness. Indeed Being and Goodness are identical. But Eunomius destroys the simplicity of God, and while he holds that the Being of the Father is "Supreme and Proper," he refuses these titles to the Son.

Gregory analyzes Eunomius' phraseology in such minute detail that little doubt can remain as to the fact that the latter's view is far from Trinitarian. But Gregory's defense of the Trinity is not always so clear. For example, in §19 he also says, "It is difficult to see how a reflecting mind can conceive one infinite to be

greater or less than another infinite." But as it was with natural science, so with mathematics. He had never heard of infinity squared or of Aleph null. This sort of thing occurs in this twentieth century also. In very recent years one theologian complained that another used the modern mathematical idea of the infinite instead of using the religious meaning. But unfortunately the former theologian was entirely unable to explain what that religious meaning was.

Gregory begins a more positive exposition in 1, §22. "The ultimate division of all things is into the Intelligible and the Sensible. The Sensible world is called by the Apostle broadly 'that which is seen.'...The common term again for all the intellectual world is with the Apostle 'That which is not seen!' And he seems to refer to *Colossians* 1:16, though *Hebrews* 11:3 might have been better. Now, continues Gregory, the Intelligible is divided into the created and the uncreated. The uncreated intelligible nature does not have the qualities of created minds, and much less the sensory qualities of the visible world.

Parenthetically, in spite of the fact that Platonism was well known, Gregory takes pains to deny sensory qualities to the Godhead. One supposes that Eunomius surely knew this. Uneducated Christians may not have known this. Even today students in Christian colleges and people in the pews frequently have trouble with the Bible's anthropomorphisms and worse trouble with the anthropopathisms. Later in this treatise, under the heading of *Eternal Generation,* the reader will meet a theologian who was much confused on this point. So, perhaps, Gregory may be excused for recurring to this theme so very frequently.

The uncreated Being therefore does not *acquire* goodness, nor *participate* in a superior goodness. It *is* good. But the Persons are differentiated. The Father is uncreated and

ungenerated; the Son is uncreated, but generated; and the Spirit is uncreated, ungenerated, but also ungenerating in distinction from the Father.

Gregory shortly returns to his repudiation of temporal distinctions in the Trinity, but the argument is extremely puzzling. “When he [Eunomius] makes the Son later than the Father by a certain intervening extension of life, he must grant a fixed beginning to the Father’s existence also,” for the interval prior to the begetting of the Son could not be infinite, because “the very nature of the infinite is to be extended in either direction and to have no bounds of any kind” (§25, 67:2). Now, quite clearly Eunomius here is charged with the denial that God is super-temporal; but this would not be a denial that he is everlasting and immutable. Somewhere in this infinite duration the First Person might beget a Son. Did not God create the world after an infinitude of waiting? Gregory seems to anticipate such a reply, for he contrasts the alleged temporal begetting of the Son with the creation of the world. Though eternal, God can create a world at a certain time, but he could not so generate a Son. The reason seems to be that the world exists in time, and we view it “in an extension of distance...but the nature preexistent to those ages escapes all distinctions of before and after.... The divine and blessed life is not in time, but time flows from it....” But if Eunomius views the Son as temporal, and the First Person also, his being begotten is no less possible than the creation of the world. Since Gregory frequently treats Eunomius as introducing time into the Trinity, this present argument seems inapplicable. It should be construed to fit a prior question. Is God eternal and not everlasting? And if so, do Gregory’s words really avoid the difficulty of asserting an eternal Deity who, if not in time, still changes his immutability to create a world?

In the same section he again puzzles us by insisting that God’s Being “presents no marks of its inmost nature: it is to be known

only in the impossibility of perceiving it. That indeed is its most special characteristic, that its nature is too high for any distinctive attribute" (§26, 70). Even omnipotence and omniscience?

Such statements bear on the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, a subject which the present treatise will discuss later at some length. Several contemporary theologians want to affirm incomprehensibility and at the same time accept the cosmological argument. Gregory, at least in §30, argues that the changeable cannot reveal the immutable. Nor conversely can we learn the nature of the creation from the creator. To put it succinctly, we get no knowledge of the invisible from the visible, nor do we get any knowledge of the visible from the invisible.

If the reader here is beginning to tire of so much detail, let him console himself by noting that §38 examines various fallacies of Eunomius for thirteen columns, each more lengthy than a page in an ordinary octavo book. Book I ends about seventeen columns later. Then comes Book II. Then on to Book XII, after which comes a second treatise of 116 pages, also double columns.

It has not been entirely useless to report the views of Eunomius at such length, for twentieth century Christians ought to be interested in what agitated their fourth century forebears. In fact, Christians today are poorly informed even on the Reformation. In southeastern France there are Protestant evangelists who are more Romish than the persecuted Huguenots whose geographical footsteps they follow. In America also Calvinism is virtually extinct. One may say that the twentieth century is the age of ignorance. To remedy such deficiencies, if by now any remedy can be of any help, a page or two will be added from Gregory's more direct doctrinal assertions, even if a few of them are somewhat inapplicable.

It is not enough, he says, to deny that the Father and the Son are independent: We must assign them a single substance. There are not two (or three) First Causes, for if the Son were a First Cause, he must have been ungenerated. “We keep dis- tinct the properties of the Persons, while, on the other hand, not dividing in the Persons the oneness of their substance” (81). The three Persons are “divided without separation and united without confusion” (102). Near the end of §2 of Book II he identifies *subsistences* with Persons, and his Greek for subsistences is *hupostaseis*. Would it not be better, even today, to use the Greek word instead of the other two?

Describing eternal generation he states, “Not dividing his own essence by begetting, and being at once begetter and be- gotten, at the same time Father and Son” (§7, 109). Even when men beget, he explains, they do not divide the essence of Man. The child has the same entire nature. All the more the Father begetting the Son does not divide the divine nature.

It is interesting to see how Gregory relates the generic Man to the One God. In a letter (?) to Ablabius, *On ‘Not Three Gods’* (331-336), he raises the question why, if Peter, James, and John are one human nature, but three men, why are not the Three Persons, of the same nature, three Gods? With unintentional understatement he remarks that this is a difficult question. All men, he continues, have the same nature. Similarly an army has a nature, and though each soldier has an individual name, the nature cannot be divided. However, in the case of God, the matter is more complicated. Gregory’s answer seems to be that God’s nature is unnameable and unspeakable. God is indeed incorruptible, but this word does not express God’s nature in essence. When we say that God is incorruptible, we say that his nature suffers no corruption, but we do not say what that nature is.

Yet, Gregory admits, this does not solve the problem: If there is one common nature, why are there not three Gods? The Godhead signifies an operation, not a nature. Philosophy is an operation, but there are three philosophers. Gregory replies, perhaps lamely, that although the Godhead is an operation, like shoemaking or philosophy, and not a nature, the men operate independently, but the Three Persons always act conjointly, and their operation is one, not three operations. For example, he adds, a sinner does not have three regenerations. Therefore there are not three Gods.

The Ante and Post Nicene Fathers were, of course, translated by very competent scholars. Their opinions are to be respected, even though not necessarily accepted as final. In a long footnote to Chapter 1 of *The Great Catechism* (475) an unsigned footnote (Moore or Wilson) refers to "the first skilful use of it [*upostasis*] in expressing that which is *neither substance nor quality*." Abraham Tucker adds, "He [Plato] styled them Hypostases or Subsistences, which is something between substance and quality, inexisting in the one and serving as a receptacle for the other's inexistency within it." This addition may serve to show the usages of these words, but the footnote rightly comments that Tucker did not identify his authority for the alleged Platonic usage. In fact Moore or Wilson thinks that the phraseology "seems to emphasize the antagonism between Platonism and Christianity." One must examine footnotes carefully, for on page 478 it says, "*innate ideas (koinön ennoiön)* but *koinön ennoiön* is a Stoic designation of ideas, not innate, but ideas which all men naturally develop from common sense experience. However, to return to the main point: If *hypostasis* is neither substance nor quality, what can it possibly be? Such expressions are hardly "a skilful use" of words.

To conclude this account of Gregory of Nyssa, and to stress the difficulty of terminology, we take up a footnote to the *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book* (253:2), with respect to a complicated argument, which nonetheless is rather conclusive. It reads as follows: "Essence, substance, ousia. Most of this controversy might have been avoided by agreeing to banish the word *ousia* entirely from this sort of connection with Deity." Then after a mention of Celsus and Origen, the footnote continues, "Indeed, the subject of substance involves questions complicated and difficult.... Supposing an absolute Substance...is God beyond this Substance in rank and power... or is he himself this substance...? ...'God is substance' ought to be regarded as an actual contradiction in terms." Gregory himself (262) acknowledges that "Holy Scripture omits all idle inquiry into substance as superfluous and unnecessary," and though the absence of a word from Scripture is not sufficient reason for avoiding it, Gregory seems to regard this word as meaningless.

In the next section it will become still clearer that if we today wish to expound the doctrine of the Trinity, one of the chief problems will be the terminology.

[1] "*Letter to Candidus*," Marius Victorinus, *Theological Treatises on the Trinity*, translated by Mary T. Clark, Catholic University of America Press, 1981, 64.

6

More on Terminology

In any subject terminology is important. No one achieves an understanding until he knows the definitions of the key words. The doctrine of the Trinity, unfortunately, seems to have been beset with more such difficulties than nearly any other subject. The terms we have met are *substance, subsistence, essence, hypostasis, person, being*, and even *numerical unity*. One source

of the confusion has been the difference between the Greek of the New Testament, which was used by the eastern Fathers, and the Latin that has formed our western languages.

Latin is an Indo-European language of the western group (Greek, Welsh, Icelandic, German). It gave rise to Italian, Spanish, French, and Roumanian. The classical grammar is complicated; but colloquial or "vulgar" Latin, Late or Patristic Latin, Medieval Latin with an influx of non-latin words, and the later Latin of more modern scholarship after ad 1600, are all more simple.

During the Hellenistic period (300 BC – AD 500) Greek came to be spoken from Spain to India. Even the Roman Senate for a time conducted its business in Greek; and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius used Greek for his Meditations. Augustine, however, (AD 354 – 430) did not know Greek, and as the Dark Ages came on (AD 500-800) the Latin of the common people in the West dominated even the invading barbarians.

In the New Testament, Latin, along with Greek and the local Aramaic, is seen in the superscription on the cross. Numerous Latin commercial terms are also put into their Greek forms (*e.g. dënarion, kënsos, titlos, et al.*). The greater proportion of Latin words (aside from proper names) in *Mark* can be taken as some evidence of its being written in Rome.

With the gradual division between the more stable Eastern Empire and the barbarian West, Latin automatically became the language of our theology. Jerome (AD 340 – 420) translated the Bible into Latin. This translation, called the Vulgate, was so superior to previous attempts that it became and remains today the official, authorized Bible of the Roman church. Nevertheless it had some flaws. Jerome translated the Greek word *metanoeo* (repent) as *agere poenitentiam* (to do penance). This altered the meaning of repentance. The Greek word refers

to a change of mind, an internal, intellectual replacement of one idea or judgment by another. The Latin phrase indicated external actions, such as flagellation, wearing hair shirts, or making a financial contribution to build St. Peter's in Rome. This emphasis on external works or merit, instead of inner conviction, gave rise to the sacrament of penance with its consequent scandals.

Another unfortunate example of the use of Latin instead of Greek is the word *faith*. This English word derives from the Latin *fides*or *fiducia*; but this is not an exact translation of the Greek word *pistis* or its verb *pisteuo*. The confusion that the word faith has caused since the Reformation, I have described in *Faith and Saving Faith*.[1]

The doctrine of the Trinity also suffered, but more subtly. In Greek the Godhead is one *ousia* (being, reality, essence), with three*hypostaseis*; but even in Greek this word is confusing, for it means *supports, ambush, sediment, duration, origin, founda tion, plan, confidence*, and *wealth*. Such a variety of meanings makes the word difficult to translate. In *2 Corinthians* 11:17 and *Hebrews* 3:14 most versions have *confidence*. In Hebrews 1:3 the Revised Standard Version and New American Standard have *nature*, whereas the King James has *substance*. The linguistic cognate of *upostasis* in Latin is *substance*, something that stands under. But the Latin theologians, who lacked the philosophic acumen of the Greeks, or who did not understand the language, made two incredible blunders. They translated *upostasis* as *persona*, and *ousia* as *substantia*. Hence orthodoxy in English has said that God is one substance and three Persons, whereas the literal Greek is one reality and three substances.

The difficulties in the doctrine of the Trinity do not, of course, all derive from Latin. Some are very real theological difficulties.

About both Calvin speaks with wisdom:

Now, though heretics rail at the word *person*, or some morose and obstinate men clamourously refuse to admit a name of human invention; since they cannot make us assert that there are three, each of whom is entirely God, nor yet that there are more gods than one, how very unreasonable is it to reprobate words which express nothing but what is testified and recorded in the Scriptures! It were better, they say, to restrain not only our thoughts, but our expressions also, within the limits of the Scriptures, than to introduce exotic words, which may generate future dissensions and disputes.... If they call every word exotic, which cannot be found in the Scriptures in so many syllables, they impose on us a law which is very unreasonable, and which condemns all interpretation, but what is composed of detached texts of Scripture connected together.... But when it shall have been proved that the Church was absolutely necessitated to use the terms Trinity and Persons, if anyone then censure the novelty of the words, may he not be justly considered as offended at the light of the truth, as having no other cause of censure but that the truth is explained and elucidated?... Unable to resist the clear testimonies of the Scriptures, Arius confessed Christ to be God and the Son of God; and as though this were all that was necessary, he pretended to agree with the Church at large. But at the same time he continued to maintain that Christ was created and had a beginning like other creatures.... His impiety openly discovered itself when the Arians began inveterately to hate and execrate the name *homoousios* (consubstantial).... That little word distinguished Christians, who held the pure faith, from the sacrilegious Arians.... If then the words have not been rashly invented, we should beware lest we be convicted of fastidious temerity in rejecting them. I could wish them indeed to be buried in oblivion, provided this faith were universally received, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are one God; and that nevertheless the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are distinguished from each other by some peculiar property. I am not so rigidly precise as to be contending for mere words. For I observe that the ancients, who otherwise speak on these subjects with great piety, are not consistent with each other, nor, in all cases, with themselves.... To what extremes does Augustine sometimes proceed! How different are the Greeks from the Latins!... When the Latins would translate the word *homoousios*, they called it*consubstantial*, signifying the *substance for essence*.

And he continues by mentioning Jerome’s strong condemnation of three substances, because he was confused by the word*upostaseis*, while Hilary more than a hundred times asserts that there are three substances (*hypostaseis*) in the God head (*Institutes*, I, xiii, 3, 4, 5).

With these apologies for the confusions that must be faced, with the candid admission that the worst difficulties are theological and philosophical rather than merely linguistic, and with only an anticipation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity, the question now comes, How can the three be one? What sort of unity is there in the Godhead? For we are not supposed to be tritheists, as the Muslims think we are.

The arguments of Athanasius show how Scriptural the doctrine of the Trinity is, and how little it depends on pagan Greek philosophy. Plato indeed had three supreme principles, but they did not form a single Godhead, and one of them was not a person. Plotinus had a trinity of the One, the Mind, and the Soul, plus a Logos; but his theory bears no resemblance to Christianity, and he could not have influenced the New Testament because he lived in the third century. Similarly, attempts to find the roots of Paul's theory of redemption in pre-Christian Gnosticism have also failed. The influence flows in the opposite direction, for it is far from certain that there was any pre-Christian Gnosticism at all.

If there be any influence of Greek philosophy on the doc- trine of the Trinity, it would be in the relationship of the three Persons to the one essence. This is very complicated. It involves the general philosophic problem of unity in multiplicity. Parmenides was strong on unity, but he got nowhere with multiplicity. Plato had a multiplicity of Ideas in one Mind. Locke, Hume, and William James were strong on multiplicity, but unity eluded them. This problem is not an artificial problem invented by secular philosophy, which Christians automatically escape. Nor is the Trinity the only point in Christianity where it appears. The doctrine of creation combines many things in one world, as Plato combined his Ideas. The origin of the souls of Adam's posterity with the doctrine of original sin has another plurality in unity. Therefore much as a beginning student would like to avoid philosophy, sooner or later he must face these difficulties or resign theology in despair.

The solution the following pages defend, if it is a solution, is Realism, often called Platonism, more accurately called Augustinianism.

[1] The Trinity Foundation, 1990, [1983]; now included in *What Is Saving Faith?* 2004.

7

Augustine

It is incomprehensible (non-theologically) how Augustine (ad 354-430), Bishop of Hippo, with his manifold ecclesiastical duties, could have written so voluminously. Among his many publications is the *De Trinitate*. For the present purpose a summary of only a few parts of it must suffice. The whole is based on, or at least largely guided by Platonic principles. It is strange that many Protestant theologians of the present day take offense at Platonic principles, while they cling to the Aristotelian views of Romanism.[1]

Anticipating the so-called Athanasian Creed, which appeared perhaps three hundred years later, and in which some verses say, "The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal; and yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal," the present summary begins with one of Augustine's arguments against Arianism, in which he raises a more perplexing question.

To quote I, 10, §1: "As therefore we do not say three essences, so we do not say three greatnesses or three who are great." Greatness is something of a Platonic Idea, in which many things participate. "Greatness is one thing, and that which is great is another. A great house certainly is not absolute greatness itself. But that is absolute greatness by which not only a great house is great and a great mountain is great, but also by which every other thing whatever is great which is called great.... Therefore as we do not say three essences, so neither do we say three greatnesses,... Let the same be said also of the goodness and of the eternity and of the omnipotence of God."

But this argument applies equally to omniscience and to the quality of being a person. If the fact that each of the three Persons is great presupposes a single superior Great, then there must also be a single superior Person, since Father, Son, and Spirit all have the attribute of personality. Hence the Godhead would be itself a Person, making four instead of only three Persons. Augustine almost says as much in the next chapter: "Certainly God is holy and God is spirit, [therefore] the Trinity can also be called the Holy Spirit." This conclusion has surfaced in the present century, though the supporting arguments are not so clear cut. While awaiting modern developments, the student may consider whether Plato's Third Man argument is pertinent. In modern symbolic logic as well, the question has arisen whether the *inclusion* of a class in a higher class is the same as the *inclusion* of an individual in a class.

Augustine also has another passage that anticipates the Athanasian Creed, indeed a most dreary passage. The point at issue is the different ways by which a predicate (*e.g.* eternal, incomprehensible, almighty) can be attached to a subject. The passage is so dreary that one is tempted to agree with Louis Berkhof (*Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, fourth revised edition, 89), who complained that the Trinity is "unintelligible in its essential nature." Now, a puzzle may be unintelligible to someone in the sense that he is too unintelligent to solve it; but if a puzzle is unintelligible in its essential nature, it is not a puzzle – it is nonsense. However little we may understand God, God is not nonsense. But the student must be warned that the puzzle is particularly difficult.

Augustine very clearly perceives the difficulties inherent in some forms of incomprehensibility. For example, in *De Doctrina Christiana* (I, 6) he indicates the strange paradox that "God should not be spoken of even as ineffable, because, when we say this word, we are saying something about him." Grelling and

Russell were no more perceptive when they discussed auto and heterological words: If the word *heterological* is itself heterological, it must be autological. This should be sufficient to refute any claim that God is ineffable. As Augustine says, “If that is ineffable which cannot be spoken of, a thing is not ineffable which can be called ineffable.” There are other words also that are difficult to handle. Augustine argues that

> Whatever is said of that most eminent and divine loftiness *in respect to itself*, is said in respect to substance; but that which is said *in relation to* anything, is not said in respect to substance, but relatively; and the effect of the same substance in Father and Son and Holy Spirit is, that whatsoever is said of each *in respect to themselves*, is to be taken of them, not in the plural in sum, but in the singular. For as the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, which no one doubts to be said in respect to substance, yet we do not say that the very supreme Trinity itself is three Gods, but only one God. So the Father is great, the Son is great, and the Holy Spirit is great; yet not three greats, but one great. For it is not written of the Father alone, as they perversely suppose, but of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.... Whatever therefore is spoken of God in respect to him- self, is both spoken singly of each person... and together of the Trinity itself, not plurally, but in the singular.... Therefore as we do not say three essences, so we do not say three greatnesses, but one essence and one greatness. I say *essence*, which in Greek is called *ousia*, and which we call more usually substance (V, 8).

A few pages later Augustine discusses relative predication. The Father is the Father of the Son. The Son is not the Father of the Father. Likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Son of the Father nor the Father of the Son. These are relative predications and do not apply to the Triune God as such.

In VII, ii, 3 Augustine makes *substance* and *essence* synonyms, and in VII, iv, 7 he twice, and maybe a third time, includes *nature*. This may help some readers to escape from Aristotelian *matter* and Locke’s two *substances*, but the term *essence* today is also vague. If, however, these terms were replaced by the word *definition*, several difficulties could be avoided. The definition of the Triune God is not the definition of the Son. The predicate *eternal* does not belong to the Son because he is Son, but because he is God. The suguaro is not a cactus because it is a succulent, but because it has no true leaves (plus one or two other predicates). Nor is a suguaro a suguaro because it is a cactus. The species must have the generic

predicates; it must also have predicates of greater connotation but of lesser extension. That is to say, the Son must have all the predicates of the Godhead, but he must also have some or at least one, the Father and the Spirit do not have. This is not the complete doctrine of the Trinity, but it is a factor by which to avoid some traditional confusion. It would have relieved Augustine himself of some confusion. In Books VI and VII he at least seems confused by the Scriptural statement that Christ is the wisdom of God, a statement seemingly implying that the Father himself has no wisdom. If Augustine is not confused, he surely fills several columns with the confusions of inferior theologians. His replies, so it seems to me, would have been less awkward had he stressed the notion of definition and had done away with substance.

That he missed this possibility is rather clear in VII, 4, §8, where he seems not to realize that a species and a genus both have a definition or essence. To quote:

> If we say three persons because that which person means is common to them...why do we not also say three Gods? For certainly since the Father is a person, and the Son is a person, and the Holy Spirit is a person, therefore there are three persons; since then the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, why not three Gods?... Why not also one person; so that we could not say three persons, although we call each a person singly, just as we cannot say three Gods, although we call each singly God.... Why then is it not lawful to say three essences?... Or if they are not called three essences, but one essence, on account of the unity of the Trinity, why is it not the case, that on account of the same unity they are not to be called three substances or three persons, but one substance and one person? For as the name of essence is common to them, so that each singly is called essence, so the name of either substance or person is common to them.

These remarks sound like a very plausible objection to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Can we not say that there are three succulents when we have a suguaro, a barrel cactus, and a prickly pear? But maybe if we *define* cactus, our theology will improve.

Here we must note that Augustine is using the term *person* as a synonym for *substance*. If the laity in translating the Greek terms into Latin embarrassed Augustine, we should expect theologians

of a later age to do better. Yet Thomas Watson, who died about 1689 or 1690, in his *Body of Divinity*, in the section on the Trinity (Sovereign Grace edition, 76) wrote, “God is but one, yet there are three distinct persons subsisting in one Godhead...three substances but one essence.” This is very confusing to modern readers, who are all accustomed to supposing, though hardly ever defining, a sharp distinction between them.

Although in good Platonic fashion Augustine suggests a generic Person, he also insists, in opposition to his own plausible arguments, that, at the cost of Sabellianism, there must be three somethings. In spite of all the linguistic confusion, and in spite of some intellectual confusion to which Augustine was less and less subject as he grew older,[2] he made it quite clear that the Godhead was one in one sense and three in a different sense. Whether this difference be called *person* or *substance* is inconsequential. The important point, even if we fail to formulate a precise definition, is that there is a difference between what is three and what is one. Those who merely wish to understand Augustine and are not particularly interested in accepting and defending a particular view of the Trinity, must not forget that he treats the terms *person* and *substance* as synonymous. He also seems to use the undefined terms*subsistence* (*esse* and *subsistere*).

Because of recent developments this point deserves emphasis. Augustine finds himself unable to define various terms, especially*person* and *substance*. However, he is neither con fused nor trapped into a contradiction, for he clearly says that the Godhead is one in one sense and three in a different sense. Although it is not familiar to our ears, one could say that God is one person and three substances. In fact, translate *substance* back into Greek and it is most orthodox to say that the Godhead is three substances. It makes no difference what term one uses, provided that he clearly states that they are

not synonymous. God is one and three in different senses. Yet the historian must note the complications in past authors.

The complications increase. One substance or essence means that neither the Father nor the Son is an “essence.” Each is a “person.” Only the Trinity as such is an “essence.” The confusion here and in the footnote above disappears, or at least is alleviated, by using the word *definition* instead of *essence*[3]; and also by remembering that the Son has an “essence” that is different from the “essence” of the Father, but which in both cases contains the “essence” of Deity. The definition of Deity does not define the Son; nor can the definition of the Son apply to Deity. A succulent does not have all the qualities of a cactus, but the latter has all of the characteristics of the former. That is to say, the Trinity or Godhead, absolutely and as such, does not have the characteristics of any one Person, absolutely and as such; but each Person has all the predicates of Deity. Note that the word here is *Deity*, not *Father*.

Augustine is confused in chapter V when he says that if predicates exist in a subject, God, being simple, can have no predicates. He then concludes that God is not a substance but an essence, though earlier he had made these terms synonymous. Indeed, he asserts that “God alone should be called essence.” This would mean that neither cacti nor triangles could be defined.

If anyone should question the propriety of a twentieth-century American adversely criticizing the great Augustine, for Americans are not too well educated and the twentieth century is surely not theologically minded, one must remember that Augustine could not read Greek, and that the terminology in Latin had not yet been fixed. These two deficiencies in Latin Europe allow room for improvement in later ages. Indeed there was improvement, in spite of the deplorable political collapse

into the Dark Ages. One improvement was the Athanasian Creed itself – Augustinian in inspiration, but at least a little more definite than Augustine himself. Furthermore, after fifteen centuries of contributions to the discussion, even if many writers are inferior on the whole, bits of progress have been made. Yet in all, the subject is discouragingly difficult and one can easily sympathize with Calvin's disparagement of such discussion and his being satisfied with a minimal creedal form, particularly if Calvin had Marius Victorinus in mind. This theologian, a contemporary of Athanasius, was the first to write a systematic defense of the Trinity in Latin; and, believe me, he was less intelligible in theology than Proclus was in philosophy. Indeed, it seems that Proclus made use of some of his verbiage. But as for Calvin, we can also excuse him on another ground. He had many pressing problems to attend to. He faced persecution and death in France. He faced obstinate opposition and violence in Geneva, was exiled once and expected to be a second time. We today do not have these excuses. Therefore we should to the best of our ability meditate on these matters, for the inerrant Scriptures reveal a Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. By their command we are obligated to draw out the implications as far as possible and as accurately as we can.

[1] Augustine was by no means a strict Platonist. Before his conversion he had been a Manichaean. He later became a Neo-Platonist. This prepared for his conversion, and there are Neo-Platonic echoes throughout his works, especially in his refutation of skepticism. But there are also inconsistent Aristotelianisms, even though his philosophy as a whole is far from being Aristotelian. His early treatise on *Free Will* is not at all Calvinistic, but his later treatises are very definitely so. However, we are now interested only in the *De Trinitate*.

Here are some Platonic themes. In VIII, 2, §3, and in other writings perhaps more so, Augustine insists that God is truth and

therefore unchangeable. In VIII, 3, §5 he uses the idea of participation. In the same book, 5, he appeals to species and genera ingrafted in us, though to be sure he also allows at least some to come from experience. In VIII, 6, §9 he declares that the idea of righteousness is found inside the mind, not as the image of Carthage which his mind received from without. One of the most obviously Platonic passages is IX, 7, § 12. “We behold then by the sight of the mind, in the eternal truth from which all things temporal are made, the form according to which we are, and according to which we do anything by true right reason, either in ourselves or in things corpo real....” Here clearly is a source of the ontologism of Malebranche, and immediately Augustine adds that when we talk to others, we hope that our words will *remind* them of the truth.

But there are non-platonic passages also. In VIII, 4, §7 he asserts that *everybody imagines* what Paul and Jesus looked like, though even here he contrasts the image with a notion implanted within us. A half-platonic and half-non-platonic argument comes in IX, 6, 9, 10. After contrasting “the eyes of the body” with “indestructible truth” and continuing with “the images of things corporeal which are drawn in through the bodily sense... by which [he] recall(s) the walls of Carthage,” he insists that “the judgment of truth from above is still strong and clear and rests firmly upon the utterly indestructible rules of its own right, and if it is covered, as it were, by cloudiness of corporeal images, yet is not wrapt up and confounded in them.” This is indeed strongly Platonic, but not purely Platonic.

[2] I would too much encumber the whole to discuss several of Augustine’s confusions. This footnote, as a parenthesis, will state one of them. In VII, vi, II, Augustine says, “if essence is a genus, then a single essence has no species; just as, because animal is a genus, a single animal has no species. Therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three species of one

essence.... For if essence is a species, as man is, then one essence is as one man is." The philosophic difficulties here are enormous, and very few Christians have the patience and the ability to follow the argument very far. It seems to me that Augustine here confuses the Aristotelian notion of an individual thing with a Platonic theory of Ideas. He seems to reject a complex division of genera into species, into sub-species, and to accept the unknowable individual of Aristotle – unknowable because dependent on an unknowable matter. This leads him to a confusion between an *infima species* and an individual. Note that he said, "If essence is a genus, then a single essence has no species." But if the essence of succulent is a genus, the single essence of cactus still has subpecies. Augustine might have said, with greater probability, "*some* essences have no subspecies"; but he actually made a universal judgment, and this seems extremely improbable. One notes that Augustine, when he uses *animal* as a genus, continues with a single animal, whereas if he had divided the *genus* animal into vertebrate and invertebrate, these *species* would clearly have sub-species. I suggest that, rejecting the Aristotelian individual, and accepting Leibniz' definition of Alexander the Great, we consider Aristotelian individuals as non-aristotelian *infimae species.*

[3] The verb *to be* must always be a copula, and never the unintelligible verb *exist*.

8

The Athanasian Creed

Augustine recognized the confusion of fifth century Latin terminology and tried to improve on it. Modern Christians are more likely to complain of the church's departure from the simplicity of Scripture toward the intolerably intricate and useless philosophy of the discussion. It became clear,

nonetheless, or at least it should have become clear in the first section of this treatise, *Preliminary Scripture*, that the Scripture itself is not so simple. After Athanasius and Augustine had done their best, the next advance was the so-called Athanasian Creed, so-called because Athanasius did not write it.

At some unknown date, later than Augustine, maybe as late as AD 850, some one, or perhaps two authors, composed what is now known as the Athanasian Creed. It first appeared in the Latin churches of Gaul, Spain, and North Africa. The Greeks did not know of it before AD 1000. Some scholars guess that it was composed, or that the damnatory clauses were added to it, during the reign of Charlemagne. Charles the Bold, in 870, had a nearly complete text. The damnatory clauses have made it unpopular; yet the theology is detailed and good. The Anglican churches are required to read it once a year on Trinity Sunday. That is not such a bad idea, if only all the members of that church believed it. Here the student should consider it carefully.

1. Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith:

2. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and unde filed: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

3. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

4. Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance [Essence].

5. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.

7. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

8. The Father uncreate [uncreated]: The Son uncreate [uncreated]: and the Holy Ghost uncreate [uncreated].

9. The Father incomprehensible [unlimited]: the Son incomprehensible [unlimited]: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible [unlimited, or infinite].

10. The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

11. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

12. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles [infinites], but one Uncreated: and one incomprehensible [infinite].

13. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

14. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.

15. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.

16. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

17. So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.

18. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.

19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord:

20. So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be [are] three Gods, or three Lords.

21. The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

22. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten.

23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.

24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

25. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another [there is nothing before, or after: nothing greater or less].

26. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.

27. So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshiped.

28. He therefore that will be saved, must [let him] thus think of the Trinity.

29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly [faithfully] the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

30. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

31. God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his Mother, born in the world.

32. Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

33. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.

34. Who although he be [is] God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ.

35. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking [assumption] of the Manhood into God.

36. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]: but by unity of Person.

37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ;

38. Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell [Hades, spirit-world]: rose again the third day from the dead.

39. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God [God the Father] Almighty.

40. From whence [thence] he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

42. And shall give account for their own works.

43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

44. This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully [truly and firmly], he can not be saved.

As a prelude to the discussion of this Athanasian Creed, and all the more of later argumentation, certain terminological difficulties require attention. Some of these terms occur in the creed; others have come into use from other sources. Over the centuries discussions on the Trinity have utilized the words *nature, essence, being, substance, subsistence,* and the very unfortunate Latin term *person*. These are hardly ever defined with precision. For example, one would ordinarily think

that a *person* must have a *will*. But the orthodox doctrine allows the three persons of the Trinity to have one will only, while surprisingly the incarnate Jesus has two wills, one divine, one human; and yet even with a human will, and "reasonable soul," he is not a human *person*. Nestorianism, with its assertion that Christ was two persons, though plausible on the ground of this psychology, is nonetheless, on the ground of the mediatorial atonement, a heresy. Other theologians, orthodox or otherwise, distinguish between the *substance* of God and his *nature*. But would not a substance without a nature lack all *attributes*? And would not a substance without attributes or characteristics be a blank nothing?[1] The nemesis of trinitarian discussion is the lack of precise definitions. Though the Westminster divines did not much advance the Trinitarian question, they showed great wisdom in composing the Shorter Catechism of so many definitions. Now, let us return from Westminster to Charlemagne's age.

The so-called Athanasian damnatory clauses can be disposed of briefly, for they contribute nothing to the understanding of the doctrine. Most American Protestants, if there are any who have read this Creed, are flabbergasted at the idea of requiring an understanding of such an abstruse creed for entrance into heaven. But the explanation is simple. The Pro testant tradition, both Lutheran and Calvinist, stresses the obligation of all church members to study the Bible. The members are to believe as much as they can understand. Obviously if they do not understand *Ezekiel* one or *Revelation* nine, they cannot believe those chapters. The Romanists, on the contrary, speak of an *implicit* faith. The person professes belief in whatever the Pope teaches, even if he has no idea of what the Pope teaches. This makes these damnatory clauses less ridiculous and less devastating than the uneducated Protestant thinks. He cannot convict the Romanists of making an ignorance of this extremely

complicated theology an impassible bar to heaven. But the price the Romanist must pay for this security is the identification of faith with ignorance. Calvin severely condemns such implicit faith as unscriptural nonsense. The Apostle said, faith comes by hearing the word of God.

Let us now examine some of the substantive clauses of the Athanasian creed. One thing can be said to the credit of the ninth or eighth century church leaders: They were much more interested in Biblical truth than most Protestant ecclesiastics today. In view of the economic, political, and social conditions of the time, though not so anarchical as the seventh and sixth centuries, we must grant these theologians of the Dark Ages high respect.

Since no later creeds have altered the Nicene and Athanasian symbols, the examination of a few clauses of the latter will end the attempt at pre-Reformation history. We must speak more theologically and as systematically as we can. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to have a first, second, and third logical point because everything fits together so intricately.

In view of the debilitating anti-intellectualism of today's evangelical churches, which they have absorbed from modern Philosophical Existentialism, it seems necessary to emphasize the fundamental importance of this doctrine in the actual mode of congregational worship. Nearly all conservative churches sing the doxology, which ends with the line, "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." They also sing, somewhat frequently, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...God in three Persons, blessed Trinity." If these hymns mean little or nothing to contemporary congregations, it is a measure of how low practical Christianity has fallen in the last few centuries. Improvement is needed almost everywhere, and can well start with the Athanasian Creed.

Verses 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, in slightly differing phraseology teach that the Trinity is one God in three Persons. The Persons are not to be confounded nor the Substance divided. Postponing the matter of the Tri-personality, let us first examine the indivisibility of the substance. The term *substance* is an unfortunately mistaken Latin translation. Athanasius spoke of one ousia and insisted that the Three Persons were *homoousioi*, the same in *ousia*. *Ousia* means being (a participial noun), *reality*, or *definition*. Charles Hodge, Volume I, 460, complains that *homoousias* can mean either specific sameness or numerical identity. He then argues that Athanasius intended the latter meaning. “In the former sense,” says Hodge, “all spirits, whether God, angels, or men are [*h*]*omoousioi* because they are all rational intelligences.” This is not, however, a good argument against the specific, or generic, use of the term homoousios. While God, angels, including Satan, and men are all rational intelligences, just as apple trees, rose bushes, strawberries and plums are*rosaceae*, the *homoousios* of Athanasius did not refer to the definition of rational intelligences, but to the definition of God in Three Persons. Species may be defined. So may genera. All the members of a genus are *homoousioi*. All the members of a species are also*homoousioi*. But the two *homoousioi* are not the same *ousia*. All apple trees belong to the same genus; but not all *rosaceae* are apple trees. The definition of the latter is more restrictive than the definition of the former. Therefore Athanasius was justified in asserting that the Three Persons were *homoousioi*, for this does not imply that men and angels are specifically *homoousioi* with the Three Persons. To make the point clearer, if that be necessary, not only are God and angels *homoousioi*: God, demons, men, plants, and even rocks are *homoousioi*. But this does not transmute worms into Deity.

Hodge, of course, is quite correct in saying that the Council took *homoousios* and *homoiousios* in radically different senses.

But he has not disproved the specific unity of the Godhead.

Now, it is abundantly clear, for it is repeated several times with slightly different wording, that the Athanasian Creed asserts that the Godhead is both one and three. It neither confounds the Persons nor divides the substance; it acknowledges that every Person by himself is God and Lord, yet they are not three Gods, but one God; one Father, not three Fathers; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

[1] A phrase in Hodge shows the uselessness of the term *substance*: "Attributes being inseparable from substance, the Scriptures, in saying that the Father. Son, and Spirit possess the same attributes, say they are the same in substance" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 1, 444). But if having the same attributes, of which each is somewhat intelligible, is the basis for asserting the unity of the substance, a term that is not intelligible, why add a meaningless term to a difficult discussion?

9

The Incomprehensibility of God

The final reference to the Athanasian Creed introduces one of the most complex aspects of Deity. Its discussion waxes warm down into the twentieth century. And though the difficulties seem enormous, its echoes cannot be eliminated from pastoral preaching if the latter is to remain Biblical. The subject is the incomprehensibility of God.

The Athanasian Creed in verses 9 and 12 says, "The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible...and yet there are not...three incomprehensibles, but one...." Note, first, however, that the Latin original does not say "incomprehensible" but "*immensus*." The Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council in 1870, Caput I, also has *immensum*; though Archbishop

Manning's English translation has *incomprehensible*. The English Athanasian translation has "unlimited or infinite" in brackets. *Immensus*means unmeasurable; *incomprehensible*, when used loosely, simply means "hard to understand." When used more technically it means "impossible to understand," *unintelligible*, or at the very least *unknowable*. Nearly all Christians – mystics may be the exception – allow for some knowledge of God. The Romanists limit this knowledge to negative knowledge and analogical knowledge. They deny the possibility of positive or univocal knowledge. The Lutheran and Calvinistic theologians have generally been less restrictive. They all reject agnosticism and skepticism. This bears repetition. Christians must by logic allow some knowledge of God, for otherwise the Bible contains no divine revelation. Surely Abraham, Moses, and Paul had some correct ideas about God.

It is of some historical interest to note what the Reformation creeds did with the term. The *French Confession* of 1559, the *Scotch Confession* of 1560, and the *Belgic Confession* of 1561 have *incomprehensible*. The Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles* of 1562 do not have this word. The *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 has *immensus*, but not *incomprehensible*. Nor do the *Irish Articles* of 1615 have *incomprehensible*. The *French Confession* cites *Jeremiah* 10:7, 10, which say nothing of the sort; and *Luke* 1:37 which mentions omnipotence only. The *Belgic Confession* cites *Romans 11:33*, "his ways are past finding out." It may be pertinent, even if out of place, to note that Berkhof (*Systematic Theology*, 60) does not connect immensity with incomprehensibility, but with omniscience. This is commendable, even though he does not fully work it out. He also mars the paragraph by failing to grasp the notion of spirit as non-spatial. He will have human spirits "in a certain definite space," as if our souls were 2' x 3' x 4' (64).

Since terminology is so important in this discussion, as it is for all clear thinking, a paragraph can be inserted here on the term*infinite*. A page or two later Spinoza will come on the scene. He distinguished his own view of God's infinity from the Christian view, which latter conceives God as "infinite after his kind"; but Spinoza conceives God as "absolutely infinite." If we appeal to Scripture, we shall find that the term *infinite* occurs three times in the English Old Testament, where it is used to translate two different Hebrew words, neither of which means *infinite*. *Psalm* 147:5 says that God's understanding is infinite. But the word so translated simply means a *number*. It can be a large number or a small number, and it is used with reference to David's numbering the people.

The other two verses in which the King James used *infinite* are *Job* 22:5 and *Nahum* 3:9. In the first of these Job's iniquities could not have been infinite. Add to whatever sins he had committed all his good deeds, and the total of his actions is not infinite. Nor could the strength of Ethiopia and Egypt combined have been infinite. The student should consult a competent Hebrew lexicon. The point is that contemporary theologians sometimes read into ancient literature the modern meanings that were never there.

We now incomprehensibly plod on. Protestant or Evangelical textbooks, presumably without exception, insist that man, even unregenerate men, can have and do have some knowledge of God. They inveigh against both skepticism and agnosticism. This is not strange, for surely the Bible tells us some truths about God. These truths are so numerous that relevant documentation is too frequent to need mention. Perhaps one can refer to Charnock's great work, *The Existence and Attributes of God*. In discourse VIII he says, "The notion of God's knowledge of all things lies above the ruins of nature; it was not obliterated by the fall of man. It was necessary offending man should know that he

had a Creator whom he had injured.... Now this being implanted in the minds of all men by nature, cannot be false...” (1873 edition, 409).

The knowledge Charnock here refers to may be called natural knowledge. If anyone objects to the assertion of natural knowledge, surely Scripture gives us many truths about God, so that, as was said above, it is not strange for evangelical theologians to oppose skepticism and agnosticism. What is strange, however, is that some of these same authors, by a devious route, also conclude that man, even regenerate man, can know nothing about God. This constitutes a present problem.

Next comes John Gill, the great Baptist theologian, in his *Body of Divinity* where he says, “If we must believe nothing but what we can comprehend... we must disbelieve some of the perfections of God; as eternity, immensity, omniscience ...or that there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead....[1] how they subsist distinctly as three Persons and yet but one God is incomprehensible...and at this rate there are many things in nature and in philosophy [footnote: “effects in chymistry as likewise in hydrostatics”] which...cannot be explained” (Sovereign Grace edition, 158, column 1). Apparently other examples of incomprehensibilia are “the temperament of soul and body;... how the sense abides in one and attracts that which is without; how the mind abides in thee and begets a word in another mind; and...the motion of the stars...from whence the winds blow; or the revolution of the seasons. If thou knowest not any of these things, O man, of which sense is a witness, how canst thou think to know God accurately?”

Gill’s skepticism with reference to chemistry and astronomy is commendable and has been borne out by the history of science since his date. But his argument is inverted: Because chemistry is incomprehensible, God must be more so. It seems that Gill

does not agree with Calvin that God is the best known of all objects of knowledge. Later on, in Bavinck, we shall see a similar inversion between science and theology. But however that may be, does Gill's notion of incomprehensibility satisfy some contemporary theologians? Do they wish to assert that God and many other things are incomprehensible, or do they wish to hold that God alone is incomprehensible? Obviously the word has had more than one meaning and this is the cause of confusion.

Since all the various parts of the doctrine of the Trinity are supposed to fit together, it is proper to add some supporting material. In Book I, chapter vi Gill declares that "God is infinite in all his attributes; and which are indeed himself, his nature." This not only makes all the attributes one, but also identifies God and God's nature with that one. He also connects the term *incomprehensible* with*immense* or *unmeasurable*: "Who can take his dimensions?" Of course he also says that "his immensity is his magnitude...it is*unsearchable* and therefore... *incomprehensible*," thus making God incomprehensible to our minds as well as "not circumscribed by space." From I, xxvi one gathers that for Gill the spatial aspect is the more important: "God is infinite and incomprehensible; as he is not bounded by time, so not by space."

There is at least some small reason for adding one final European theologian of the last century. The remarks will bear on the use of Greek terminology and Greek philosophy, though when an analysis is made it turns out to be an example of too little philosophy rather than too much. The point in question is the word *homoousios* (the same in substance). William Cunningham (*Historical Theology,* Volume I, 279-293, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960) for these fifteen pages vigorously defends the use of this term as a proper test of orthodoxy. That no Arian would accept it is undeniable historical fact. That many

Arian objections to it were based on a witting or unwitting misinterpretation of Scripture is also beyond question. Much of what Cunningham says is valuable and to the point. In one place he shows charity by a feeble defense of the term *homoiousios* (of a like substance), for the sake of those who only quibbled over a word. But there are flaws in his argument. A minor flaw is the assumption that a rejection of the term can be motivated only by a secret dislike of the Scriptural and orthodox Trinitarian position. This was undoubtedly true of the Arians. But Cunningham admits that there were some of whom it was not true. These held that Jesus Christ was true God, not a creature, not temporal but eternal. These people Cunningham charges with "great weakness, originating probably to some extent [a charitable modification] in pride or prejudice, not very creditable to the parties themselves." The reason for this modified but still serious judgment seems to lie in Cunningham's opinion that only a dislike for the doctrine can produce a dislike for the word *homoousios*. Only this word correctly summarizes Scripture.

On the contrary, however, it is not clear that this word summarizes anything. The major flaw is that Cunningham never once explains what the term substance means. His frequent usage of this term to designate the subject matter or substance of the debate should have alerted him to its ambiguity. Nor is it clear that there is no other suitable term. Nor is a dislike for Trinitarianism the only reason for objecting to that word. Those in the fourth century who asserted the deity of Christ may or may not have had a clear understanding of why they disliked the term in question. Calvin also may not have been motivated by antipathy to Aristotle when he refused to insist on some time honored technical terminology. Nevertheless, Calvin's term *auto-theos* is more intelligible than and preferable to *homoousios*. The real reason for hesitating on the latter word

is that it is a meaningless pseudo-concept. *Ousia* doubtless means “reality.” But not only are trees and rocks “real,” dreams are “real” too. They are real dreams. The number three is real. Everything is real, and thus the term has no meaning. But not everything is *auto-theos*: God in his own right. Therefore while Athanasius’ term is meaningless, Calvin’s is intelligible. Unfortunately it has one disadvantage: It does not clearly rule out tritheism.

[1] Strictly speaking, this is not true. We can believe many things we do not know or comprehend. We believe, when we enter a restaurant, that the cook has not put arsenic in the food; but we do not know it. Hence Gill’s words “we must disbelieve” are not accurate.

10

Hodge and Berkhof

If now we cross the Atlantic, Charles Hodge, I think I may say, is the greatest theologian America has so far produced.

Not only his three volumes on *Systematic Theology*, but also his tremendous *Commentary on Romans* elicit highest admi- ration. This is not to say that he was infallible. The criticisms in some following paragraphs, if they uncover a fault or two, also warn the elementary and advanced students alike that the subject matter is extremely difficult. At the same time, Abraham Kuyper (*Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, Scribner’s, 1898, 318) is not really just in his criticism of Hodge. Hodge was wrong in using the cosmological argument and in using a supposedly universal religious experience to support Christianity; but Kuyper’s rejection of Hodge’s appeal to “the facts of the Bible...which theology has to collect, authenticate,[1] arrange and exhibit in their internal relation to each other,” is ill founded.

One should consider the reliability of a theological writer. His method should be scrutinized. If his method is poor, what he says may be correct, by accident, but it is very likely to be wrong. For example, a certain twentieth century author of a Systematic Theology makes references to previous philosophers and theologians, maybe a hundred references; but in ninety cases (roughly) he quotes a secondary source. He quotes Mary Calkins on what Haldane said about Hegel. Spinoza is served up on a Weber-Perry platter, with a side dish from Fullerton. Miley, the Arminian, is quoted on page after page.

For some purposes, such as an unimportant side-issue, a secondary source is sufficient; but a plethora of them is painful. Even an original source can be misunderstood, much to the confusion of the student; but when the original passes through two misunderstanding minds the result is not likely to be accurate.

Hodge quotes the original sources, frequently in Latin to the dismay of American students whose High Schools have deleted the languages. But even so, an original source can be misunderstood too, and by a man of ability, as in Charles Hodge's introductory paragraph to *The Knowledge of God* (Volume I, 335). This example is pertinent, not only to the dangers of quotation, but also to the recommendation of the present treatise that the term *substance* be abolished.

Hodge says, "Some...philosophers taught that the nature of God can be as fully understood and determined as any other object of knowledge.... Among the propositions laid down by Spinoza we find the following, [Hodge quotes the Latin of *Ethica* II, xlvi]: 'The knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God which every idea involves is adequate and perfect.'"

To discuss the matter requires the omission of Hodge's words "as any other object of knowledge." Or perhaps we should say,

and it seems true, that Hodge believes sensory objects can be known “adequately” or better than God. God is mysterious and “incomprehensible,” but stones and stars are clearly understood.

Now, did Spinoza hold that God can be fully known so that our knowledge of him is complete? One must admit that at first sight Hodge’s quotation seems to justify his conclusion. Hodge had introduced the sentence quoted above with the remark that the Christian doctrine “does not mean that we can know all that is true concerning God.” Since Spinoza is Hodge’s first example of philosophers who reject the Christian doctrine, it surely seems that according to Hodge Spinoza held that we can know all that is true concerning God.

Consider these quotations from Spinoza. *Ethica* I, Def. vi: “By God I mean a being absolutely infinite – that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality.” Question: Since Spinoza’s *Ethics* has some fewer than an infinite number of propositions, did he claim to know all that is true about God? *Ethica* I, xvi says, “From the necessity of the divine nature must follow an infinite number of things in infinite ways.” The Preface of Part II modestly promises to deduce only a few of that infinite number. Following the Preface, Axiom 5 is “We feel and perceive no particular things save bodies and modes of thought.” Apparently Spinoza claims knowledge of only two of the infinite number of attributes. Spinoza’s letter of July 29, 1675, (Elwes’ translation, 404-406, and possibly the one Alasdair MacIntyre refers to in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 7, 535, column 1) says again, “I therefore conclude that the human mind cannot attain knowledge of any attribute of God beside these.”

After several remarks on Spinoza, Hegel, and Cousin, and regardless of the error just explained, Hodge ends the paragraph

with the indubitable truth that these views of these men are in no sense Scriptural.

But in what sense do the Scriptures teach that God is knowable? The title to Hodge's next subdivision is "God Inconceivable." The paragraph is inconclusive. The first two-thirds argues that if conception is a mental image, as Mansel and Taylor hold, then God is inconceivable. Well, that is obviously true. Since Hodge in other places stresses sensation and seems generally to be some sort of empiricist, one might guess that he agrees with Mansel. The last third of the paragraph, however, speaks of another theory of conception which does not restrict it to images. But Hodge neither rejects the first nor accepts the second. Let the position of the present treatise be made clear: Conception does not depend on imagination, for the general conic can be clearly conceived but cannot possibly be imagined. And God is even less imaginable, if the word less has any meaning here.

Hodge's next paragraph bears the title, "God Incomprehensible." Here he gives his definition: "To comprehend is to have a complete and exhaustive knowledge of an object" (I, 337). He then asserts that force, in physics, is incomprehensible, and then adds that "It would be strange that we should know more of God than of ourselves, or of the most familiar objects of sense."

This calls forth three remarks. First, as just previously mentioned in anticipation of Bavinck, Calvin regarded God as the first object of knowledge, without which knowledge nothing can be known. Second, on Hodge's view just about everything is incomprehensible, so that incomprehensibility is far from being a characteristic of God alone. But if this be so, and if a stone is just as incomprehensible as God, then in contradistinction from the great emphasis some theologians place upon it, it is hardly worth more than the barest mention in theology.[2] Then, third, Hodge seems to think that individuals, or as he says, "familiar

objects of sense" are objects of knowledge. This idea is based on a theory of individuation to be examined later.

So far then an object is incomprehensible if we do not "have a complete and exhaustive knowledge" of it. Hodge emphasizes this under his next subhead: "Our Knowledge of God is Partial." He mentions a half dozen things we do not know about God. Note again also that this is true of everything else. "Our ignorance or the limitation of our knowledge concerning God finds a parallel in our ignorance of ourself." He supports this position with a quotation from Descartes, and most inconsistently by a quotation from Spinoza.

At the same time Hodge will not allow himself to be charged with skepticism. We know some truths about God: "Our knowledge, as far as it goes, is true knowledge.... We know what the word Spirit means. We know what the words infinite, eternal, and immutable mean...God...is not the unknown God because he is infinite. Knowledge of him does not cease to be knowledge because it is omniscience...any more than space ceases to be space because it is infinite" (338).

I wonder whether Hodge or anyone else knows what space is; and how would Hodge define *infinite*? But at any rate he asserts that we can know some truths about God. The problem of space, however, is less important than the troubles with the infinite. If Spinoza had claimed to know the infinite number of propositions in each of the infinite number of sets of implications, it would have been proper for Hodge to point out Spinoza's disagreement with Christianity. But aside from Parmenides, who held that there is only one true proposition, no philosopher has claimed omniscience. Even Hegel, who adamantly denied Kant's Unknowable, acknowledged that in the lower reaches of zoology nature is irrational and spawns illogical subspecies. The present

writer holds to incomprehensibility in Hodge's sense that man does not and cannot know everything God knows.

From the time of the Reformation onward the idea of incomprehensibility has seemingly become more confused rather than less. The Scholastics, who are often condemned for their infinite and incomprehensible distinctions, sometimes listed three points: the bare existence of God – Is there a God?, the question What is God?, and third, What sort of being is God? This is most confusing. Suppose I ask you, Is there a modwacki? No one can answer intelligently without knowing what a modwacki is; and to know what a modwacki is, one must know what sort of thing it is. If God is as incomprehensible as a modwacki, theology is at an end. What theology needs is to suppress the question, Is there a God?, and treat the other two as identical. In trying to maintain that we cannot know God "unto perfection," and yet can have some "partial" knowledge of God, the Reformed theologians sometimes, because of inadequate philosophical training, make utterly unintelligible assertions. Hodge does some of this, but a comparison with Berkhof, a comparison that will be most instructive to the serious student, will bring into relief the superiority of Hodge.

Although many people who sit in the pews are disinterested and even irritated by the intricacies of theology, as were also the majority of bishops at Nicaea, yet the Deity of Christ – so far as a human being can judge about what might have been – would be unknown today had not Athanasius prevailed. And no Christian dare be irritated, or even disinterested in the Deity of Christ. Seminary students, more than those in the pews, should be keenly aware of the fact that in our present population there are atheists, Unitarians, and assorted liberals, not to mention the several anti-trinitarian cults, and that Christianity has more enemies today than it had in Athanasius' time. We need to know

how to give an answer to the opposition. If this requires some logical expertise, the ministers should learn a little logic.

Some students complain that they are never sure whether a sentence in a textbook is the author's own opinion or whether it is the opinion of an opponent being criticized, and if so, is it merely an *ad hominem* criticism or really the textbook's. Nor are young students the only ones who get confused. Let it be clear then that this author accepts the proposition that God is incomprehensible in the sense that human beings are ignorant of many divine truths, even of some which have been revealed, and of course ignorant of the unrevealed truths of *Deuteronomy* 29:29. It will become clear, however, that the present writer does not attach the same emotional emphasis to it that some other theologians exhibit.

One of the passages most frequently used in the explanation and defense of the idea of incomprehensibility is *Job* 11:7, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Almost without exception those who do this quoting fail to explain what the verse means. Aside from the fact that God in *Job* 42:7 condemns three of Job's pseudo-friends, with the result that one cannot assume that Zophar always spoke the truth, the theologians in question, of whom one is Louis Berkhof (*Systematic Theology*, fourth revised edition, 29,43), more or less extend the verse beyond its stated limits. It seems best to understand the first sentence of the verse as a rejection of empirical philosophy. It is obviously a rhetorical question requiring a negative answer: It is impossible to discover God through sensory experience. The Bible does indeed command us to search: "Search the Scriptures" (*John*5:39), and "You will seek and find me when you search for me with all your heart" (*Jeremiah* 29:13). The futility and the success of the searching are matters of method. Experience teaches us nothing; revelation teaches all we need to know.

There is a second possible interpretation of these two sentences in *Job*: possible but less instructive. One may take the second sentence as merely a correction and fuller expression of the first. This makes the first superfluous, a result which ought to be avoided. But at any rate, the second clearly means that we cannot even by searching the Scriptures learn all of God's mind. But there is nothing in *Job* that makes God's thought so qualitatively different from ours that we cannot think God's own thoughts after he teaches them to us. When we think one of God's thoughts after him, his knowledge and our knowledge coincide at that point.

Coming now to Berkhof one notes that he is clearly mistaken when he says, "The early church Fathers...had advanced very little beyond the old Greek idea that the Divine Being is absolute attributeless existence" (29). This statement is repeated on page 42. Who were these Greeks? Perhaps this description fits Parmenides, and one could argue possibly that Plotinus had a small area of agreement; but Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans had no such idea. Aside from its not being a characteristic Greek idea, one may ask which Christian Fathers – note that Berkhof uses the plural and not the singular – asserted that God was absolute attributeless existence? Did any deny that he was omnipotent?

Some students who have never read the first book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* nor the first four chapters of Hegel's*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, and some theologians who are no longer students, will consider this treatise as too harsh in its criticism of its predecessors. Yet aside from its necessity in scholarly investigation, criticism is not wholesale condemnation. For example, though several pages of Berkhof are extremely confused, he makes some excellent points on page 44: "We cannot...have an absolute and exhaustive knowledge of him, but we can undoubtedly have a relative or partial knowledge of the

Divine Being.... Dr. Orr says '... Neither is it correct to say that this knowledge which we have of God is only a *relative knowledge*. It is in part a knowledge of the absolute nature of God as well.' The last statements are probably intended to ward off the idea that all our knowledge of God is merely relative to the human mind, so that we have no assurance that it corresponds with the reality as it exists in God." Some theologians who strongly claim to be Reformed deny this. They may say other things that are commendable, but here Berkhof is to be preferred.

The Biblical data, as it seems to me, adequately support Berkhof's assertion that "God and his attributes are one" (44). *Psalm* 85:10 gives literary expression to this idea: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The Scriptures give no hint of a quality-less *ousia* to which separate attributes are somehow glued on. "Neither can they be regarded as something added to the Being of God."

In this Berkhof agrees with John Gill, who also held that "the attributes of God...are not other than God himself, and neither differ from one another, but with respect to their objects and effects, and in our manner of conception of them; nor from the nature and essence of God: they are himself and his nature..." (*A Body of Divinity*, I, iv, 34, column 2).

Yet Berkhof's continuation is peculiar. He develops this position until he thinks it becomes the "very dangerous extreme ...of Pantheism." Then he seems to reassert the unity of the attributes. The development toward pantheism goes like this: "God's attributes are God himself...God is all that he has... the whole essence of God is identical with each one of the attributes, so that God's knowing is God, and [as John Gill also said] God's willing is God. Some... say that each attribute is identical with

every other attribute.... This is a very dangerous extreme" (*Systematic Theology*, 45).

Now, how in the world can this be called pantheism? If God's justice and mercy are identified and are the basis for Christ's statement, how can that be construed as pantheism? How can the identification of omniscience and omnipotence "lead in the direction of a pantheistic denial of a personal God?" [3]

Fortunately Berkhof rejects his own criticism. "We should guard against separating the divine essence and the divine at tributes.... Shedd speaks of them as 'an analytical and closer description of the essence.'... Knowledge of the attributes carries with it the knowledge of the Divine Essence."[4] This treatise has already suggested that the attributes are the essence, and that it would be better to drop the word *essence* and use the word *definition*. The attributes constitute the definition of God.

If now the attributes are identical in God, and if that unity may be designated by the name sovereignty or omnipotence, and if therefore the terms love, justice, grace, and whatever, are used to designate the various effects God produces in the world, the whole confused discussion of the classification of attributes may be dropped. Berkhof reports the several views. Some theologians divide attributes into two groups: natural and moral. Others divide them into absolute and relative. Another division is transitive and intransitive. "The most common distinction," says Berkhof, "is that between communicable and incommunicable." Berkhof continues with a page of further distinctions. The only classification that avoids confusion is that between the divine simplicity of omnipotent sovereignty and its manifold operations in the universe. Yet this division is the one Berkhof seems most clearly to reject. "This division seems to proceed on the assumption that we can have some knowledge of God as He is in himself, entirely apart from the revelations in which He stands to

His creatures. But this is not so" (55). On this point Strong's view is to be preferred. If anything is "not so," it is that the view in question operates apart from revelation.

Berkhof is partly correct when he says that God's "knowl- edge is not like ours, obtained from without.... It is *innate* and*immediate* and does not result from observation. . ." (66). Certainly God's knowledge is not obtained from without, as the result of observation. But some of our knowledge also is innate and therefore immediate. The difference is that all of God's knowledge is innate and immediate. Indeed, God's knowledge is God; and we are our limited knowledge. Then too when Berkhof includes the additional phrases, "intuitive rather than discursive...or from a process of reasoning," he leads us into confusion. If God's knowledge is not demonstrative, he must be ignorant of the Pythagorean theorem. He did not have to labor, as Pythagoras did, to discover the proof, but still it is a demonstrative proof and God knows the demonstration. Nor can we agree with Berkhof when in the same paragraph he maintains that some parts of God's knowledge are and some are not "purely an act of the divine intellect without any concurrent action of the divine will." This radical separation of the will from the intellect is destructive of the simplicity of the divine nature. And, further, it would seem to require alternating peri ods of time when the will was active and the intellect was not with other periods when the reverse was the case. This is inconsistent with God's eternity.

[1] By *authenticate* I think Hodge means the process of exegesis by which one determines the meaning of a verse, and not some extra-Biblical material to prove the statement true.

[2] Several theologians refuse to maintain that God alone is incomprehensible. For example, Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Meaning of Man*, (chapter XV) says, "the union of the mental

with the bodily presents a connection unspeakable and inconceivable.... The mind approaching [approaches] our nature in some inexplicable and incomprehensible way...in a way which we cannot speak or think.

[3] In some forms of post-hegelian idealism the Absolute was considered to be suprapersonal. But most pantheism does not deny the personality of God. The Stoics are a good example. So also other forms of Hegelianism.

[4] Compare also 52-54, except the last four lines, for the Scholastics were empiricists, not apriorists; nor does the term aposteriori quite fit revelation.

11

Bavinck and Van Til

We now take a short backward step in time, recross the Atlantic to Holland, and, in order to prepare for the views of Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary, discuss the theology of Herman Bavinck.[1]

Near the beginning of this book Bavinck declares "...the idea that the believer would be able to understand and comprehend intellectually the revealed mysteries is equally unscriptural. On the contrary, the truth which God has revealed concerning himself in Scripture far surpasses human conception and comprehension" (13). Taken at face value these words seem to contradict *1 Corinthians*2:7-16 where "none of the rulers of this age has understood," but where "we have the mind of Christ." In *Ephesians* 3:3 "God made known to me the mystery...and you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." In the following verses this mystery is to be made known either to the Ephesians or to the rulers in heavenly places. In particular, since Bavinck expressly says that we cannot understand Scripture, one

must insist that “all Scripture...is profitable for doctrine...that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished for every good work.” If we cannot understand or conceive what God tells us to do, of what use is the revelation?

Admittedly Bavinck spends the next several pages arguing that God can be known. The difficulty is his neglect to define incomprehensibility so as to distinguish it from knowledge. Does incomprehensibility mean simply that we do not know everything that God knows? Certain other Dutch theologians have rejected such an idea as a merely “quantitative” distinction. They want an all-inclusive qualitative distinction, refusing, however, to mention the quality, and to define *quality* in the first place. Bavinck makes certain assertions: God can be apprehended; he cannot be comprehended. There is a “knowledge” but no “comprehension” of God (32, 33). Perhaps we should understand a following sentence as his explanation: “We fully agree with Kant that our knowledge is confined to the realm of experience” (36). This is incredible! The reason Kant denied any knowledge of God was that he confined knowledge to sensory content. The mind imposed space, time, and causality on the chaotic sensations. God and the *Ding an sich* were totally unknowable because they had no sensory content. How can Bavinck, if a Christian, “fully agree” with Kant in limiting knowledge to experience? Does he make God unknowable? Or does he hold that God is an object of sensation?

Bavinck asserts that “All those who teach God’s knowability are willing to admit that this knowledge is of a peculiar and very limited character” (41). Such a statement is too universal. Presumably all who teach God’s knowability agree that its extent is very limited; but not all agree that this knowledge is peculiar. Like all other knowledge, our knowledge of God consists of certain propositions or truths. No doubt it is true that “that which God reveals of himself...is so rich and deep [presumably

Bavinck means extensive and complicated] that it can never be fully known by any human individual." But this is not because the knowledge of God is a peculiar and different type of knowledge: It is because life is too short to gain an understanding of the Bible. The defect lies in the shortness of human life, and often in the mediocrity of the man, not in the understandability of the revelation, for all Scripture is profitable for doctrine. Bavinck tries to support his position by an inverted comparison. He says, "In many respects we do not even understand the universe of created beings,... How then should we be able to understand the revelation of God?" This is inverted because as Hume and Einstein said, and as the history of science so clearly shows, we can never discover even a single law of nature. The laws of physics are constantly changing.[2] The Bible remains fixed. Hence it is possible and easier to know God than to know how nature works.

In opposition to the theory of innate ideas Bavinck asserts that "man naturally and necessarily arrives at this idea [of God]...by means of meditation upon God's revelation in nature" (48). In the next sentence he says that "Augustine agrees substantially...though to him the dependence of the soul on sensation did not seem quite as great" as in the earlier church fathers. But this universal proposition is clearly false. Many five year olds have an idea of God without ever having meditated on nature. Indeed in the very next paragraph Bavinck quotes Augustine: "God directs the mind of men without any intervention of nature." And without verbatim quotation Bavinck reports of Augustine that "we perceive the intelligible truths [not by the light of the sun, but] in the light of God." With whom now does Bavinck fully agree, Kant or Augustine? He even adds, "Calvin...held that 'a sense of Deity' was implanted in the human soul 'by natural instinct' "(52). On the following page it seems that Ursinus, Zanchius ("innate, not furnished by

experience” that children know at once) and Polanus all held to innate ideas.

Bavinck’s arguments against innate ideas are quite unsound. He says that the theory “leads to rationalism by making man independent of divine revelation” (53). Two reasons show this to be false. First, a theory of innate ideas does not require the doctrine of the Atonement to be an innate idea. Second, without the innate laws of logic one could not understand the message of the Bible. Bavinck’s next argument against innate ideas is that it leads to mysticism. This is even further from the truth than the statement that it leads to rationalism. Neither Leibniz, Descartes, nor Anselm ever recommended mystic trances. Bavinck’s third argument is that innate ideas are contrary to Scripture. Not at all: They are essential to the Scriptural doctrine that man is the image of God. Fourth, the theory of innate ideas is not in harmony with psychology. But since psychology is rather Freudian, behavioristic, and humanistic, this is not much of an objection. Fifth, it contradicts the facts of history because history shows that moral and aesthetic ideas vary from tribe to tribe, and “This could not be the case if these ideas were innate.” This objection, like the first one, assumes that the theory asserts all ideas to be innate. But Kant had only twelve, or fourteen if we include space and time. McCosh with his *Intuitions of the Mind Inductively Investigated*, however foolish it may be, had only a limited number. But even with Plato, if all Ideas are innate, many of them await reminiscence while people have a variety of *opinions* which are not Ideas.

This refutation of Bavinck has limited itself to the introductory statement in bold face type. The continuing exposition is not only confused, but defaced by incorrect statements, such as, “The dualism of Descartes...reasserted...in more recent philosophy, has led Kant...to a rationalism which constructs the entire universe out of the contents of man’s immanent reflection”

(54). I do not know who has reasserted Descartes' dualism. Kant surely did not, for in addition to reflection there was *das Gegebenes*, the indispensable sensory content. Besides, Bavinck fully agrees with Kant.

After his inadequate account and refutation of innate ideas, and his praise of Locke who defended the "glorious truth" of empiricism, though "mysticism and rationalism meant well when they maintained that the idea of things could not be reached by means of sense perception" (55), Bavinck continues by advocating a sort of apriorism. The main defect of the at- tempt is not so much the flowery language, such as "a seed of religion, a sense of divinity, a divine instinct" (57), nor various statements which are not clearly true, but the total absence of a list of apriori forms necessary for learning. Aristotle, though an empiricist, had listed ten categories. Kant, more consistently, had twelve. To make things worse, Bavinck's categories "are not used to contradict the [Lockean and Thomistic] doctrine that man is born as a tabula rasa"(58). This puts a plume in Bavinck's cap: the *pl* from Plato and the *ume* from Hume.

In explaining the persons of the Trinity by opposing their intertrinitarian relations to the relations among human beings, Bavinck argues, "The concept 'human nature' is a universal concept...it is real and present in each individual human being, but it is *differently*and *finitely* present in any single man. It is never fully and infinitely present in any single man" (298). The term *infinitely* has no meaning here. The quality *succulent* is in every cactus, but it is not so much false as it is nonsense to say it is or it is not infinitely in a suguaro. But it is in each suguaro fully or completely. So also with man. Unless the definition of man is fully in a single object, that object is not a man. As a cactus has five characteristics, so a human being has a fixed number of characteristics. If any one be absent, the thing is not a suguaro or not a man. Any argument denying the presence of the

complete definition in its particular examples denies that the full definition of Deity is applicable to the Son. Bavinck, because of his faulty philosophy, distorts the doctrine of the Trinity.

We now come to the distinguished Professor of Theology at Westminster Seminary, Cornelius Van Til. The discussion concerns the inferences Dr. Van Til draws from his theory of incomprehensibility as applied to the doctrine of the Trinity. In a *Complaint* against the Presbytery of Philadelphia, signed by several of Westminster's faculty, Van Til expounds his view. The *Complaint* is a rather long document of fifteen pages, three columns each. Because of its length, because of its multiple signatories, and because it is a judicial complaint, one can be sure that it accurately states Van Til's position. But because of the length only a short summary can be given here.

On page two in column three the *Complaint* contends that "The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is not a mere qualification of his knowability; it is not the doctrine that God can be known only if he makes himself known.... It is rather that God because of his very nature must remain incomprehensible to man." Thus at the very beginning the document lays down the principle that incomprehensibility means incomprehensibility. However, there soon comes a negative statement. "Because God is God...the divine knowledge and the knowledge possible to man may never be conceived of merely in quantitative terms, as a difference of degree rather than a difference in kind." I do not know how many "degrees" there are to the knowledge that "David was king of Israel," or that "two plus two is four," but at any rate God has a different "kind" of knowledge, so they say. One expects the *Complaint* to define what "kind" of knowledge that is, for unless the "kind" be known, the difference in kind cannot be defended. If this "kind" is not explained, how could it be that "its meaning does not remain uncertain because of its uniform significance in the history of Christian thought"? (4:2).

But we have seen that such uniform significance is not to be found in the history of Christian thought. In fact some of the authors the *Complaint* quotes have differed with others. The present treatise has already refuted the *Complaint's* appeal to several Scripture passages (4:3), and its interpretation of *Matthew* 11:27 omits the last phrase of the verse.

On page 5 (column 1) the *Complaint* holds that there is a "qualitative distinction between the contents of the knowledge of God and the contents of the knowledge possible to man." One must insistently ask, What is this qualitative difference? One must also ask, What does *quality* mean? Does not the proposition "David was King of Israel" have the same meaning for both God and man? No doubt God knows more about the details of that kingship than man does, but does not the proposition itself, unencumbered with additional truths, have precisely one meaning which God and man hold in common? What qualitative difference could there be? It is the same proposition in both minds. The only important quality, so far as I can see, is its truth. Does it have for God the quality of being false? The *Complaint* hints that for man "David was king" is a proposition, even though it tentatively suggests that divine knowledge might not be propositional (5:2). One must ask, Where did they obtain the information that for God truth is not propositional? All the truth in the Bible is propositional. The dependence of the complainants on the Bible is not clear, for they object to the statement that all the Bible was given to us for us to understand. Yet is this not what *2 Timothy* 3:16 says?

The climax of the *Complaint*, so far as this theme is concerned, is the definitive statement that "We dare not maintain that his knowledge and our knowledge coincide at any single point" (5:3). If this were so, the proposition "David was king" would have two totally, *totally*, different meanings, one for God and one for man, with not a single point of coincidence. Nothing that

we could get from the sentences in the Bible would be what God meant by them. Clearly we could not think God's thoughts after him. Since God knows all truth, and since God's mind and ours do not have a single point in common, man can know nothing at all.

This view of incomprehensibility, which is surely not the view commonly held in the history of the Christian church, bears on the doctrine of the Trinity. It obviously must. In what way or ways we shall now try to see.

The most glaring departure from the orthodox faith that this theory leads to with reference to the Trinity comes to the fore in the answer a Christian usually gives to the charge that the doctrine of the Trinity is self-contradictory.

To many people, not only Muslims, but Jews also, and atheists in particular, the doctrine of the Trinity seems self- contradictory and absurd. It is arithmetically impossible for one to equal three. But we Trinitarians have learned some other subjects in addition to arithmetic. The United States government is one government of three almost independent divisions. The governing board of a small business can be one board of three officers. There is nothing self- contradictory about a situation being one in one sense and three in a different respect. This is not to say that the United States government, or the business corporation, is an exact replica of the Trinity. There are many ways in which three can be one. The point is that there is no contradiction in asserting one-ness and three-ness in two different senses.

Most amazingly Van Til has repudiated this defense of the Trinity and has asserted that the Godhead is three and one in precisely the same sense. In his *Junior Systematics* (178, 179, mimeographed by the Reformed Episcopal Seminary, 1940) he writes, "We do assert that God, that is, the whole Godhead, is

one person.... We must maintain that God is numerically one, He is one person."

A slight evidence that this latter has not been the position of the church through the ages is a rubric in the Episcopal Prayer Book which says, "Upon the Feast of Trinity only, may be said, Who art one God, one Lord, not one only Person, but three Persons in one Substance.... "Note the phrase, "not one only Person."

Another piece of evidence for those who wish to look it up is Loraine Boettner's *Studies in Theology* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980, 125).

A. H. Strong also declares that "The doctrine of the Trinity is not self-contradictory. This it would be, only if it declared God to be three in the same numerical sense in which he is said to be one. This we do not assert. We assert simply that the same God who is one with respect to his essence is three with respect to the internal distinctions of that essence" (*Systematic Theology,* I, 345). In the fine print, so conspicuous in Strong's volumes, he quotes another theologian who refuses to say that God is one person: "We do not say that one God is three Gods, nor that one person is three persons."

One may also regress as far back as Gregory of Nyssa. To be sure he was interested in refuting Sabellianism, and though thus his words are not directly applicable to the present point, they support it by implication. He wrote, "We do not let our idea about them be melted down into One Person" (*Against Eunomius*, Book I, §35).

Since in the history of theology so few theologians, perhaps none, have asserted that God is One Person and Three Persons – not even Sabellius – explicit denials are hard to find. But implicit denials abound. To quote John Gill again, "Nor is the article [on one God] to be understood in the Sabellian sense, that God is not

but one person; for though there is but one God, there are three Persons" (*A Body of Divinity*, I, xxvi, 2). This is not to suggest that Van Til is a Sabellian; but had he been the author instead of Gill, he would have probably added that God was also one Person. Gill has no such idea. Indeed down further in the same column Gill adds, "If Father, Son, and Spirit were but one Person, they could not be testifiers as they are said to be in *1 John* 5:7." Since this matter involves the law of contradiction, it is proper to note that Gill continues by insisting that *John* 10:30 "cannot mean one person for this is to make him say what is most absurd and contradictory" (Sovereign Grace edition, 1971, 128, column 2). Does not all this show that Van Til's position is not the uniform heritage of the church? Could not one call it a novelty?

To indicate that this treatise neither misunderstands nor distorts Van Til's position, we further quote *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (1949, 224-226). Here he repeats his allegation that the Trinity is One Person: "We do assert that God, that is, the whole Godhead, is one person.... Even within the ontological Trinity we must maintain that God is numerically one. He is one person...."[3]

On this basis Dr. Van Til concludes that the defense given just above, against the allegation that the doctrine is self-contradictory, is an untenable defense. He even suggests that one need not accept the law of contradiction. On page 10 of the same syllabus he had already said, "The laws of human thought and the laws of ethics are not eternal and unchangeable in the sense that God is unchangeable." What the two senses of the term *unchangeable* are is hard to guess at. What else can unchangeable mean other than that the thing in question remains the same? Some unknown and highly suspicious different meaning contributes nothing intelligible to any argument. But suppose the laws of thought could be changed. John Dewey

asserts that this actually happens. Even the law of contradiction will eventually be changed. This means that truth and falsehood will be identical. According to Aristotelian logic it is impossible for both “All a is b” and “Some a is not b” to be true. If one is true, the other must be false. Now, if God is superior to logic and somewhat arbitrarily imposed the distinction between truth and error on us, but does not himself think that way, then the statements “All dogs are mammals” and “Some dogs are not mammals” are both true. They are also both false, for apart from Aristotelian logic the statement “No dogs are mammals” is equally true. What Dewey sees in the future, this view attributes to God now. God therefore is irrational. What he tells us in the Bible is as false as it is true.

Not only are all propositions both true and false, but the individual words have no meaning. By the basic law of logic a word, to mean something, must also mean not something. *Cat* must mean a pussy, but it must also not mean *dog*. If a given word should mean everything, it would mean nothing. Suppose the dictionary should list, as the meaning of *cat*, anchovy, baboon, curl, dog, energy, flower, all the way down to zyzomys; then “cat cat cat cat” would mean the baboon eats anchovies energetically. Of course, it would also mean that Monday is Thursday.

For corroboration of the foregoing, with respect both to the exposition and the analysis, one can again cite the Junior Systematics. On page 140 Van Til begins a section on *The Incomprehensibility and Knowability of God.* What does Van Til mean by incomprehensibility? “We mean by it,” he says, “that God is exhaustively comprehensible to himself and is therefore known by man only to the extent that he voluntarily reveals himself.” In other words, incomprehensibility is God’s being comprehensible to himself. This is like saying that an invertebrate is not a vertebrate. It is a case of defining a word by

itself; or, more exactly, it is a case of defining a word by its contradictory. This is circular, and, you know, circles are vicious.

After a page of sentences many of which are true enough, such as “God is light,” Van Til calls on Bavinck for help. “Dogmatics is face to face with ‘the Incomprehensible One.’... Our knowledge of God is true but never ‘adequate.’ By the term *adequate* Bavinck constantly means ‘comprehensible’” (141). Thus we get dizzy going around.

To indicate that this brief quotation does not misrepresent Van Til’s position, we note similar statements on the next page. “The true notion [of incomprehensibility as opposed to false notions] is nothing but that limitation which is involved for the knowledge of man in the fact that God is self-contained” (142). Actually this says less than the opening statements, for presumably everybody’s knowledge of anything is “self-contained,” since clearly $(a < b) < (a < b)$.

It is true that Van Til immediately begins to criticize Bavinck for not thinking clearly enough; and the previous section of this treatise agrees with that criticism. Nevertheless the quotations just made seem to represent Van Til’s own thought and not merely a resumé of Bavinck. Indeed the several pages of criticisms of Bavinck are mainly well founded.

In his further elucidation of the doctrine Van Til makes two assertions which cannot both be true. On page 178 we find this argument:

> It is sometimes asserted that we can prove to men that we are not asserting anything that ought to be considered irrational, inasmuch as we say that God is one in essence and three in persons. We therefore claim that we have not asserted unity and trinity of exactly the same thing.
>
> Yet this is not the whole truth of the matter. We do as sert that God, that is the whole Godhead, is one person. We have noted how each attribute is coextensive with the Being of God. We are compelled to maintain this in order to avoid the notion of an uninterpreted being of some sort.... We have noted how theologians insist that each of the persons of the Godhead is co-terminous with the Being of the Godhead.... “Each person,” says Bavinck, “is equal to the whole essence of God and co-terminous with both other persons and with all three” (*Dogmatik*, Volume II, 311).

Note the situation. When opponents have objected that the doctrine of the Trinity is logically self- contradictory because it makes three equal to one, Christians have usually replied that there are many examples of situations that are three in one sense and one in a different sense. Hence there is no contradiction. Here Van Til rejects this defense of the Trinity and asserts that the Trinity is both one and three in the same sense: not one substance and three Persons, but one Person and three Persons. This is indeed contradictory and utterly irrational. Look at his words again: “We do assert that God, that is the whole Godhead, is one person.” He defends this irrationalism on the ground that “each attribute is co-extensive with the Being of God.” Now, some attributes apply equally to all three Persons; for example, omnipotence and omniscience. But the attribute of Fatherhood and Sonship are not “co-extensive with the Being of God.” Sonship is not attributable to the Father, nor to the Spirit.

Perhaps Van Til will reply that Sonship is not an “attribute.” If this is his reply, one must ask, How does an attribute differ from a quality? Christ has the quality or characteristic of being omnipotent and of being Son. Why is one predicate an attribute and another not an attribute? Do we not attribute paternity to the Father, and to the Father alone? How can Fatherhood be coterminous with Sonship?

As the Athanasian Creed stated, there are some predicates that attach to each of the three Persons equally. There are not three “Greats,” but only one “Great.” But there are also predicates that attach to one Person singly. If this were not so, there could not be three Persons, and the Father would be the Son.

A quotation from a later book, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969) will further illustrate Van Til’s troubles with logic. He wrote, “I do not artificially separate induction from deduction, or

reasoning about the facts of nature from reasoning in apriorianalytical fashion.... On the contrary I see induction and analytical reasoning as part of one process of interpretation" (293).

Later on, in his rejoinder to Knudsen, we shall see that he stigmatizes analytical reasoning as a work of the devil. If here he identifies the two forms of reasoning as a single process, one is inclined to conclude that he rejects them both. We can ignore this point for the moment.

The word "artificially" in the quotation above is a weasel word. It allows but does not specify some non-artificial separation. One must therefore either limit the criticism to a charge of having said nothing intelligible, or delete the word "artificial."

The point at issue is one of method. Results sometimes impress the general public when they do not know the method is faulty and the whole is useless. This is the case here. Crows can furnish an example of the method of induction. A young ornithologist sees a crow and notes that it is black. He sees a second crow and notes that it is black. He sees a third and a fourth. Then after 99 or 999 cases he infers that the next crow will be black. In fact he concludes that all crows are black. The conclusion is false because a few crows, not noticed by the young student, are albinos. Of course the 1000th crow may be black too. Indeed it might have been that all crows are black, but even so the method cannot justify the universal conclusion. Induction is a logical fallacy.

The same fallacy occurs in Biblical archaeology. Van Til modestly acknowledges, "I do not personally do a great deal of this because my colleagues in other departments of the Seminary in which I teach are doing it better than I could do it. Every bit of historical investigation...is bound to confirm the claims of the Christian position" (293). Now, it is possible that an

archaeological discovery might “confirm” the Christian position; but before such confirmation, the truth claim would have had to be independently established; and this archaeology cannot do. Suppose for example that before 1962 the critics insisted that seven stemmed lamps never existed before the late Persian empire and that therefore because of *Exodus* 25:31-35 and 37:17-21 the book could not have been written before the sixth century. Then in 1962 a dig uncovers a seven stemmed lamp which pottery dating puts before the time of Abraham.

This discomfits the destructive critics; but it is far from proving inerrancy. There may be 999 true historical statements in the Bible, but this does not prove that the 1000th is true. Nor can archaeology prove even one theological statement to be true. The method as a whole is wrong. Induction is always a fallacy.

Fortunately, contrary to what Van Til says, induction can be separated from deduction, for the conclusion of a valid syllogism follows from its premises necessarily. It is what the *Westminster Confession* calls “good and necessary consequence.”

Furthermore, Van Til claims to be a presuppositionalist. But there is no logical place for induction in presuppositionalism. One assumes or presupposes certain axioms and from there on everything is deduction.

Van Til, however, has left himself an escape-hatch. In his *Junior Systematics* he wrote, “We should observe that it is not possible to find a term with respect to method that avoids all difficulties. We can speak of our method as the method of implication if we only realize that after all we mean something different with the term ‘implication’ just as we mean something different with the term ‘induction’ from what the non christian logician means by it” (14). On the following page he specifies *analogical* as

another term to which he attaches a meaning different from the meaning in ordinary English.

The trouble, however, is that he does not attach another meaning. He attaches no meaning at all. Above I explained and gave an example of induction. I should define a valid implication as an inference whose form of the conclusion is true every time the form(s) of its premise(s) are true. Now, if someone does not like these definitions, he is free to present his own for consideration. But if he disagrees with those given and then refuses to supply substitutes, he has said nothing of importance. One cannot examine and evaluate an unstated position. There is no position to evaluate.

This reminds me of a dinner the students of Westminster Seminary put on for Van Til and me. I spoke on the subject of individuation – a subject that bears on the trinity of the divine persons. Dr. Van Til replied in an impressive manner. He disagreed with me completely. Then a student, whose ashes have now been scattered over his beloved Colorado mountains, stood up and asked, “Dr. Van Til, you have objected to Dr. Clark’s theory of individuation; what is your theory of individuation?” Dr. Van Til for the next ten minutes replied with the fluency and vigor for which he is so well known. Then the student rose a second time and asked, “But, Dr. Van Til what is *your* theory of individuation?” The tall and handsome professor spoke for another five minutes. Then for the last time the student rose and asked, “But, Dr. Van Til, what is your theory of individuation?” And the question was never answered.

Dr. Van Til’s rejection of logic is reproduced by some of his students, for example, Vern S. Poythress (*Philosophy, Science, and the Sovereignty of God*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976). On page 6 his rejection of sharp distinctions is so limited by the context that no one can object to

it. But as one reads on, the avoidance of sharp distinctions expands. A moderate amount of chapter two is rather vague and fuzzy. That this is not a case of inadvertence becomes clear on page 31, where he explicitly declares, “I remind my readers again that *none* [italics his] of my technical terms have (*sic*) precise boundaries.” A footnote to this, on page 106, elaborates: “there is no precise ‘meaning-kernel,’ but rather a blur with a (roughly) fixed center.”

On this basis, however, any objection to Arianism has no force. Not only does three mean one, but *created, begotten*, God, and*angel* are all a blur with a fixed center that cannot be located. The reader should note that the term roughly and the parentheses in which it is enclosed are Poythress’ own: They were not put there by the present writer. The present writer maintains that strict definitions are an indispensable means of making progress in a very difficult subject.

Another one of Dr. Van Til’s students, in maintaining that the distinction between three Persons or *hypostaseis* and one *ousia* or substance is so vague that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be defended against the charge of self-contradiction, argues “It would solve the apparent contradiction if we knew clearly what a substance (*ousia*) was, what a person (*hypostasis*) was, and precisely how the two are related. But we don’t.” To this I answer that there is not even an apparent contradiction if we say that God is one in one sense and three in a different sense. The gentleman in question assumes that there is an apparent contradiction. But this is no more than his subjective reaction. An apparent something is something that appears. The alleged contradiction does not appear to me. Appearances differ from person to person. Some verses in the Bible seem difficult to some people, but clear and easy to others. Yet it appears to me that the Van Tilian position assumes that an apparent contradiction must be apparent to everybody. For him difficulty

lies in the Scripture verse itself, not in the reader. The falsity of such a position should be obvious to all, even to Van Tilians. But it appears to me that it does not so appear to them.

The second point in defending the traditional answer to the charge of self-contradiction is the denial of the previously quoted requirement. The gentleman said that to avoid the apparent contradiction we should have to know clearly what a substance was, what a person was, and precisely how the two are related – but we don't. On one point the writer is correct: We don't. But it is the aim of serious theology to make its terms clear and precise. I want to do so; I shall most probably, most certainly, fail. Some of the terms have been listed above. They should be defined and their mutual relations should be clarified. I hope to make some small contribution toward this end, if even only to get rid of the term *substance.* But failure to accomplish much does not invalidate the force of the reply to the charge that three-in-one is a self-contradiction. Recall that Augustine, though he could not define his terms, was content to know that their meanings were different. All that is needed is the realization that the Athanasian Creed does not use the terms*substance* and *person* in the same sense. Verse four says, "neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance." Who can be so obtuse as to deny that *Substance* and *Person* are intended to have different meanings? And if the meanings are different, all appearance of contradiction vanishes from a normal mind. Augustine himself, even though not so advanced as the creed his influence initiated, made it unmistakably clear that *three* and *one* have different referents.

As a double example of failure in this regard one may refer to *Jerusalem and Athens* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971) in which Robert D. Knudsen criticizes Dr. Van Til (275-298) and the latter replies to him (298-305). Knudsen's first half a dozen pages are quite good; in respect to their reference

point they are excellent. But when he begins to criticize Van Til, a fuzziness creeps in. In order to show that "Van Til's apologetics pointed in two directions at once" (283), Knudsen states that, "If one fails to assume a starting point that presupposed the Christian faith, he has no foundation for making intelligible judgments at all" (282).

The logical flaw in such a statement is that starting points cannot have presuppositions. The term *starting point* is perhaps a clearer term than presupposition. One may say that Book Two of Euclid presupposes Book One. Hence a presup- position may be relative and not absolutely basic. But surely a starting point is a point from which the argument starts. If the starting point had a presupposition it would not be the starting point.

To many people this criticism of Knudsen may seem trivial. But it is not trivial to note that fuzziness cannot refute Dr. Van Til. Not that I wholly agree with him: He has fuzzy passages too.

For the satisfaction of those readers who know more than most about the Westminster faculty, I acknowledge that Knudsen spends his next four pages or so disagreeing with a man whose name is Clark. His disagreements, however, are somewhat muted; and his summary of that position is on the whole not too bad.[4] Here, however, Knudsen has been brought in because it is he to whom Van Til directs his reply. Nor is the reply as a whole under consideration. One point must serve as an example of the faulty reasoning, if the words are taken in their usual sense; or, if they were intended in some unusual sense, an example of an extremely poor form of expression. In either case the point to be made is not so arcane, esoteric, or downright trivial as it may at first appear, for on it depends the value of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, and the Nicene Creed as well.

After quoting some cloudy verbiage from Knudsen, Van Til, in a reply that is not clearly relevant, asserts, “For me ‘the analytical judgment’ is an invention of apostate thought” (299). Then after a few words about Kant, he appends footnote 9 (304): “We have used the term ‘analytical’ in the sense it has in the expression ‘analytical judgment’ and also in the sense pertaining to the analytic aspect of logical distinguishing. We use it here in the latter sense” (477).

The short last sentence is puzzling. Is Van Til going to use the term in two senses? Or has he gone beyond a first sense and now wishes to use only the second? Note that Van Til does not express the meaning of the term he uses. He defines neither “analytic judgment” nor “aspect of logical distinguishing.” Strictly speaking therefore no one can know what he means. But since he previously mentioned Kant, and since he is writing English words, we must assume that an analytic judgment, which he calls an invention of apostate thought, is a judgment whose predicate is a logical component of the subject’s definition. The proposition, “A dog is a mammal” is an analytic judgment because the idea *mammal* is a part of the definition of dog. Sometimes the predicate is the complete definition itself. Therefore Van Til aserts that all definitions, including those of the catechism, and all partial definitions are apostate thoughts. It is an apostate thought to say that a circle is a closed plane curve every point of which is equidistant from a fixed point within the curve. The *Westminster Confession’s* excellence depends on its analytic propositions, as also the Athanasian Creed.

In addition to analytic propositions there is one more point that can well be mentioned. Dr. Van Til in *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (124 *ff.*) is clearly unsatisfied with “the reduction of all concrete differences in existence to the formal identity of pure logic.” This is surely a poorly expressed sentence, since it is hard to think of anyone who has done so; it seems to mean

“everything is reduced to abstraction.” A few lines below he states that “Formal truth is therefore the result of a dialectical relationship between universality and abstract particularity.” This is also hard to understand. An example of a formal truth is “No *a* is *b* implies no *b* is *a*.” How to connect the formal statement with the sentence quoted is not at all clear. In the next paragraph he refers to “an abstract non-christian principle of unity” and also “an abstract principle of diversity.” Later on page 129 he again shows himself hostile to abstraction. Much later, on page 263, there is additional evidence that Van Til dislikes “abstract possibility.”

Although this section of the present treatise concerns the views of Dr. Van Til the main purpose right here is to address similar ideas, modified, distorted, and popularized in ordinary preaching. Just last Lord’s Day the preacher in a sermon on *Romans* 12:1, 2 included a brief denunciation of abstraction. He declared that he did not obey the divine moral commands in the Bible because of their abstract statement in the Bible, but because – it was not too clear – of his sympathy and compassion for others. A few paragraphs later he repeated his dislike of abstraction. A more academically advanced minister asserted, and here I can quote verbatim, “The Bible never operates with an abstract concept of God, but always describes him as ‘the living God.’”

The idea of abstraction exemplifies the great complexity of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a point that only the most advanced student would be much inclined to investigate. Yet from a systematic standpoint it is actually essential.

To make matters worse for the reader, the present writer may seem to agree with those he is about to criticize, for he too rejects abstract ideas; but for a different reason. These other people assume that there are such things as abstract ideas, which

may under some circumstances be of minimum use. But they are very bad in theology. The criticism will be that those who hold this popular and widespread opinion would be better off if they welcomed abstractions in place of their substitute. They proceed in the wrong direction in their opposition to abstraction and land in something worse. But let us get to the details.

The view is that abstraction is bad for theology. But is not this assertion itself an abstraction? Of course this depends on what is meant by abstraction. The two philosophers best known for their theory of abstraction are Aristotle and Locke. Briefly, Aristotle begins with sensory impressions. These motions initiate subsequent motions after the sense object no longer is present. These subsequent motions are sensory images. From these images, by a process which Aristotle never clearly de scribes, we construct abstract ideas. Thus instead of having the individual sensation of this one pussy, Timothy Ticklepitchers by name, we have the abstract ideas of cat. Abstraction therefore presupposes an empirical epistemology. Theologians who are not empiricists, Shedd for example, have no place for abstract ideas. Calvin also, if we stress the first chapter of the *Institutes,* cannot admit the possibility of abstract ideas. The present treatise, strongly anti empirical, denies the possibility of abstraction in its traditional meaning. If theologians wish to redefine abstraction, and if therefore they mean something different from what Aristotle and Locke meant, they should make their redefinition explicit and even emphatic. If any of them has done this, I have failed to find it. To make a backward glance, though Augustine saw the walls of Carthage, and though it is dangerous to make universal negative statements, I think he has no theory of abstract concepts. Basically he was not an empiricist.

[1]*Doctrine of God*, translated by William Hendriksen from the third edition of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatik*, 1918; Banner of Truth Trust, 1977, 1978; Eerdmans, 1951.

[2] Compare Gordon H. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God* (The Trinity Foundation, 1996 [1987]; now included in *Modern Philosophy*, 2008.

[3] This quote is found on 363, 364 in the second edition published by P&R Publishing, 2004. – Editor.

[4] Knudsen, at least here, does not treat me so severely as Van Til sometimes does. In *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (1949, 95) Van Til objects to my refutation of an atheistic argument. The atheist, differing from an agnostic, denies the existence of God. In scientific form this is essentially the position of Ernest Nagel in his presidential address to the American Philosophical Association in 1954 (compare my *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*, 93-94). The atheistic argument is empirical: The absence of evidence for a God is proof that there is none. I doctored up the refutation by supposing that a scientist could find no evidence for a particular animal's having lived on this particular island, and that the scientist had concluded no such animal ever had lived there. Van Til claimed that my pointing out the fallacy in this atheistic argument "is the exact reverse of the teaching of Calvin." I hold that it is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the atheist's argument. Does Van Til wish to defend the atheist?

12

Individuation

The last few paragraphs have maintained that the Father is not the Son. They are two Persons. Still earlier in the preceding quotations there occurred, several times, the phrase "numerical unity." No comment has till now been made upon it. In fact, once or twice, a quotation has been cut off in order to avoid a complicating factor. But only a few pages ago Strong's sentence was included, in which, speaking of this three-in-one problem,

he said, “The doctrine of the Trinity...would be [self-contradictory] only if it declared God to be three in the same numerical sense in which he is said to be one.”

Earlier John Gill (*A Body of Divinity*, 128, column 2) had used the phrase. Some of its context will be included. “There must be three persons and not one only; and when Christ says, ‘I and my Father are one,’ he cannot mean one person, for this is...most absurd and contradictory.... Nor is this doctrine to be understood in a Tritheistic sense, that is, that there are three essences or beings numerically distinct, which may be said to be one, because of the same nature; as three men may be said to be one, because of the same human nature.” Then further down the column: “not an unity of genus and species...but God is one in number and nature.”[1]

Hodge has this: “The ambiguity of the word [*h*]*omoousios* has already been remarked upon. As *ousia* may mean generic unity common to many individuals, not *unum in numer*o but *ens unum in multis*, so *omoousios* (consubstantial) may mean nothing more than sameness of species or kind. It is there- fore said [by Schaff: footnote] that ‘the term *homoousion* in its strict grammatical sense...signifies not numerical identity, but equality of essence’” (I, 463) Then further down the page: “Gieseler...denies that the Nicene fathers held the numerical identity of essence in the persons of the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Spirit were the same in substance as having the same nature or same kind of substance.... Gieseler says that the numerical sameness of nature in the three divine persons was first asserted by Augustine.... Basil...understood by the word God a generic idea (*Gattungsbegriff*), belonging equally to the Father and the Son...as numerical difference pertains only to material [464] things. Augustine...expressly excludes the idea of generic unity...and therefore taught that there is one God in three persons.” Beyond this Hodge and Shedd differ on federal

headship and traducianism because, apparently, Shedd defends a numerical unity of Adam and his posterity, while Hodge does not. The difficulty here, relative to the latter two doctrines as well as to the Trinity, is the meaning of numerical oneness and the problem of individuation.

The most obvious phase of the difficulty lies in the fact that species and genera can be counted as well as individuals. This pussy, Timothy Ticklepitchers by name, and this puppy, Sport, are two numerically different animals. But feline and canine are also numerically different species. One is as numerical as the other. We can count and number species as easily as we can individuals. In the case of Shedd and federal headship, with the exception of one peculiarly worded sentence, Shedd could be numbering species rather than individuals; though Hodge does not think so. The present writer has the impression that some theologians count species, that some have no clear notion of numerical unity, that some therefore oscillate, and that many are confused. This judgment is justified because hardly any of them study the theories of individuation.

In the history of philosophy there have been only three main theories. Kant held that one thing is not another because of position in space and time. In criminal law this becomes the defense by alibi. I may look like the criminal, says the accused, but I was not at that place at that time. Neither was Hegel there then, as he tossed his famous slip of paper out the window, but nonetheless he was guilty of murdering this theory.

The second theory has two somewhat different forms, but still Aristotle and Locke have much in common. Locke allowed that two substances could have the identical qualities in common. Both books could be brown, heavy, and have 471 pages. But they are two because these identical qualities are attached to two different substances. For Locke substance was the most abstract

of all abstract ideas, and was “something, I know not what.” In other words, Locke could not explain individuality.

Aristotle explained individuation by having a form imposed on matter. Matter, for him, was neither an abstract idea nor a three dimensional, tangible, visible stuff, but a pure potentiality, “actually nothing.”[2]

The third theory is that of Plato and Leibniz, the latter of whom is supposed to have said that no two leaves in the forest are entirely alike. In criminal law, the qualitative differences among finger prints are more highly regarded than those of space and time. Now, obviously the Persons of the Trinity cannot be individuated by space and time; and since they are said to be the same in substance, either they cannot be recognized as three, or else we must use some form of the Platonic-Leibnizian theory.

Whether we talk of cats, trees, or men, the problem is the same. What is a man? Why are you and I two different persons? Even if space and time could individuate bodies, our minds, souls, or spirits are as little spatial as God. And of course time cannot individuate because many bodies, not to mention many souls, are co-temporaneous. Conservative theologians, through inertia, generally rely on the unintelligible substance theory. Like Locke they posit a material substance and a spiritual substance, to no avail. Secular scholars, clearly seeing the difficulties, have in large measure turned to behaviorism. The mind is simply the functioning of the bodily parts, as digestion is a function of the stomach and not a separate “substance.” A few professors who claim to be Christian try to introduce a form of behaviorism into the psychology courses in conservative Christian colleges. [3] What modern Christian academics needs therefore, among other things, is a theory of individuation.

A common expression or two can give a hint as to what an individual man is. On occasion one may say, with emphasis, “I

know that man." The intonation indicates that more is meant than "I have met him once or twice." It rather means "I know him well," or, "I know how he thinks," or "I can just about predict how he will act in such and such circumstances." The Scripture itself reminds us that "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Cannot we then infer that a man is what he thinks?

The view that a man is what he thinks is not entirely original with the present writer; nor does this acknowledgment refer only to the Scriptures. Gregory of Nyssa, of tedious memory, seems to have had a similar notion, though his translator's footnote is clearer than his text. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (*Post Nicene Fathers*) footnote seven reads: "Each individual soul represents, to Gregory's view, a 'thought' of God,[4] which becomes visible by the soul being born. There will come a time when these 'thoughts,' which complete, and do not destroy, each other, will have completed the *plēroma* (Humanity) which the Deity contemplates. This immediate apparition of a soul, as a 'thought' of God, is very unlike the teaching of his master Origen; and yet more sober and more Scriptural" (459).

The present writer is not so sure that the footnote in all respects conveys Gregory's meaning. Nor does he deny that Gregory can be improved upon. The point simply is that since the definition of a person has been discussed in earlier ages, present day theologians who write on such matters should not omit an indication of what they think a person – human or divine – is. One theologian can refute another's view either by proving it self-contradictory or by proving it unscriptural; but one cannot refute another merely by proposing some vague, confused, unsupported alternative.

.Accordingly the proposal is that a man is a congeries, a system, sometimes an agglomeration of miscellany, but at any rate a

collection of thoughts. A man is what he thinks: and no two men are precisely the same combination.[5]

This is true of the Trinity also, for although each of the three Persons is omniscient, one thinks “I or my collection of thoughts is the Father,” and the second thinks, “I or my thoughts will assume or have assumed a human nature.” The Father does not think this second thought, nor does the Son think the first. This is the qualitative theory of individuation, as opposed to the space-time theory: No two leaves in the forest are exactly alike, and Leibniz’ Alexander the Great is defined by his history. Even if trees could be individuated by space and time, the persons of the Trinity, as said above, could not; nor could human souls or other spirits.

Several romantically inclined students, and a few professors as well, have complained that “this makes your wife merely a set of propositions.” Well, so it does. This suits me, for I am a set of propositions too. And those who complain are as they think. Is a person to be considered unconscious, mute substance? Why is he not conscious thoughts? Of course, one may just say “thoughts,” for thoughts cannot be unconscious.

Naturally, human beings are mutable: Their thoughts or minds change. The three Persons of the Godhead are immu- table because their thoughts never change. They never forget what they now know, they never learn something new, in fact they have never learned anything. Their thought is eternal. Since also the three Persons do not have precisely the same set of thoughts, they are not one Person, but three. If substance were the principle of individuation – for we have seen that space-time cannot be – then there could not be three Persons. Identity of substance would mean identity of person. If then substance, for this and other reasons, is not the principle of individuation, the theologians referred to should explain what their principle is.

Another argument, more plausible than Van Til's, seems at first sight to lead to the conclusion that God is a fourth Person. Doubtless Van Til would not care to use it, but since some may think that the present writer cannot on his philosophy escape it and its conclusion, its discussion will at least in a negative way defend the orthodox position from a fallacious objection.

In the *Parmenides* Plato briefly notes several objections to his theory of Ideas. He answers only one of them, presumably because he thinks the replies to the others are relatively obvious. One of them is called the Third Man argument.

Plato held that acts of justice, imperfect as they are, presuppose a real Justice in the Ideal world. Similarly dice, children's playing blocks of various sizes, and some other things, are imperfect copies of the real Cube. Cebes, Simmias, and Crito, imperfect, changing men, are men because they participate in the eternal, immutable reality of the Ideal Man.

The objection, now, is that if the similarity among the three men requires the Ideal Man, there must be a still superior man to account for the similarity between Cebes and the Ideal Man. This, called the Third Man objection, leads to an infinite regress.

Applying this to the Trinity one could argue that the similarity among the three Persons presupposes a higher Person than the three. Of course, if this were so, there would also be an infinite regress of Persons, Super-persons, and so on.

This line of argument is defective against Platonism and even more impossible against Trinitarianism. A. E. Taylor (*Plato, the Man and His Work*, New York, 1927, 355-356) answers for Plato, and probably could have figured out an even better refutation. With respect to the Trinity a series of considerations apply. Most obviously Plato argued from the changing things in the sphere of "Becoming" to the immutable realities in the

sphere of “Being.” But the three Persons of the Trinity are already immutable and eternal, so that nothing higher is conceivable. It would be like asserting that three mutable cubes require a fourth mutable cube. But a genus is not one of its included individuals.

Furthermore, as has been hinted, Augustinianism differs from Platonism. Plato had Ideas. Augustine has truths or propositions. In reading what Augustine wrote, most people fail to note what he did not write; namely, they fail to note that he has no theory of abstraction. Instead of abstract ideas, he has truths. The present treatise follows Augustine on this point: There are no such things as abstraction and abstract ideas.

A critic may reply, “How is that? Does not the identity or similarity of the propositions constituting the three Persons require a fourth Person above them?” No, it does not, at least if personality requires, among other things, those propositions that are not common to the Three. The propositions relative to the term Father, and Arius’ misused term Ingenerate, and to the terms Son, Generated, incarnated, are not common to all three Persons. But if Father and Son are essential to personality, there cannot be a fourth person in the Godhead.

This line of argument seems to be consistent with the statements of the Athanasian Creed: “The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal.... So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty... not three Gods, but one God.”

The discussion of the main problem in the doctrine of the Trinity may now be called completed, even if it is not complete. Other students and scholars may add to, subtract from, modify, contradict, or otherwise alter the foregoing. Such responses

would be a great improvement over the present almost universal neglect of the doctrine. It would turn the attention of the somewhat faithful churches from their sociological sentimentalism to the basic doctrine of the Bible.

But though the preceding sections have labored over the greatest difficulties, there remains, even as if an anti-climax, some not unimportant material that ought not be omitted in a treatise on the Trinity. Hence the next section concerns the doctrine of eternal generation.

[1] The distressing complexity of all the details is again exemplified by asking, Does Gill first reject tritheism for holding that the three persons are numerically distinct and have one nature, and then accept the Trinitarian doctrine because God is one in nature?

[2] For a more extensive explanation, see Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (The Trinity Foundation, 2000 [1957]), 95-96, 120-121.

[3] Compare Gordon H. Clark, *Behaviorism and Christianity* (The Trinity Foundation, 1982); included in *Modern Philosophy.*

[4] The summary on pages 428-429, toward its end, notes that "the whole Creation [is] the *realized thoughts* of God" (Anticipations of Malebranche)

[5] Some bright sophomore who has studied Hume and Kant may here wonder aloud how there can be a collection without a collector. Must there not be a transcendental unity of apperception? Then an uneducated farm lad comes along and tells how a hundred hornets collected under the eaves of the barn.

Eternal Generation

All trinitarians, tautologically, assert that there are three Persons in the Godhead. Even those who posit a fourth person do not deny that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three in some sense. It follows therefore that a theologian must say something about the relationships among these three. This is especially true of the overwhelming majority who do not acknowledge a fourth person. In the history of theology this problem is discussed under the titles of the eternal generation of the Son and the equally eternal procession of the Spirit. The second of these two does not so insistently demand attention as the first, for similarly to the minimum attention paid to the Spirit in Nicaea, when the main question is answered with respect to the Son, the problem of the Spirit has in principle been solved.

The starting point is the fact that Scripture distinguished between the Father and the Son. That they are distinct Persons was sufficiently supported by the Biblical data very early in this treatise. Here we note that the term Father and the term Son imply a generation and a filiation. To put it in the simplest possible words, why is the first Person called Father and the second called Son? Since they are both eternal, their relationship must be eternal also. But though eternal it is still the relationship of Father to Son. In theological language this becomes the doctrine of eternal generation.

No such doctrine can find a place in Sabellianism, in other forms of modalism, or in modern Unitarianism. It is clearly a trinitarian doctrine. The term *generation*, however, because of its human connotations, disturbs some people; others oppose it because it seems to introduce temporal activity into the Godhead; still others are quite willing to think of God as temporal – it helps a great deal in the doctrine of creation – and only deny that generation is eternal.

Before summarizing the history of the doctrine, we must note that recent theologians use terms such as *essence*, *substance*, *being*, *nature*, and similar terms that Augustine had recognized as ambiguous. The necessary use of these terms in the following historical survey must not be understood as an approval of them. On the contrary the aim is eventually to express the Scriptural meaning in less confusing language. Admittedly theologians must use non-scriptural terms. *Trinity* itself is one. But it does not follow that the terms Augustine found so confusing are the only ones which can faithfully systematize the Scriptural material. Let us then work our way through the traditional formulations.

First, this treatise takes for granted, without argumentation, that God is eternal, and whatever relation there may be among the Three Persons is not subject to time. Besides. this, it is well to point out that while all divine works *ad extra, i.e*. God's external works, his power exercised on and in the universe, are ascribed to all Three Persons, though some more frequently to one and others more frequently to another, the internal distinctions must be those of each Person singly, or there would not be Three Persons.

The external works may be said to be arbitrary, though some theologians dislike the term; but no one denies that God willed to create, willed to save some, willed to make a covenant with Abraham, and chose how many hairs should grow on each man's head. These are decisions of God's free will, free in the very definite sense of not having been imposed on him by an external power, but not free in the sense that anything could be otherwise. To hold the latter position would be to aver that God himself could be otherwise than he is, an "unnecessary" being.

But did the Father will to generate the Son? Several theologians say, No, because the Father, though he could choose to create or

choose not to create, had no choice here, for the relation between the Father and the Son is eternal and exists by a necessity of God's nature. Unfortunately there are several pervasive mistakes in such an assertion. First, it is not true that the Father could choose to create or choose not to create. God did not have, from eternity, a blank mind, undecided as to whether to create or not. God's mind is, or, better, includes the idea of this particular cosmos, with Abraham, David, and Jesus at particular points in time. It was not external power that forced him to create, nor was there any such from which he was free, for there was no external power at all. But God, being God, was a God of such nature that a creation naturally resulted from such a nature. If there had been a God who might not have created, he would not have been the God described in the Bible. To suppose that God sometime or other finally made up his mind to create is to deny both his immutability and his omniscience. These fatal implications follow from the Arminian introduction of time into the Godhead, which wreaks devastation upon Scriptural theology. The immediate point is that the view which we repudiate assumes that an act of will must be limited to a finite, momentary bit of time. We reply that God's act of will is eternal. Thus the begetting of the Son occurs, and the Son as a Person exists, by a necessity of the divine nature – the nature of the divine will. Later this theme may become complicated, or simplified, by the iden tification of the Father's will, the Son's will, and the Spirit's will as one will.

John Gill, otherwise so excellent, falls into this temporal trap at one place. "God exists necessarily," he says, and this is true; but then he adds, "and not by choice and will," which is false. His argument is, "if his existence is owing to will and choice [and obviously it cannot be by the choice of someone else, nor can it be] his own will, for then he must be before he was, have will and choice before he existed, which is an absurdity not to be

endured" (*A Body of Dvinity*, 141, column 2). Of course that is an absurdity, but it is not applicable to an eternal will with respect to which there was no "before." Though Gill is here speaking of the existence of God, the considerations apply equally to the generation of the Son. It is an eternal generation. If Christian theologians cannot understand this and think of the divine will as temporal, they ought to accept Spinoza's criticism and agree that God has no will at all.

Gill himself equates the arbitrary and the temporal: "this distinction [between Father and Son] is natural and necessary, or by necessity of nature, and not arbitrary, or of choice and will; which if it was, it might not have been at all" (142, column 2). Hence he presupposes that God might not have willed what he actually willed. This presupposition impinges also on the doctrine of the Atonement. Many theologians say that if God wished to save anyone, he could have used no other means than the death of Christ; but he was perfectly free not to save anyone, and therefore could have decided against any incarnation. All this is entirely inconsistent with God's eternity and immutability. He never considered changing any plans. The method of the Atonement, and the precise individuals saved, were all "arbitrary," sovereign, eternal, and immutable. Everything occurs by the necessity of the divine nature.[1] Is it not obvious that though the Father voluntarily generated the Son, he could not, being what he is, have chosen differently? His mind, his plan, his counsel is eternal and immutable.

The orthodox doctrine, expressed in traditional language, teaches that it is the Person of the Son, not the essence of the Son, that is generated. There is not a second and generated essence. Nor is it the essence that does the generating. The generation is a generation of a Person by a Person, a position incompatible with all Arianism. As Calvin says in the *Institutes*, I, xiii, 19, "We

justly represent him as originating from the Father." The word "originating," however, may result in some confusion.

Terminological difficulties abound in every line. Modern theologians could have avoided some, if they had a greater knowledge of pagan Greek philosophy. For example, Hodge (Volume 1, 468) complains that the Nicene fathers went too far when they derived the essence of the Son from that of the Father. This seems to be an historical mistake because the Nicene Creed excludes every kind of subordination of essence. It states the absolute unity of the divine being or essence. When Hodge objects that the Nicene theology teaches that the Father communicates the essence of the Godhead to the second Person, a phrase or idea Hodge uses three times on these two pages, his use of the preposition *to* betrays a misunderstanding of Greek philosophy. The common English usage of communication has lost the meaning of the Greek *koinonia*. *To communicate* does not mean that the Father hands over or gives certain things to the Son. To communicate means to have something in common. The Father and the Son hold in common the essential characteristics of the Godhead. The English word *share* would be a better translation.

Of course, Hodge clearly asserts the generation of the Son, and correctly rejects the generation of the essence. His theology is impeccable. It is an historical question here, and so far as any criticism of Hodge is concerned, not a theological issue. It is therefore a matter of Hodge's misunderstanding of the Greek term *communicate*. He writes, "That essential idea [of paternity] is assumed to be the communication of the essence of the parent to his child; and therefore it is maintained that there must be a communication of the essence of the God-head from the Father to the Son." Note the words from and *to*. This suggests that the Father gives the essence to the Son. But such is not what the Greek fathers meant. Communication means that there is a

quality *common* to the Father and the Son. Hodge continues to the effect that in human life “it is a gratuitious assumption that...there is even among men any communication of the essence of the parent to the child. Traducianism has never been the general doctrine of the Christian Church.”

The question of whether God creates the soul of each child separately, engaging in many acts of creation, or whether the soul of the child is derived from the soul of its parents, is a concern in the Biblical doctrine of man, and somewhat out of place in a treatise on the Trinity. Here the mention of traducianism results only from a misunderstanding of the Greek background. Not only do the souls of parents and children “communicate,” but the souls of children here and those of the children down the street, and the adults across town all communicate, *i.e*. have human nature in common.[2]

The doctrine of eternal generation was worked out to avoid two errors. One is precluded by the term *eternal*, and the other by the term *generation*. The latter was used to exclude various forms of emanationism. Basilides and Valentinus, with their thirty eons whose final pair God cast out of the pleroma, and the several Christs who come in along the way, are too preposterous for any modern mind to discuss, but they constituted a very real, very practical, a very serious danger to the Church of the second and third centuries. A more reasonable and philosophical theory of emanation was that of Plotinus (died, AD 270), whose deleterious effects, variously evaluated by different writers, were not so immediate. The theory is a form of pantheism. The Supreme One, transcending even the duality of propositional truth, transcending Mind, beyond all knowledge, shines by its own nature, and its expanding rays are the ranks of being in the world, each less brilliant than the prior one, until the light is lost in darkness and nothingness.

Since the Christian idea of generation ends with a single only-begotten Son, Neoplatonism is ruled out. This also rules out the several Christs of Gnosticism. Arianism is all the more ruled out, for although Arius may not have been so totally removed from Christianity as Plotinus was, Athanasius perceived that he was using terms that failed to do justice to the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity used the term *generation* as a contrast with the term *creation*, as well as a contrast with emanationism, to preserve the New Testament teaching on the doctrine of the Second Person.

The other and more difficult point that the doctrine of eternal generation was promulgated to meet also concerned the heresy of Arius. He had been using expressions such as, “The Son before his generation was not.” Thus the essence of the Son could be as eternal as the essence of the Father, but the Person was not. Therefore the Trinitarians insisted on *eternal* generation. However, there is a further complication. The idea of eternal generation was supposed to distinguish, not merely a temporal event from an eternal reality, but also the *voluntary* creation of the world from the *necessary* generation of the Son. Creation was taken as a voluntary and unnecessary act, while generation was involuntary and necessary.

Now, some caution is needed here. Obviously the world is not related to the Father, nor to the Godhead as a whole, as the Son is to the Father. Created objects are not *homoousionta* with the Father. This point is fixed. Yet the world is not “voluntary,” if this term is used to denote some irrational, unnecessary freedom. The idea of free will is so widespread that people often think there can be no will unless it is free. But though our wills may sometimes be free, unfortunately, from our rational control, just as our intellectual endeavors may be vitiated by fallacious syllogisms, yet none of these defects can be attributed to God.

The eternal plan of God included the crucifixion of Christ, slain from the foundation of the world. Hence God was not “free” in history; that is, God was not so insane as to will historically anything that contradicted his eternal decree. The death of Christ was necessary and inevitable. At the same time, most free-willists, even though they want to make historical events uncertain and undetermined, admit that the generation of the Son is not free but is a necessary and eternal relationship.

When this is stated in the broadest generality, the problem of “philosophical necessity” comes into view. At this point another reference to William Cunningham is in order, for he was unquestionably a great scholar. In *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, (Banner of Truth Trust, 1967) he has an article on “Calvinism and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity,” in which he defends the orthodoxy of Thomas Chalmers, leader of the Free Church of Scotland, against charges of fatalism, pantheism, denial that God is the moral governor of the world, and near atheism – charges made by Sir William Hamilton. At this distance such charges against Thomas Chalmers, a preacher of unrivaled reputation, professor of moral philosophy in St. Andrews University, and professor of divinity in Edinburgh University, seem ludicrous.

The philosophical issue, however, was and remains a matter of importance and controversy, since similar charges, now usually summarized under the catch-all of “hyper-calvinism,” continue. William Cunningham in his rather lengthy article argues that Calvinism accords with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, or vice versa, but that Calvinism does not require it. To a necessitarian like Augustus Toplady, or the present writer, Cunningham’s position is more gratifying than one which holds that the Bible completely rules out the doctrine of necessity. And there is a reason why Cunningham holds such a non-committal opinion. In his view the solution depends on extremely intricate

psychological analyses, foreign to most theologians and useless in the life of the church. He seems never to suspect that easily deduced inferences from Scripture can settle the matter. Yet such seems to be the case: At any rate the topic becomes one for exegesis and theology rather than general psychology.

If now, God is rational, as the Bible teaches in many places, if he is omniscient, if he predestinates whatever comes to pass; if consequently the world itself is rationally organized, and if God's image in man is rationality, then consistency would require that one or the other of these contradictory positions, necessitarianism or indeterminism, must fit. Either the world is necessary and inevitable or it is not. Of course it might be that the Bible is completely silent on this point; or, what is more likely, we may have not yet understood what Scripture implies. Therefore every theologian must either admit ignorance here, or show from Scripture what he believes Scripture teaches. The necessitarian is willing to accept the burden of proof, and that burden is borne by the items mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph: God is truth, he is omniscient, he decrees whatsoever comes to pass.

There is, however, a further phase of this subject that most people ignore. It is rather recondite and is mentioned only for completeness' sake. It has to do with the definition of "philosophical necessitarianism." The name can bear two senses, and the one which in all probability Sir William Hamilton used is that of factual inevitability. Events are inevitable in the sense that, given a set of conditions, the event in question must occur. A different set would have necessitated a different result. Such a necessitarianism may be called factual or hypothetical, for the result is inevitable only under the hypothesis of certain conditions, and other conditions might have prevailed.

The second type of necessitarianism may be called logical rather than factual, and absolute rather than hypothetical. On this view of things no other conditions than the actual conditions are possible. This is not “the best of all possible worlds,” as Leibniz claimed: It is the only possible world, as Spinoza claimed. Any other world, on this view, can be imagined only by failing to see that it contains a logical contradiction or impossibility.

Now, Spinoza is in ill repute among orthodox theologians; and even non-christians classify him, if not as an atheist, at least as a pantheist. But it does not follow that every idea he suggests is wrong, for otherwise geometry would be false.

Neither Sir William nor theologian Cunningham makes this distinction clear. But it would seem that Cunningham’s remarks apply to both forms of necessitarianism. We must ask therefore whether or not this world is logically necessitated. The answer must take into consideration that God is truth and truth is rational. Does this mean that the universe is not a voluntary creation? Does it mean that the generation of the Son is not voluntary? Of course not. Both these items are both voluntary and necessary. Naturally they differ in other respects, but not in these two respects.

Given then the immutability of God’s mind and the eternity of truth, so-called philosophical necessitarianism seems to be quite Scriptural and with respect to the creation of the world conflicts in no way with the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Since God’s mind is immutable, since his decree is eternal, it follows that no other world than this is possible or imaginable.

More recently than Hodge an evangelical theologian has attempted to do away with the doctrine of eternal generation altogether. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. writes,

We must now turn to a very special word, “only begotten,” *monogenes*, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ.... In the common reading of*John* 1:18 he is called “*monogenes* Son,” but in the

critical text in this passage he is called "*monogenes* God."... It seems that the church fathers of the fourth century, in the heat of the Arian controversy, took this word as somehow connected with the root of the very *gennaō*, which means generate or beget.... When the orthodox fathers were challenged by the Arians, who said that Christ was a created being and who pointed to the word *monogenes* for their evidence, the orthodox fathers did not have the facilities to prove that the word has nothing to do with begetting.... (*A Systematic Theology*, 110*ff*.)

There are several points of interest in this quotation. First, if the correct reading is *monogenes uios* (Textus Receptus), the translation "only son" rather than "only begotten Son" is at least plausible. But if the critical reading is correct, as Dr. Buswell seems to grant, it cannot be translated "only God," as he would like, for to say so would deny that the Father is God. The translation must be, "The only begotten God explicated" the God who is not begotten.

In the second place, when Dr. Buswell says that the Greek fathers did not know as much Greek as we do, it must surprise the student to learn that Athanasius and a hundred Greek bishops, whose mother tongue was Greek, knew less Greek than we do, and in particular did not know that *monogenes* is derived from *ginomai* rather from *gennaō*. Even so, the two verbs are themselves derived from an earlier common stem. At any rate, the *genes* in *monogenes* derives immediately from *genos*. This word as a matter of fact suggests begetting and generation, as much as if it had been derived from *gennaō*, *Genos* means first of all race, stock, kin. *Genei uios*means a natural as opposed to an adopted son. *Genos* also means direct as opposed to collateral descent. It can mean a clan, a house, a tribe, or a family. Eventually – Liddell and Scott put it in their fifth division – it means a kind, a class, or a genus.

Yet Athanasius and the Greek fathers, in spite of their perfect knowledge of Greek, did not confute the Arians by the word *genos* or*monogenes*. They did indeed insist that Christ was God's *only* Son, and therefore he was not a son in the sense that believers are; but their emphasis in the present subject depended

on the word *Son*. If this person is a son, he is begot ten. It is the word *son*, not the word *only*, that forces the idea of begetting.

Still, if anyone wants an instance of the verb *gennaō* applied to Christ, it is found in *Hebrews* 1:5: “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”

Here then the New Testament applies to Christ the verb *gennaō* and not *ginomai* only. Dr. Buswell tries to avoid the plain implication both of the word Son and of the verb *gennaō* in *Hebrews* by quoting *Hebrews* 5:5: “Thus Christ did not glorify himself to be made a high priest, but it was he who said to him, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee’ who glorified him; just as in another passage he says, ‘Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’ We are thus justified in saying that the ‘begetting’ of the Son referred to in *Psalm* 2:7, as interpreted in the New Testament, is not a literal generation of his being in any sense of the word, but a reference to God’s declaratory revelation of the eternal divine Sonship, particularly in Christ’s resurrection from the dead.”

Of course there is no idea of a literal sexual begetting. The language is figurative, such as also the phrases “the hand of God,” and his eye balls roll over hill and dale. Let us not belabor the obvious. The important point relates to understanding the begetting as somehow connected with the resurrection. Did the resurrection make Jesus the Son of God? Was not Christ the Son of God before his resurrection?

How the verb *gennaō* can refer to the divine declaration concerning the resurrection, as the verb *orizo* does in *Romans* 1:4, remains unexplained. But in one point Dr. Buswell is correct. The New Testament does not teach a generation of the being or essence of the Second Person. However, this is not what the doctrine of eternal generation asserts. It is the Person, not the essence,[3] that is generated; and

if one rules out generation in any sense of the word, why does the New Testament call our Lord Son?

Though we must apply to the Son some sense of the term *generation*, let it be admitted that the sense is not completely clear. Christ is indeed the Son of God, and the relationship is *filiation*. But since this relationship is eternal, and there was no time before the Son was Son, and though there was no time before the Father was Father, and though to be Biblical we must call the First Person Father and the Second Person Son, it has pleased God not to have revealed much further as to the nature of this relationship. At least no theologian has succeeded in extending the implications of the Scripture very far. Perhaps the best we can do is to suggest that the three Persons are identical with the exception of their personal differences.

The amount of historical material through the first half of this study and the discussions of contemporary trinitarian theologians may give the impression that aside from the small Universal-Unitarian church and the "main-line" liberal denominations there is no anti-trinitarianism today. This is not quite so. References have been made to Jehovah's Witnesses as rather faithful exponents of Arianism, and this movement is no small affair. But there are others also. One is called The Way. Since of course its views touch upon nearly all the theological loci, its discussion could have been inserted nearly anywhere in these pages. Its actual position at this point is not altogether arbitrary, for The Way has a most interesting way of avoiding the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. The source material is a volume *Jesus Is Not God* by V. P. Wierwille (The American Christian Press, 1975).

The position defended is that "God is the Father...that Jesus Christ is the Son...to say that 'Son of God' means or equals 'God the Son' totally negates the rules of language.... God and the Son

of God are not co-eternal.... Jesus Christ was not literally with God in the beginning, neither does he have all the assets of God" (5).

Chapter one is largely misinterpretation of the history of the church before ad 325, plus a bold attempt at textual criticism. Among other things it says, concerning the baptismal formula of *Matthew* 28:19, that "It would not have been difficult for scribes to insert 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' in the place of the original 'in my name.' This must have been what happened because earlier manuscripts from which Eusebius (who died in 349 ad) quoted in the early part of the fourth century could not have used the trinitarian words" (19, 20). Quoting Peter in *Acts* 2:38, "Repent and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ," the author infers that therefore Peter could not have used the trinitarian formula in the actual baptism.

Many times over with more than a dozen pages of Scripture verses, he insists that the phrase "Son of God" cannot possibly mean "God the Son." Nowhere does he discuss Athanasius' argument that a son always has the same generic nature as the father. Nor does he anywhere quote *Romans* 9:5, "Christ...who is over all, God blessed forever."

The historical section of the chapter has two themes. First he insists that the doctrine of the Trinity was introduced into the church by converts whose previous religions had been trinitarian paganism. Apparently all Gentile religions were trinitarian, even the Greek religion with its Zeus and a dozen other gods. Hence Athanasius represents a triumph of paganism over the pure unitarian Christianity of the first century. He interprets the discussions and controversies of the second and third centuries, not as attempts to define the Biblical position and to purge the church of heresies, but as the invention of a new syncretistic religion. The author's historical expertise in this chapter is

evidenced by his placing the Council of ad 325 in Nice, France (23), instead of in Nicaea in Bithynia.

The second theme is theological. Its position makes Christ a strictly human being. God favored him above all other men, and the author uses some Scriptural, devotional language, but it is always interpreted as applied to a human person. The Way does not even rise to the position of Jehovah's Witnesses and make Christ an angel. He is strictly human and nothing else. To quote: "In the beginning there was only one who was above Adam, and that was God" (64). It must be kept in mind that in this book the term *God*refers only to him whom Christians call Father. There is no Godhead. Hence it teaches that Christ did not exist before Adam was created. There is no eternal generation. Christ was generated in Nazareth in the reign of Caesar Augustus (69*ff*). This results in some peculiar argumentation: "If Jesus Christ had been God, he would not have legally redeemed man, for he would not have wilfully chosen to do so" (74). What sort of reasoning is this? Why cannot God choose to do anything he desires? Here the author cannot rely on his constant supposition that God could not possibly become man. "To understand our redemption through Christ our passover, we must know that the perfect Sacrifice had to be a man and not God"(76). Christians agree of course that God cannot die; that is why the Second Person of the Trinity became man. But The Way rules out all possibility of an incarnation.

Having quoted a great deal of Scripture the author does not dare omit mention of *John* 1:1. "When John 1:1 says, 'the Word was with God,' it refers to the manifested *logos*: (1) the written Word...the Bible, and (2) the created Word which is Jesus Christ" (84). Note that Christ is a creature. He was in the beginning only in the sense that God foreknew that Jesus would redeem man. "John 1:1 literally says: The revealed 'Word was with God' in his foreknowledge" (85). But it seems to me that John not only

says that the Logos was with God, without any reference to foreknowledge, but also that the Word was God, and a few lines later that the Logos was not a creature but the Creator. “All things were made by him” could not be said of a creature born about 2000 years ago.

The author tries to avoid the plain teaching of the passage. When he comes to *John* 1:3, “All things were made by him,” he wants the “him” to refer to God and not to Christ the Logos. But obviously the main subject in these opening verses is the Logos. To say that God made all things would be trivial. Similarly in 1:4, “in him was life,” the author refers the “him” to God (93), instead of to the Logos. Yet the Logos is the main subject of the whole passage.

The total misunderstanding becomes painfully obvious when the author interprets *John* 1:11, “He came to his own, and his own received him not” to mean that God (the Father) came to Israel. Clearly the reference is to Christ, the Logos. Similarly, references to Christ are misapplied to God, the Father, in *Colossians* 1:16, 17. The verses definitely say that Christ created all things. Christ continues to be the reference in verses 18 and 19, for the person indicated is the head of the church and was the first to rise from the dead. Did the Father ever rise from the dead? The author’s argument is blunt: “The people who say that all things were created by Jesus Christ contradict the first verse of the Bible: ‘In the beginning God created’ ”(119).

The whole argument seems to be circular: Christ cannot be God because God has to be a single Person other than Christ.

For the Third Person of the Trinity, the author substitutes two Holy Spirits. The one is the Father himself, for is not the Father spirit? And of course he is holy. The second is a holy spirit which God gave to his people at Pentecost and continues to instill in his people down to the present day.

This theology is not exactly Sabellianism because the Son is a human person. For the same reason it is not Arianism. One can say that it is a form of Unitarianism with the addition of a few subpoints that sound more Christian than the Unitarians do. The earlier sections of the present treatise, with the Scripture references, seem to be a sufficient rebuttal of this cult's position, and therefore nothing need be added here.

[1] Compare Gordon H. Clark, *Biblical Predestination*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969; and *Predestination in the Old Testament*, 1978; now combined as *Predestination*, [1987] 2004.

[2]See Gordon H. Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (The Trinity Foundation, 1984), 45-53.

[3] In order not to inconvenience the reader who is not yet familiar with my terminological modifications, I retain the traditional term *essence*.

14

Philosophical Elucidations

In the preceding argumentation the constant intrusion of philosophic themes has doubtless discouraged some seminary students and may have annoyed some seminary professors. Should the philosophy have been omitted? Throughout the history of Christianity various popular leaders have tried to maintain a modicum of doctrine pure from any tincture of profundity. Others have attempted to eliminate theology itself. At times these people have favored mysticism. In the United States today non-doctrinal emotionalism finds wide acceptance. But this cannot be done without eliminating Christianity as well. The Bible asserts a metaphysical dependence of the visible world on an invisible God. Its theory of man makes him the

image of God. The doctrine of sin presupposes a certain type of psychology, with an accompanying penology; and any doctrine must be based on some sort of epistemology.

In contrast with the stentorian evangelists I so often hear on the radio, who know more about Armageddon than they know about the Trinity, the more competent ministers, who read all the Bible and have a better understanding of it, introduce, as a matter of course and necessity, metaphysical and epistemological themes. Since the thirteenth century many of these theologians, possibly a majority,[1] have favored Aristotle, condemned Plato, and ignored Augustine. Plato had at least some sort of heaven and a firm belief in immortality. He was of course a pagan, but no more so than Aristotle. Aristotle had no heaven, and no immortality, either. But of course if a Christian wishes to avoid Aristotle, he must also alter Platonism in several significant ways. This is what Augustine did, and this treatise has followed a similar procedure. The result is that this section of philosophic summary will be rather repetitious. Nevertheless some readers may profit from such a review.

The philosophy used here is first of all a form of Realism. There are several kinds. In the 1930s there was a sort of materialistic realism.[2] But whatever the variety, realism is such because it asserts a knowledge of the “real” object, and not a sensory or other type of representation of it.

Nearly all empiricists assert or imply that the real object never enters the mind and cannot be known. Berkeley was an exception. The usual notion is that the human mind takes, a photograph of what is “out there,” with the obvious result that the object itself is unknowable.

Realists claim that the mind grasps, gets, has, knows the real object, though of course the real objects are not spatial or physical. Plato called them Ideas, eternal and immutable.

Although the present treatise is as realistic as it could be made, it differs from Plato in that Ideas are replaced by propositions.

The reason is that a single X can neither be known nor expressed. The best we do with human beings is to use proper names: John Doe, Bill Smith, and George Washington. But there are not enough proper nouns to supply each person with a unique name. My wife and I knew three girls named Helen Andrews. For this reason computer-minded bureaucrats give us numbers: Good morning, Mr. 376-598024, but there is nothing in the number, nor in the name either, that describes the person to us. The name George Washington tells us nothing about anybody.

This is also true of an isolated Aristotelian concept and of an allegedly physical thing. Suppose I meet a friend on the street and greet him with the single word “cat.” My astonished listener is likely to reply, “What?” A single noun, all by itself, and a single Platonic Idea as well in isolation, has no meaning. But if one should say, “the cat is black,” the proposition conveys a meaning. It may be true, or it may be false, but it is not meaningless.

Now, the Bible is largely a series of propositions. There are of course some interrogatory sentences, and a few exclamations. But the Bible is largely propositional. One or two of my critics have suggested that God does not think in propositions. Where in the Bible, one may ask, is such a suggestion hinted at? If God does not think in propositions, where did all the Biblical propositions come from? If God does not think in propositions, how could he ever know that “David was king of Israel”? The Bible teaches that God is truth; and a single word, without unexpressed connotations, can never be true. A single word has no meaning. Truth is always a matter of the relationship between a subject and a predicate.

Scripture says that God is a God of knowledge. That God is truth is one of Augustine's most fundamental theses. The opposing view gives us only a photograph taken by a defective lens, and to make it worse it gives us no method of judging the accuracy of the photograph.

But if anyone assert that it is completely wrong to begin with realistic epistemology, one need only recall that nominalism provides no basis for federal headship and the imputation of righteousness and justification by faith. It provides no basis for talking about the human race. In nominalism there is no human race. In order to have any Christian doctrine at all, universal propositions are necessary and indispensable.

Note the phrase just above: "any Christian doctrine." The argument is not restricted to the Trinity. In his argument against trichotomy, Hodge (II, 54) describes realism in these words: "What God created therefore, was not an individual man, but the species*homo*, or generic humanity – an intelligent, rational, and voluntary essence; individual men are manifestations of this substance numerically and specifically one and the same, in connection with their several corporeal organizations. Their souls are not individual essences, but one common essence revealed and acting in many separate organisms."

This description is faulty on several counts. Hodge's use of some traditional, scholastic, unintelligible terminology is quite beside the point here. The very serious criticism fixes first on his assertion that trichotomists deny that God created the individual man Adam, the man whose wife was Eve. They are supposed to assert that God created only the species *homo*. But this is not only historically incorrect: It is a logical blunder. Realistic trichotomy, because realistic, holds that the Platonic Idea of Man, or on our view the several propositions describing "generic

humanity" were never created at all, but are eternal, uncreated thoughts in the mind of God.[3]

Secondly, Hodge argues (II, 57) that the Bible contradicts realism by teaching the soul's survival of death. A most peculiar objection. Since Plato himself taught and emphasized the survival of the individual soul after death, and since no Christian trichotomist or traducianist, so far as I know, denies a future life, Hodge ought to have provided massive argumentation. But all he does is to assert, what seems to me quite false, "if a man is the manifestation of a generic life, or of humanity as an essence common to all men, then when his body dies, the man ceases to exist." Much to one's amazement Hodge seems to accuse trichotomists and traducianists of unmitigated behaviorism. Since traducianists derive the soul of the child, as well as his body, from his parents, they can hardly be guilty of behaviorism. Recall again that Plato himself asserted the immortality of the soul. The immediate conclusion is that the arguments of the eminent American theologian fail completely to show that epistemological realism is inconsistent with the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity or with any other Biblical doctrine.

One of the purposes of this discussion is to impress the student with the fact that Augustinianism with its realistic epistemology is not inconsistent with the incarnation of Christ, as Hodge claims: nor does it deny that the sin of Adam was the sin of an individual man, as Hodge also claims; nor does it conflict with, but is rather essential to, the doctrines of justification and regeneration. Nor is it true to say, as Hodge does, that "as a historical fact, the consistent and thorough-going advocates of this doctrine teach an entirely different method of salvation." This may be true of some nineteenth century Hegelians; but note that it was Augustine who defended grace against Pelagius' dependence on works. Note too that Anselm had a better understanding of the Atonement than anyone before him (except

the apostles); and note also that in later Catholicism it was the Jansenists and Augustinians who preserved more of the Gospel than their Aristotelian opponents. Hodge says, “individuals alone exist” (62), but if so, there is no *real* unity in the Godhead, and we have only three individuals.

[1]Even Augustus Toplady was an outrageous Lockean.

[2] Compare Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, Allen and Unwin, 1939, chapters XI, XII.

[3] The reader must not suppose that the present writer accepts trichotomy.

15

The Holy Spirit

To complete a treatise on the Trinity it is necessary to make some mention of the Holy Spirit. But such a mention is much like an anti-climactic postscript. This is not because there is nothing to be said. Abraham Kuyper wrote 649 pages on *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. But the basic and difficult trinitarian problems are solved if the relation between the Father and the Son is determined. Athanasius recognized that such was the case.

The AD 381 edition of the Nicene Creed added some emphasis on the personality of the Third Person, which the earlier edition lacked. The original form ended with the bare statement, “and in the Holy Ghost.” The later form reads, “And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeded from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets...” Nevertheless the theology of the Holy Spirit was in principle fixed by the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. With respect to modern deviations from orthodox doctrine, it is popularly said that we are obliged to defend the deity, not the personality, of the Son, and the personality, not the

deity, of the Spirit. The reason is that Arius and modern Unitarians admit that Jesus was a person; and they admit a divine “spirit,” even if it is not a distinct person, but only an influence. For example, Schleiermacher defines the Holy Spirit as “der Gemeingeist der Kirche,” the common opinion of the Church. God is the cause of this consensus; and as cause operative in Jesus we may call it Son. This sort of view is usually termed a modal trinity.

To show that the Bible teaches a trinity of persons, and not three modes of operations by one person, that is, to show that the Bible speaks of a personal Spirit, it is necessary to quote verses that ascribe to him intelligence and volition.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

John 16:13 When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth.

1 Corinthians 12:8, 11 To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge...but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.

The first of these verses says that the Holy Spirit teaches; therefore he must know something; therefore he is a person, a mind, an intelligence. The second verse is similar. In *1 Corinthian*s Paul says that the Spirit has knowledge of divine things (12:11), and gives wisdom to men, and knowledge, and other gifts as well. Not only so, but he selects the men to whom he will give these gifts. To some he chooses to give one gift; to some others he decides to give other gifts. This choice is an act of will. Nothing further is needed to prove that the Scripture represents the Spirit as a person.

But four verses make a very slim sample of the Biblical material. To these may be added

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.

John 16:7, 8 If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you...and he, when he is come, will convict the world of sin.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?

Acts 13:2, 4 The Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul.... So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit....

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us....

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops.

Romans 8:16, 26, 27 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit...in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us....

Acts 5:3 may at first cause some surprise; but obviously a man cannot lie to an inanimate thing, nor to a mathematical equation, nor to “the spirit of the times.” One can lie only to a person.

Yet it may be and has been maintained that the Spirit is not a distinct person, but just the one God referred to under one of his many names. That this is not the case, but that the Spirit is a Person distinct from both the Father and the Son may be seen in *John* 14:16, 26; *John* 15:26; *John* 16:7, 8 already quoted, and in the following.

Matthew 3:16, 17 He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of heaven,

saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 28:19 baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost....

Luke 11:13 how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

1 Corinthians 12:3 No man can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

1 Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

It seems unnecessary further to explain these verses, for even a casual reading shows that three distinct persons are identified in them.

The next point is the relation between the Spirit and the other two Persons. The relation between the Father and the Son was described as that of the Father's generating the Son. What then is the relation between the Father and the Spirit? The difficulty is somewhat greater, for whereas the term Son naturally suggests generation, the term Spirit does not so clearly suggest anything. Since the word *spirit* means breath, maybe we should call the relationship *spiration*. The usual word, however, is procession, rather than spiration; and a student may begin to wonder whether there is any Scriptural basis for these terms. There is not much. If the idea of generation remains somewhat obscure in Scripture, the idea of spiration or procession is still more so. Nevertheless, the Scripture is not absolutely silent.

John 15:26 When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.

It might be objected that this procession refers to Christ's sending the Comforter to the disciples, perhaps at Pentecost, or at other times; in any case not an eternal relation within the Trinity. This might seem all the more probable to English speaking students who remember the King James version of *John* 8:42 that the Son also *proceeded* from the Father, a verse that definitely refers to Christ's earthly ministry. But the Greek verb is not the same. More to the point, the phrase in *John* 15:26 can hardly be applied to Christ's sending the Spirit from the Father to the disciples at some later date. The verse indeed, but not the phrase, refers to a future sending into the world. Christ says, "I will send." This is a future tense; and he will send the Paraclete to the disciples, but now we ask, Who is this Paraclete whom Christ will send? He is the Spirit of truth; and surely he does not become the Spirit of truth in virtue of his being later sent. He is eternally the Spirit of truth, the Person who proceeds from, though not generated by, the Father. Very evidently therefore Christ is naming an eternal relationship between the Father and the Spirit. It would be superfluous for the sending and the proceeding in verse 26 to refer to the same thing. The phrase can only refer to a Trinitarian relationship.

But it would be difficult to find even one other verse in Scripture that speaks at all clearly about this eternal procession. There are of course phrases, such as the Spirit of or from God, which occurs frequently; and the Spirit of the Lord (in *2 Corinthians* 3:17, 18 – a puzzling passage because it seems to identify the Spirit and the Lord) where one may think he sees a procession of the Spirit from the Lord; the Spirit of Jesus Christ in *Philippians* 1:19, about which the same remark can be made; but such phrases fall a little short of the idea of eternal

procession. For this reason the evangelical theologians, perhaps culpably, have little to say about it. Calvin's*Institutes* I, xiii is a lengthy and excellent discussion of the Trinity; it is full of the Deity of Christ; but can one find there a single mention of the procession of the Spirit? Other evangelical theologians slight even the doctrine of the Trinity itself. The Puritan Thomas Watson (died 1690) was commended by Spurgeon in these words, "Thomas Watson's *Body of Practical Divinity* is one of the most precious and peerless works of the Puritans." But its chapter on the Trinity, hardly more than three pages, barely mentions the procession of the Spirit in a dependent clause of seven words.

An historical note may be helpful. The Greek church asserts the procession of the Spirit from the Father. The Roman Church and its Protestant successors teach the procession of the Spirit from the Father and from the Son. The phrase "and from the Son" was added to the Nicene Creed presumably by the Council of Toledo in ad 589. This event eventually led to the separation of the Greek and Roman churches in 1054. There were other contributing factors. One was the superstition introduced by the Roman Church that the bread of the Lord's Supper had to be unleavened. There were also administrative difficulties concerning the respective authorities of the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople. But the main theological difference was the *filioque* clause.

The Greeks held that the Council of Toledo was illegal. Even in the West acceptance of its addition to the Creed was not prompt and universal. But it gradually gained undisputed acceptance. To understand the logic of the controversy, however, one must remember that if Toledo was illegal, as it well may have been, the falsity of the *filioque* clause does not validly follow. Illegal bodies sometimes speak the truth. Thomas Aquinas defends the

doctrine, if not the legality, of the Council. In his *Summa Theologica* (I, Q. 27, 1) he says,

> Scripture uses, in relation to God, names that signify procession. This procession has been variously understood. Some have understood it in the sense of an effect proceeding from the cause. So Arius took it, saying that the Son proceeds from the Father as his primary creature, and that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son as the creature of both. In this sense neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost would be true God;... Others take this procession to mean the cause proceeding to the effect as moving it, or impressing its own likeness on it; in which sense it was understood by Sabellius.... Both of these opinions take procession as meaning an outward act; hence neither of them affirms procession as existing in God himself.... This applies most conspicuously to the intellect, the action of which remains in the intelligent agent. For whenever we understand, by the very fact of understanding there proceeds something within us, which is a conception issuing from our intellectual power and proceeding from our knowledge of that thing.

See also I, Q. 28, 4; and I, Q. 36, 2; though this latter passage is almost as bad as Marius Victorinus.

The work of the Holy Spirit is much more easily understood. Toward the beginning of the present century the two largest Presbyterian denominations in this country were disturbed by the fact that the *Westminster Confession* had no chapter on the Holy Spirit. The result was, along with another matter, they amended the *Confession* by adding such a chapter. Upon examination, however, it will be seen that the new chapter does little more than gather together in one place what was already given in various other chapters. For example, one sentence is, “He convicts men of sin, moves them to repentance, regenerates them by his grace, and persuades and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith.” But this had all been said before.

There is of course no good reason why an author should be prohibited from gathering together in one chapter or one book the extensive work of the Holy Spirit. But a confession is hardly the place for that sort of thing. In fact, precisely because of the innumerable details, it is an awkward subject in a systematic theology. It is more a matter of Biblical Theology. However, no one can object to some hints being included here as samples of such details.

Matthew 1:18 and *Luke* 1:35 attribute the birth of Jesus to the power of the Holy Ghost. All three Synoptics mention John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost; and all three describe the Spirit's descent on Jesus at his baptism, with the added information that he led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted.

Matthew 12:18 and *Luke* 4:18 mention the prophecy that the Messiah would be endowed with the Spirit. *Matthew* 10:20 and *Luke*12:12 promise the disciples, when persecuted, that the Holy Spirit will give them the words they should say. Because God gave the Spirit to Jesus without measure (*John* 3:34), Jesus can give the Spirit to his disciples after his resurrection (*John* 20:22-23). *John* 7:38, 39 indicate many givings to the end of time.

John chapters 14-16 contain five instances of the word *Paraclete*. *Comforter* is a poor translation. *Advocate*, a forensic term, is a better translation, as in *1 John* 2:1.

These details about the Holy Ghost could be extended for many pages. Just one more will be mentioned. In *John* 3:1 the new birth is birth by water and the Spirit, as is also *Romans* 6:4. *John* 6:63 says that the Spirit gives life, and since the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, the verse continues with "the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life."

But, really, a treatise on the Trinity, such as this, is no place to condense Abraham Kuyper's 649 pages. We can only close with

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty

God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Chapter 4 – Creation

Under the heading of omniscience one could discuss, not only God's self-knowledge of the Trinitarian relations, but also the present world, its constitution, its history, and its culmination. Thus the wars of Israel and the Babylonian captivity could be placed as a sub-paragraph under the heading of omniscience. But since theologians and seminary students do not see all knowledge at a single glance, we must break up the whole into smaller parts. One part of this whole is the whole itself over again. After a chapter on God, it is customary to discuss the divine decree. Since this is God's eternal plan and purpose, and is therefore logically prior to its execution in the works of creation and providence, the decree should probably be studied before taking up the creation of heaven and earth. But since the doctrine of creation includes the purpose for which the world was made, the eternal decree can be discussed under the sub-head — sub-head indeed! — of the world's purpose.

Creation ex nihilo

The Bible, arranged chronologically in the main, begins with the first exhibition of omnipotence and omniscience, viz., the creation of the universe. As usual, the starting point is the Biblical data.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Neh. 9:6 Thou art the Lord, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is in them. dr. Isa. 42:5.

Acts 14:15 We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is.

Heb. 3:4 He who constructed the universe is God.

In these verses and others to be mentioned, the first point to note is that God created all things out of nothing. The terms used in theology are creation ex nihilo or fiat creation. This refers to God's initiation of temporal sequence; and to learn how interconnected all revelation is, the student may consider how the account of creation supports some previous material on the nature of God. When we ask, What is God? the reply is, maker of heaven and earth.

In Acts 14:15, quoted above, Paul and Barnabas, after they had been mistaken for Mercury and Jupiter, distinguished these pagan gods from the living God who made heaven and earth. Creation was the distinguishing feature. The verses teach that God is omnipotent because only omnipotence could create ex nihilo.

The Hebrew verb bara in Genesis 1:1 perhaps does not conclusively prove creation ex nihilo; but its meaning, about which the student can ask his Hebrew professor, is so strange as to strongly suggest it. Added to its linguistic peculiarities, the phrase "in the beginning" shows that there was nothing prior from which to construct a universe. Further passages are even clearer.

Gen. 1:3 And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.

Psa. 36:6, 9 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake and it was done.

John 1:3 All things came into being through him, and without him not a single thing came into being that has come into being.

Col. 1:16, 17 For by him all things in heaven and on earth were created. . . . and he is before all things and by him the universe has stood forth.

Heb. 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order by the word of God, so that sensory objects did not arise out of phenomena.

That the universe came into being through God's mere command, is clear both in Gen. 1:3 and Psa. 36:9. God spake and it was done. With the verb made Psalm 36 could still be true even if there were pre-existing materials out of which God organized the heavens by his fiat. However, the last three passages in the list could not be plainer in denying God's use of building materials. Nothing except God existed before God spoke. These verses, which teach creation ex nihilo. also bear on the doctrine of the Trinity, for John 1:3 and Col. 1:16 show that Christ was the creator. This is noteworthy, though the main point now is not the role of Christ as a person, but the fact that the world was created from nothing: all things without exception came into being through Christ, and not a single thing came into being without him. He is before all things. Nothing existed for him to work on. By Him the entire universe stood forth, or, was completed. The world does not "consist" of Christ, as water consists of hydrogen and oxygen, or as bread consists of wheat. Even the King James version, when it uses the word consist, does not mean to say this. "Stood forth" is a better translation. Instead of saying "in him all things consist"," one is justified in saying, "By his fiat all things stood forth." This rules out all pre-existent materials.

Above it was noted that there was some logical advantage in discussing the nature of God first and afterwards his works. Hebrews 11:3 has more about his works than about God himself.

It says first of all that the doctrine of creation is not to be understood by empirical observation, but by faith. For this reason attempts to demonstrate the Christian view of nature on the basis of scientific experimentation are futile. The second laws of thermodynamics, or hypotheses that the sun will explode or freeze, and such like, are all irrelevant. We understand by faith. Secular thinkers regularly reject faith; unfortunately some Christians reject understanding. Both misinterpret faith. As John Owen, the great Puritan writer says in his Commentary on Hebrews at this point, faith is our assent to the truths of revelation. Then the verse makes a puzzling statement, denying one particular type of cosmology. The unfamiliar translation above was made in order to arrest the student's attention. Strange though it be to our ears and memory, it is a sufficiently accurate translation. But some exegesis is required.

If what is seen, i.e. visible objects such as trees and rivers, did not arise from phenomena, or, more in accord with the order of the words in the text, if visible objects — even if tous aionas is taken to refer to historical ages, the age of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, the phrase includes visible objects — if, to repeat, visible objects arose from what is non-phenomenal, one may ask, What is the identity of that non-phenomenal from which the sensory objects were made? To say simply that they came from nothing seems to ignore a possible contrast that this verse suggests by the word phenomena. Delitzsch says that the sense of the verse must be completed by adding to the phrase not from phenomena the contrast "but from noumena."

Plato and Philo

Hodge (Vol. I, p. 560) objects that "This is Platonism, and foreign to the Scriptural modes of thinking and teaching." But it is not Platonism, and there are other Scriptural texts to support Delitzsch's suggestion. Unlike Biblical monotheistic trinitarianism, Plato posited three eternal independent principles. The supreme principle was the World of Ideas. This Ideal world consisted of the Ideas of man, animal, beauty, justice, etc., and at the very top the Idea of the Good.

Some Platonic scholars, both Christian and secular, would understand these Ideas much as recent physicists view the laws of physics. This view of the world of Ideas as an impersonal set of laws is made more plausible by including the numbers of arithmetic among them. The latter point and its relation to Neoplatonism is much too technical to discuss here; but the dialogue Sophist makes it fairly clear that for Plato the world of Ideas was not a dead, impersonal set of laws, but a living mind. However, it was not the maker of heaven and earth.

Second to the world of Ideas was the unbegotten Demiurge, the divine Soul who formed, forms, and will form the visible world according to the patterns of the Ideas. A tree is a tree and a man is a man because the Demiurge made it like the Ideal Tree and Ideal Man. The third principle, also independent, is chaotic, recalcitrant Space out of which the Demiurge fashions the visible cosmos, or upon which he forcibly imposes the Ideal pattern. This is Platonism.

Philo, a Jewish philosopher and an older contemporary of Christ, was indeed influenced by Platonism; but he saw that this basic part of the system did not accord with the Old Testament. Hence he put the maker of heaven and earth, Jehovah, in the supreme position and placed the Ideas in God's mind. These are the noumena, the objects God thinks.[1] The difference is this: Plato distinguished between the highest principle and the Soul who fashions the visible world. The latter, though independent, has no part in making the Ideas what they are. They do not exist because he thinks them; but he thinks them because they exist -independently of him. In Christianity, however the supreme philosophic principle and the Creator are one and the same. The Bible also eliminates the chaotic Space or matter on which the Forms are imposed. Therefore it is not Platonism to maintain with Delitzsch that there are noumena from which the phenomena derive their characteristics. This view is Philonic or Biblical.

The other Scriptural evidences for such noumena, which Hodge says do not exist, are everywhere that ascribes to God a plan of the universe. Not only is there an all inclusive plan with a foreordained end - a matter to be considered in a moment with reference to God's purpose in creation — but the Scripture also refers to these noumena when speaking on very small matters. God created man according to the blueprint (so to speak) eternal in his mind. Exodus 25:9 says that God showed to Moses the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture. Numbers 8:4 mentions the pattern of the candlestick, including the flower design. See also Heb. 8:5. These patterns are the Ideas. Therefore the cause or explanation of the visible objects Moses made, and all other phenomena, is the ideal pattern that does not appear to the senses.

There is another reason, not so immediately connected with the doctrine of creation, that requires the positing of divine noumena. In the late middle ages there appeared nominalistic philosophers who asserted that only sensory individuals are real. John and James are real; but man is not. Nominalism is a widely held position in this century also. Oswald Spengler said, There are men, there is no Man. Contemporary disciples of Berkeley and Hume reduced "abstract ideas" to linguistic peculiarities. Pussies that meow are real, but cat is just a sound. All abstract nouns, like cat, dog, man have no existence other than vibrations in the air. But if this nominalism were so, how could a Christian mean anything by words such as justification-imputation- or even sin? These are no sensory individuals, Reality is largely non-sensory. This is not paganism. It is Christianity.

4. Materialism.

If enough has now been said about creation ex nihilo according to the Ideas in God's mind, the discussion may now pass on to the representation of those Ideas in space. Since this means the visible or physical universe, the subject impinges on matters of secular science. One most important contrast between secular views and the Biblical position is the contrast between purposeless materialism or mechanism and divine teleology. This contrast can be introduced by another reference to Hodge's distaste for Platonism.

If the assertion of Ideas in God's mind is Platonism, then the assertion of a purpose in nature must be Platonism too, for Plato's Ideas were purposes. Plato only dimly anticipated by Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, was the first philosopher to emphasize teleology, i.e. the fact that the world must be explained in terms of purpose. In this twentieth century almost all non-Christian philosophers deny universal purpose and describe nature in mechanical terms. This resulted from the success of Renaissance scientists, such as Galileo, in contrast with the futile Aristotelian teleology of the Middle Ages. Descartes (1590-1650) still acknowledged that God had purposes; but men could give only mathematical or mechanical explanations of natural phenomena. Later scientists simply dropped God and purpose.

Sometimes this view is called materialism, especially when it was extended to cover the behavior of animals and men. Now, in ancient Greek and in nineteenth century Germany there were materialists properly so-called. Democritus pictures the universe as a complex of atoms in empty space. These indivisible and impenetrable bodies collided with one another, and their combinations are the visible world. In Germany Vogt and Buchner wrote on Kraft und Stoff. and explained how one motion caused another motion according to the Newtonian laws. But hardly anyone today thinks of the the world as a collection of discrete particles. This rejection of atomism or materialism was not based on the recent splitting of the "atom." To be sure, nuclear physics has destroyed the atomic theory of last century; yet it could still have posited smaller three dimensional bodies. But even before nuclear fission, Mach and Haeckel discarded atoms and substituted sensations, spirits, or perhaps point centers of force. Space was no longer empty; it was both a plenum and a continuum.

Ernst Nagel in his presidential address to the American Philosophical Association in 1954, more materialistic than Haeckel, declared that the causal primacy of organized matter, the contingency of events on the organization of spatio-temporally located bodies, is one of the best tested conclusions of experience. He is particularly emphatic that there is no place for an immaterial spirit or for the survival of personality after the body decays. These principles, he repeats, are supported by compelling, conclusive evidence.

If this was intended to deny that Energy is the ultimate and single constituent of the universe, and to assert the ultimacy of three dimensional bodies, however small, it may be called materialism. But this is not the majority view of top level physicists; and maybe Nagel deliberately said "bodies" instead of particles because he clearly had in mind only macro-physics and anti-theology.

Newtonian and ancient materialism is gone. The twentieth century has produced a profusion of new ideas, some restricted and some quite general. If there is anything sure besides death and taxes, it is that science will continue to change, not only in details, but in general. Therefore it is bad policy for Christian theologians to take contemporary science too seriously. No doubt the populace or the Christian populace wants some clarification as to how atheistic science can be countered. But it should always be remembered that science is constantly changing and that, after the long reign of the Newtonian synthesis ended not quite a century ago, the theories that took its place have changed and been replaced with much greater rapidity.

5. Mechanism

Since the promulgation of Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy about 1930, some scientists and some philosophers have accepted a theory of free will and a disordered universe. Strictly speaking, although Heisenberg's work was an important advance in physics with reference to the position and velocity of tiny particles, his indeterministic philosophy does not validly follow from his experimentation. For this reason the theory which in the main has replaced materialism, and which controls scientific investigation, is mechanism. This theory is conjoined, sometimes, with a metaphysics that postulates a continuum, i.e. a stuff, substance, or matter, or, better, an electro-magnetic field that is not atomic or composed of discrete particles, but is unitary or homogenous in its infinite extent; or, sometimes, and even less "materialistic" substance that consists of "experience" or sensations. Ernst Haeckel in The Riddle of the Universe (pp. 20-21), has said, "Matter, or infinitely extended substance, and spirit (or energy) or sensitive and thinking substance are the two fundamental attributes ... of the all embracing divine essence of the world, the universal substance." Ernst Mach (1838-1916), one of his contemporaries, with better scientific credentials, more thoroughly resolve the universe into sensations. However, when "experience" is made basic, it does not follow that "experience" is mental. John Dewey and other reject both materialism and mentalism, though here, as also with Spinoza, whose substance possessed all attributes, it is hard to understand what precisely the stuff of the universe is. In any case the resultant physics is mathematically deterministic. Given the positions and velocities of points, their future positions and velocities can be predicted by means of differential equations.

The theologians of last century were particularly unfortunate in living at a time when science seemed monolithic. Addressing themselves to their day, they made several blunders. Part of Hodge's refutation of materialism depends on the assumption that the product of infinity and zero is zero. (Vol. I, p. 211). Strong (Vol. II, p. 371), seems to accept the definition of force as "energy under resistance." The actual definition of force in Newtonian science was "the product of mass and acceleration." Strong also (Vol. I, pp. 90, 91) says, "Deprive atoms of force and all that remains is extension, which = space = zero." Just how space equals zero, he does not explain. But if it does, then he says, "If atoms are not extended, then even an infinite multiplication and combination of them could not produce an extended substance." Here is a plausible fallacy: plausible but not the less fallacious. The unexpressed premise of this argument is that the qualities of a compound must be found in its elements. This is the assumption underlying the Eleatic Zeno's criticism of Democritus' view of sensation. If a great ocean wave crashes with a thunderous roar on a rocky coast, the finest particles of spray must have made a small noise, for an addition of no noises equals no noise. Now, if no ocean waves are handy, the experimenter may take a flake of ground pepper, stand on a step ladder, and let the flake fall to crash upon the kitchen floor. The sound will be zero — he will hear nothing at all. It follows that a whole is not often the sum of its parts. And Leibniz was not stupid when he attempted to construct extended bodies from unextended monads.

Equally peculiar is the apparent blindness of the theologians in thinking that causality as used in nineteenth century physics is similar to the divine causality in creating the world. Therefore they bristled when the philosopher Hume exploded the concept of cause and showed that experience gives no basis for the idea of necessary connection. Kant then sought to defend Newtonian physics by reintroducing cause as an apriori form of the mind. But for Kant and the scientists every event was both a cause and an effect. Every cause was a motion of a physical body. Hume's arguments therefore did not touch divine causality, nor did Kant's arguments support it; for neither the philosophers nor the scientists were discussing the kind of cause the theologians had in mind. Conversely, the theologians misunderstood what the scientists were talking about. Since the God of the Bible is not an effect, and therefore cannot be a cause, the theologians' arguments were often beside the point. Whatever those theologians thought they could discover about causality from their naive

consciousness, it would have been better, had they read Notes on Causality by Herbert Feigl, The Causal Character of Modem Physical Theory by Ernest Nagel, or Per Kausalhegriff in der Phvsik by Max Planck.

There are two lessons here for theologians to learn: first, not to take science too seriously; and yet, second, not to misunderstand the meaning of scientific terms. In addition to misunderstanding the term cause, the nineteenth century theologians used the law of gravitation to explain miracles. To quote, "One law is superseded by another. When I support an apple in my hand, the law of gravitation does not cease to act, but another power prevents the apple from falling. So when an aeroplane flies among the clouds, or a steel vessel floats, or a ram forces water to run up an incline. The natural laws are operative all the time, but human contrivances effect their purpose while no law of nature is suspended or violated." But this reduces miracles to ordinary complexities among the laws of Newton. Since today the Newtonian synthesis has been discarded, atomism entirely repudiated, and instead of bits of matter the stuff of the universe is called Energy, to which only an operational definition can be given, we should not fall into the same trap of depending on contemporary science or philosophy. Operationalism seems to be the best method of dealing with physics, but if there is anything certain about physics, it is that the physics of today will be discarded tomorrow. The law of gravitation does not conform to the observational material; the concepts of causality and uniformity of nature play no role in physics; and what previous theologians thought was obvious common sense cannot be relied upon. Our ideal should be to adhere to the Biblical data and pay no attention to extraneous ideas. This is more difficult than it sounds, however; all of us are affected by our environment and it is hard to purge our minds of our secular education. But perhaps it is easier to do so now than it was a hundred years ago. Since today science is seen to be changing rapidly, it no longer seems so absurd to suppose that science never has and never will describe the process of nature. Had Hodge not been so antagonistic toward Plato and so friendly toward Aristotle as to accept the latter's view that science arrives at absolute truth, he might have given more credit to the former philosopher's view that science is always tentative. It was not only the philosopher Hume (Einstein comes in a moment) who said, "Hence we may discover the reason why no philosopher, who is rational and modest, has ever pretended to assign the ultimate cause of any natural operation, or to show distinctly the action of that power, which produces any single effect in the universe. It is confessed, that the utmost effort of human reason is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation. But as to the causes of these general causes, we should in vain attempt their discovery; nor shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explication of them. These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry. Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse; these are probably the ultimate causes and principles which we ever discover in nature; and we may esteem ourselves sufficiently happy, if, by accurate inquiry and reasoning, we can trace up the particular phenomena to, or near to, these general principles. The most perfect philosophy of the natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer: as perhaps the most perfect philosophy of the moral or metaphysical kind serves only to discover larger portions of it. Thus the observation of human blindness and weakness is the result of all philosophy, and meets us at every turn, in spite of our endeavours to elude or avoid it."

If anyone disparage philosophers and say scientists should be quoted, he surely must pay attention to Einstein. Chaim Tschernowitz quotes Einstein in a conversation: We know nothing about it at all. Our knowledge is but the knowledge of school children. ... We shall know a little more than we do now. But the real nature of things — that we shall never know, never" (Readers Digest. Aug. 1972, p.28).

A Christian theologian ought therefore to be cautious in refuting anti-theistic views on the basis of some scientific theory. It can indeed be shown that the philosophy of mechanism is not derived by

any valid argument from the date of laboratory experimentation. It can also be shown that every law of physics is false, if taken as a description of the processes of nature. But though all science be false, mechanism for all of that might still be true.[2] Whether one adopts mechanism or teleology depends on the first principles a man chooses. The Bible claims that God acts for a purpose, and now the discussion turns to that purpose.

6. Biblical Teleology

Since the subjection of purpose is so important and leads into the doctrine of the divine decree, a list of references somewhat longer than usual will be given. The verses vary in specificity and universality; and some exposition will therefore follow.

II Sam. 17:14 For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

Jer. 26:3 If so be they will hearken ... that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to unto them.

Jer. 36:3 ... All the evil which I purpose to do unto them ...

Jer. 51:29 Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon.

John 13:13 I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

Acts 26:16 I have appeared unto thee for this purpose.

Rom. 8:28 We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Rom. 9:11, 17 that the purpose of God according to election might stand ... Even for this same purpose have I raise thee up ...

Eph. 1:11 Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our

Lord.

II Tim. 1:9 According to his own purpose.

I John 3:9 For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.

Some of these verses state quite particularly that God had a purpose with respect to a certain individual or a certain dated event: Ahithophel and Absalom, Babylon, Judas, and Paul. If, now, God is a God of Wisdom, and if predictions must be fulfilled by intermediate events, we can conclude that God has a purpose for every person. We could also infer that he has a purpose for every animal, since it is explicitly stated that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the Father's notice. Obviously the Father's notice is not restricted to sparrows: it extends to squirrels, elephants, coyotes, and Jonah's big shark.

An unfriendly physicist might complain that this is no reason for saying nature as a whole has a purpose, for it is possible to construct a mechanistic system in which there are purposes though the

whole has none. The unfriendly physicist by the same reasoning will also say that the Scriptural references do not support the Platonic position that all concepts must be defined teologically. To which a Christian may reply that the Scripture assigns purposes to inanimate objects, since God made the sun for the purpose of "ruling over the day" and with the moon and stars to measure the seasons.

To maintain a teleological view of nature, it is not necessary to include teleological concepts in the definition of force. Force can still be mass times acceleration, and the product of ohms and amperes can still be volts. This is all the more the case if scientific terms are operational — and that for two apparently opposite yet actually complementary reasons. First, operational physics has nothing to say about the constitution of nature. Therefore its terms may be devoid of purposive intent without denying purpose in the world. Then, second, in operationalism the purpose is very clearly located in the scientist himself. Science therefore furnishes no evidence against a teleological concept of nature as a whole; and the Christian position on its own base remains untouched.

Now, in addition to the statements concerning particular events and individual persons, some of the verses in the list make more general assertions. Romans 8:28 speaks of all things. It is not as if things worked. There is a reading attested by manuscripts p 46, A, and B, that says, "God works all things." This may not be the best reading, but it is the best sense, for there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that things work independently of God. In any case, Eph. 1:11 says that we are predestinated according to the previous resolve of him who works all things after the counsel of his will. This totally universal proposition says clearly that it is God who works or controls every last item in the universe of physics and history. It is God's decision that fixes the number of hairs on our heads and makes it rain on the fourth of July for the benefit of them that love him.

This is not to say that the only purpose God has in mind is the good of those who love him. Purposes regularly come in series. A man gets dressed in order to leave the house, in order to take the bus, in order to ride down town, in order to get to the department store, in order to buy a present for his wife's birthday yesterday. God preserved Noah in order to make a covenant with Abraham, so that there could be a people over whom David, was to rule, in order to prepare for the Messiah, so that Paul could preach the gospel in Corinth. God does indeed work all things for the good of his saints, but the purpose of creation, the purpose of the act of creation, goes beyond this, important as this is to us.

7. The Glory of God.

It is proper, it is important, and it is very necessary to say that God does all things for his own glory. The glory of God is the final and full purpose of everything.

Isa. 48:11 For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be profaned? And my glory will I not give to another.

Ezek. 20:9 I wrought for my name's sake ...

Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.

I Cor. 15:28 ... then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all.

Col. 1:16 All things have been created through him and unto him.

Rev. 4:11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory ... for thou didst create all things, and because of they will they were and were created.

Undoubtedly God intended to benefit his saints by the course of history; but why did he choose to have saints in the first place? The answer is, for his own glory. The universe is of him, by him, and to him. Who has instructed him? Who has first given him anything? Mankind is as a drop in a bucket or the fine dust on the scales (Isa. 40:15). All things are unto him; he is their end; and because of his will, or good pleasure, the universe was created. That the glory of God is the ultimate and original purpose for which everything was made is an idea of the greatest importance. A few pages later much of this will be summarized under the concept of the sovereignty of God. It must not be underestimated. Yet the Scripture also gives another purpose for the creation of the world, subsidiary to the ultimate purpose, yet nearer the ultimate cause than the benefit of the saints. Its importance is greater than the lesser purposes and it is particularly useful to know because it gives a key to the understanding of the logical order of the parts of the eternal decree.

8. Four Parts of God’s Purpose.

God's purpose, as has been made obvious; embraces many, indeed all events. But some events, some of God's choices or determinations, are more important than others; and theologians have wondered how these decrees, as they are called in the plural, depend on one another. Of course, very literally, one could speak of the decree to call Abraham, to make David king of Israel, to rebuild Jerusalem, and so on. But the four more general decrees usually selected for study are creation, the fall of man, the decree to save some and reprobate others, and the decree to provide salvation for the elect. The two chief views relative to the logical order of these decrees are called infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism, depending on whether the decree to elect presupposes and therefore comes under or after the fall, or whether conversely election is prior.

The exponents of both views agree that the order of the decrees in not a temporal or chronological order since they are all eternal in God's mind. It is the logical order that is sought. But neither party is too clear as to what the term logical order means. In fact, the infralapsarian view seems to be simply chronological: creation, fall, provision for salvation, and the election of those saved. Some infralapsarians make a slight change and list them as: creation, the fall, election, and the provision for those elected.

The supralapsarian view, at least as sometimes stated, is also chronological except that the decree of election is put first. H. B. Smith (p. 118) describes it as follows: "The Supralapsarian says that the divine purpose in respect of sin was subsequent to the divine purpose for salvation and punishment, i.e. in the order of decrees, the logical order, the first decree is that God will set forth his glory, the second that he will do this by saving some and condemning others, and the third is the decree of the fall, the Lapsus.” Smith favors the infralapsarian position, but takes a defeatist attitude and concludes, "the whole subject of the divine decrees is above man's comprehension."

Such seeming humility has often been used when a theologian cannot see how to solve his problem. But actually it is a form of conceit. It means in the first place that if Dr. X cannot think of a solution, no one else can. In the second place, it means that Dr. X. has so thoroughly understood everything from Genesis to Revelation that he can assert with complete infallibility that the Scripture contains not a single hint from which a solution can be deduced or even guessed at. And if this means, as it certainly seems to, that some Scripture is unintelligible, it contradicts God's Word, which tells us that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine.

These remarks do not deny that exegetes make mistakes, nor that man's ignorance is greater than his knowledge. Nor do they deny that God has given us only a partial revelation. But when a problem is presented by the Scripture itself, it seems wiser and more humble to admit that one has failed to understand than to assert that no one else can understand it.

The particular problem on the order of the decrees is not nearly so difficult as many think. H. B. Smith's defeatism, the two forms of infralapsarianism, the oddities advanced for one view or the other, are mainly the result of not having a clear notion of what is meant by logical as opposed to chronological order. Other oddities may have a different origin.

Turretin argued against supralapsarianism by saying that, “Of a non-ens nothing can be determined;” hence the decree to create an £ns must precede the fall and election. This is bad scholasticism. It would entail the impossibility of God’s decreeing anything in advance. For example, on this view, God could not have decided to destroy Absalom through bad advice until after Absalom had been bom. Or, more to the point, God could not have decreed to create man as a rational being, since before the actual creation man would have been a non-ens about which nothing could be determined. In fact, all four of God’s decrees in eternity relate to non entia. Turretin’s argument therefore seems to imply that God decreed nothing.

Various writers object to supralapsarianism because the Scriptures often picture the saints as having been saved out of the mass of fallen humanity. The saint is “a brand plucked from the burning" (Zech. 3:2). “You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2) "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). But such verses and other like them are irrelevant to the present problem. The Scriptures proceed historically, chronologically. They describe the threatenings of the prophets and the exhortations of the apostles. Naturally the Scriptures say that Christ came to "deliver us out of this present evil world.” But this obvious chronology is not intended to state the logical order of the decrees. Nevertheless the chronological account gives us a hint as to the logical order.

9. The Particular Purpose of Creation.

Let us examine Eph. 3:10.

The main exegetical problem of Ephesians 3:10 is the identification of the antecedent of the purpose clause: "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known, by means of the Church, to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Something happened in the preceding verses for the purpose of revealing God's wisdom. What was it that had this purpose?

There are three and apparently only three possible antecedents: (1) Paul was called to preach in order that, (2) The mystery was hid in order that, and (3) God created the world in order that.

First, I should like to eliminate from consideration the second of these possibilities. This interpretation would hold that God kept a certain secret hidden from the beginning of the world in order to reveal it in New Testament days. The only textual support for this exegesis, aside from the fact that the event of hiding is mentioned prior to the purpose clause, is the word now. By emphasizing the word now, one may say that the mystery or secret was kept hidden for the purpose of revealing it now. It is true that the emphatic position is given to the verb might be made known, and hence a contrast with the previous hiding is pointed out. The word now, however, is not particularly emphatic and cannot bear the burden of this exegesis. The burden is considerable, for while it is possible to hide something in order to make it known at a later date, it is more probable

that the revelation is the purpose of Paul's preaching or of God's creation of the world. Hiding is a more or less negative idea, and it seems reasonable to expect some definite and outward event that has the purpose stated here.

Let us then consider the next possibility. The interpretation that Paul was called to preach in order that God's wisdom might be made known seems to fit in very well with the preceding context.

In verse 8 Paul had just referred to the grace God had given him for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. From this point the long complicated, sentence continues to the end of verse 13. Even further back, as early as verse 2. the idea of Paul's preaching had been introduced. Therefore no one can doubt that Paul's preaching is the main idea, or at least one of the main ideas, of this passage. Whether or not Paul's personal ministry recedes from its main position as the paragraph approaches its end, and what other subordinate ideas may be found in verses 9-11, must of course be determined by direct examination. But the idea of Paul’s preaching is without doubt prominent.

We now ask the question whether or not the revelation of God's wisdom to powers in heaven is the purpose of Paul's preaching.

Charles Hodge thinks it is. Aside from his objections to other views, which we shall study presently, his positive argument is as follows: "The apostle is speaking of his conversion and call to the apostleship. To him was the grace given to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and teach all men the economy of redemption, 'in order that' through the Church might be made known the manifold wisdom of God. It is only thus that the connection of this verse with the main idea of the context is preserved. It is not the design of creation, but the design of the revelation of the mystery of redemption, of which he is here speaking (*Commentary, in loc.* p. 119).

For.the moment the only objection to Hodge's exegesis is the seemingly peculiar notion that Paul's preaching on earth reveals God's wisdom to the powers in heaven. One would not be surprised if Paul's preaching on earth revealed God's wisdom to men. But Paul did not preach to angels, demons, or whomever these powers may be. Admittedly, Paul's preaching and the founding of the Church can be said to reveal God's wisdom to these powers, if we suppose that God directed their attention to what was going on. In this case Paul's preaching would have this purpose, but it would be a purpose one or two steps removed. Immediately it would seem more natural to connect Paul's preaching with its effects on men, rather than on angels or demons.

However, since no decisive grammatical reason can be advanced against this interpretation, it is presumably impossible to disprove it.

On the other haud, there is a third interpretation, also grammatically possible, one that seems to have weightier reasons in its favor, and which does not suffer under the objections raised against it. Grammatically, in fact, this third interpretation is not merely equally good, but somewhat preferable.

When we say that God created the world for the purpose of displaying his manifold wisdom, we connect the purpose clause with the nearest antecedent. As anyone can see, the reference to Paul's preaching lies several clauses further back. The immediate antecedent is creation, and this position, we hold, is of some value in deciding the matter.

Since therefore the syntax is at least somewhat in its favor, the best procedure is to examine objections against so understanding it.

We turn again to Hodge for these objections. The view that God created the universe in order to display his manifold wisdom is, as Hodge says, the supralapsarian view. Against this interpretation

Hodge urges four objections: (1) This passage is the only passage in Scripture adduced as directly asserting supralapsarianism, and supralapsarianism is foreign to to the New Testament. (2) Apart from doctrinal objections, this interpretation imposes an unnatural connection upon the clauses. The idea of creation is entirely subordinate and unessential: it could have been omitted without materially affecting the sense of the passage. (3) The theme of the passage concerns Paul's preaching; only by connecting the purpose clause with Paul's preaching can the unity of the context be preserved. (4) The word now, in contrast with the previous hiding, supports the reference to Paul's preaching. It was Paul's preaching that had now put an end to the secret's hiddenness. Such are Hodge's four objections.

Let us consider the last one first. Admittedly, it was Paul's preaching that founded the Church, and the founding of the Church made known God's wisdom to the powers in heaven.

The supralapsarian interpretation does not deny that Paul's preaching played this important part in God's eternal plan. But even so, Paul's preaching was not the immediate cause of the revelation of God's wisdom. It was the existence of the Church that was the immediate cause.

Yet grammar prevents us from saying that the Church was founded in order that God's wisdom might be revealed. It is true that the Church was founded to reveal God's wisdom, but this is not what the verse says. Now, if several events had occurred, leading up to this revelation of God's wisdom, including the founding of the Church, Paul's preaching, and of course the death and resurrection of Christ which Paul preached, the word *now* in the verse cannot be used to single out Paul's preaching in contrast with other events mentioned in the passage. Hodge's fourth objection is therefore poor.

Next, the first objection: this is the only passage in Scripture adduced as directly asserting supralapsarianism, and supralapsarianism is foreign to the New Testament. The latter half of this objection is of course a petitio principii, i.e., Hodge begs the question. If this verse teaches supralapsarianism, then the doctrine is not foreign to the New Testament. We must first determine what the verse means; then we shall know what is in the New Testament and what perhaps is not.

To be sure, if this one verse were indeed the only verse in the Bible with supralapsarian overtones, we would be justified in entertaining some suspicion of the interpretation. Hodge does not say explicitly that this is the only verse; he says it is the only verse adduced as directly asserting supralapsarianism.

Well, really, even this verse does not directly assert the whole complex supralapsarian view. Very few verses in Scripture directly assert the whole of a major doctrine. Therefore we must recognize degrees of directness, partial and even fragmentary assertions of a doctrine. And with this recognition, regularly acknowledged in the development of any doctrine, it is evident that this verse does not stand alone in suspicious isolation.

Supralapsarianism, for all its insistence on a certain logical order among the divine decrees, is essentially, so it seems to us, the unobjectionable view that God controls the universe purposefully. God acts with a purpose. He has an end in view and sees the end from the beginning. Every verse in Scripture that in one way or another refers to God's manifold wisdom, every statement indicating that a prior event is for the purpose of causing a subsequent event, every mention of an eternal, all-embracing plan contributes· to a teleological and therefore supralapsarian view of God’s control of history. In this light Ephesians 3:10 clearly does not stand alone.

The connection between supralapsarianism and the fact that God always acts purposefully depends on the observation that the logical order of any plan is the exact reverse of its temporal execution.

The first step in any planning is the end to be achieved; then the means are decided upon, until last of all the first thing to be done is discovered. The execution in time reverses the order of planning. Thus creation, since it is first in history, must be logically last in the divine decrees. Every Biblical passage therefore that refers to God's wisdom also supports Ephesians 3:10.

Next comes objection number two. Hodge claimed that the supralapsarian interpretation of this verse imposes an unnatural connection upon the clauses. The idea of creation, he said, is entirely unessential and could have been omitted without materially affecting the sense of the passage.

Is it not evident that Hodge does not know how to handle the reference to creation? He claims that it is unessential, a chance and thoughtless remark that does not affect the sense of the passage. Such careless writing does not seem to me to be Paul's usual style.

For example, in Galatians 1: 1, Paul says, "Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." Why now did Paul mention that God raised Jesus Christ? If it were a chance remark without logical connection with the sense of the passage, a remark intended only to speak of some aspect of God's glory, Paul could as well have said, God who created the universe.

But it is fairly clear that Paul had a conscious purpose in selecting the resurrection instead of the creation. He wanted to emphasize, against his detractors, that he had apostolic authority from Jesus Christ himself And Jesus Christ was able to give him that authority because he was not dead, but had been raised up by God.

So, as Paul chose the idea of resurrection instead of creation in Galatians 1:1, he also chose creation instead of resurrection in Ephesians 3:9 because the idea of creation contributed some meaning to his thought. Certainly the supralapsarian or teleological interpretation of Ephesians 3:10 accommodates the idea of creation, and contrariwise an interpretation that can find no meaning in these words is a poorer interpretation.

The remaining objection is that only by making Paul's preaching the antecedent of the purpose clause can the unity of the context be preserved. The reverse seems to be the case. Not only does Hodge fail to account for the mention of creation, and thus diminish the unity, but further the stress on purpose, running from creation to the present unifies the passage in a most satisfactory manner. The teleological understanding of God's working in fact enables us to combine all three of these interpretations, including the second which in itself has so very little in its favor, in a unified thought. Since God does everything for a purpose, and since whatever precedes in time has in a general way the purpose of preparing for what follows, we may say that God kept the secret hidden in order to reveal it now, and also that Paul preached the gospel in-order to reveal it now. But if God had not created the world, there would have been no Paul to preach, no Church by which the revelation could be made, no heavenly powers on which to impress the idea of God's manifold wisdom. Only by connecting the purpose clause with the immediate antecedent concerning creation, can a unified sense be obtained from the passage as a whole.

Therefore, in conclusion, although the other interpretation is grammatically possible, the idea that God created the world for the purpose of revealing his wisdom makes much better sense.

The doctrine of the divine decrees must again be considered in the discussion on sin and atonement. But perhaps sufficient has been said for a chapter on creation.

10. Immutability and Creation.

It would not do, however, to omit from this chapter a discussion of an extremely difficult point that besets the doctrine of creation. The difficulty lies in the apparent antithesis between divine immutability and the single, once-for-all act of creation, from which God rested on the seventh day. The history of theology has not overlooked this difficulty, but the solutions proposed are sometimes painfully superficial.

Augustine did his best with the problem: How can the eternal and immutable produce the temporal and changing? The famous Passage in the Confessions (XI, 10, or 12) begins with the question of the Manichaeans: "What was God doing before he created the heaven and the earth? If he were lazy and inactive, why, they ask, why did he not remain so for the rest of time, the same as before, doing nothing? If a change occurred in God, a new volition, to create what he had not yet created, how could there be a true eternity, when a volition occurred that had not occurred previously? Indeed, the will of God is not a creature; it precedes every creature; nothing is created without the preexisting will of the creator. The will of God belongs to the very substance of God. If in the divine substance, something comes forth that did not previously exist, that substance cannot be truly called eternal. And if God has always willed the existence of the creature, why is not the creature also eternal?" (cf. City of God. XI, 4-5).

The way the Manichaeans and Augustine understood the problem results in a solution that depends on a theory of time. The first word of Genesis, "in the beginning," indicates a moment at which creatures first began to exist. Since, now, change defines time, time itself is a creature and began in the finite past. Hence it is wrong to picture God as doing nothing for a long time and then after this time creating the world. There was no time before creation. God is eternal, not temporal. A time preceding creation would pose the question, Why did God choose one moment, rather than an earlier or later moment, in which to create? In an infinite void time, every moment would be indistinguishable from every other. No one more than any other would contain a reason for choosing that one to be the moment of creation. This irrationality therefore precludes an infinite past of empty time. Similarly there could be no infinite empty space, for the same question reappears: Why did God create the world here rather than there?

Augustine locates the difficulty in our mistaken attempt to compare two heterogeneous types of duration — if indeed duration is at all proper in this ease. These two 'durations' are based on two heterogeneous types of being. He then seems to conclude (not obviously in harmony with his strong anti-skeptical insistence that we most surely know God) that since we do not know the being of God, we cannot solve the problem.

Thomas Aquinas' solution is much the same, in that it depends on considerations of time and motion; its technicalities, however, make it more difficult to understand. He recognizes that a delayed volition seems to presuppose some modification or change in God causing him to initiate the action. If therefore God immutably wills the world, the world must always have existed. This difficulty, Thomas argues, results from applying to the First and Universal Cause conditions applicable only to particular causes acting in time. A particular cause is not the cause of the time within which its action takes place; but God, on the contrary, is himself the cause of time. What is true of particular causes in their interlocking relationships, one part of the universe with another, is not true of the production of the universe as a Whole. Furthermore, Aquinas argues, creation is not a change or motion. For a thing to move, it must be first in a certain place (or condition), and then it must get to another place. But in creation, there is no point of departure. This does not mean that creation is impossible, as opponents aver, but only that creation is not a motion. Our imaginations, depending as they do on sensory experience, must always picture creation as a motion; but in reality it is something quite different beyond the range of human experience. In the Summa Theologica (I, Q. 45, Art. 2) he says, "Creation is not change, except according to our way of understanding. For change means that the

same thing should be different now from what it was previously. Sometimes it is the same actual reality which is different now from what it was before, as happens when the motion is according to quantity, quality and place; but sometimes it is the same being only in potentiality, as in substantial change, the subject of which is matter. But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and before only according to our way of understanding, so that a thing is understood as first not existing at all, and afterwards as existing. But *as action and passion coincide as to the substance of motion,* and differ only according to diverse relations, it must follow that, when motion is withdrawn, there remain only the diverse relations in the Creator and in the creature. But because the mode of signification follows the mode of understanding, as was said above creation is signified as a change; and on this account it is said that to create is to make something from nothing. And yet *to make* and *to be made* are more suitable expressions here than *to change* and *to be changed*, because *to make* and *to be made* import a relation of cause to the effect, and of effect to the cause, and imply change only as a consequence."

This argument hardly carries conviction, not only because of its difficult scholastic terminology, but because, while it may show that creation is not a motion of the created object, it fails completely to show that a once-for-all volition is not a change in an immutable God.

But evangelical theologians are even more unsatisfactory: either they do not see precisely what the difficulty is, as Augustine so clearly did, or they deny that God is immutable. For example, Stephen Charnock and, about sixty years later, John Gill, said much the same thing.

The latter wrote, "Nor is the immutability of the divine nature to be disproved from the creation of the world, and all things in it; as when it is suggested, God, from a non-agent, became an agent and acquired a new relation, that of a Creator, from which mutability is argued, but it should be observed, that God had from all eternity the same creative power, and would have had, if he had never created anything; and when he put it forth in time, it was according to his unchangeable will in eternity, and produced no change in him; the change was in the creatures made, not in him the Maker; and though a relation results from hence, and which is real in creatures, is only nominal in the Creator, and makes no change in his nature." (Book I, chapter V). Not only does this evade the problem; it asserts that creation is a change in the created object, and on this point Aquinas has the better of it.

Chamock and Gill in effect deny that God is immutable. Not that they intended to. In the same section from which the quotation above was taken, Gill says, "Immutability is an attribute which God claims ... Mutability belongs to creatures, immutability to God only; creatures change, but he does not. .. . He is unchangeable ... in his nature and essence, being simple and devoid of all composition ... God being an infinite and uncreated Spirit, and free from composition in every sense, is intirely [sic] and perfectly immutable ... Time doth not belong to him, only to a creature ... his eternity is an everlasting and unchanging <u>now</u>."

The conclusion must be that Gill did not have as clear an understanding of the problem as did Augustine and Aquinas, and that he therefore fell into a contradiction.

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., in his <u>A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion</u> tpp. 40, 42, 47-48, 52-53)) solves the present problem by denying what previous theologians have called immutability. Buswell of course asserts that God is eternal, but he denies that eternity is timelessness. He objects to the idea of an eternal <u>now,</u> and disapproves of Augustine and Aquinas. Although he asserts that God is "unchangeable in his being," he repudiates "a timeless mental and spiritual immobility." He denies that God is "fully actualized," and asserts that God is (partly at least) potential; from which we must conclude that Buswell is conceiving of God as in a state of development. He says, "The implications

of the doctrine that God is 'pure act,' 'fully realized', that in him there is 'no potentiality tdunamisY are devastating."

Naturally there is no antithesis between a temporal, potential, developing God and an act of creation preceded by time.

First lessons in theology, no matter how elementary, do not dare to omit the Scriptural material on omniscience, immutability, and creation. But it would be unfair to the student to leave the impression that all is elementary and easy. While it is conceit to assert that the problem here is insoluble, for no one knows enough to set limits to the implications of Scripture, it is not conceit, it is not even modesty, it is but frustrating fact to acknowledge that even the better attempts to solve this problem leave much to be desired.

Notes

1

Cf. Thales to Dewey, Gordon H. Clark, pp. 195-210

2

Gordon H. Clark The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God

Chapter 5 - Man

In 1895 John Laidlaw, Professor of Theology in New College, Edinburgh, published his revised edition of*Bible Doctrine of Man.* It is a masterpiece, and every theological student should study it with great care. The present attempt cannot equal it; but perhaps some references to twentieth century developments, and inevitably from another person's perspective, may justify this attempt. What unfortunately justifies this attempt to a greater degree is the disturbing fact that so few contemporary students have read its illustrious predecessor.

The main topics discussed here are the creation of man, the nature of man as given in creation, the propagation of the soul to Adam's descendants, the religious relation of Adam as the first man to his posterity, and the effects of sin, noetic and otherwise. The subject matter is somewhat more complicated than these section headings may suggest.

1. Creation and Evolution

God created man, men, the human race as he also created the solar system and the sand of the sea. It hardly needs mention that the Bible teaches a theistic philosophy. But though equally created, man differs from the sea and the solar system in nature and importance. The physical universe is but a backdrop or stage setting for the Divine Comedy in which man is the main actor. In the largest sense God is the main actor, as well as the author. But among created things, when history is taken as the drama of redemption, man plays the title role. Some people, called scientists, legitimately study the stage setting with its lighting arrangements, but "the play's the thing."

Now first, the Bible definitely asserts that man was created.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female, created he them.

Genesis 2:21-23 and the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he took one of his ribs, and . . . made he a woman . . . and Adam said, This is now bone of my bones . . . She shall be called woman.

Acts 17:26 God. . . hath made of one blood all nations of men.

Adam was created a full grown adult. Eve was miraculously taken from his side. And the human race descended from this pair.

Brief as the above statement is, it is enough to show that the Bible assigns the origin of man to God's command. But not everyone believes the Bible. From reports in the public media one easily gets the impression that only a small and ignorant minority of the population believes the Bible. The present study aims to explain the Biblical position. But to a degree it must also defend that position against the assaults of its adversaries. But only to a degree, for the problems involved extend to the profoundest depths of philosophy where many a gem of purest ray serene is borne to waste its fragrance on the desert air.

Throughout the twentieth century the most vigorous attack on the divine creation of man has been the theory of evolution. In the United States its exponents have obtained governmental compulsion of its teaching and governmental prohibition of the theistic view. Perhaps this is an indication of the intellectual weakness of the evolutionary theory. Scholars used to insist on freedom of thought and expression. Today the organized educators use legal force to ban the view they dislike. This method of legal repression may be subconsciously supported by

the suspicion that scientific theories are tentative only. In physics the Newtonian synthesis has been abandoned. One can say that in biology Darwinianism is not universally accepted; and what new theories century twenty-one will see, no one can guess..^the evolutionists must rely on political restraint.

There are some interesting side-lights in this battle for religious liberty and scholarly freedom. Although there are pictorial diagrams of the descent of man, with the Piltdown man erased, the evolutionists have not produced a similar botanical genealogy, though this should precede zoology. Then too, there is a sociological aberration. Religious liberals react strongly against anything, no matter how innocent, that remotely resembles what they call racism. The mainstay of their religion is the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. But it is the Biblical doctrine of creation that makes all men natural brothers. This is something that evolution cannot do. Evolution allows men to have evolved in several places at several times. Thus the liberals' science conflicts with their religion. Nor can their religion be commended for making Stalin and Hitler the spiritual brothers of the apostle Paul.

A further word on the Piltdown Man will show how the theory of evolution corrupts the scientific process. Someone in England planted a hoax where he knew that excavations would soon be made. He used chemicals to age the tooth of an ape and buried it. When the excavators found it, the scientist-cartoonists blew it up with jaws, hair, legs, torso, and called it the Piltdown Man. Museums displayed him to overawed visitors. There were, however, a few, a very few, reputable scientists who were cautious and skeptical. But so great was their submission to the theory of evolution that they finally capitulated to the majority opinion. It was almost half a century later that the dishonesty of the perpetrator and the uninhibited imagination of the reconstructors were discovered. During all that time the

Piltdown Man was a standard item of evolutionary proof in college zoology courses.

That the Bible has a theistic view widely different from contemporary biology is already clear in the few verses quoted above. They teach that the human race is one race descended from precisely two human beings. But the Bible's most conspicuous denial of evolution is the second citation, Genesis 2:21, on the creation or formation of woman. It is not clear whether evolution must hold that the first human being was a male or female; and it would be stretching credulity to suppose that a pair always evolved at the same time and place. But Eve was no evolutionary product. She did not appear in the usual way. So-called natural law does not cover her case. Therefore the usual forms of evolution, even with occasional theistic modifications, cannot be harmonized with Christianity, for Christianity teaches creation.

In this scientific debate one should press upon the biologists and the federal courts what most physics professors know so well: namely, that science is not fixed but tentative. There used to be a universal ether by which light waves were propagated. But a good ninety years ago that ether evaporated. The result was that light became and remains today self-contradictory "wavicles." Atomism exploded, theoretically in 1905, and visibly in World War II. The Newtonian law of gravitation, supposedly describing the motion of all bodies and accounting for the distribution of the planets and stars, held sway for two centuries. But now not one of the Newtonian laws remains. Even the first law of straight line motion is gone, for there is no scientific method for determining a straight line. Subsidiary laws, such as the theory of heat, had changed earlier. But the evolutionists, particularly those in Education, blindly believe that their view is immutably true.

Because of the present work of the Institute of Creation Research, and the court cases concerning the legal imposition of one particular view upon school children, many Christians are beginning to understand that not only legal action but also scientific study is a necessary concern. A few realize that Christians should consider physics as well as zoology and geology. But many see no point in studying philosophy. Yet the nature of man is subject for both psychology and philosophy. The early Christian fathers who formulated our basic doctrines adopted, modified, or denied the views of Plato,

Chrysippus, and Philo. In modern times various orthodox theologians utilize the views of Descartes, Locke, or Kant, sometimes without realizing what they are doing. The result has usually been some distortion, great or small, of both the Bible and the philosopher. The secular scientist says that theology hinders science; but often Christians have hindered theology by imposing current scientific theories on the Bible. The best way to avoid this error is to know the several non-christian systems. Only then can one be confident that foreign theories have not contaminated theology. Hence zoology, physics, and philosophy too demand discussion in a study of the Bible.

2. The Image of God

Instead of assigning to man a subhuman ancestry, the Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God. On one occasion, in a philosophy class, a girl dressed in the synthetic poverty of dirty blue jeans, popular in the 1960’s, objected to a Christian expression in the lecture and replied, “But I am only an animal.” She was in truth a human being, however poor a specimen. The Bible makes an immense distinction between man and animals. Animals are interesting, sometimes clever, and often beautiful. One of the most handsome specimens I ever saw

was an enormous skunk. About three times the size of ordinary skunks, he would have been a prize for any skunk basketball or football team. I was tempted to make his acquaintance, but thought better of it. After a moment or two we bowed to each other and went our opposite ways. Likewise, who is not intrigued by a road runner, and who fails to admire a lion or jaguar? In the zoo, of course.

In order to describe the nature of the image one can immediately assert the principle that any interpretation which identifies the image with some characteristics not found in God must be incorrect. For example, the image cannot be man's body. If anyone says that the upright position of the human body, in contrast with fourfooted beasts and creeping things, allows it to be the image, the reply is not merely that birds have two legs, but rather that Genesis makes no reference to a physical image. A more important reason for denying that man's body is the image is the fact that God is not and has not a body.

One can at the same time see a more notable distinction between the creation of animals and the creation of man. In Genesis 1:11 we read, "Let the earth bring forth grass;" a few verses further on, "God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly." Verse 24 adds, "Let the earth bring forth cattle and every creeping thing and beasts." But Genesis 1:26,27 quote God as saying, "Let us make man in our image;" and then continue, "So God created man in his own image." Because the earth brings forth cattle, while God says "Let us," the wording suggests a more direct relationship between God and man than between God and the animals. Animals are indeed beautiful and interesting and useful; but man is superior. How?

Although the two verses just quoted do not explain exactly how, the context implies more than one might guess at first reading. To be sure, Genesis says that God gave man dominion over the

animals; but it is more important to know by what endowment such a dominion can be exercised. We might guess by noting that although the Baltimore oriole builds a beautiful nest, oriole architecture has not changed in centuries. One can also note that animals cannot do geometry nor even write narrative. These missing activities depend on a rationality that animals lack. We call them brute species. Man has a mind.

Let us therefore examine with greater care how much Genesis actually implies. More important than the dominion itself is the fact that God explained this dominion to Adam. That is to say, God spoke to Adam and Adam understood what God told him. To understand meaningful speech requires more intelligence than it does to manage animals.

Then too, God's instructions to Adam were not limited to agriculture and husbandry. He gave Adam some religious instructions also. Genesis 2:16, 17 record certain commands that God imposed on Adam. In particular God commanded Adam not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, and he warned him that "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shah surely die. " Here we have a stated penalty for disobedience. How did Adam know what death was? For what matter how did Adam know that he was obligated to obey? These are matters of the knowledge of morality, and Adam understood. If we must go to the New Testament to see it more clearly, I Timothy 2:14 tells us that though Eve was deceived, Adam was not deceived. Clearly Adam understood.

But there is another point that precedes and is requisite to Adam's disobedience. In addition to understanding his dominion over the animals, and in addition to his, perhaps incomplete, understanding of the creation of Eve, as stated in Genesis 1:23, 24, Adam also recognized his friendly and happy relationship with God. This is partly shown in the fact that neither Adam nor

Eve was ashamed of being naked. It is better shown in the recorded conversation between God and Adam. God had endowed Adam with the ability to speak, not only to speak to Eve, but to speak to God and worship him. The whole account in the first chapter depicts an unspoiled relationship. This relationship, which one may call a religious relationship, continues in a negative fashion after Adam sinned. The conversation is recorded in Gensis 3:18-19. When Adam heard the voice of the Lord God, he and his wife hid themselves, and God said, “Where art thou?” Adam replied, “I was afraid.” And so the account proceeds. The important point is that God and Adam talked to each other and Adam understood. Animals do not understand, are not subject to moral commands, cannot sin, and hold no religious services.

In describing the image of God as it was before the fall, it is almost impossible to exclude a reference to man’s later condition. Since man is himself the image, as the following paragraph will explain, the image must in some way or other be a permanent characteristic of personality. Original righteousness reveals a capacity of man's nature for restoration after sin. Had Adam never been either moral or intelligent before the fall, no one could assert the possibility of his later becoming so. But since he was so before the fall, the impossibility of a restoration is ruled out.

If Adam’s condition in Eden had not been that of original righteousness, but only a neutral condition, neither good nor bad, there would be little hope of a more blessed future. Pelagians and Romanists hold that man was originally neutral. God created him without a moral character. He had only a capacity to become good or bad. This assumes that moral character is a product of volition, instead of volition’s being controlled by the character. But God’s pronouncement that the creation was good, and that the creation of man was very good, shows that Adam’s original

nature was not an equilibrium. And the argument shows how one doctrine affects another so that theology is not an aggregate of propositions, but a system.

Proceeding further into the Old Testament one finds that Job 32:8 repeats the idea of intellect or understanding. It says, “The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them [men] understanding.” Isaiah 42:5 may be less clear, yet it contains the same idea: “He giveth breath unto the people. . . and spirit to them that walk [on earth].” When we come to the New Testament remarkable additions are found. The image of God is not something man has, somewhere inside of him, or somewhere on the surface, as if God had first created man and then stamped him with a signet ring. No, the image is not something man *has,* man *is* the image. First Corinthians 11:7 pointedly says, “He [man] is the image and glory of God.”

So much for exegesis for the moment. There are other complications, perhaps more philosophical than some would prefer, which nevertheless must be fitted into the material from Genesis. Some contemporary theologians, on the whole quite orthodox, insist that man is a unity, not a duality; hence they conclude that he is not his soul, but the combination of soul and body.

Before discussing such a view, one should realize that the New Testament terminology, though a development from the Old, is not precisely the same. Genesis explicitly describes the soul as the combination of earthly clay and divine breath, and calls man a living soul. The language in the preceding paragraph takes soul to be something quite distinct from the body, and this in general is the New Testament usage. While the Old Testament often uses soul and spirit synonymously, the New Testament, especially when the adjectival forms of the word occur, imposes on them a moral distinction. Soulish carries an evil connotation (compare 1

Corinthians 2:14,15:44, Jude 19). On the other hand, spiritual no longer denotes the human spirit, but the influence of the Holy Ghost (compare I Corinthians 2:11-16 and 15:42-47; Colossians 1:9,1 Peter 2:5).

With this Scriptural background in mind, one may return to the question, not whether man is a unity, but what sort of unity man is. A parallel case should help. Salt is a sort of unity too, being the chemical combination of sodium and chlorine.

So also the compound man is not the soul. Here of course the word *soul* does not reproduce the usage of *nephesh* in Genesis 2:7. It is a New Testament usage and is the common usage of our present century. Now, to show that man himself is not the combination, but is precisely the soul, mind, or spirit, one may appeal to II Corinthians 12:2, which says that on one occasion Paul did not know whether or not he was in the body or out of the body. Quite obviously the*he* cannot be the body, for he, Paul, could be either in the body or out of it. And if man *is* the soul, we have a more perfect unity than a chemical compound of sodium and chlorine. One may also quote II Corinthians 5:1, “For we know that if our earthly home of the tabernacle be destroyed, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Similarly Philippians 1:21 ff. says, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. . . for I am faced with two choices, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better. . . .” Both of these verses show that the person can exist apart from the body. The body is not the person; it is a place in which the soul dwells. The home eternal in the heavens is not the soul, for our souls are not eternal. By God’s grace they are everlasting, but eternality would be a denial of their creation. What Paul is saying is that if the soul’s present residence is to be destroyed, we need not worry because in our Father’s house there are many mansions, and Christ has ascended to prepare them for the arrival of our souls.

Or to change the figure, the present body, as Augustine said, is an instrument which the soul uses. It is the latter that is the image and the person.

Though the two verses just quoted come from Paul, Peter teaches the same doctrine when he says that he will shortly put off this earthly tabernacle. The body had been his house or tent. He himself would soon move to more elaborate quarters.

This dispenses with the notion that the body is a part of the image. The image is the soul. Indeed the soul is more than an image. Of all the passages quoted, I Corinthians 11:7, previously used to show that man is the image, remains the strongest of all, for it adds an astounding phrase. It says that man is not only the image of God, but also that man is the glory of God. Only the authority of direct revelation permits this assertion. Hodge in his commentary on I Corinthians offers an explanation of this additional designation, but it is sufficient here simply to recognize how emphatic it is.

This view of man seems to maintain the unity of the person better than its rivals; it seems to be more consistent and logical; and with all the Scriptural support indicated it seems impossible to find a view that is more Biblical. Since the doctrine is so important relative to soteriology, it may be interesting, if not essential, to see how the early church began to study the subject.

3. Some Earlier Views

The idea that God created man in his own image is so clearly stated in Genesis that the early church fathers could not miss it. It is also such an amazing idea that they could not refrain from discussing it. Some of the first attempts were, naturally, less than intelligible. For example, Gregory of Nyssa expatiates in flowery metaphors conveying awe of the subject, but which lack any explanatory clarity. Well, perhaps there is one clear point: The

image has something to do with human intelligence. This is at least better than Justin Martyr's identification of it with the bodily form. Augustine took the image to be the knowledge of the truth and he took the likeness to be the love of virtue. In his*Summa Theologica* (Q. 93, Art. 9) after stating some views to be rejected, Thomas Aquinas in his usual form writes, "*On the contrary,* Augustine says, 'Some consider that these two were mentioned not without reason, namely image and likeness, since if they meant the same, one would have sufficed.' " This attempt to distinguish rather than to identify image and likeness was not one of Augustine's happiest tentatives. If the Bible were written in the technical language of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* one could well imagine that the two words bore different meanings. But in literary language such as the Bible uses, two such words can be synonymously used for the sake of emphasis. The Psalms are replete with this device: "I *cried* unto Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my *supplication;"* and "Blessed is he whose *transgression* is *forgiven,* and whose *sin* is *covered,"* where there are two pairs of synonyms; and "Thy word is a*lamp* unto my feet and a *light* unto my path." There are many such.

Even so, it is not fatal to the doctrines of grace if a distinction, without faulty additions, is made between image and likeness. Since the New Testament refers to knowledge and righteousness, we could call the one the image and the other the likeness. Such a speculation, however, is rather fanciful and futile. One must therefore consider what distinction the Roman church imposed on the terms and how it fitted into a distortion of Biblical truth.

In support of the distinction Thomas had already (Q. 93, Art. 1) argued that where an image exists, there must be a likeness; but a likeness does not necessarily mean an image. Now, the Roman church developed this, which so far is innocuous, into something that contradicts important parts of the Biblical message. Their

present view is that the image itself is rationality, created because, when, and as man was created. But after man was created, God gave him an extra gift, a *donum superadditum*, the likeness, defined as original righteousness. Man therefore was not strictly created righteous. Adam

was at first morally neutral. Perhaps he was not even neutral. Bellarmin speaks of the original Adam, composed of body and soul, as disordered and diseased, afflicted with a *morbus* or languor that needed a remedy. Yet Bellarmin does not quite say that this *morbus* is a sin; it is rather something unfortunate and less than ideal. To remedy this defect God gave the additional gift of righteousness. Adam's fall then resulted in the loss of original righteousness; but he fell only to the neutral moral level on which he was created. In this state, because of his free will, he is able, at least in some low degree, to please God.

Obviously this view has soteriological implications. Even though the neutral state was soon defaced by voluntary sins, man without saving grace could still obey God's commands upon occasion. After regeneration a man could do even more than God requires. This then becomes the foundation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the treasury of the saints. If a particular man does not himself earn a sufficient number of merits, the Pope can transfer from the saints' accounts as many more merits as are necessary for his entrance into heaven. One horrendous implication of all this is that although Christ's death remains necessary to salvation, it is not sufficient. Human merit is indispensable.

However logically implicated this soteriology is, the present study should not stray too far from the image itself. Above it was said that an assertion of a distinction between image and likeness, by itself, is not fatal. But it is not Biblical

either. Scripture makes no distinction between image and likeness. Not only does the New Testament make nothing of such a distinction; even in Genesis the two words are used interchangeably. Genesis 1:27 uses the word *image* alone, and Genesis 5:1 uses *likeness* alone, though in each case the whole is intended. The likeness therefore is not an extra gadget attached to man after his creation, not a *donum superadditum,* like a suit of clothes that he could take off. It is rather the unitary person.

4. The Definition

This short account of earlier views has somewhat trespassed on the territory of the nature of the image. That knowledge, and possibly righteousness, have commonly been associated with man's original endowment is a point no reader above third grade can have missed. The majority of devout evangelical Christians would probably stress righteousness, and if the subject were soteriology that would be proper. But during the second half of the twentieth century a rather pointed debate has centered on the factor of knowledge. As an important development in apologetics it has become a bit technical. Even so, the debaters try to base their views on Scripture. Let us begin with one important passage.

Since the verses in Genesis imply more than they state, the first verse to be quoted, and for the purpose of showing that Scripture defines the image as knowledge and righteousness, is Colossians 3:10. The definition is derived by noting that the new man is such because God has renewed him after the image in which he was originally created. Ephesians 4:24 mentions righteousness, but Colossians has knowledge only. Its previous context speaks of "the old man with deeds. "Then comes a contrast with "the new man." In what consists the renewal that makes the old man the new man? The verse says, He is renewed "to knowledge."

He is renewed to knowledge according to the image of the Creator. That is to say, the image of God, in which image man was created, is knowledge. Of course this does not mean that Adam was omniscient; yet he had some knowledge, and this is not said of the animals. Since this knowledge comes by the act of breathing into Adam the spirit of life, the knowledge must be considered, not as the result of observation, since Adam had not yet observed anything at all, but as the apriori or the innate equipment for learning.

If it be suggested that angels also have rational knowledge, they too must have been created in God's image and therefore man is not the only image of God. This is plausible since the Psalms say that man was created a little lower than the angels. But it does not militate against man's being the image of God. And further, while the Bible distinctly asserts the image in man, it does not make this assertion of angels. The creation of angels is left in obscurity, and so we too must leave it there.

A study of the nature of man can become complex, cannot avoid becoming complex. But because sin is a disturbing factor, it is easier to study man in his original state of innocency. Modern psychology and secular philosophy face extreme difficulties. Six hundred years after Socrates said, "Know thyself," Plotinus wrote fifty-four tractates on the problem. Here we reject that well known bad advice, "Seek not the face of God to scan, the proper study of mankind is man.''Contrary to this advice we do indeed seek the face of God to scan, and for the very reason that one of the proper studies of mankind is man. Without a revelation from God who made man, it is doubtful that we could learn much about him at all. Even with the aid of a divine revelation the subject is still difficult.

The Bible asks the question, "What is man?" Can we answer what a person is? Do you know yourself? The Bible also says,

“The heart of man is desperately wicked: who can know it?” Can we know the heart or nature of man before he became desperately wicked? Is man what he thinks? Or is he Immanuel Kant’s “transcendental unity of apperception”? Hume described him as a group of sensations. This would make him not much superior to the animals, for many animals hav sharper sensations than man has. But animals cannot think. At least they cannot do geometry, and geometry is just about the best example of thinking that one can think of. Man then is a rational being, like God, while animals, bless their little gizzards, are not.

But let us get back to the Scripture. There were two verses that connected knowledge and righteousness. Such a brief statement requires further explanation. We need additional information because a correct view of the original nature of man must underlie, not only an understanding of sin and the fall, but also the Biblical view of death, the intermediate state, the resurrection, and our final beatitude. To repeat: Theology is systematic: All its parts interpenetrate each other.

Genesis clearly distinguishes man from animals. Every book in the Bible describes sinful man as thinking, often thinking incorrectly, but sometimes thinking correctly. We must more closely examine Adam as he was before the fall; but to provide a background, without which one’s view would be too restricted, some other parts of Scripture will be more or less haphazardly introduced.

The mage must be reason because God is truth, and fellowship with him—a most important purpose in creation— requires thinking and understanding. Without reason man would doubtless glorify God as do the stars, stones, and ani-mals; but he could not enjoy him forever. Even if in God’s providence animals survive death and adorn the heavenly realm, they cannot

have what the Scripture calls eternallife because eternal life consists in knowing the only true God, and knowledge is an exercise of the rnind or reason. Without reason there can be no morality or righteousness: These too require thought. Lacking these, animals are neither righteous nor sinful.

The identification of the image with reason explains or is supported by a puzzling remark in John 1:9: “It was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” How can Christ, in whom is the life that is the light of men, be the light of every man, when Scripture teaches that some are lost in eternal darkness? The puzzle arises from interpreting light in exclusively redemptive terms.

The first chapter of John is not soteriological only. Obviously there are references to salvation in verses 7, 8, 12, and 13. It is not surprising that some Christians understood verse nine also in a soteriological sense. But it is not true that all men are saved; hence if Christ lightens every man, this enlightening cannot be soteriological. This is not the only non-soteriological verse in the chapter. The opening verses treat of creation and the relation of the Logos to God. If the enlightening is not soteriological, it could be epistemological. Then since responsibility depends on knowledge, the responsibility"of the unregenerate is adequately founded.

"In order to avoid this interpretation and to retain the idea of salvation here, one exegete suggests that the Light shines on all but does not penetrate all. He might even have quoted earlier verses that the light shines in darkness and the darkness did not grasp or understand it. But the later verse does not speak of darkness in the abstract; it speaks of all men. Can it now be said that the light lights all men without enlightening them?

The verb occurs about eleven times in the New Testament. First, Luke 11:36. The passage begins with literal light

(though artificial) by which people are enabled to see in an otherwise dark room. It then speaks of the whole body's being full of light. There is no hint that the people do not see the light. Quite the reverse; and the last phrase asserts that the person receives the light.

I Corinthians 4:5 might be taken as an example of "casting light upon," without enlightening any mind. This is irrelevant, however, for the objects on which the light shines are not human beings but the hidden things of darkness. Even so, the persons twice obliquely alluded to, seem to achieve perception thereby.

Ephesians 1:18, "The eyes of your hearts being enlightened to know . . ." is a strong confirmation of the interpretation now being given to John 1:9. Ephesians 3:9 is also similar. That the light gives or is the knowledge cannot be denied.

When II Timothy 1:10 says that Christ "brought life and immortality to light," it must mean the implantation of knowledge in men because this lighting or enlightening was accompanied by the preaching of the gospel. The passage is indeed soteric, but the lighting is subjective or individual.

Subjective enlightenment is also found in Hebrews 6:4 and 10:32.

Revelation 18:1 could well be a lighting effect on objects without any change in the mind of a human being. Revelation 21:23 could be the same, though the next verse says that human beings took advantage of the light.

It is not to be denied that most of these references are soteric. John 1:9 cannot be soteric because it refers to all men. But this is far from showing that the light hits them in a merely external way, as it might shine on a rock or tree. The conclusion therefore is that creative light gives every man an innate knowledge

sufficient to make all men responsible for their evil actions. This interpretation ties in with the idea of creation in verse three. Thus the Logos or rationality of God, who created all things without a single exception, can be seen as having created man with the light of logic as his distinctive human characteristic.

5. Apriorism

During the second half of the twentieth century apolo-getes, most of them otherwise orthodox, have tried to develop a theism based on sensory experience. Some of them are satisfied with a Thomistic cosmological argument for the existence of God without explicitly producing a complete empirical epistemology. Others seem satisfied with even less: Sometimes called evidentialists, they have tried to prove the truth of the Bible by archaeological discoveries. One at least is chiefly interested in history. A few go some distance into epistemology, but they usually, I could even say always, ignore basic questions, such as the production of abstract ideas from memory images. Examples of these somewhat varying groups are Stuart C. Hackett in his *The Resurrection of Theism;* Gordon R. Lewis in his *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims;* and several works by John Warwick Montgomery, Clark Pin-nock, and R.C. Sproul. There are differences among them, of course. Some are more explicit than others. Some are more consistent than others. But in general they are empiricists, denying apriori forms of the mind, and implicitly basing all knowledge on sensation.

This view has had a long and illustrious history. It began with Aristotle, from whom Thomas Aquinas derived his basic principles; John Locke had a slightly different version of it, which Augustus T op lady unfortunately pretty much accepted; plus John Gill, and with certain modifications, Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield. Probably because of the latter two the Platonic or Augustinian view has been often frowned upon.

The Lutherans too, as for example Leander S. Keyser, have generally been Aristotelians. But not all. Dorner in his*A System of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh, 1881, Vol. II, p. 82) asserts that “the soul is never a mere *tabula rasa*,. . .there is in it a world of the unconscious. If in our knowledge there is already inherent no innate relation to what is rational and good—a relation that is an original dowry of our nature and not our own work—then knowledge of truth and goodness as such is absolutely out of the question.” This is a statement worth reading a second time.

If further Lutheran documentation is desired, one will find a less explicit and no doubt a different point of view in Francis Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics* (Concordia Publishing House, 1950). In the section entitled “Man Before the Fall,” he agrees that “image and likeness are synonyms,” citing the verses quoted here. Though using slightly different language, he also accepts knowledge and righteousness as its components. But surely he exaggerates the extent of Adam’s knowledge when he says that Adam “had such a grasp of the natural sciences as is unattainable today by even the most diligent study” (I, p. 517). Did Adam really foresee the recent upsetting discoveries about the rings of Saturn? Or the implanting of a mechanical heart in a human being? Aside from such imaginations, the basic difficulty, from the point of view of this discussion, is that Pieper seems to have no interest in the epistemological problem and therefore simply avoids it.

John Theodore Mueller, in his *Christian Dogmatics,* emulates his Lutheran predecessor. He is slightly more explicit than Pieper, and continues the exaggeration of Adam’s knowledge. The difference is that Adam’s whole scientific knowledge is pictured as apriori. Disturbed by evolution he wrote, “The evolutionistic view, according to which man was originally a brute, without the faculty of speech ... is therefore anti-scriptural. ... In addition to perfect moral endowments man was blessed also with great

intellectual endowments, so that he possessed ... an intuitive knowledge of God's creatures (science) such as no scientist after the Fall has ever attained" (p. 205). Note that whereas Pieper simply assigned to Adam the same extensive knowledge, Mueller adds that this knowledge was "intuitive." If Adam's correct knowledge of the speed of light was not empirical but intuitive, the term *intuitive* seems to mean apriori. In any case no such extensive knowledge is ascribed to Adam in the Scriptural verses Mueller quotes, *viz.*, Genesis 2:19-20,23-24. Neither writer is sufficiently clear, but the phrase "great intellectual endowment" and the word "intuitive" favor apriorism much more than they favor empiricism.

Unfortunately, however, Mueller had previously approved of the cosmological argument for the existence of God (p. 143) as Pieper also had done before him. The two authors lack consistency. Neither of them seems interested in the present problem, nor is either so clear as Dorner.

Dorner rejected the blank mind. Even some Roman Catholics, a few centuries ago, defended apriorism: Descartes, Malebranche, Pascal, and the Jansenists. But all the wit of Pascal did not save them from the Jesuits.

Now, it seems to me that even the skimpy material in Genesis is sufficient to refute empiricism with its blank mind. First, since God is a God of knowledge, eternally omniscient, how could a being, declared to be his image and likeness, be a blank mind? Even apart from the explicit statements in the New Testament, Genesis says that God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Since at that time they had no sensory experience of other people, must they not have had some innate intelligence to understand this command? Of course an empiricist might insist that they Rad learned the meaning from observing animals. But this assumes that a fair length of time intervened between

the creation of Adam and God's imposition of the obligation. One can better suppose that God gave instructions to Adam more immediately. This is rather obviously true of Genesis 2:16,17. The command not to eat of a given tree, since it constituted Adam's probation, surely was given only moments after the creation. Of course such a command was not apriori knowledge, but the intellectual equipment to understand it was.

There is more, too. Adam not only understood the command: He understood that it was God who gave it. Are we to suppose that he laboriously worked out the cosmological argument, including the physics that underlies it? And did he derive the concept of moral responsibility from his sensations? Though the account is brief, it seems that Adam knew he was obligated to worship God and obey him. But empiricism's cosmological argument is surpassed in its fallacies by the impossibility of deducing moral evaluations from factual premises, even should these premises be true. If an empiricist insists that the Genesis account is too brief to support such an interpretation, we can at least rely on the Pauline epistles. Genesis is not the only book in the Bible.

A subsidiary point is Cain's fear of punishment after he had murdered Abel. Evidently God had given Adam and his boys what we call the sixth commandment. They must have recognized this as a moral imperative. But is it at all possible to develop the idea of a moral imperative by watching trees grow in a garden? Note the point: The commandment itself may not have been innate, but the idea of morality must have been or the import of the commandment could not have been understood. Sensation at best might possibly give some factual information; but though this would be knowledge of what *is*, empiricism can never produce a knowledge of what *ought* to be.

Underlying all these details of both physics and morality lies the necessity of universal propositions. Not only are murder and idolatry wrong, but the laws of physics are asserted as applying universally. They are not supposed to have any exceptions. Physics is the clearer example. The law of the pendulum, to take an elementary example, is that the period of the swing is proportional to the square root of the length. The law asserts that this is true of all pendulums, all that exist now, all that have existed in the past, and all that will exist in the future. The law is a universal proposition, that is, it has no exceptions. Clearly this law cannot have been deduced from experiment or observation, for no one has observed all present pendulums, or all past pendulums, and no one has observed any future pendulums. Hence empiricism can never justify any law of physics. If, now, sensory experience cannot justify a knowledge of natural phenomena, how could it possibly be of any use in theology? The principles of theology are all universal propositions. Of course theology includes certain historical statements, such as "David was king of Israel," and this does not seem to be a universal. Actually it is, for David as the subject term is a class by himself, and all of that class is a king of Israel. But aside from propositions with individual subjects, the principles of theology, which give meaning to the historical events, are plain, ordinary universal statements. They cannot therefore be based on observation. For that matter, God cannot be observed.

In addition to the failure of empiricism due to universal propositions, there is an even more fundamental factor. Every statement, even if particular, depends on the law of contradiction. Truth and error are incompatible. If all marhoucals are rhinosaps, there cannot be a single marhoucal that is not a rhinosap. We do not have to inspect the infinite number of the latter in order to assure ourselves that none can be found.

Given the premise we do not need to examine even one. That O ab cannot be deduced from A ab is a necessity of logic. And if our minds are not so constructed, we can never distinguish truth from error. But empiricism furnishes no necessity, no universality, no *all,* no *none.*

Indeed, it furnishes no *some* either. Whether the logical form be universal or particular, the proposition must have a subject term. All dogs are vertebrates; some dogs are black. Suppose now that the subject term, dogs, had five meanings. This is not unusual for English words. Consult *Merriam Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* Look up the words fast, curb, domestic, race, land, not to mention love, emotion, grace, religion, and virtue. Each one will have possibly four, five, and sometimes six different meanings. This frequently introduces considerable ambiguity, with the result that an argument, apparently logical, is actually fallacious. The fallacy can be avoided, sometimes with a bit of trouble, by specifying meaning one, meaning two, and meaning three. But there is a deeper problem. Suppose a given word had an infinite number of meanings. The word *fast* would then mean every word in the dictionary from the article "a" to "zyzzogetan," plus an unimaginable greater number. "Fast fast fast fast" would mean, "Today is last Tuesday" and "Washington discovered America in 1066." That is to say, a word that means everything means nothing, But this which is so obvious could not be deduced from any finite number of observations. It is a principle which must be accepted even before the term "observation" could be given any meaning at all. Therefore the use of any single word in an intelligible sentence depends on an apriori principle. No blank mind could ever discover this principle. One could phrase the principle as "a word, to mean something, must also not mean something;" or, "if a word means everything, it means nothing." Like the law of contradiction it is a way of

maintaining the distinction between truth and falsehood. And this distinction is the basic element in the image of God.

6. Behaviorism

The most vigorous opponents of Platonism, Augustinian-ism, apriorism, intellectualism, rationalism, or whatever anyone wishes to call it, are not the Christian evidentialists. These gentlemen adopt an inconsistent amalgam of empiricism and the Biblical doctrine of the image. The logical positivists, the behaviorists, the devotees of scientism are consistent: There is no commixture of mental or spiritual ideas with corporeal concepts in their theory. Man is entirely physical, and there is no life after death.

It will be profitable to contrast the Biblical view of man as rational with behaviorism, because even many devout church members, who attend regularly, have picked up behavioristic ideas from the pervasive culture. Their minds are thus confused. Less confused are many who never attend church and who more or less definitely oppose Christianity. When the preacher or one of the devout members tries to tell them the good news, one of two things may happen. The secularist may not understand the words because of his mind-set and humanistic vocabulary. Or, and this is frequent, the secularist overwhelms the Christian because the latter does not understand the theory from which the secularist speaks. A course in systematic theology ought to do something to remedy this defect. Hence, this subsection on behaviorism.

John B. Watson is credited in this country with being the father of behaviorism, though, not to mention Nietzsche in Germany, William James in 1904 published an article, “Does Consciousness Exist?” to which he gave a negative answer.

Since the behaviorist position is fairly well known, it is neither necessary to describe it in great detail nor to refer to many authors. Briefly stated, behaviorism is the theory that souls or spirits do not exist, and that thinking, which they sometimes call mind, is a function of bodily parts in the same sense that digestion is the function of the stomach. The earlier identification of the bodily part as the larynx was soon discredited. A still very popular form of the theory makes thought a function of the brain. But a technically superior view makes thinking any muscular activity in general. All activities previously called mental are thus reduced to chemistry. Gilbert Ryle derides the idea of a soul as "the ghost in the machine," and classifies it as a "category mistake." B.F. Skinner can be characterized by the title of one of his chapters, "The World Within the Skin." The phrase occurs in other chapters as well. Contrasting the traditional view of perception with the view "common, I believe, to all versions of behaviorism" (*Behaviorism*, New York, 1974, p. 73), he asserts that the former considers perception as active process, while the latter "is that the initiating action is taken by the environment rather than by the perceiver." But a warning is necessary. Readers who are unfamiliar with behavioristic authors may be deceived by their use of mentalistic terms such as feeling, pain, thinking, and even hunger, and other terms with similar connotations. Skinner is particularly guilty of this sort of deception. Of course he does not call it deception: Hunger is simply contractions of the stomach, and if thinking is not Watson's sub-vocal speech, it is still a complex of muscular motions.

Now, for one thing, this deceptive language disguises the fact that the behaviorists do not know what thinking is. To say that it is motion does not distinguish thought from digestion, or the emotion of fear from the solution of an equation. Had Skinner really tried to use literal language, had he confined himself to

physical or physiological terminology, as behaviorism requires, his book would have been less clear and much less convincing.

Although Skinner and Ryle have had widespread influence, there was an earlier author who had much more and prepared the way for their successes. Because of the multiplicity of his publications and their multifaceted subject matter, not the least of which were his deleterious proposals on education, John Dewey is not usually classified in the narrower category of behaviorist. But he was a behaviorist nonetheless. Speaking of human habits he insists that “In the case of no other engine does one suppose that a defective machine will turn out goods simply because it is invited to. . . . Refusal to recognize this fact only leads to a separation of mind from body, and to supposing that mental or ‘psychical’ mechanisms are different in kind from those of bodily operations and independent of them” (*Human Nature and Conduct,* Henry Holt and Co., 1922, p. 33). Note the words *engine, machine, mechanisms, bodily operations.* Dewey teaches that knowledge resides in the muscles, that mental mechanisms are no different in kind from bodily operations.*

***Compare Clark, *Dewey* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 53-61.**

In another place Dewey insists that “Habits formed in the process of exercising biological aptitudes are the sole agents of observation, recollection, foresight, and judgment: a mind or consciousness or soul in general which performs these operations is a myth. . . . Knowledge which is not projected against the black unknown lives in the muscles.” In fact, not even this statement is complete, for in *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (ed. Schlipp, p. 555) Dewey replies to his critics by saying, “Although the psychological theory involved is a form of behaviorism . . . behavior is not viewed as something taking place under the skin . . . but always directly or indirectly

in obvious overtness or at a distance ... an interaction with environing conditions." In the same volume (p. 599) he replies to another critic: "There is no passage from the physical to the mental, from an external world to something felt. . . . When, however, a quality is termed a 'sensation'... it is now placed in a specially selected connection, that to the organism or self. Pending the outcome of an inquiry not yet completed, one may not know whether a quality, say red, belongs to *this* or *that* object in the environment, nor indeed whether it may not be the product of intraorganic processes as in the case of 'seeing stars' after a blow on the head. In other words, the occurrence of qualities upon my view is a purely natural event."

Behaviorism today permeates a large and important segment of society. A nurse in Detroit told me that she and the other nurses in the hospital, and the city policemen, were required to attend lectures advocating behaviorism.

Now, Christians should not sit idly by in ignorance or disinterest. But there are several ways of reacting. One is to preach the gospel without taking any notice of its antagonists. This is not what Paul did. Not only in I Corinthians and Galatians did he explicitly attack the enemies of Christ, but so also even in his shorter epistles. Yet not every sermon need be polemic. This present study itself, on the Biblical doctrine of man, could legitimately confine itself to exegesis. And surely it should not spend a hundred technical pages refuting behaviorism. Yet two or three pages seem called for.*

*** For a longer sample, compare Clark, *Behaviorism and Christianity* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1982).**

In keeping with the main purpose of this study, the reply will be first of all Biblical. Its basis will be the revealed truth that God is truth; he is a God of knowledge, and the Son is the Logos and

Wisdom of God. Isaiah 33:6 says, “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times and strength of salvation.” Or in the New American Standard, “He shall be the stability of your times and a wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge. ” Of course behaviorists will not be impressed with any Scriptural dicta. If they were willing to take the time, they might well conclude that the orthodox doctrines are indeed what the Bible teaches, and that they are all nonsense. But they might be caught contradicting themselves if they say that the Bible is *all* nonsense. The vigor with which they press their theories indicates that they think that the philosophy of behaviorism is true, at least in the main. They believe that this life is all and enough, as Corliss Lamont claimed. That man is entirely physical or corporeal, they regard as true. They do not think that their theories are fundamentally false. In other words, they assert a difference between truth and falsehood.

But their assertion is inconsistent with their fundamental principle. Man is physics and chemistry, is he? Well, if a chemist combines hydrogen, sulphur, and oxygen, in certain proportions, he will have sulphuric acid. And to keep the examples elementary, if he combines sodium and chlorine, he will get salt. But is salt any more “true” than sulphuric acid? Make the example more complex. If certain brains and muscles perform motions called behaviorism, are they any more true than my brains and muscles whose intricate reaction is called Christianity? Reduce thinking to chemistry and no distinction between truth and error remains. Behaviorism has committed the suicide of self-contradiction.

Such a refutation is thoroughly Biblical; but in addition an illustration may be used which, though not in Scriptural language, nonetheless emphasizes the characteristics of truth versus the implications of behaviorism. It would be possible to reproduce a part of Plato’s *Phaedo,* for several

thinkers (only they could not admit to thinking) of that day held the same basic theory. But we shall begin with Leibniz and expand on him with a contemporary illustration.

Leibniz, in answer to the materialism or incipient behaviorism of his day, asked the reader to imagine the brain in a greatly enlarged form. Picture it in the dimensions of a large mill, so that one can walk into it and examine its machinery. We shall see, he says, bodily parts moving with bodily parts, as wheels turn wheels, but we shall never see a thought.

Leibniz's illustration can be improved, or at least up-dated, by using a baseball diamond, instead of a grist mill, as an illustration for the whole body, plus Dewey's distant objects, for the argument applies to any combination of moving parts. Accordingly the pitcher is one ganglionic cell, the catcher is a muscle in the leg, and the fielders are whatever you wish. Now, if thinking is a function of the brain, a particular thought must be a particular motion of one of the players. Let it be the curve of the opening pitch.

The first implication of this proposal is this: When the ball ends its motion in the catcher's mitt, that particular motion can never occur again. It is a past event. Similarly, if a thought is a motion in the body, that thought can never occur to you again. No one ever thinks the same thought twice.

The behaviorist or the baseball fan is likely to reply: True, the first pitch of the first inning cannot recur; but the pitcher will pitch his curve again in the third inning. Since the two curves are the same, the same thought can recur.

But this is not so easy as it seems. Aside from the admitted fact that the first thought cannot be thought again, we now ask, What is that thought of similarity by which you connect the first and third innings? How do you know the two curves are similar? The

thought of similarity cannot be the first pitch because that was a thought about the hot dog vendor, or anything else, and was then similar to nothing, for no pitch preceded it. Nor can the thought of similarity be the curve in the third inning, because this pitch is supposedly similar to the hot dog vendor; and this man is surely not the idea of similarity.

Since, further, a thought of similarity or comparison cannot occur until there are two items to compare, the thought of similarity must be a later pitch—a fast ball in the fourth inning. Unfortunately the first pitch is over and gone in the fourth inning; so is the curve in the third. These pitches, i.e. these thoughts, these motions of bodily parts, are not present in the fourth inning, and hence the fast ball in the fourth cannot compare the previous pitches. Behaviorism makes comparison impossible; or, conversely, if comparison is possible, thinking cannot be a function of the brain.

Devastating as this may be, the argument does not end here. On the behavioristic view it is not only impossible for one person to have the same idea twice, but it is all the more impossible for two people to have the same thought once. If Pythagoras had the idea of a triangle, Einstein never learned Euclidean geometry. The ball park represents the person. One ball park is in Philadelphia, and we can call that person Pythagoras. Another ball park is in Chicago, and we may call that person Einstein. Tom, Dick, and Harry are in Birmingham, Baltimore, and Boston. Now, obviously the motion or thought, the act of digestion, that occurred on a certain date in one of these cities could not possibly recur in any other body. The wiggle of a dendritic process in my brain cannot be the wiggle in your brain. The motion of a bodily part cannot occur in two places, either at the same time or at different times. Therefore if J.B. Watson had some wiggles called the theory of behaviorism, I certainly do not have them. Nor could he know my refutation of behaviorism. I

give it and hope it will be understood only because I do not regard thinking as a functioning of bodily parts.

Arguments from Leibniz or baseball are one way Christian academics can react to behaviorism. But what about the worshippers who sit in the pews every Lord's Day? Naturally the reactions of several million people will differ. But do those obdurately impractical "practical" Christians follow the argument? Note its implications concerning the other part of the image, to wit, righteousness. The logical positivists, who are a subdivision of behaviorism, abolish all morality along with the soul. The other behaviorists, Skinner for one, Dewey for another, very definitely want to reconstruct society. Christianity is a source of evil. It must be eradicated. Some form of socialism or communism can then impose a happy state of society. Prisons and penalties will be abolished because punishment is anti-social; parents will be prohibited from teaching their children religion, and capitalism will be destroyed. But if there is no truth, and if normative conclusions can never be deduced from observational premises, the politics of Dewey and Skinner have no basis except their own evil desires. As Supreme Court Justice Holmes wrote, "When one thinks coldly, I can see no reason for attributing to man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand. ... I wonder if cosmically an idea is any more important than the bowels." In an article, "Hobbes, Holmes, and Hitler," Ben W. Palmer quotes Holmes as saying, "I am so skeptical as to our knowledge about the goodness and badness of laws that I have no practical criterion except what the crowd wants." Palmer concluded that this Supreme Court Justice's theory was indistinguishable from that of a storm trooper proclaiming the supremacy of the blonde beast.* No wonder that the present Court initiated the murder of millions of innocent babies. That seems to be what the crowd

wants. Devotional, emotional, practical anti-intellectual Christianity, if indeed it is Christianity, cannot meet present realities.

***Compare Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1991 [1952]),** p. 11.

7. Dichotomy and Trichotomy

The previous sections have interpreted the Bible as teaching that God is truth and that man is rational. The immediately preceding section defended the distinction between truth and falsehood, and the spirituality of man against the major contemporary attack on Christianity. Important, yes; fundamental as these points are, Genesis gives further details relative to man's nature. These too have implications for soteriology and therefore cannot be omitted. Since God is rational, his revelation is systematic, and his faithful servants are obligated to study the interrelationships to the best of their individual abilities.

Up to this point emphasis has been put on man's soul or mind, for surely this is the basic truth about man's nature. However, man also has a body. An earlier page mentioned some theologians who, in the interest of man's unity, somewhat made man a compound like NaCl. This, I hold, is not the Biblical view, but of course man does have a body and what the Bible says on the subject must not be ignored. In fact some theologians, instead of considering man in his present compound state as body and soul, advocate a threefold division. They say that man is three-fold, like H_2SO_4. He is a compound of body, soul, and spirit. The theological terminology for these two views is dichotomy and trichotomy.

Before the Biblical documentation is spread on the page, a very slight bit of history will provide an elementary perspective. Yet

one must be cautious. Keep in mind that the church did not succeed in formulating the doctrine of the Trinity until A.D. 325. Other doctrines remained in confusion. Note too that the modern theologians sometimes fail to understand second and third century language, not to mention their distortions of Greek philosophy. Several of them assign a Logos doctrine to Plato, though actually it is Stoic. Many have found references to Gnosticism in the New Testament, and they describe it as a dualistic system. This latter is a mistake that should not have been made even in the nineteenth century. Since the middle of the twentieth century, with new discoveries, one can plausibly or even confidently say that the New Testament shows no, or only the slightest, knowledge of Gnosticism. Since the problem of man's prelapsarian composition is by no means so important as the Trinity, the very early views of the subject abound in confusion.

It is true that some early theologians held a sort of trichotomy. But the view shortly disappeared. The reason was that Apollinaris, a contemporary of Athanasius, used the doctrine to produce a defective Christology. The Nicene Council had concluded nothing as to the relationship between the divine and the human natures of Christ. Clearly this is a matter of interest, and a difficult one. Apollinaris was no Arian; he sincerely accepted the deity of Christ; but he could not handle Christ's humanity. Instead of attributing to Christ what was later called "a reasonable soul," he allowed him only an "animal" soul, and substituted the divine Logos for the other*

***Compare W.G.T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine,* Vol. 1, pp. 394 ff.**

Parenthetically, one of those modern theologians who does not understand all he knows described some of the ancient views as giving Christ or man three souls: nutritive, animal, and rational.

The division is Aristotle's, but it does not imply that animals have two souls and man three. The soul or living principle of plants is nutritive only. The soul of what we now call animals has two functions: nutrition and sensation. Man's soul is as unitary as one can wish, but it has three functions. Apollinaris denied the third function to Christ's soul, substituting, as was said above, the thoroughly divine Logos. But the church at large, however confusedly, recognized that the Atonement required a man. Hence not only was Apollinaris condemned, but trichotomy also died out. This is not to say that all trichotomists deny the humanity of Christ: The above is history, not necessarily logic.

Trichotomy remained in its tomb until resurrected in the nineteenth century by several English and German theologians. Hodge pays some slight attention to this movement (II, pp. 47 ff., 400ff.), but Laidlaw complains that Hodge considered trichotomy only in its crudest form (p. 68, and footnote 2); but as its crudest form alone has currency in this twentieth century, this study will merit the same criticism. So far as I know, the authors whom Laidlaw so competently discussed now have no descendents, though basic trichotomy enjoys a measure of popularity.

It would be tedious and time consuming to quote every verse in the Bible that in some way or other bears on the subject. But it is imperative that a fair amount of documentation be laid down as a foundation. Though the present writer makes no apologies for several pages which to some people seem too philosophic and secular, he insists that the foundation is always the Scripture. As one must suppose, it begins in the first chapter of Genesis.

Genesis 2:7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Genesis 3:19 Dust thou art, and unto dust shah thou return.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

Isaiah 10:18 both soul and body

Daniel 7:15 my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body . . .

Matthew 6:25 Be not anxious for your life . . . nor yet for your body ... Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment?

Matthew 10:28 Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 10:27 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind.

I Thessalonians 5:23 The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete.

Hebrews 4:12 piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow.

Since Genesis describes the creation of man, there is no better place to look in order to determine his components. Genesis 2:7 mentions the body, the dust of the ground. On this point there is no dispute. Everybody agrees that Adam had a body. Genesis next mentions the breath of God. The Hebrew word is *neshamah.* It means a blast of wind, even destructive in force; not just a gentle breathing as one might imagine from the context. The word *ruach*(spirit) is what we could have expected, from its occurrence in Genesis 1:2 where the verb *moved* is not particularly violent. But at any rate in Genesis

2:7 we have a body, a blast of wind, and a *nephesh,* or as translated in the King James, a living soul.

The point to notice here is that God constructed man out of two elements: the dust of the ground and his own breath. The combination is the *nephesh.* A parallel illustration may be of help. Suppose, under proper laboratory conditions, I mix some sodium with some chlorine and the mixture becomes salt. Salt is not one of the elements: it is the name of the compound. So also in Genesis: God took some clay, breathed his spirit into it, and the combination was a living soul. In the Old Testament the term *soul* designates the combination as a whole, not just one of the components.

Several distinguished theologians are in complete agreement. John Gill, though not belaboring the point as if to refute someone, expresses the dichotomous view as obvious from Scripture. Admittedly I do not agree with him that the image is "the whole man, both body and *soul" (Body of Divinity,* III, iv, pp. 274,275); but he adds on the same page, "The principal seat of the image of God in man is the soul." The pertinent point at the moment is that he describes the whole man as "soul and body." He had already said, "the constituent and essential parts of man. . .are two, body and soul" (p. 270). There is not the least bit of trichotomy. Since Gill is so frequently prolix, one is tempted to guess that he had never heard of trichotomy. A second historical note is the material from Oehler-Day *(Old Testament Theology,* New York, 1883, pp. 149-152); and though it is not so decisive or blunt as the chemical illustrations, it fairly well substantiates dichotomy. Hodge, for another reference (*Systematic Theology,* II, p. 48) clearly says "There is in this account no intimation of anything more than the material body . . . and the living principle derived from God."

In this same place Hodge refutes an idea frequently asserted by trichotomists. They hold that man is composed of body, soul, and spirit. Soul is earthbound and is common to man and animals, but spirit is the consciousness of God which no animal has. In addition to what anyone can find out by reading an English Bible, namely that the term is assigned to animals as well as to men, Hodge compares a number of passages to show that *nephesh* and *ruach* are synonyms and interchangeable. Genesis 6:17, 7:15, 22, and Ecclesiastes 3:21 all apply the word *spirit* to animals. Of course men are conscious of God, but if *spirit* is defined as God-consciousness, we ought to follow the example of St. Francis and preach the gospel to the birds.

To return to the list of quoted verses, Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Isaiah 10:18, and Daniel 7:15 all clearly support dichotomy. The verse in Isaiah is puzzling, for it specifies *nephesh* and body, the compound with a component. A two fold division is perfectly clear, but it is not the division found in Genesis. One must remember, however, that the colloquial language of the Bible is not the technical terminology of a persnickety theologian. I take it as a literary emphasis, as if a gangster should yell “I’ll kill you dead and smash your head in.” Surely Isaiah did not intend to contradict Genesis.

So much then for the Old Testament. In addition to the few New Testament verses in the last list, three more may now be added, with a comment. Matthew 26:38 describes the soul as sorrowful, and John 13:21 says the spirit is sad. Apparently soul and spirit can be used synonymously. Matthew 10:28 in the previous list speaks of soul and body; James 2:26 has spirit and body. In each case the entire person is meant. Luke 1:46,47 and Philippians 1:27 both combine soul and spirit. This is literary parallelism. If anyone doubts it, the more important passages can be adduced.

These more explicit passages invite a direct confrontation with the most popular form of twentieth century trichotomy. It is the trichotomy of the Scofield Bible and the theology of Lewis Sperry Chafer. Although some of the members of the present Dallas Seminary faculty have modified the earlier position of the school and have published a new edition of the Scofield Bible, deleting some of the original notes, the original position is a fact of history and still remains the view of many ministers and many church members. A charge of misrepresentation is therefore inapplicable.

The Scofield Bible's note on I Thessalonians 5:23 reads in part, "Man is a trinity. That the human soul and spirit are not identical is proved by the facts that they are divisible (Hebrews 4:22), and that the soul and spirit are sharply distinguished in the burial and resurrection of the body ... I Corinthians 15:44. . . . The distinction is that the spirit is that part of the body. . . which '*knows'(l* Corinthians 2:11), his mind; the soul is the seat of his *affections, desires,* and so of the *emotions,* and of the active *will,* the self. . . . The word translated 'soul' (*nephesh*) in the O.T. is the exact equivalent of the N.T. word for soul (Grk. *psuche)* and the use of 'soul' in the O.T. is identical with the use of that word in the N.T. (see, e.g. Deuteronomy 6:5; 14:26) .... Because man is 'spirit' he is capable of God-consciousness .. . because he is 'soul' he has self-consciousness,... because he is 'body' he has, through his senses, world-consciousness."

As for I Thessalonians 5:23 itself ("may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire"), one can note that if this teaches trichotomy, then Jesus contradicted it and in Matthew 22:37 asserted four elements in man's make-up. The body, which he did not mention, and three others, heart, soul, and mind. Spirit is not included in the list. Deuteronomy 6:5, which the verse in Matthew echoes, has *might,* instead of ; and Luke 10:27, the

parallel passage, enumerates four “elements,” with the body as an unexpressed fifth. One may therefore wonder why I Thessalonians 5:23 was selected as the decisive verse on the composition of man.

Naturally some of Scofield’s statements are true enough, though not always in the sense he intended. For example, it is true that the human soul and spirit, as these words are used in the Old Testament, “are not identical.” At least they are not always identical. In fact they are often, even usually, synonymous. But far from proving that man is a trinity, the statement that they are not identical remains true when *spirit* is an element and *soul* the compound. Furthermore, Scofield is mistaken when he says that “The word tr. ‘soul’ (*nephesh*) in the Old Testament is the exact equivalent of the N.T. word for soul (Gk. *psuche)."* Why they are not exact equivalents will be explained later. Because they are not, the Scofield reference to 1 Corinthians 15:44 requires an amount of exegesis. Again, to say that the soul, as opposed to the spirit, is the seat of affections or emotions contradicts I Kings 21:5, “Why is thy spirit so sad?” Scofield also says that the soul (emotion and will), not the spirit (the mind or intellect) is the self. Hodge seems to agree when he says (*Systematic Theology,* Vol. n, p. 48), “The soul is the man himself, that in which his identity and personality reside: It is the *Ego."* But there is no real agreement because Hodge identifies soul and spirit, while Scofield “sharply distinguished” them. The subject is somewhat more complex than it seems at first; and hence more detailed and penetrating discussion is needed.

Certain cautions are to be observed in this discussion. Some Christian writers take pleasure in emphasizing the unity of man as opposed to “Greek dualism,” or Cartesian dualism. Now, virtually every thinker who has discussed the nature of man has asserted his unity, and also some sort of duality. Even Spinoza had a dualism, a very prominent dualism. This is not the

problem. The problem is posed by asking: what sort of unity and what sort of duality? Plato indeed had a duality of an everlasting though derivative soul and an everlasting underived chaotic space, out of which latter the human body was formed. Obviously this is not Christian. But Descartes asserted the creation of two different substances, soul and body; and many orthodox theologians would consider this quite Christian. This is not to say that Descartes used the term *anima* in the same sense that Moses used the word *nephesh.* In these discussions one must always take care to determine the precise meaning of the author, for the usages of various authors vary. And while the meanings of the words *unity* and *duality* may be the same to many authors, the nature of the unity and duality often varies greatly.

Scriptural language is the common popular language of the time. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, does not use many fixed technical terms. Soul and flesh are synonymous in Job 13:14,14:22, and in Psalms 63:1. Heart and mind, referring to God, are synonymous in I Samuel 2:35; flesh and heart in Proverbs 14:30, Ecclesiastes 2:3, 11:10, and Ezekiel 44:7, 9 (though in Ezekiel a distinction could be asserted). Soul, heart, and flesh seem to be identical in Psalm 84:2; heart and flesh in Psalm 16:9; soul and spirit are parallel in Isaiah 26:9; and much to our elementary confusion Psalm 31:9 combines eye, soul, and belly.

The New Testament also uses the same popular language in many places. A moment ago it was said that Scofield contradicts I Kings 21:5 because there the spirit is sad. In John 13:21 it is the *spirit* that is troubled, though in Matthew 26:38, as in Psalm 42:11, it is the *soul* that is sorrowful. In Matthew 10:28 “soul and body” means the entire man; in James 2:26 the entire man is “spirit and body.”

When the Virgin Mary in Luke 1:46,47—a passage penetrated with Old Testament piety—referred to her soul and spirit, she was using the language of the Psalms, where soul and spirit are synonymous and parallel. But generally in the New Testament *psuche* and *pneuma* are not parallel.

Though both Testaments regularly use popular imprecise language, the New differs from the Old by introducing something more technical. The Apochrypha and Philo used the terms *soul* and *spirit* with greater attention to psychological niceties. Their phraseology filtered down into the common speech. The New Testament uses these terms, then, in a way somewhat different from the parallelism of the Psalms, while also reflecting the older usage. The difference in usage is more clear and consistent with the adjectives *soulish* and *spiritual,* than with the nouns. In James 3:15 there is a wisdom that is "earthly, *soulish,* demonic." Jude 19 speaks of men who are *soulish,* not having spirit." See also I Corinthians 2:14, 15:44, and Philippians 3:20.

Nor does the word *flesh* in the New Testament regularly denote the body or dust of Genesis. Flesh, like soul, often refers to man's sinful nature. Spirit or spiritual does not designate the breath of God as one of the two elements in man's make-up, nor even his mind in a simple psychological sense, but rather, when it does not mean the Holy Spirit himself, it designates a man who is under the Spirit's beneficent control.

Now, the theory of trichotomy comes in various forms. Scofield's is about the most superficial and simplistic one can find. Others develop a complex psychology, a theory of regeneration, or an application to Christ's incarnate nature. This was true of Apollinaris briefly mentioned above. Because of Apollinaris, trichotomy disappeared until in 1769 it reappeared in a book by M.F. Roos. This gentleman was a

careful scholar and avoided later extremisms by refusing to go much beyond a study of the usage of the terms. Olshausen (1834) proposed an embryonic psychology, hardly as definite as that of Apollinaris. Delitzsch goes a little further. Soul and spirit, he says, are two substances, but one in nature, as the Son and Spirit are one in nature, but two hypostases. His analogies, as analogies usually, are not enlightening: The body is the house of the soul, and the soul is the house of the spirit; or, the soul is related to the triune nature. Delitzsch as a good scholar acknowledges that the Bible contains many dichotomous passages. In fact he is so honest in this that he virtually contradicts himself.

J.B. Heard, *Tripartite Nature,* worked out a much more complete scheme of trichotomy and integrated it with his doctrines of sin and redemption, or vice versa. Man is a tripartite hypostasis, he says; i.e. a person with three natures or possibly composed of three substances. Soul was created free to choose either the direction of the body or the direction of the spirit. Adam chose the body. Consequently his descendants inherited a deadened spirit. This trichotomous view, held by the Greek Fathers, never penetrated the Latin mind, Heard complains, and the results were Augustine's unacceptable refutation of Pelagius and the defective view of sin held by the Reformers. If man is bipartite and if sin is positive, like a virus, either human recuperative powers would have destroyed the virus or the virus would have, by this time, destroyed the race. But if sin is negative, then the bipartite theory results in Pelagianism. The solution is: Sin is negative, but man is a trinity. The result of the fall, an event far more serious than Pelagius allowed, but not so serious as Augustine thought, is a deadened spirit. Original sin is thus privative only, though a serious privation. Since the spirit is only deadened, not annihilated, there is a possibility of regeneration. On the bipartite view regeneration would be impossible. So also

sanctification. If the soul were thoroughly corrupt—and man had no spirit—the Holy Spirit could not purify the soul; but in the tripartite scheme the soul remains prone to evil,but the regenerated spirit cannot sin*

***This is a very brief summary of Laidlaw's detailed analysis.**

What should be noted in this subject is its effect on many other doctrines. It is not just a detached piece of psychology. The nature of Christ is affected; the role of the Holy Spirit is affected; as also regeneration and sanctification. What a seminary student must learn and keep in mind, and what ninety-nine percent of the communicant members never consider, is that Christianity is *a system* of doctrine. Truth forms a system. Doctrines interlock; and as J. Gresham Machen used to say, most people are saved by blessed inconsistency.

One further Scriptural passage, though of lesser importance, can serve as a closing paragraph for this section. Hebrews 4:12, "dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," is sometimes quoted to sustain a division between soul and spirit. The verse, however, does not say that soul and spirit are two of the elements out of which man was composed. But what is even more to the point, the basic division in this verse is not three-fold but two-fold: soul and spirit versus joints and marrow. If, now, soul and spirit are two different components, then joints and marrow must also be another two; and man is four-fold, not tripartite. Further, the excellence of Christ (not the written word: compare John Owen's comentary on Hebrews) is that he can divide what is seemingly indivisible. If soul and spirit were as sharply distinguished as the trichotomists say, the ability to divide them would not be a noteworthy excellence of Christ. The verse therefore closely conjoins them, and in this instance too it favors dichotomy.

8. Traducianism and Creationism

The next question concerns the origin of the souls of Adam's descendants. Do the children inherit, derive, or get their souls from their parents (traducianism), or does God perform an act of creation for every baby?

The theory of creationism maintains that God immediately creates *ex nihilo* a new soul for each individual. Some verses that seem to favor this view are:

Numbers 16:22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Psalm 33:15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he con-sidereth all their works.

Isaiah 57:16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before, and the souls which I have made.

Jeremiah 38:16 As the Lord liveth, that made us this soul...

Zechariah 12:1 The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

These verses are hardly conclusive, for they do not specify an immediate creation rather than an extended process. Of course there is other material also. Let us then see what some theologians do with it.

The great Baptist theologian, John Gill, argues as follows in his *Body of Divinity* (111,3). Christ, he reminds us, was made like us in all ways except sin, and therefore had a true body and a reasonable soul. This soul, Gill insists, could not have come from Mary, for as a sinner she would have transmitted a sinful soul. This argument, however, depends on some doubtful assumptions. If the soul of the child comes from the father, and the body from the mother, as some earlier theologians had it, Gill's reference to Mary would be beside the point. Maybe the notion that the father alone propagates the soul is mere superstition; but until Gill proves the contrary, his argument is defective.

What may more disturb those who wish to stay close to the Bible is the similarity between Gill's argument and the Romanists' defense of the immaculate conception of Mary. The argument founders because the difficulty reappears with Mary's mother. How could the sinful mother of Mary produce a sinless daughter? If God could so control the conception of Mary, and produce a sinless girl from a sinful parent, why is it impossible that this is what he did in the incarnation, rather than a generation earlier?

Of course this absurdity of Romanism does not attach to Gill. He holds that if the soul comes from the parent, the new soul just could not possibly be sinless. Hence, it must have been created *ex nihilo.* Yet the miracle, if it be a miracle at all, of producing a sinless soul from a sinful parent, is nothing in comparison with the most stupendous miracle of all: not just the virgin birth, but the incarnation itself. If the eternal God can become incarnate, surely the lesser miracle need not trou-

ble us. Even so, and in conjunction with the federal headship of Adam, one would like to know how Jesus could have been born

sinless.

There is a reasonable, or at least a possible explanation. The imputation of Adam’s guilt, not Eve’s previous sin, may be based on the male line. If so, the virgin birth would avoid the imputation of guilt to, and the consequent corruption of, a son so born.

Gill also argues that souls are incapable of producing other souls. His reason for saying so is that angels are souls, and angels do not propagate. The argument is an obvious fallacy because the undistributed term *souls* in the minor premise is distributed in the conclusion. The syllogistic form is: no angels propagate; all angels are souls; therefore no souls propagate. EAE in the third figure is invalid. No third figure syllogism has a universal conclusion.

Again Gill argues that the soul of the child could not come from a part of the parent’s soul, for souls have no parts. But if it came from the whole of the parent’s soul, the parent would have no soul left and his body would immediately die. This is ludicrous. Traducianism does not assert that the parent's_soul becomes the child's soul, but that the parent’s soul produces another soul for the child. That souls have no parts, at least in any spatial sensed must be maintained. But souls have functions They are active. Why cannot one produce another? This of course is speculation: It does not prove traducianism. What it does is to show that Gill’s argument is equally speculation and fallacious to boot.

Gill’s clinching argument is based on Hebrews 12:9, “We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us. . . shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits.” His point is that the immediate source of our flesh or body is our earthly parents, and therefore the immediate source of our spirit is God the Father. Yet in the same paragraph Gill admits that a parent horse generates the colt’s spirit. John Owen has the

same interpretation, though he does not mention horses. The opposing theologians would point out that the context is a discussion of chastisement. The main point is that as we reverenced the fathers of our flesh when they chastened us, we should all the more be in subjection to the Father of spirits. The text does not read “the Father of our spirits,” though obviously we are individually included with all other Christians. But the exegesis of Gill and Owen depends on inserting the word, or idea, *immediate* before the words *fathers* and *Father.* This idea cannot be read into the text as the previous word *our* can. In fact the word *father*itself does not have the same connotation in both instances. There are many differences—and this puts it mildly—between our Father in heaven and our earthly father. Therefore creationism is at best nothing more than a possible interpretation. The verse does not deny creationism; nor does it assert traducianism; it is simply silent on the question.

Archibald Alexander Hodge, in his truly magnificent volume on *The Atonement,* defends creationism as necessary to a proper understanding of that central doctrine of Christianity. The problem A. A. Hodge faces is the relationship between Adam’s first sin and the guilt of the human race. What is behind the phrase, “In Adam all die?” How could Adam’s descendants be personally guilty and merit God’s punishment? Hodge objects to the Realism of W. G. T. Shedd, whom he represents as saying (not a verbatim quotation from Shedd) that “Adam was the entire *genus* , as well as the first individual . . . every individual member [of the human race] was physically and numerically one with him . . . hence the whole genus is guilty. . . . This is the Realistic view recently advocated... by Dr. William G.T. Shedd” (p. 99). On the next two pages he reiterates the idea that we “were *really* and *numerically* one with Adam” and that “this

Realistic theory of our *numerical* oneness with Adam is an essential element of the doctrine. ...”

In these and his following pages Hodge seems to labor under two important misconceptions. He is quite convinced that traducianism, a theory concerning the propagation of the soul, is utterly inconsistent with the doctrines of federal headship and immediate imputation. This just is not so. There is no logical incongruity between the proposition, the souls of descendants are propagated through their parents, and the proposition, Adam acted as the legal representative for all men. Rather, is it not plausible that the first propagator would be the best representative? In fact, Hodge agrees with this last plausibility (*ibid.*, p. Ill), but he seems unaware how much this undermines his arguments against traducianism.

Then, second, Hodge seems to have a defective view of Realism. Realism of course asserts the real existence of the human genus. This is an Idea in God’s mind and it is a real object of knowledge. But it is hard to imagine any Realist identifying the perfect eternal Idea with a temporal and imperfect individual. The relationship of Adam to the Idea is precisely the same as the relationship of any other individual man to the Idea. The individuals “participate” in, or are all “patterned after” the Idea; but the notion that one individual is “physically and numerically one” with the Idea, or that any other individual is “physically and numerically one” with Adam is enough to send poor Plato to his grave in despair. This misunderstanding of Realism vitiates much of Hodge’s argumentation.

We may admit that some of Shedd’s expressions are imprecise. He does not pin down the nature of the unity between Adam and the Idea. He uses the phrase “the Adamic existence and unity” (*History of Doctrine,* II, p. 16); and also “the Adamic unity in respect to both body and soul” *(ibid,* p. 24). Later he asserts that

the Latin fathers held that “man was created as a species, in respect of both soul and body” *(ibid*, p.91); these phrases may be imprecise, but they do not support Hodge’s assertions. There must be some sort of Adamic existence and unity; this unity surely has something to do with both body and soul; and the species man was eternally in God’s mind as truly as Adam was created. But these indubitable truths do not justify an assertion of the *numerical* and *physical* unity of each human being with Adam. Could Shedd or anyone else ever have held that I am physically and numerically Adam, and that you are too, and that therefore you and I are the numerically identical body now sitting in this chair? Furthermore, A.A. Hodge cites no page on which Shedd makes such an assertion.

There is a passage in Augustine that asserts a peculiar unity of all men, including Adam, with a generic human nature. The translation of the *City of God* (XIII, 14) in the Post-Nicene Fathers seems to say that this generic unity sinned before Adam sinned. To quote, “Man. . . begot corrupted and condemned children. For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man, who fell into sin by the woman. . . .For not yet was the particular form created and distributed to us, in whom we as individuals were to live, but already the seminal nature was there. . .

But the 1947 reprint of the Healey translation in Everyman’s Library has it differently. The important sentences are these: “For in him were we all, since we all were that one man, who . . . fell into sin. We had not our particular forms yet, but there was the seed of our natural propagation, which being corrupted by sin must produce man of that same nature. . . .”

The only phrase that could offend contemporary nominalists is, “we all were that one man.” But nothing in the text defines that unity as numerical. The text says indeed that the seed of our

natural propagation was in Adam; and in that sense we were physically in Adam. Who can deny it? The text also says that our present corrupt nature is inherited from our parents. If creationism is correct, then we do not inherit our corruption from our parents, but we get it immediately from God in his creative act. Can this be the Biblical position? Even Hodge does not want to say that God creates depraved souls. In his catechetical *Outlines of Theology* (p. 349) he writes, "(1) God cannot be the author of sin. (2) We must not believe that he could consistently with his own perfections create a creature *de novo* with a sinful nature." But whether the first paragraph on 352 implies that children are born sinless, is a question its language does not answer clearly.

One may well suspect that Hodge gives away his case, when in *The Atonement* (p. 114) he admits, "If, on the other hand, the question be asked *HO* inherent moral corruption originates in a newly-created soul and yet the Creator of the soul be not the author of the sin, it must be confessed in reply that the Scriptures give us no direct solution, and that various answers have been given by men equally orthodox."

May we then conclude (1) that the inability of creationism to absolve God of the immediate creation of sinful souls is a point against creationism; (2) that propagation by parents is a very natural and plausible assumption; (3) that traducianism does not conflict with immediate imputation and the federal headship of Adam; and (4) not only divine immutability in general, but the specific statement that God rested from his work of creation renders incredible the notion that God issued many billions of creative fiats after the original creative week;

Both Hodges confidently claim that creationism has been the majority opinion among Reformed theologians. Is it possible to detect a fissure in this granite mass? Louis Berkof, and of course

all Dutch theologians are incurably Reformed, in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 196 ff.), discusses the two views. He notes that there was some traducianism in the early church (e.g. Tertullian, Leo the Great), but that creationism eventually became the dominant opinion, as in Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard. Luther and his successors favored traducianism, but Calvinists "decidedly favored creationism."

Yet Berkhof, after giving the arguments pro and con, does not accept creationism as whole-heartedly as its better known exponents do. He rather straddles the issue. The closing paragraph (p. 201) gives three reasons for preferring creationism, but then he adds, "At the same time we are convinced that the creative activity of God in originating human souls must be conceived as being most closely connected with the natural process in the generation of new individuals. Creationism does not claim to be able to clear up all the difficulties, but at the same time it serves as a warning against [certain] errors. . . ."

Although creationism justly claims to be the view of the majority of Calvinists, there have been dissenters. Berkhof mentions H.B. Smith, W.G.T. Shedd, and, though not so Calvinistic, A.H. Strong. Hence if the arguments above are inconclusive, and some outright fallacies, it is time to give something in support of traducianism. Perhaps they too may prove inconclusive, and if so, one can rely only on probability. Yet I think one of them is more than merely probable. It will be the first to be stated.

Traducianism holds that children derive not only their bodies from their parents, but their souls also. It sees no reason why there should be many billions of creative acts for souls, when one act of creation was sufficent for all bodies. This is not a mere supposition. It seems to have incontestable Scriptural support. Genesis 2:2, 3 says that God rested from his

work of creation, and the Sabbath was instituted to commemorate his resting. There is no hint that God ever created anything again.

Then, of course, though it is a subsidiary point, the creationists can only squirm at the inference that God immediately created sinful souls.

Finally, and this too is subsidiary, verses in which God refers to "the souls which I have made," if taken in the creationist sense, would imply that God immediately created the trees on my lawn. They are indeed a part of creation, but immediately they grew from the seeds of previous trees. The conclusion is, to put it modestly, that traducianism is well nigh inescapable.

9. Adam and the Fall: The Covenant of Works

Most of the preceding has dealt with man's basic nature as created. It has been impossible to exclude all references to sin and its effects, but the topic was restricted to a minimum. Now the argument must proceed to what happened next. There will be a brief resume of Adam's original nature and then a description of the changes that took place. The brief resume must begin with Adam's rationality, for this has a great deal to do with his relationship to God.

The section on the image of God showed that mankind was created rational. Although sin and salvation have been anticipated, the main line of development has come only to man's dichotomous composition and the propagation of the soul. Therefore we return to Adam. Created as an adult, his intellect was ready for the problems that faced him. Among them was the necessity of talking with Eve, and especially of talking with God. Since God obviously intended to speak to men, Adam must have had from the first an ability to understand and reply.

Genesis 1:28,29 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, . . . and have dominion . . . over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 2:16,17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:19,20 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, . . . and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: . . . And Adam gave names to all cattle, . . . , and to every beast of the field.

This is not to say that Adam was created with a complete vocabulary. Nor had he developed Newtonian calculus. But he had enough vocabulary to understand what God said to him and enough intellectual ingenuity to invent names or symbols for the animals.

The problem of language is a difficult one for secular philosophers. Rousseau recognized the paradox he faced. To learn a language, one must live in a society that speaks the language, as a baby does; but for a society to exist, it is first necessary that they speak a common language. After Rousseau, the evolutionists tried to develop language out of the grunts of pigs and the twittering of birds. Wilbur Marshall Urban placed emphasis on the imitation of natural sounds. He cites a so-called primitive language in which two or three similar syllables are supposed to sound like a murmuring

brook; then with two more of the same syllables the word means *ocean.* The meanings are supposedly conveyed by the sound itself. It is not likely that anyone could guess the meaning of the first word; and what is worse onomatopoeia does

not account for words such as *because*, *the*, *left*, *therefore*, *seven*, or even *agricola* and *georgos.*

Furthermore, evolution requires simplicity at the start and complexity later on; but the older known languages are all more complex than the modern languages. Latin is tremendously more complicated than French, and the savage languages are worse than Latin.

While this is an embarrassment to evolutionary theories, it does not follow that Adam invented or was endowed with the most complicated grammar ever used; for the confusion of tongues at Babel broke the continuity of linguistic development, and we today have no idea of what Adam's language was. But that he spoke a rational language immediately is a clear inference from Genesis. He was created rational for the purpose of speaking to God and to Eve.

With respect to Adam's original state, and particularly the image of God, the Greek theologians imagined that they completely excluded Adam's moral conformity from the image. Some Lutherans, in order to stress original righteousness and its loss in the fall, seem to exclude rationality and restrict the image to Adam's moral nature. The Reformed theologians often say they include both. But this way of stating the matter is awkward. Both Lutherans and Calvinists speak as if rationality and morality are quite distinct. It is better, however to recognize that morality is a subdivision of rationality. Conscience, whether perfect or defiled, is not a separate element in man's constitution. It is simply the human activity of thinking about moral norms. Man thinks of arithmetic and he thinks of obeying God's commands. Adam before the fall thought correctly about both subjects. He was indeed altogether righteous, but he was so because he was altogether rational. As Charles Hodge says (*Systematic Theology,* II, p.99), in a few lines that are almost a verbatim

quotation from Thomas Aquinas *(Summa Theologica,* I, Q. 95, 1) “His reason was subject to God; his will was subject to his reason; his affections and appetites to his will; the body was the obedient organ of the soul.”

This picture of man is quite different from the one Aristotle gives us. Of course there was no first man for Aristotle: He taught that the human race had always lived on the planet Earth. Neither did Aristotle have the Hebrew-Christian concept of sin and its disastrous effects. But aside from these two points the basic difference in ethics is that for Aristotle each man is born morally neutral (and had there been a first man, he too would have been morally neutral). As the child grows, he learns to live morally, or immorally, by practice. It is similar to learning the piano. If the child practices the correct fingering, he will develop good habits and in time play Mozart’s sonatas smoothly. But if he makes a mistake in fingering, and repeats the mistake, he will soon develop bad habits that can hardly, if ever, be corrected. This is not the Biblical view of man, either before or after the fall. Man was not created neutral: He was positively righteous. After the fall men are born totally depraved. In neither case is man morally neutral. Although the Roman church, in adopting Aristotle as its patron philosopher, never copied this theory of ethics completely, Aristotle’s influence on Romanism produced a view of sin and regeneration that is quite different from what the Bible teaches.

The Romanists acknowledge that Adam before the fall was as a matter of fact rational and righteous. So far as this fact is concerned they do not differ from the Protestant view. But whereas the Protestants include the righteousness in the image of God, the Romanists restrict the image to the natural powers of reason, and then they consider righteousness as an additional supernatural gift. In the fall, man loses his original righteousness, but retains the image in its completeness.

If this should seem to be “merely” a difference in the usage of the term *image* (for the Protestants also say that righteousness was lost but reason retained), one may reply that a Christian theologian should use Biblical terms in their Biblical meaning. One may also reply that, as in the case of *justification* also, the non-biblical usage results in an unbiblical doctrine of sin and salvation.

This becomes clear when the Romanists assert that the body and the spirit, before the fall, had, not merely diverse, but actually contrary inclinations. These inclinations fought: *Ex his autem diversis, vel contrariis propensionitus existere in unoeodem homine pugnam quantam* (Bellarmin, *De Gratia Primi Hominis).*

This theory is not explicit in the Decrees of Trent. These are deliberately obscure; and any Reformer could perfectly well accept most of the wording of the Fifth Session on original sin. There is one sentence, however, that the Reformers could not accept. Our catechism says that sin is any want of conformity unto, as well as transgression of the law of God. But the Decrees of Trent refuse to make the lack of conformity truly and properly sin. The text is, “in the baptized [understand, *regenerate*] there remains concupiscence, or an incentive to sin. . . . This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin.”

But if the fifth decree of Trent is largely ambiguous, the Roman Catechism, of equal authority, is more explicit, and Bellarmin still more so.*

***Compare W.G.T. Shedd, *History of Doctrine,* II, pp. 140 ff.**

The Romish theory therefore locates the source of sin in Adam’s unfallen nature. After the loss of the supernatural gift, he falls to

the lower neutral level of his created state, and the struggle between the bodily appetites and the norms of reason naturally results in sin.

The similarity to Aristotle is that Adam was created neither sinful nor holy, but neutral. Maybe this is worse than Aristotle, for Adam's neutrality seems to offer no hope of achieving sinlessness; rather it seems that the body must inevitably overcome the mind.

The Reformed or Augustinian doctrine is that man was created righteous. The body had no downward propensities. No added supernatural gift was necessary to produce a harmony between body and spirit. Sin does not begin in the body—this is a remnant of Manichaeism—but in the mind. The result is total depravity, and the "concupiscence" even in the regenerate is truly and properly sin, as the apostle says.

But once again the discussion has leaped too far ahead. And again before the fall is discussed, it is necessary to explain federal headship, and before that, the covenant of works.

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Luke 10:28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live.

Romans 2:6-8 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

The idea of a covenant permeates Scripture, indeed the Bible itself is divided into two parts, called the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Children's Catechism defines covenant as an agreement between two or more persons. This does not require the equality of the parties. A victorious army can dictate the terms of peace to its defeated enemy. A father can lay down conditions in his will that bind his son. God laid down conditions for Adam's obedience. Being perfectly righteous at that time Adam certainly acquiesced without hesitation. But even though a defeated nation may hem and haw, Clemenceau commands, "Signez!" and a covenant is made.

The covenant of works with Adam required him not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Stated generally, the covenant required perfect obedience. The result of perfect obedience was to have been eternal life. As a general principle of divine justice this covenant is still in effect. As Romans 2:6-8 says, God will give eternal life to anyone who by patient good works seeks glory, honour, and incorruption. But while this covenant is still the standard of divine justice, it is inapplicable because there is no

one that seeketh after God, all have sinned, and there is none that doeth good, no not one.

J.J. Van Oosterzee (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 381) in rather peremptory phraseology rejects the idea of a covenant of works. He says, “There is not, however, the slightest ground for conceiving here of a properly so-called*covenant* made by God with all mankind in Adam, in which eternal life, as the reward of the work of obedience, was the promise, and the tree of life was the sign and seal (Coccejus). The exegetical grounds for this view in Hosea 6:7 are absolutely insufficient and its dogmatic value has not the slightest importance. Scripture does not teach that God has made a contract with man, but only that he designs to lead him, plainly by a moral road, to greater happiness.”

How Van Oosterzee can defend the assertion, “its dogmatic value has not the slightest importance,” is hard to guess. If the Bible does in fact teach a covenant of works, it must have some dogmatic importance. In fact the relation between the covenant of works and other parts of the plan of redemption will, as we proceed, become clear enough.

As for Hosea 6:7 one may translate it either, “But they like men have transgressed the covenant;” or, “they like Adam have transgressed the covenant.” The first of these translations makes mediocre sense at best. Is it a very strong condemnation to say that they as well as other men have transgressed? The second translation is more pointed. It can be paraphrased as, they are not like ordinary sinners, they are worse, even similar to Adam in his first sin. With this translation the idea of a covenant with Adam is explicit.

However, the doctrine of a covenant of works does not depend on this isolated expression in Hosea. If a covenant is an agreement between two or more persons, the only factor

not explicitly mentioned in Genesis is Adam's statement, "I agree." Now, if indeed Adam did not agree, there might be some reason for denying the existence of a covenant. But, since Adam had been created righteous, since further God and Adam, in Genesis 2:19, conversed as friends, and since the fact of this friendship is emphasized by the contrast of Adam's changed behavior in hiding from God in Genesis 3:8-10, it cannot be imagined that Adam had not agreed with the terms set down in Genesis 1:29 and 2:15 ff.

Further to support the idea of a covenant of works, it may be noted that the *threat* of death shows that death was not a natural end of life. The threat is good evidence that there was a covenant.

There is an understanding or interpretation of the particular test that throws light on some disturbing passages in the later Scriptures. Suppose God had commanded Adam not to murder Eve. God no doubt prohibited murder, for Cain seems to have known this law and trembled at its penalty. Presumably God gave all the Ten Commandments to Adam, either before the fall or immediately after. But the test of the covenant of works was the fruit of the tree and not the murder of Eve. Had it been the latter, Adam might have obeyed God simply because Eve was so beautiful. Obedience then would have followed upon mixed motives. But in the case of the fruit, whatever beauty it had was no sufficient motive for disobedience; and the only motive for obedience was the bare desire to obey God. Morality therefore is based on God's sovereignty. His command alone makes an action right or wrong.

This explains some passages in I Samuel and elsewhere that greatly disturb the modern mind. After the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Lord, he discomfited them with rats and bubonic plague. Therefore they sent the Ark back to

the Israelites. When the cows took the Ark to Bethshemesh, the people of that place rejoiced greatly. They sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering unto Jehovah. Yet, in spite of such joy and thanksgiving, the Lord smote the men of Bethshemesh because they had looked into the Ark. In fact the Lord killed 50,070 Israelites. Better known is the punishment of Uzzah in II Samuel 6:7. The modern mind is disturbed by these severities because it has an unbiblical concept of God and a false understanding of morality. Even Christians are contaminated with these popular secular views. The Christian position is that morality and righteousness are based on the sovereign commands of a sovereign God. An action is wrong simply because God forbids it. Where there is no law, there is no sin to impute. Had God given Adam no commands, Adam would have been as free as the animals. They cannot sin; but Adam could and did.

There was therefore a covenant of works.

10. Adam and the Fall: Federal Headship

If Adam had fulfilled the terms of the covenant, not only he himself, but all his posterity also would have benefited. As it turned out, we must be more interested in the result of his disobedience. The two cases are in principle the same: His act, good or bad, would determine the moral position of his descendants. Though Genesis does not explain it at length, Adam's disobedience was not merely his personal and private sin. Even if this depraved nature was transmitted to his children by inheritance, this is not the full meaning of the fall because it is not the full meaning of Adam's relation to his posterity. The great passage on the subject is Romans 5:12-21: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and by the sin death, and so death came upon all men because all sinned. . . . by the transgression of the one, the many died. . .

. the judgment came from one to condemnation ... by the transgression of the one; death reigned by the one. ... So then as by one transgression the judgment came to all men to condemnation. . . . for as by one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the one, the many shall be constituted righteous."

The student should now study Charles Hodge's superb *Commentary on Romans* for an exhaustive explanation of these verses. In fact all systematic theology presupposes preparatory exegesis. Ideally the student has covered most of the Bible in his exegesis courses, and now he is systematizing what he has previously learned. That is why theology text books, more advanced than this one, are often entitled, Systematic Theology.

So far as Romans 5:12-21 goes, there are three main interpretations. Each is learnedly, though sometimes perversely defended. The test of these interpretations, however, is simple. Only a person completely insane could deny that Paul in this passage constructs an analogy between Adam and Christ. Therefore any interpretation that ruins the analogy, that is, an mterpretation that cannot be carried through with respect to both Adam and Christ, must be wrong.

The Pelagian interpretation is the worst of the three. Pelagius believed that Adam's sin had no effect on his posterity except that it furnished a bad example. Man has free will and he is able to obey the law of God perfectly. If a man uses his free will to obey sufficiently, inspired as he may be by Christ's example, he has earned his salvation.

This view does indeed preserve an analogy. But it is not Paul's analogy. Pelagius was consistent. We are sinners because of our own voluntary transgressions, and we achieve righteousness by

our own good works. The analogy is complete; but both parts are false.

The first part is false because the Biblical text says that the many were made sinners by the one act of the one man; and it also says that many shall be made righteous, not by any alleged free will and obedience, but by the obedience of one man, Jesus. Note how Paul emphasizes the idea of the *one* act and the *one* person.

It may also be noted that Pelagius cannot explain the deathfof infants. On his theory they are born, if not righteous, at least neutral and not sinners, and therefore not deserving the penalty of death. Paul explains that infants die, even if they have not committed a voluntary sin after the similitude of Adam's first transgression. They are sinners by imputation.

The second view can be called either Romish or Arminian, or, sometimes, semi-pelagian. This theory holds that Adam's sin was not merely a bad example. By it his physical and mental constitution became depraved, and his natural posterity naturally inherited this depravity, and this depravity is the cause of death, even of infant deaths.

One point against this interpretation is the fact that the words "all sinned" in Romans 5:12 cannot be translated "all became corrupt." Paul says, "all sinned.'' The verb is not even a perfect tense, which could be translated "all have sinned and continue to be sinners." Normally the aorist tense refers to a single event in past time and here it refers to the one sin of the one man. How the one sin of Adam can justify the assertion that all sinned in that one act will be explained in a moment; but the verse cannot mean "all became corrupt."

Furthermore, this Romish-Arminian view destroys the analogy. Like the Pelagian view it also states an analogy. But the problem is not to invent some analogy or other; what is required is to

preserve Paul's analogy and see that it is consistent with everything Paul teaches elsewhere. Now the Romish view is that though the depraved nature is not really sin, the sins that follow make us guilty of the death penalty. Similarly, infused grace results in those good works by which we merit salvation. But the New Testament is clear that the ground of our acquittal is no subjective state of ours, but the finished work and merit of Christ. The Arminians may not be so wrong on this point as the Romanists, for they profess to believe justification by faith. Nevertheless they tend to view our subjective believing as the basis of justification, and thereby at least to obscure and misunderstand Christ's merit.

Then, finally, the Biblical material shows that depravity is not the cause of death. Depravity is a part of death itself. Scripture uses the term *death* both for physical death and for spiritual death. Both together are the penalty for sin. God told Adam in Genesis 2:17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And die that day he did. About 900 years later he died physically. But this was only one part of the penalty for sin. The more immediate penalty was the depraving of his constitution. Therefore since depravity is a part of the penalty, it cannot be the cause of the penalty, as this view holds.

The third interpretation must therefore be correct. Adam was not only the natural head of the race, but God also chose him to be its representative. It was the race and not Adam alone that was on probation. If he sinned, then all sinned. Had he passed his probation, his children would have been sinless.

This view is sketchily given in Genesis. First, the penalty for disobedience descends to Adam's posterity (Genesis 3:15-16). Apparently also the righteousness established by probation, and its consequent freedom from death, would likewise have been transmitted. Note that the command to propagate the race comes

before the fall. Adam and Eve would have had children. But they fell, and God drove them out of the garden lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. This implies that the children, had there been no fall, would have had access to the tree of life. Hence the penalty descends, as the reward would have descended.

But what is so sketchily given in Genesis is fully explained in a paragraph not fully quoted a page or two ago:

Romans 5:17-19: For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in the life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

The emphasis on the one man is overwhelming. By one man's offense, death reigned by the one. For the moment, omit the references to the one man Christ. By one transgression condemnation came upon all men. Through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners.

If, now, Adam were not the representative of us all, and if his first sin were not ours, then Paul could not have so stressed the one sin and ignored Adam's later sins. These later sins were also bad examples; if they did not initiate, they at least increased Adam's depravity. And why was not Eve's sin mentioned? Was it not also a bad example? Did it not deprave her? How then is the sin, depravity, and death of her posterity referred to Adam and not to Eve? The only answer can be that God chose Adam and not Eve to be our representative and to act in our stead.

The conclusion therefore is that Adam was the federal head or legal representative of his natural posterity. And when he sinned that one time, we all sinned.

11. Immediate Imputation

The federal headship of Adam may not seem germane to a descriptive psychology of human nature. As an office or function it does not even describe Adam's nature. But without it there is no understanding of the later generations—Cain, Lamech, Paul, and Alexander the coppersmith. Much of this material has already been touched upon, so that a reminder, some implications, and a small addition will be sufficient here. The small addition will be a defense of the consistency of immediate imputation with the philosophy of Realism, a consistency which Hodge denies.

In the discussion on traducianism it was necessary to anticipate the doctrine of immediate imputation. The essential point was there made clear: Depravity is a part of the penalty for sin, therefore the guilt logically precedes. The question is, on what ground does God hold us, Adam's posterity, guilty? The Biblical doctrine is that God imputes Adam's guilt to us immediately; that is, without an intermediary step. The word *immediately* here does not refer to time. One might say that God imputed Adam's guilt to us the very moment that Adam sinned. This could well be true, though it is more accurate to say that God imputed this guilt from all eternity. Clearly the doctrine of immediate imputation does not focus on time, as the contemporary usage of the word might suggest: The question is as stated above: Does God impute guilt because of our inherited depravity, or does he impute it without this as a means? The Biblical reason for the doctrine of immediate imputation is that depravity is a part of the penalty the guilt entails. We are not guilty because we are depraved; we are depraved because we are guilty.

Of course we are also guilty of our own voluntary transgressions here and now. This, however, is irrelevant to the present matter. The present matter is our relation to Adam's first sin.

The Westminster Confession uses a very carefully phrased paragraph to distinguish between inherited depravity and imputed guilt. It is so carefully yet so naturally worded that most readers probably fail to see the implications. The confessional statement is: "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation" (VI, 3). Note: the guilt was *imputed*; the corruption was *conveyed.*

None of this, to return to a previous point, conflicts with traducianism or realism. If there have been some theologians who asserted the preexistence of all souls, and somehow identify Adam's sin in a previous existence with a sin of ours in a previous existence, we agree that Plato taught preexistence and reincarnation. But he never identified Socrates with the Idea Man or with any other individual man. Hence realism cannot be rejected on the ground that Plato held both to realism and to preexistence. The former does not necessitate the latter.

It might then be asserted that realism is faulty because it cannot explain the relation of Adam's sin to our guilt. The obvious answer is that realism has no obligation to do so. The mere fact that genera and species are real, existing objects of thought is not very closely related to the problem of original sin. The fact that rosaceae is a genus has little to do with sending long stemmed roses to a lovely young lady. After all, neither does the doctrine of the Trinity explain the doctrine of original sin.

Hodge (*Systematic Theology* II, p. 217) admits that President Edwards' theory of original sin "is not exactly the old realistic

theory.” Indeed it is not. Edwards was not a realist at all. He was an empiricist, deeply influenced by Locke and Berkeley. Hence objections to Edwards damage neither realism nor traducianism. But Hodge wants to convict realism, even apart from Edwards. He writes (p.221) “The realistic doctrine . . . makes the numerical sameness of substance the essence of identity. Every genus or species of plants or animals is one because all the individuals of those genera and species are partakers of one and the same substance. In every species there is but one substance of which the individuals are the modes of manifestations.” From this he infers that realism must identify the individual Adam with the individuals Peter and Paul.

But the difficulty, and of course there are others also, lies in the word *substance.* This is the word that causes difficulty in the doctrine of the Trinity. Since *substance* is Latin, and since it was given a different meaning from its Greek cognate*hypostasis,* one wants to know what Hodge means by it. If we use medieval Latin, we would not say that “in every species there is but one substance.” We would say, “every species is one substance.” Taking this back to Aristotle, this means that every species has a fixed *definition.* Plato would have said that the individuals *participate* in the Idea. In this way an individual could be called a mode of the Idea’s or definition’s manifestation. But this is far from identifying one mode of manifestation with another mode. That is, this is far from identifying the individual Adam with the individual Peter or Paul.

It is also far from identifying Adam with the species *homo sapiens.* A late Neoplatonist, Porphyry (c. 275), got his name attached to the phrase “a tree of Porphyry.” This is a dichotomous scheme of classification. For example, Living Being is divided into immortal and mortal; mortal is divided into rational and irrational; irrational is divided into plant

and animal. Now, then, this individual dachshund, Zephi, is a "manifestation" of the essence, definition, or reality*Dachshund*. He also participates in the essence or definition of *Dog;* and of *Animal.*

If anyone should suspect that Porphyry in the third century of our era cannot be trusted as a representative of Plato six centuries earlier, we may note that Plato's dialogue *Sophist* begins with a playful illustration of a "tree of Porphyry" in defining an angler. It eventually discusses the highest Ideas of Being, Same, Other, Rest and Motion; and concludes with another tree of Porphyry defining the Sophist. The dialogue *Parmenides* is too intricate to discuss here.

But even if Adam and Peter are "lowest species," they are not identical either with each other or with the higher species *homo.* Someone may now object that all this is too pagan. What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? This is the device of escapism. It evinces a disinclination to serious study. Yet a theologian may and ought to translate this material into more Biblical terminology. So we say, God knows, has the idea of, defines man, Adam, and Peter. God's knowledge is clear and distinct. He does not confuse one definition with another; he does not confuse Adam with Peter, or either one with the definition of man.

The conclusion then is that immediate imputation is a doctrine very obviously exegeted from Scripture; that realism, though not so quickly inferred by the average Bible reader, nevertheless underlies the Scriptural theory of truth and the presence of so-called abstract terms such as justification, and has further evidence in the pattern of the tabernacle; and finally that at the very least realism does not conflict with immediate imputation.

Unlike the previous defense of the consistency of realism and immediate imputation, a subject that seems and is philosophical, because of which people with few logical proclivities fail to appreciate its Biblical importance, the doctrine of total depravity is of necessity more descriptive and more obviously Biblical. This doctrine has to do with the effects of sin in the history of the human race. Some of these effects are the actions of God; but more particularly they are the actions of Adam, Noah and his contemporaries, the sins of Israel, and our own. But not merely the actions: behind them is the depraved nature which engenders them.

Yet though the following is more temporally conditioned than the preceding, it is still mainly doctrinal. There are two reasons. First, the following is basically doctrinal because bare events are bare unless explained and explanation is doctrine. Then second, in Christianity history is itself doctrine. Although without the doctrinal explanation we would have no real understanding of the events, yet Christianity cannot be true unless the events actually occurred. The exodus from Egypt may not be so important as the death of Christ, but it is as essential to Christianity as the doctrine of the Atonement is. An explanation of an event—Christ died for our sins—is no explanation at all if the event did not occur.

So then, the first point in this section refers to a single historical event: Adam ate the forbidden fruit.

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree,

Whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe,

....

Sing, heavenly Muse."

But the song is lugubrious, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

Our discussion previously mentioned that this threat may seem not to have been fulfilled, for Adam lived several centuries after his initial disobedience. What this indicates, as explained above, is that *death* in the Scriptures does not primarily mean physical death. It means spiritual death, and this spiritual death brought us all our woe.

The first question now is, What became of the image of God when Adam fell? The Romish position that he fell to a level of neutrality was discussed earlier. The Bible and the Reformed position place him much lower. If he were neutral, there would have been the possibility of his regaining perfect righteousness by his own exertions. Such was Pelagius’ dependence on free will. Further, if Adam had merely lost his original righteousness, the penalty God threatened to execute would have been inappropriate. Since the penalty was more severe than it seems to an uninstructed American pagan, one must ask, What happened to the image? Was it annihilated? Did man cease to be God’s image?

The answer, as any partly educated Christian realizes, is, No. Before the more fundamental reasons are considered, a particular application, and one of political importance today, is given in Genesis 9:6. The text says, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.” The authority for capital punishment in the event of murder is based on the fact that the victim was the image of God. Naturally the secularists oppose capital punishment for murderers because they want to murder millions of unborn babies. This very practical consideration should stimulate in the untheological and unphilosophical Christian some respect for the more abstruse reasonings. To such we now return.

No; man did not cease to be God's image. Paradoxical though it may seem, man could not be a sinner at all, even now, if he were not still God's image. Sinning presupposes rationality and voluntary decision. Animals cannot sin. Sin therefore requires God's image because man is responsible for his sins. If there were no responsibility, there could be nothing properly called sin. Sin is an offense against God, and God calls us to account. If we were not answerable to God, repentance would be useless, indeed impossible nonsense. Reprobation and hell would also be impossible; for God has made responsibility a function of knowledge.

The same idea can be put another way. Whatever the fall did to man, it did not reduce him to the status of an irrational animal. Man is still man after the fall. He is still a person. He is still rational. To be sure, he acts irrationally. Yet his life is not one of instinct as is the case with animals. Sin does not eradicate the image; but it certainly causes a malfunctioning.

Theologians sometimes discuss, or more usually barely mention, the *noetic* effect of sin; and their remarks are often vague and hard to understand. Yet it should not be difficult to specify such noetic effects, that is, the effects of sin on the mind and rationality. The effect on the mind is not ignorance as such, for Adam was extensively ignorant before the fall. Not only was he ignorant of botany and calculus, he was ignorant of nearly all Biblical theology. The coming of a redeemer was revealed only after the fall, naturally and even then in puzzling brevity. The intellectual difference between Adam before the fall and afterwards was that after it he made mistakes. Error, not ignorance, is the effect. Before the fall, no matter how extensive his ignorance of mathematics may have been, whatever arithmetic he actually used was correct. Today we make mistakes in addition when we try to balance our bank

statements. That is to say, Arminians do not understand the Bible.

The effect should be and can be stated more generally. Before the fall Adam may have reasoned relatively little, but his syllogisms were all valid. Afterward he fell into fallacies. He began to deny the antecedent, assert the consequent, and use too many undistributed middles. Sin had no effect on logic. Logic is the form of God's thought and a valid syllogism is valid even if it is the devil himself who uses it. Similarly with invalid inferences: no matter how saintly the devout Christian, his sanctification never makes an invalid inference valid. It is the sinner, not the logic, that is mistaken. Biologically he is still a rational species, but his mind has blundered. He does not always blunder in his inferences; the image is distorted, but not eradicated.

There is another type of error that man has fallen into. Not only are his inferences sometimes invalid: He often chooses false premises. Since this is rather obvious, its mention so far as formal logic is concerned should be sufficient. But there is one type of premise that requires special mention.

Questions of morality, in the more ordinary sense of the word (for a mistake in arithmetic is itself immoral, and that is why Arminianism was mentioned two paragraphs ago) are often divorced from discussions of logic, rationality, and even theology. Have we not all heard evangelists declaring that the unregenerate are not recalcitrant because of any theological difficulty: the trouble is moral.

A Nazarene professor once preached a sermon in Chicago on Christ's conversation with the woman at the well. She was not a woman of impeccable morality. When Christ reminded her that she was not married to the man she was living with, the woman, so the Nazarene professor declared, tried to side-step the issue of

morality by asking a theological question on which the Jews and the Samaritans differed. But, said the professor, Christ could not be distracted, and he kept on pressing the matter of morality. Apparently the theological professor had never read the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. Christ very explicitly, even emphatically, gave the theological answer. There is not another word about morality or sin in the remainder of the conversation. In the preceding chapter Jesus had told the very pious Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." To the woman he said, "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Too bad: Poor Jesus got his two answers twisted around.

Yet even moral judgments are a species of judgment and are thus subsumed under general intellectual activity. One result of the fall, then, is the occurrence of incorrect evaluations by means of erroneous thinking. Adam thought, incorrectly, that it would be better to join Eve in her sin than to obey God and separated from her. So without being deceived he ate the forbidden fruit. The external act followed upon the thought. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Commonly immorality is considered to consist in overt actions; the Bible shows its origin in thinking.

The topic of the noetic effects of sin, and the identification of God's image in man as reason or intellect, preserves the unity of man's person and saves theologians from splitting the image into schizophrenic parts. It accords with all that the Scripture says about sin and salvation.

Yet too many people in the pews, steeped in contemporary anti-intellectualism, and regarding all religion as essentially emotional, conclude that the noetic effects of sin is a subject too abstruse and philosophical, while on the other hand too many people who do not sit in the pews, the abortionists, the homosexuals, and assorted criminals, condemn Christianity

as being too strict, bigoted, and any other unpleasant terms one can think of. The former group will be less than enthusiastic about any further emphasis on thinking, while the latter group will go their wicked way, hating and despising the Bible's characterization of prevalent sins.

In case some elementary students are unaware of it, and some secular professors too, one must inform them that the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that everyone is as sinful as it is possible to be. The word *total* in English can be used either extensively or intensively. The intensive or connotative idea is that man is so corrupt that his every act is as heinous an any act can be. The extensive or denotative sense is that all his thought, faculties, and activities, all of them, are to some degree or other affected by sin. In his totality he is indeed heading in the wrong direction, but only a few persons have actually descended to the lowest depths of their destination.

The doctrine of total depravity is essential to the theology of grace. If even one action, part, function or factor in man were free from the effects of sin, a sinner might expect that his salvation would depend, at least in part, on his own inherent goodness. Salvation might require the grace of God, but man's own goodness would also be requisite and effective. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Christianity is a unified, logical system of doctrine and that various parts of theology which seem so disconnected are in fact absolutely essential to each other. A denial of total depravity is also a denial of salvation by Christ.

That the Scriptures definitely teach total depravity and base it on the noetic effects of sin, can easily be documented.

Genesis 6:5 And God saw that. . . every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually.

Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Matthew 15:19 Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, . . . blasphemies.

And Romans 3:9-18, which we shall refrain from quoting.

These verses and dozens more, all of which, at least in their totality, rather definitely teach that sin affects every part of human nature, so that even the ploughing of the wicked is sin, are sufficient to justify the omission of a catalogue of actual sins. The sins themselves are of tremendous importance, but descriptive psychology could become very boring in describing them all. Some one or two could be analyzed for the benefit of a person today similarly tempted; but why here? One might begin with Cain, proceed to the utter wickedness of Noah's generation, repeat the story of Sodom, of Ahab, and of Judas. Perhaps more convincing are the sins of Jacob, of David, and Peter's denial. But why not just read the Bible? Some of the anti-philosophic readers would soon be happy with brief generalities, that is, the doctrinal summations. The present one is that human nature is depraved in all its parts.

13. The Heart

In addition to the basic principles relative to man's nature, the discussion of which sounds too philosophical for daily devotions, the Scripture exhibits numerous subsidiary details. Well, obviously, it had to, if it was going to describe the conduct of several hundred, or in groups several millions of people. It recounts the popular rejoicings and complaints

by the people of Israel relative to Moses' administration of the new nation. The captivity and the return to Jerusalem were group phenomena. The Pharisees and the Sadducees combined in one group to oppose Christ. And the Stoics and Epicureans on Mars Hill dispersed when Paul began to mention the resurrection.

But human psychology is better described in the actions of individuals. Noah persevered for years in opposition to the prevailing opinions. Gideon gave the appearance of acting stupidly; and Samson certainly acted stupidly. Job is a wonderful example of trust in God during severe adversity. David sinned. Daniel resisted pressure. Consider the dozens of individuals whose actions the New Testament portrays. Such individualities are material for novels. For theology psychological terms must be examined.

The Bible speaks of the spirit, the soul, the mind, the conscience, and in the New Testament even the flesh, the usages of all of which are worthy of study. But nowhere in the Bible, at least in the King James version, is the word *emotion* to be found. One does, however, frequently find the term *heart.* Laidlaw (p. 121) remarks that "This is the one least disputed in its meaning... it may be held to be common to all parts of the Bible in the same sense. It only concerns the modern reader to note what that sense is, and to distinguish it, in one or two particulars, from the modern use of the word." This statement may be barely true. The term may possibly be the least disputed among scholars, though it is hard to prove it. It is not used in the Bible only in one sense. And if its modern use in Laidlaw's day differed in just one or two particulars, it is today widely misunderstood with deleterious effects. Many preachers interpret it to be the antithesis of intellect. A recurrent contrast is that between the heart and the head. If the head as intellect is not totally repudiated, it is degraded to minor importance. William E.

Hocking, who did so much to destroy evangelical foreign missions some fifty years ago, though he does not deny that there are intellectual factors in religion, declared that no theoretical proposition is true apart from feeling. I suppose that in order to be true, 2 + 2 = 4 must cause palpitation of the heart. And conversely, though he might possibly admit that not all passion is religious, passion is so much the medium of religion that whatever is of passion "tends to be" religious. James Bissett Pratt, in his *The Religious Consciousness* (p. 123) asserts, "Nor is the intellectual side of the process of conversion to be neglected, though it is frankly the least noticeable of the three [will, emotion, and thought]. In most cases it seems to play but a negative part." These two men were scholars and by their training disposed to speak cautiously. Popular evangelists do not always do so.

Sometimes a Christian will insist that Jonathan Edwards wrote a *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections.* Since no one can deny that Jonathan Edwards was moderately well educated, his interest in the emotions, so they say, is strong evidence in favor of an emotional religion. But it is doubtful that these Christians ever read even the first few pages of that treatise. In the 1808 edition, printed by Edward Bains, in Leeds, on pages 10-13 Edwards defines what he means by affections. True, on page 9 he says that "true religion in great part consists in holy affections." Could it be that the great Puritan was anticipating W.E. Hocking and J.B. Pratt? Does doctrine, in Edwards' view, "play but a negative part"? Is emotion, feeling, passion the really important factor?

The point is that Edwards' word *affections* does not mean *emotions.* On page 10 we read, or we ought to read rather than decide what his views were without reading, "Here it may be inquired, What the affections of the mind are? I answer, The affections are no other than the more vigorous and

sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul." Surely no one will reply, "Ah, *sensible!* Edwards is talking about sensation." Well, the great Puritan did not deny that we have sensations, but in the very next line he continues: "God has endued the soul with two principal faculties: The one, that by which it is capable of *perception* and speculation, or by which it discerns and judges of things, which is called [not sensation, but] the *understanding*. The other, that by which the soul is some way *inclined* with respect to the things it views or considers: or it is the faculty by which the soul beholds things. . .either as liking, disliking. . . approving or rejecting. This faculty is called . . . inclination, will. . . mind . . . often called the heart."

Since a few more lines from Edwards may incline a student's will or mind to read some of his works, the quotation will continue a bit further. "It is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections. ... Nor are the motions of the animal spirits, and fluids of the body, anything properly belonging to the *nature* of the affections; though they always *accompany* them . . . [and] are entirely distinct from the affections themselves, and no way essential to them. . . .As all the exercises of inclination and will are concerned either in approving. . . or disapproving. . . so the affections are of two sorts. . .cleaving [to something] or [being] averse from it." On the next page he uses the terms inclination, will, and heart as synonymous.

The Lutherans too, at least those who like the Missouri Synod have preserved their orthodoxy, pay little or no attention to the emotions. Even in this century their notable theologian, Pieper, in his *Christian Dogmatics* (p. 519) very briefly, but twice, states the Lutheran position that the image consists of intellect and will. There is no mention of emotions.

This emphasis on the will has almost totally disappeared from what passes as Christian preaching. Freudianism has replaced it with the emotions. Most pew-warmers do not realize that this emphasis is a very modern development. One can go back to the Westminster divines, to Calvin, to Aquinas. to Angustine, and will find that human nature is regularly divided into intellect and will. To mention another philosopher, not altogether at random, Malebranche in the late seventeenth century began the first numbered paragraph of his *Recherche de la Verite* with the words, “The spirit of man, not being material or extended, is doubtless a simple substance, indivisible and without composition of parts; but nevertheless it is customary to distinguish in it two faculties, to wit, understanding and volition. . . .” Emotions in theology seem to be a twentieth century invention. This development naturally altered people’s views on regeneration and sanctification.

Augustine may seem an exception. The reason, however, was that he wanted to find a replica of the Trinity in man’s mental make-up. He gave several different analyses of human nature. The most frequently mentioned third part was memory; and indeed he defended the identity of persons in heaven on the basis of memory. He also inclined to assign to the will a superiority over the intellect. Even today someone might argue that no one can learn anything without paying attention, and attention is a voluntary action. But Augustine’s desire to find traces of the Trinity in man no longer dominates, and memory can be classified as intellectual, as when we remember that 2 + 2 = 4.

These historical notes have given us a little information on the position of the church through the ages, but they have not advanced the main issue, which is the Biblical meaning of the word *heart.* But another, though this time a very slight, diversion will prove most helpful. Prior to the quotations, it seems best to state the conclusion finally to be drawn. The

purpose is not to force the Scriptural material into a preconceived mold, but rather to direct the student's attention to certain ideas in the material. A single verse can express several ideas, on several subjects; stating the conclusion first will avoid irrelevancies in the examination. The conclusion will be that the term *heart* denotes emotion about ten or at the very most fifteen percent of the time. It denotes the will maybe thirty percent of the time; and it very clearly means the intellect sixty or seventy percent. These figures are obviously approximate. The term *heart* in the Bible occurs more than a thousand times. In view of the present writer's preference for intellectualism as opposed to emotionalism, his critics can easily suspect that he has deliberately chosen to present the intellectual verses—even though some extreme emotionalists may deny there are any at all—and to omit or to decrease the proportion of those on emotion. The only defense the writer has against such accusations is to challenge the critic to study all 1168 (?) verses. Those students who are as little inclined as I am to exegete them all must take my word for it that I have deliberately included a greater number of the emotional verses than I thought necessary. Fifteen percent of the Old Testament citations, if I quote seventy-five, would be 11.5 verses; and I do not think that the clearly emotional verses amount to fifteen percent.

Genesis 6:5, 6 was a passage used to support the doctrine of total depravity, but now attention is directed to the term *heart:* "every imagination of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only evil continually. . . . and it repented the Lord. . .and grieved him at his heart. " Notice that the heart has thoughts: It thinks. The text refers to the evil plans of the populace, excluding Noah. Even the word *imagination* does not designate emotion. Similarly the second verse refers to God's thoughts. Repentance is a change of mind, not an emotion; and though God is immutable and never changes his mind, the Bible frequently uses anthropopathisms as

well as anthropomorphisms. Strange to say, while few Christians are disturbed by the latter, many are deceived by the former. I doubt that any textbook on Systematic Theology written by a Calvinist, a Lutheran, or a Roman Catholic attributes emotion to God. One of them—I can't remember which one at the moment —explains God's anger as his immutable and eternal will to punish sin. Conversely love. Probably many Systematic Theologies say the same thing.

Genesis 8:21 refers both to the heart of God and the heart of man. In both cases it refers chiefly to volition, though both cases indicate a previous intellectual judgment.

Genesis 17:17 refers to a thought or judgment which Abraham made on the basis of his opinions regarding physiology. Genesis 20:5, 6 both refer to the intellectual integrity of Abimilech's heart. He sure had emotions! But both verses concern his mistaken, though excusable, conclusion.

Genesis 24:45 describes the intellectual formulation of a plan of action. No emotion is implied at all. Genesis 27:41 has to do with Esau's plan to murder Jacob. True enough, Esau hated Jacob, and this was no doubt an emotion; but the*heart* is mentioned in connection with a decision on the time to commit the murder. It was pure intellection and not even volition.

Genesis 42:28 may be cited as a case of emotion, for fear is presumably an emotion. When Joseph's brothers on their return from Egypt found their money in their sacks, "their heart failed them." In Genesis 45:26 "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.''The disbelief was an intellectual act, but the fainting was emotional.

Ten verses from Genesis have now been quoted; eight are rather clearly intellectual, while two are distinctly emotional.

Exodus has about twenty references to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, or Pharaoh's hardening his own heart, or simply the hardening of his heart. Virtually all of them indicate a voluntary determination to retain the Israelites in slavery. Exodus 4:14 is rather clearly emotional, along with 35:21 and 36:2. On the intellectual side there are 35:34,35.1 hope this is a fairly accurate report on Exodus. Let it also be said that Leviticus 19:17 has to do with the emotions.

Suppose we now skip to I Samuel 1:8,13; 2:1; 9:19; 14:7; 27:1; and 28:5. The first of these is clearly an emotion, and 1:13 has this emotional background though explicitly it is a prayer and therefore intellectual. Also emotional is 2:1, though it too is a prayer. The next three are intellectual and the last is the emotion of fear. There are in all, I believe, twenty-three occurrences of the term *heart* in First Samuel, and fourteen in Second Samuel. The latter's first case, 3:21,1 would classify as intellectual, or perhaps volitional, but hardly emotional. Michal in 6:16 may have been emotional, but there had to be a normative judgment too. God's plan and David's knowledge, in 7:21, are equally intellectual, as 7:27 also is. Amnon's heart in 13:23 was about to be emotionally drunk, but 13:33 refers to a piece of misinformation.

However tedious this brief list has become, and whatever omissions are justifiable, the Psalms cannot be disregarded. I judge the term occurs about 130 times. Can we be satisfied with thirteen of them?

Psalm 4:4, 7 are "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still. . . .Thou hast put gladness in my heart." The latter verse may indicate some lesser degree of emotion, but the former definitely speaks of meditation, an intellectual process of thought when one is calm and not upset emotionally. How many Christians today, during a wakeful period about 2:00 a.m.,

meditate on a verse or two and try to understand its implications? Of course, there is some danger in this: The verse may become so interesting that you can't get back to sleep before 3:30.

Psalm 9:1 reads, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. " The emotionalists will count this one in their favor, but acceptable praise cannot be devoid of correct theology. Psalm 10:11, 13 are, "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten ... he will never see it. . . . [the wicked man] hath said in his heart Thou will not require it." This is obviously intellectual. To be sure the wicked man is making false statements, but they are nonetheless intellectual judgments. They are theological blunders. He is denying God's immutability and his omniscience, as well as his eternal decree to punish the wicked.

Psalm 12:2 says, "With flattering lips and with a double heart they do speak,''and thus describes insincerity. The man is practicing deceit. One of his hearts contains his real opinions, while his other heart pronounces opposite judgments.

Psalm 19 is a great Psalm, and 19:4 is a great verse. After several references to the law and statutes of God, his judgments and testimony, all of which are intellectual truth, the Psalmist concludes, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." Here the Psalmist prays to God that his thoughts on the Atonement may be true. And not only his thoughts: also his words when he preaches publicly. We cannot assume that his words were spoken to nobody.

Psalm 24:4 speaks of clean hands and a pure heart. This seems best classified as volitional, yet holy actions presuppose holy thinking.

Psalm 36:1,10 first pictures the Psalmist as concluding in his heart that the wicked do not fear God. This is of course an intellectual judgment. Then second the Psalmist prays that God continue his loving-kindness to them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. This tenth verse speaks of knowledge and then of righteousness. The latter is probably a volitional reference, but it is made against an intellectual background. At any rate there is nothing emotional here.

"The law of his God is in his heart" (Psalm 37:31) is clearly intellectual. The previous verse mentioned wisdom and judgment, and the law is something that must be understood.

Look at 45:1, "My heart is inditing [overflows with; metaphorical for "is occupied with;" *indite:* compose or write down] a good matter... my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." The verse is completely intellectual, as is also Psalm 49:3, "wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding."

Just prior to this list from the Psalms a question was asked: Can we be satisfied with thirteen of them? Thirteen have now been given. If anyone prefers to skip the next eleven, he may do so; but two dozen impresses the writer more favorably than a baker's dozen. The aim is to leave no doubt but that the heart fundamentally means the intellect and surely not the emotions.

Psalm 53:1 reminds us of some present day intellectual boasting: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Intellection may be righteous or sinful; but in either case it is thinking and not emoting. Psalm 77:6 is again intellectual meditation; and 78:8 could be volitional; and 78:72 is both.

Psalm 84:5 is volitional; 86:11, 12 are partly intellectual, "Teach me thy way, O Lord," and partly volitional, "I will praise thee, O

Lord, with my whole heart." Psalm 95:8,10 are rather clearly volitional.

But Psalm 119 is intellectual throughout. Verse 7 says, "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments." Verse 11 is the well known statement, "Thy word I have hid in my heart." Here the Psalmist tells us that he had memorized much of the Scripture that had already been written at that time. Of course it is a recommendation to us also not to be intellectually lazy, but to learn the Scriptures by heart. You can't do that with your emotions. Verse 36 inclines the heart to God's testimonies, and verse 69 repeats the same general idea: "I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart." If the "keeping" is volitional, it presupposes, as was previously stated, an earlier process of learning those testimonies.

Now, without continuing to Proverbs 2:2,10 (very clear), 3:1,4:4 and to the remainder of the Old Testament, it seems that more than eleven verses have been added to the thirteen.

The conclusion is that the *heart* in the Old Testament* designates the intellect most of the time; it designates volition maybe one third of the time; it refers to the emotions maybe a bit more than ten percent of the time.

***Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Erdmanns, 1978), in footnote 5 on page 198 says, "In Hebrew thought the heart is tantamount to the conscience." Evidently he had not studied the 1,168 instances.**

Therefore when someone in the pews hears the preacher contrasting the head and the heart, he will realize that the preacher either does not know or does not believe what the Bible says. That the gospel may be proclaimed in its purity and power, the churches should eliminate their Freudianism and other forms of contemporary psychology and return to

God’s Word, to which nothing should be added and from which nothing should be subtracted.

14. A Philosophic Appendix

There are no doubt a few more psychological terms which could be discussed. For example, the term *flesh* in the New Testament does not always mean muscles and sinews. It often denotes the sinful proclivities of human nature. The term *spiritual* also as often refers to the results of the Holy Spirit’s operations as it does to the soul. But these items do not raise problems equal in difficulty and importance with what has been discussed. A very different problem of tremendous difficulty will serve as a concluding appendix for anyone patient enough to read it.

Identifying the soul, spirit, or mind as the man himself— and this is what the preceding material has done—raises philosophic perplexities of the highest order. But let it be noted that any theory not identifying man with mind faces the same embarrassing dilemmas. The question is, What is the relation of body to soul? Even the behaviorists, who deny the existence of a soul, though they escape the one question, sink into a deeper quagmire.*

***Compare G.H. Clark,*Behaviorism and Christianity* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1982).**

The question therefore is, How can an extended, inert lump of clay affect a non-spatial active spirit? Or conversely, How can a non-spatial spirit initiate or direct the motions of a physical body?

Tertullian tried to evade the embarrassments—though in his age they were not so keenly felt—by making the soul a fiery breath, an idea he probably accepted from Stoicism. Vigorous Christian

though he was, and precursor of the doctrine of the Trinity, he has the dubious honor of being a Christian materialist. I can think of only one other, an Englishman.

Augustine, more Neoplatonic than Stoic, realized that the spirit was not corporeal. By a theory of causation he argued that since causality always descends from the superior to the inferior, the body never affects the soul: the soul controls the body. Unfortunately this principle does not explain *how* the unextended can initiate or alter corporeal motions.

Sometimes Descartes is either praised or blamed for sharpening the antithesis. He held that God created two substances, material and spiritual. The soul is an unextended point in the pineal gland of the brain and there it can alter the direction of the animal spirits (as brandy is a *spirit)* and so control the body without changing the magnitude of the motion. Clearly this does not explain how a mathematical point can in any way alter physical motion. The usual idea is that one body has to bump another body.

Following Descartes several philosophers made serious efforts to solve the problem. What then is the relationship between the inert clay from which God formed Adam's body and the active, even turbulent breath that he breathed into Adam's nostrils? Though most evangelical theologians have something to say on the matter, H.B. Smith,*System of Christian Theology* (New York, 1864, pp. 164-165) has perhaps the clearest and most concise statement of the several positions. I shall not quote verbatim but be content to follow his order and extend his description.

The first theory mentioned is materialism, or, since no one any longer holds to classical materialism, behaviorism, according to which what we call conscious life is precisely the functioning of bodily parts. Today even some who profess to be Christian

accept this theory. They picture a human being as a complex electric circuit on a sign that flashes an advertisement. Long ago Plato clearly stated how this is in utter conflict with Christianity. His example, instead of being an electric circuit, was that of a lyre, whose functioning, illustrative of the soul, is the music; but after the lyre is broken, there can be no more music. Thus the soul does not outlive the body.

Materialism can be called a monistic theory. The second is also monistic, but also quite the opposite of the first. Instead of denying the soul, it denies the matter. The view can be called idealism. The good Bishop Berkeley was an idealist. This is a more reasonable theory than the first one, for (1) it is hard to see how matter can become thought, while (2) it is relatively easy to see how sensory perceptions, which are elements of consciousness, could be mistakenly assigned unconscious causes. Later Hegel and his disciples produced an idealism rather different from Berkeley's and pretty well held the field until defeated in World War I.

If now idealism must be rejected, one must accept some kind of dualism. This presumably requires Descartes' two substances—whatever the term substance might mean. We do not necessarily have Descartes' pineal gland to explain their relationship. Malebranche in his *The Search for Truth* (1674) published a new tentative. Well, not entirely new. The medieval philosopher, the Moslem A1 Gazali, denied physical causation and referred all events immediately to the will of God. Zwingli also seems to have suggested something similar in his emphasis on the sovereignty of God.* But Malebranche goes into detail.†

***Frank Hugh Foster, in a supplementary chapter to Samuel Macauley Jackson's *Huldreich Zwingli,* p. 379, quotes Zwingli's *Werke,* ed. by Schuler u. Schulthess, p. 85.**

† **Levy-Bruhl gives a readable account in his *History of Modem Philosophy in France,* Open Court, 1924, pp. 38-76. But if the student can do nothing more, he should read the Preface to *La Recherche,***

First he attacks the confused notion of causality. Theologians use the term glibly, but they never define it. The Westminster Confession states that God's decree establishes secondary causes, but it gives no hint as to what they are or how they operate. The term *cause* is of course correlative with the term *effect.* If there be no effect, there could have been no cause. If there is a cause, the effect results necessarily. But no such relationship is found in sensory experience. If someone says that eating good food is the cause of nourishment, a touch of seasickness will disabuse his mind. Eating good food does not necessitate nourishment. The so-called cause can occur and the alleged effect fail. Hence the soul cannot cause a bodily motion. In fact there are no causes and effects in natural phenomena. This is rather interesting, for it means that Male-branche anticipated modern science in rejecting occult qualities and the like and in defining the scientific enterprise as a description of motions. Hume thus was not so original as he has often been thought to be. For that matter, Malebranche was not completely original, either; for Descartes understood that science could not discover God's purposes and that theological explanations must be replaced with mathematical equations.

Since no one can see the soul affecting the body, why does it seem so? Aside from the intellectual lethargy of the general public and its unquestioning acceptance of traditional ignorance, the worlds of space and mind, in the light of revelation, do have an understandable relationship. Malebranche's explanation of this is a theory called Occasionalism. God is the sole and indefeasibly effective cause

of everything throughout the universe. He speaks and it is done. God produces mental events and physical events immediately. That is to say, when one sticks one's finger with a pin and experiences a pain, it is not the pin that produced the pain. God did.

There is another possibility. Leibniz did not favor the notion that God immediately causes every event. In a somewhat deistic fashion he held that God manufactured two clocks—body and soul—so perfectly adjusted to each other that when one strikes three (the three illustrating the pin prick) the other clock strikes three at the same moment (illustrating the pain). This theory is called pre-established harmony. God originally constructed the universe so that everything would dove-tail. Leibniz was not really so interested in the relation between bodies and souls as he was in the relationships among persons. The various human beings are like a number of musicians, each in a different room; but they each have a score before them, written by the same composer, for flute, violin, or bassoon as the case may be; then, oblivious to one another, at a creative signal all begin to play, and the 1812 overture of war, peace, and politics sounds forth.

Even though more deistic than Malebranche, Leibniz had one advantage over him. His problem is different. The Frenchman, as a disciple of Descartes, struggled with the relationship between spatial bodies and non-spatial souls. For Leibniz the elements were not bodies: they were monadic non-extended souls. A body is like a school of fish: We do not see the individual fishes below the surface; what we see is a long shape, deceptively continuous. He thus anticipated our contemporary view that apparently solid objects, not only human bodies, but pens and pencils, have no contiguous parts, but are ninety-nine percent empty space. This must suffice for now. Interested students must go to their university libraries or take a good course in physics.

But the discussion has not been so unbiblical and untheo-logical as the uninitiated suppose. The more obvious religious consideration is that theologians write Systematic Theologies without a sufficient background. H.B. Smith, after his excellent outline of the several positions sums it all up by saying, “The simple facts are, however, . . . that they [soul and body] do interact.” He gives no reason: It is true simply because he says so.

Now, Malebranche was a Roman Catholic and rather strongly so. His type of theology is anathema to Calvinists. But insofar as he defends some Augustinian positions, he can serve as a corrective to the anti-intellectualism of the present day, its existentialism, combined as it is with non-biblical psychology and sociology. For this reason I shall translate a few paragraphs of the powerful Preface to *La Recherche de la Verite,* to the praise of the God of Truth.

The spirit of man is by its nature placed between its Creator and bodily creatures. . . .But as the great elevation by which it is above all material things does not prevent it from being united to them ... so the infinite distance between the sovereign Being and the human spirit does not prevent it from being immediately united to him in a most intimate manner. This latter union elevates it above all things; by that union it receives its life, its light, and all its felicity. ... On the contrary, the union of the spirit with the body abases man infinitely, and it is now the principal cause of all our errors and all our miseries.

I am not surprised that ordinary people or pagan philosophers only consider the soul in its relation and union with the body, without recognizing the relation and union it has with God; but 1 am surprised that Christian philosophers, who ought to prefer the spirit of God above the spirit of man, Moses above Aristotle, Augustine above some miserable commentator of a pagan

philosopher, are more interested in the soul as the form of the body than as made in the image and for the image of God . . . to whom it is immediately united. . . .

. . . Since the will of God regulates the nature of every thing, it is more the nature of the soul to be united to God by a knowledge of the truth and by the love of good, than to be united to the body, because it is certain. . .that God made our spirits in order to know him and to love him rather than to impose a form on the body. . . .

The sin of the first man so weakened the union of our spirit with God that. . . that union appears imaginary to those who blindly follow the judgments of sense and the urgings of passion.

On the contrary, it [the first sin] has so strengthened the union of our soul with our body that it seems to us that these two parts of ourselves are no more than a single substance; or, rather, it has so subjected us to our senses and our emotions that we are brought to believe that our body is the principal one of the two parts of which we are composed.

The soul, although united very strictly to the body, does not cease being united to God; and at the very time when it is receiving from its body those feelings, lively and confused, which its passions inspire in it, it is [also] receiving from the eternal truth which presides over its spirit the knowledge of its duty and its shortcomings. When the body deceives it, God undeceives it. . . .

... A man who judges everything by his senses, who always follows the movements of his passions, who perceives only what he senses. . .is in the most miserable state of spirit that he could be in; . . . But when a man judges things only by the pure ideas of the spirit, and carefully avoids the confused noise of the creatures, and when retiring into himself he hears his sovereign

Maker, with his senses and passions silent, it is impossible for him to fall into error.

. . . but when the spirit turns from God and goes outside, when he interrogates only his body in seeking the truth, when he listens only to his senses, his imagination, and his passions, it is impossible for him to escape deception. . . .

The body fills the spirit with such a great number of sensations that it becomes incapable of knowing the least hidden of truths. ... It is only by the attention of the spirit that any truth is discovered and any knowledge is gained; because indeed the attention of the spirit is nothing other than its return and conversion to God, who is our only Teacher. . . as St. Augustine says.

Chapter 6 - The Atonement

1. Introduction on Method

When a pastor preaches a sermon on the Atonement, he will, if he believes the Bible, choose a text or a passage and explain its meaning. This is the same method that a professor of philosophy uses in lecturing to a college class on Aristotle. Unlike the pastor, the professor may not believe everything his text says, but in both cases the method con- sists in explaining just what the text means.

If, however, the pastor wishes to convince some non- Christians who may be in his audience of the truth of his message, he may go beyond pure exposition and try persuasion . In theological language this means that he employs some apologetic method. Theologians do this more frequently than pastors, for theologians usually aim to persuade or at least to refute those who reject the doctrine. Of course, pastors sometimes aim to refute, and surely theologians aim to expound; but apologetics or polemics does not sound like pure exposition. Their precise and technical relationship can be discussed later.

Whatever that precise relationship may be, this treatise attempts to do both. Many ordinary Christians are woefully ignorant. In a class of enthusiastic Christian students at a summer conference, all of college level, all “on fire for Jesus,” singing wild “gospel songs” with abandon, thirty-four out of thirty-five had not the dimmest notion of justification by faith.

They could clap their hands and stomp their feet, but not one of the thirty-four could recite the Ten Commandments. In fact the lone exception was not a member of the conference staff, but a visitor who just sat in. The present treatise will at least quote some very elementary Biblical passages, if not for the edification of those whirling dervishes, at least for the sober- minded, even if poorly instructed, church members who genuinely want to understand this central doctrine of Christianity. I do not despise ignorant Christians because of their ignorance, but who can praise those who are determined not to learn?

Christians and any others who are both ignorant and stupid resent being called ignorant. Christians and any others who are ignorant but intelligent admit their deficiency and make an honest effort to learn. Most Christians today do not realize to what a low level evangelical-or so-called evangelical-Christianity has fallen since 1660. Few modern Christians can endure reading a Puritan commentary. Some are exceedingly tedious, and some are really of little value. But many are so detailed because their readers wanted to know every Scriptural detail they could. John Owen wrote a commentary on Hebrews that runs a good 4,000 pages. It may seem tedious to many people; and undoubtedly it con- tains several mistakes-for only Scripture is infallible-but by its popular acclaim it testifies to a high level of Christian intelligence in the seventeenth century.

Some smart-aleck teenagers, and of course the liberal critics, will continue to spurn Calvinism; nor should one rely merely on the evidence of Puritan commentaries. The value of detailed study of the Bible is asserted by the Bible itself. Those who still believe that the Scriptures are the inerrant word of the infallible God, who is truth itself, should carefully study what treatment the Bible demands for itself. Only a few verses will be quoted, but they should be read very slowly so that their meaning may sink in.

Deuteronomy 6:6,7: These words . . . shall be in your heart; you shall teach them dili- gently to your children, and shall talk of them ....

Deuteronomy 17:19: He shall read it all the days of his life ....

Psalm 1:2: His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119:97: O, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Psalm 119:148: My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on your word.

John 5:39: Search the Scriptures ....

John 17:17: Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth.

Acts 17:11: These . .. searched the Scriptures daily.

Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

These verses in one way or another stress the necessity of reading, understanding, and tracing out the implications of God's written revelation. Someone might wonder why 2 Timothy 2:15 was not quoted. Does it not command us to ***study*** the Scriptures? And does not the present writer wish to emphasize studying the Scriptures? Well, the Greek word is not ***study.*** But let not the intellectually lazy person rejoice. The Greek verb means ***be eager, make every effort, be zealous*** to arrive at a correct understanding of the word of truth.

This opening page has not exhibited, nor has it seemed to promise, any great degree of profound scholarship. But appearances are deceptive. The first step is to get the ordi-

nary church members, who have unwittingly absorbed the anti-intellectual proclivities of neo-orthodoxy, to realize that God speaks the truth; and that he spoke the truth so that we might gain an understanding of his mind, so that also we ourselves might have the mind of Christ. Nowhere are we told to have the emotions of Christ. But Scripture repeats and re- peats the exhortation to understand divine truth. This is God's command, though obedience to it is often quite difficult.

This treatise will soon become very complicated because the doctrine of the Atonement is very complicated, far more complicated than the vast majority of Christians can imagine . Learned theologians may look down their noses at quoting a few disjointed passages. The more erudite books assume that their readers already know these verses. Such an assumption was perhaps once justified, but hardly now. At any rate a few easy quotations may possibly entice an unsuspecting pew-warmer to dive into theology before he realizes the dangers of not being able to swim. But how can one learn to swim without jumping in? Other verses will be quoted later as they are needed; but these are an easy, perhaps deceptively easy, beginning.

Genesis 3:15: He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Isaiah 53:5,11: He was wounded for our transgressions ... he shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

Matthew 1:21: You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

1 Peter 2:24: Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree ... by whose stripes you were healed.

In addition to the information these verses provide, their

use bears on the distinction between exposition and apologetics , or at least some apologetics. Taking into consideration the entire Christian enterprise, should we limit ourselves to Scripture and arguments based thereon? Or should we find premises in sincere, common opinion-human experience- from which we can establish the basic principles of Christianity and so justify the use of revelation? Although a final conclusion on this point is inappropriate so early in the discussion , the reader must not be left unaware of its pervasive importance. One example, to be discussed more fully later on, may be introduced by another scriptural quotation. In a tremendous paragraph Paul wrote

Romans 3:26: . . . that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

This verse says something about the ***justice*** of God, and the justice of God is a most important facet of the doctrine of the Atonement. But at the moment we are interested only in the ***method used*** to defend divine justice. Here is an example.

Jonathan Edwards wrote a thirty-five page article ***Concerning the Necessity and Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine of Satisfaction for Sin (Works,*** Volume VIII, 1811). He introduces his subject with the proposition, "Justice re- quires that sin be punished." He appeals to the universal belief that "some crimes are so horrid . . . that it is requisite they should not go unpunished unless . . . some measure [of compensation or repentance] at least balances the desert of punishment." In Jonathan Edwards' day hardly anyone would have disagreed, and thus Edwards could rely on the com- monly held view as a sufficient introduction to his theology. Today that is not the case. Many people hold that crime is only a disease; the criminal is not guilty, but sick; and even his sickness is the result of a misguided society rather than of a depraved individual mind or will. If then it be our business to maintain

the truth of the Christian doctrine of Atonement , instead of merely explaining it, we must face a problem Edwards hardly dreamed of. In view of the prevalent behaviorism and Freudian psychology, we cannot rely on common opinion and so-called human reason. Yet if we depend on revelation alone, are we not begging the question and losing our audience? Edwards could plausibly appeal to human reason because the human reason he was acquainted with was English reason already permeated with Christian ideas. But this is no longer the case. Edwards thought that crime excites "such an abhorrence and indignation that . . . by this all is granted that needs to be granted, to show that desert of punishment carries in it a requisiteness of the punishment deserved" (500). But today the behaviorists (for example, John Watson and B.F. Skinner) aim to remove the idea of punishment from the laws and from the mind of man. Sweden, for example, has made it illegal for parents to spank their children or even to scold them. Naturally: Socialism is anti-Christian.

From the eighteenth-century Christian opinion that all crime demands punishment, unless there be something to balance it, Edwards infers that, since any sin against God is so great that nothing can balance it, God must punish it. "If any ask, why God could not pardon the injury on repentance, without other satisfaction, without wrong to justice; I ask the same person why he could not also pardon the injury ***without*** repentance?" To Edwards this is unthinkable, but few today would acknowledge that his argument is valid. On the next page (502) he appeals not only to a Christian conscience, but also to "the consciences of heathen." Yet he must add the damaging proviso "unless conscience has been stupified by frequent violations." On page 506 he also admits "all but

Epicureans will own that all moral agents are subjects of God's moral government." This is a false statement. Others than Epicureans are also such exceptions. Of course Jonathan Edwards antedated the modern Logical Positivists (who are far from being Epicureans) but in addition to Democritus, not even Aristotle satisfies Edwards' assertion. For that matter, even one exception to his norm destroys his position. Yet from his inadequate observation he concludes that therefore God's conscience must be like ours. Hence Edwards' argument fails on two counts: invalid inference and false premises .

To conclude this first section and to anticipate, the method used here will be, first, some exposition-plus here and there the drawing of inferences from the verses quoted; then, second, the refutation of two sorts of arguments-well- meaning but inadequate defenses of the Biblical truths, and definite attacks on the Christian faith.

2. The Doctrine in Its Simplicity

An individual Christian, without scholarly ambitions, reads the Bible and notes certain statements concerning the death of Christ. With further meditation, if he qualifies as an example of Psalm 1:2, he will realize that several verses say pretty much the same thing, while another half dozen make a different point. This procedure will in time result in an elementary understanding of the Atonement divided into four or five or six points. These points could be that Christ's death was (1) a sacrifice, for 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us"; (2) an expiatory sacrifice , for Matthew 26:28 speaks of "my blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins"; (3) a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice, for Mark 10:45 says that "the Son of Man [came] ... to give his life a ransom for many"; (4) a

propitiation, for 2 Corinthians 5:18 says, "God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ"; and (5) a satisfaction of divine justice, for Romans 3:25, 26 specify both propitiation and satisfaction: "whom God set forth to be a propitiation . . . that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

After further study, indeed after much further study and discussion among themselves, groups of devout men tried to summarize the Biblical teaching. Their statements may not have reproduced every jot and tittle of the teaching, but some formulations were remarkably complete. There were at times individual authors who wrote books on the subject, of whom Anselm is one of the best known; but the reference here is to groups of theologians who wrote short summaries, at least shorter than a book. The best and most important of these summaries-and this is not just my opinion alone-is chapter eight of the Westminster Confession. This document is more than a summary of the doctrine of the Atonement. From 1643 to 1649 (theoretically until 1652) approximately sixty to seventy of the most learned English and Scottish theologians worked on a summary of all the main

Biblical teachings. No document since that date comes anywhere near superseding it. Chapter eight will now be quoted; but first, in view of some contemporary confusion, a distinction should be made.

In 1924 a document called the Auburn Affirmation was signed and published by some 1,300 ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the US.A. These 1,300 ministers unanimously rejected the inerrancy of Scripture, and in addition asserted that the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the miracles, the Atonement, and the Resurrection are unessential . They somewhat disguised their unbelief by stating that they all believed in the ***fact*** of the Atonement, though which ***doctrine*** of the Atonement to accept was unimportant. This attempt to distinguish between the fact of the Atonement and

the doctrine of the Atonement is obfuscating. The Atonement is a doctrine, not a fact. The Old Testament, and to a lesser extent the New Testament as well, contains many statements of historical events: the flood, Abraham's migration to Palestine, the Exodus, and the fact that David was born into the tribe of Judah. So what? Other people migrated and other children were bom into the tribe of Judah and still others into the tribe of Ephraim. So what? Jesus' death was also an historical event. It took place on Friday, the fourteenth of Nisan, in the year A.D. 30 (or thereabouts). But the death of two thieves at the same time and place was also an historical event. Eventually Pontius Pilate died, and so too the High Priest. The death of Jesus as a bare historical event would be as unimportant as theirs. The tremendous difference between Jesus' death and the deaths of the others is its significance. The Bible recounts the event, to be sure, but it also adds the explanation of the event. The doctrine of the Atonement is that explanation. This doctrine or explanation is no temporal occurrence: It is a part of the divine plan, an eternal thought in the mind of God. What God's eternal thought is, he revealed in the Bible; and the Westminster Confession summarizes the Biblical teaching. The five points mentioned in the first paragraph of this sub- section give the simplest Biblical form; other verses should be added to them by each person who reads the Bible; the Westminster Confession aims to summarize these verses. Its summary is not quite so simple as the verses. But it is not beyond the grasp of an average intellect.

It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Saviour of his Church; the Heir of all things; and Judge of the world; unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justi-

fied, sanctified, and glorified.[1]

Some editions of the Confession print out eight or ten verses in support of the text; other editions give only book, chapter and verse. For example, in section one, the eternal purpose of God to choose Jesus Christ as mediator is sup- ported by Isaiah 42:1, "Behold! My servant whom I uphold, ***my elect one*** in whom my soul delights! I ***have put my Spirit upon him;*** he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles." There follow four other verses to the same purpose. As one familiar with the Scriptures may suppose, these are not the only verses which shed light on the Father's eternal choice of Christ. They are samples only. The footnote to the final phrase of VIII, viii gives six verses. First year seminary students and every Bible-loving Christian should familiarize himself with such material.

It will be of historical interest as well as of theological importance to quote a bit of the Confession of the Waldenses. It was written somewhat as an appeal to the Protestant nations in consequence of a frightful and barbarous massacre of the Waldenses by the Romanists. Cromwell in England out of his own pocket donated £2,000 and thus initiated a public subscription for the alleviation of the survivors. Some £38,000 were raised; but as Cromwell died about then, the licentious and semi-Catholic Charles II purloined about £16,000. Here is a part of the Confession: "We believe . . . that God saves from this corruption and condemnation those whom he has chosen of his mercy in Jesus Christ his Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of his freedom and justice."

Some fifty years before these two creeds the English church had adopted its Thirty-nine Articles, of which the

XXXI is as follows:

The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption , propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain and guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.

These then are simple but official statements of the doc- trine this treatise aims to examine.

3. The Covenant of Redemption

The simplicity of the passion narratives in the four Gospels begins to become complex for us when we realize that the events have an eternal significance. The doctrine of the Atonement is a part, a most important part, of the divine and omniscient plan of the universe. It is not a temporal event: It is an eternal decree. The extremely puzzling relationship between time and eternity is the worst complexity embedded in the doctrine of the Atonement, and in all Biblical doc- trines, for all are related to and dependent on the eternal God. Such a difficulty is hardly appropriate for any elementary study of the Bible; yet it cannot be totally avoided. Perhaps it will be pedagogically but not theoretically sufficient to pinpoint the difficulty and press on.

As with every problem, the most important step is to define the terms. Augustine of Hippo made the frequently quoted remark, If you do not ask me what time is, I know, but if you ask me, I do not know. Sir Isaac Newton posited time and space as the two independent frameworks within which everything happens. But today apparently no scien-

tist accepts this view. A decrease in velocity increases the diameter of an object-or something like that. ***The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,*** edited by Paul Edwards, has several articles on “Time.” Most readers will find them unintelligible . Secular scientists are not interested in eternity, but secular philosophers-even pagan philosophers like Plato-are.

It is pedagogically unsound to follow this subject very far in this treatise. Yet a hint may be of some help. Augustine , for all his hesitation, defined time as the sequence of ideas in a created mind. Perhaps this is circular and begs the question, but on this ground we may define eternity as omniscience. There is no sequence of ideas in God’s mind: no temporal sequence. If there were, God would know some things today he did not know yesterday. But omniscience means that God always knows everything. Ideas do not come and go. His mind, that is, God himself, is immutable; he is not subject to change. Hence we talk of an eternal decree. God’s plan of the universe never began and was never altered . This includes the doctrine of the Atonement, as the Confession says, “It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus . . .

This choice can and has been called the covenant of redemption.

No matter how ill-prepared a young Christian student may be, he can hardly be ignorant of the fact that the Bible prescribes a method by which sinners are to be forgiven, escape the penalty for sin, and find favor with God. Biblical theologians have often divided the preparatory steps to this actual salvation into two covenants: the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace. This is a convenient division because, even if some theologians want to merge them and use only the second title, there are two stages in the preparation for the Atonement and its application; and these two must both be included somewhere in the discussion. The

division depends on the first part’s being a relation between the Father and the Son, while the second part is a relation between the Son and the people he came to save. What is worse than merging these two parts is the outright denial of the first part by several non-Calvinistic theologians. Their reasons for such a denial are two. First, the general theology of Arminianism prevents the acknowledgment of the covenant of redemption. To answer this objection one must show that Augustine, Calvin, and Hodge correctly understood the Bible, whereas Arminius did not. The second reason for not acknowledging the covenant of redemption is the impression that the Bible nowhere describes such a consultation between the Father and the Son. This narrower and more direct objection can be answered by showing that such an agreement between the Father and the Son is by no means an obscure

idea buried in one or two subsidiary phrases. On the contrary, the Scripture gives a quite ample foundation to the doctrine. To show that there is indeed a covenant of redemption , a dozen verses will first be quoted, and then exegesis will follow.

Luke 22:29: And I bestow upon you a kingdom just as my Father bestowed one upon me.

John 5:30: I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge and my judgment is righteous because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.

John 5:43: I have come in my Father's name.

John 6:37-39: All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of the Father who

sent me, that I should lose nothing of all he has given me, but that I should raise it up at the last day.

John 8:42: I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of myself, but he sent me.

John 10:29: My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all.

John 17:6ff: ... the men whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours and you gave them to me .... For 1 have given to them the words which you have given to me . . . those who you gave me . . .

Romans 5:19: ... by one man's obedience ***[i.e.,*** of Jesus to his Father.]

Romans 8:3: God did by sending his own Son. . . .

Ephesians 1:45¯: ... he chose us in him . . . having predestined us ... by Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:11: ... the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord . . .

2 Timothy 1:9: ... according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before time began . . .

This list of verses is longer than usual because some theologians deny the concept and some pastors think that if there be such a covenant it is too unimportant to preach about. A study of the Scripture, an exegesis of these verses, should dispel the objections.

The first of these verses quoted states that the Father bestowed or assigned a task to the Son. The verb ***bestow*** means to make a will or covenant. It has the same root as the New ***Testament*** has. The Father is here described as making

a will, a testament, or a covenant with the Son. The Son clearly accepted the assignment, for in fulfillment of the task the Father gave him, he gives a similar assignment to his disciples.

The next two verses teach that the Son does not act on his individual authority alone: He is intent on accomplishing his Father's will-he acts in his Father's name. Obviously there must have been some agreement between the Father and the Son before the Son's incarnation. John 8:42 repeats these ideas.

John 6:37-39 not only repeats that the Son does the Father's will, but in addition specifies what this will is. With John 10 and John 17 they all teach that the Father selected a certain group of people out of the world as the particular persons whom the Son was to save. This is said not just once, but is repeated several times in this group of verses.

The context of Romans 5:19 expounds a comparison between Adam and Christ. Since the disobedience of the first Adam reflects a covenant of works with God, the comparison naturally suggests some sort of covenant between the Father and the Son. Otherwise the comparison would be completely adventitious and inconsistent with an omniscient plan of redemption. The same may be said of the extremely condensed statement in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

Romans 8:3 may not add much, but at least it repeats the same idea: God sent his Son to do a certain task. All these verses indicate a divine plan to save certain people by Jesus Christ. This predestination occurred according to the good pleasure of God's will. The relation of the Father to the Son is twice made explicit, though not emphasized, in Ephesians 1:4-5. Greater emphasis comes in Ephesians 3:11 because the verse is shorter than the preceding, with its several additional phrases omitted. Because of these omissions the idea of the eternal purpose which the Father accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord receives the exclusive emphasis. 2 Timothy 1:9 clearly indicates that the elect received grace by Christ before the world began. Obviously Christ agreed to carry out this plan in time. Lest the list be thought too long, be it noted that 1 Peter 1:2 also indicates a concerted plan in which the three persons of the Trinity all have a part.

As a concluding Scriptural emphasis, another pertinent verse is

Hebrews 10:7: Behold, I have come ... to do your will, O God.

This verse clearly requires an agreement by the Son to fulfill what the Father willed him to do. Does not this justify a theologian's acceptance of the concept of a covenant of redemption?

The main terms of the covenant are set forth in the several passages quoted. Some specifications and developments can be more appropriately discussed under later subheads, but the chief idea is that the Son consented to atone for the sins of those people whom the Father had given to him. The method of this development is of course the full doctrine: his incarnation, his death, his satisfaction of divine justice, and-if one wish-his resurrection with its consequences. Since all these things lead into or are a part of the covenant of grace, it is well to note that for Christ himself the covenant of redemption was not a covenant of grace. The two covenants, admittedly both parts of a unitary eternal decree, are essentially distinct because for Christ the covenant of redemption was a covenant of works. It was necessary for him to live a sinless life, in full obedience to the law, and then to bear the penalty due to the sinners he came to save. Christ ***earned*** salvation.

For sermonic material many verses invite some reference to this covenant. Hebrews 10:5 indicates that the Farther prepared a suitable body for the Son's incarnation. Isaiah 42:1-7 recounts certain promises the Father made to the Son. Acts 2:27 quotes the promise of Psalm 16:10 as the context describes its fulfillment.

It is clear, therefore, that the covenant of redemption is not an invention of imaginative theologians; nor is it an obscure implication buried in a few brief phrases; on the contrary , all these verses teach (1) that the Son came to Earth on the authority of the Father who sent him; (2) that the Father had given him a definite number of people to save; and (3) several other things that will be pertinent later. But the first two points, which could be deduced from the doctrine of omniscience plus the historical events, are clearly made explicit. And this is equivalent to the assertion that an agreement or covenant between the Father and the Son existed from all eternity.

4. The Covenant of Grace

Although the word ***covenant*** has been constantly used in the preceding discussion, it may be wise, before the de- tails of the covenant of grace are taken up, to say a little more about the idea or definition of a covenant. This is particularly appropriate because the Presbyterian and Reformed denominations have historically taught “covenant theology.” That is to say, these churches have viewed the Scripture as a developing revelation-developing from a less detailed to a more detailed form-of a single plan of salvation. This single theme, the Bible calls a covenant; and by this covenant between God and his people, the latter are prepared for and are brought to its complete fruition in Heaven.

The preceding section assumed that a covenant was an agreement between two or more persons. Although this is the standard Calvinistic definition, sometimes it is said to be incorrect. It does indeed run the risk of producing a misunderstanding . In these days agreements or contracts are usually drawn up by two or more fairly equal parties. At least, even the weakest party might force acceptance of one or two subordinate clauses. In the covenant of grace, however, sin- ful man has no say as to what the terms of the covenant shall be. Therefore the transaction might be called an imposition, a promise, a command, but hardly a contract. While such a misunderstanding is possible, yet it is not an objection to defining covenant as an agreement. The most frequently repeated covenant in the Old Testament was the marriage covenant . Yet in those times the wife was not the equal of the husband, nor for that matter did the groom have full liberty in setting the terms of the agreement. Neither does a Chris- tian couple today have the authority to formulate the main terms. The idea of ***agreement*** therefore requires neither that the parties be equal, nor that the parties themselves determine the conditions. Yet when they accept the conditions, an agreement exists.

The terms of the covenant of grace are indeed dictated by God. No man can change them. The covenant is wholly divine in its origin and specifications. In fact, so true is this that God says, “I will establish my covenant with you.” He does not ask, Shall we formulate a covenant? Noah agreed, and the account of Noah’s relation to God will serve as a good example.

Without denying the idea of agreement, it is worthwhile to emphasize the divine initiative. Not just once, but at least four times in the account of Noah, God says, “I establish my covenant with you.” In addition to these four assertions, God also said, “I set my rainbow in the cloud,” and “I will re- member my covenant.” The rainbow is not so much to re- mind Noah of God’s covenant, as to remind God himself:

“the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud and I will remember . ... I will look on it to remember the everlasting cov- enant” (Genesis 9:8-17).

The terms of the covenant with Noah have to do with the divine promise not to destroy the Earth by flood again. The text does not explicitly mention salvation from sin. Yet, since the flood came because of the great sinfulness of the race, and since Noah was saved from the immediate punishment of this sin, the whole may be taken as a type or anticipation of a still greater salvation. Therefore the covenant with Noah may properly be viewed as an early form of the covenant of grace. God explained the covenant in fuller detail to Abraham, and these details Moses, by inspiration, recorded.

In Abraham’s case the divine initiative is even clearer than it was with Noah, if that were possible. Genesis 15:18 says, “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.” Note: It does not say that the Lord and Abram made a covenant between themselves, but “the Lord made a covenant with Abram.” Not only are there explicit assertions in Genesis 15:18 and 17:2,7, plus other verses in the latter chapter , but there is also in the previous chapter the awesome horror of great darkness in which Abram was a totally passive recipient of prophecy. Moses also in Exodus 24:8 ex- presses the divine initiative; David also, in 2 Samuel 23:5. Then Isaiah 55:3 reads, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you-the sure mercies of David.” Compare Jeremiah 31:31-33. The definition of a covenant as an agreement is intended to cover both God’s covenants, the marriage covenant , and other contracts. If, however, the word ***agreement*** obscures the idea that God sovereignly imposes the terms, then perhaps it may be thought wise to drop the word agreement and use some other word. Yet, this would be unfortunate , for Abraham surely agreed to the terms.

The terms of the covenant of grace are no more than slightly hinted at in Genesis 3:15. A bit more explicit is God's revelation to Abraham in Genesis 12, where God promises to bless Abraham and in him all the families of the Earth, though he will curse those who curse Abraham. Greater de- tail comes in the horror of great darkness in Genesis 15; and other details, including circumcision as a sign of the covenant , in Genesis 17. The extent of the covenant is not merely limited to the descendants of Abraham, but "in Isaac your seed shall be called." It is not necessary, however, to trace the historical development of the revelation through the Old Testament; for as the whole is the doctrine of the Atonement, its details will be covered in the systematic exposition.

A few paragraphs above there was a reference to the "covenant theology" of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Though the aim here is to show that this theology is Biblical, as are the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, yet in the history of Christendom none of these three doctrines was well understood for centuries after the apostles. Perhaps the credit of having discovered this doctrine may be assigned to Zwingli. Calvin mentions the doctrine, but his emphasis is on other matters. Ursinus in Germany, and a bit later Ussher in Ireland, developed the idea. The Westminster Assembly gave it confessional status . In Holland, Cocceius popularized it-though he unfortunately added a few fanciful details. The Anabaptists denied the covenant of grace, as did some Baptists before John Gill; and naturally the Arminians, Wesleyans, and Methodists found no place for it. Its frequent mention in the Scripture, however, makes such denials or neglect a strange phenomenon among those who profess to accept the Bible.

More recently, the opposite extreme of multiplying covenants or dispensations has given rise to Dispensationalism. The Scofield Bible enumerates seven dispensations. It de- fines ***dispensation*** in the subhead to Genesis 1:28: "A dis-

pensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some ***specific*** revelation of the will of God." In itself this definition is not particularly bad. Old Testament history describes several occasions when God tested man by some ***specific*** revelation. This was true not only of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, but also of many others . There are several cases in Judges, such as the testing of Gideon by reducing his army as described in the seventh chapter . Then there is the case of Saul and Agag (1 Samuel 15:3, 8, 14): Saul failed the test; Gideon passed the test. Then too there is the case of David's numbering the people (2 Samuel 24:1, 10, 12).

These, however, are not what Scofield means by dispensations , even though they are cases of God's testing men by a special revelation. Scofield enumerates seven dispensations . Even this, though somewhat fanciful, is nothing to cause great alarm. The description of the first dispensation in the footnote to Genesis 1:28 is quite good. The really serious error, the actually fatal error, of Dispensationalism is the construing of these dispensations so as to provide, since the fall, two (or more) separate and distinct plans of salvation . Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "There are two widely different , standardized, divine provisions, whereby man, who is utterly fallen may come into the favor of God" ***(Bibliotheca Sacra,*** Vol. 93, 1936, 410). On 1 John 3:7, "he who practices righteousness is righteous," the Scofield Bible's note is in part, "The righteous man under law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous." Thus instead of a covenant of grace, extending from Adam, through Abraham, into Galatians, and on to the culmination, Dispensationalism has two methods of salvation.

For example, Scofield's footnote to Romans 7:6 speaks of "two methods of divine dealing: one through the law, the other through the Holy Spirit." Now, Paul before his conversion may have had a wrong conception of the Mosaic law, but this does not mean that in reality the Holy Spirit was inoperative in the Old Testament. Similarly the footnote to John 1:17, "Grace ... is constantly set in contrast to law, under which God demands righteousness from man." But God still demands righteousness from man, though this righteousness is a gift from God. The righteousness by which an Old Testament saint was saved was also a divine gift. Therefore Scofield is quite wrong in the following footnote, which says, "As a dispensation grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ. . . . The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation." But the dispensation of grace did not begin with the crucifixion. God began dispensing grace to Adam. Furthermore, legal obedience was not the condition of salvation in the Mosaic "dispensation." The condition was faith in a future sacrifice.

This radical deviation from the doctrine that salvation in all ages can be found in Christ alone results in another amazing distortion of the Old Testament. In his note on Matthew 4:17, Scofield says-and to ensure against the charge of misrepresentation by omission the note will be reproduced in its entirety:

"At hand" is never a positive affirmation that the person or thing said to be "at hand" will immediately appear, but only that no known or predicted event must intervene. When Christ appeared to the Jewish people, the next thing, in the order of revelation as it then stood, should have been the setting up of the Davidic kingdom. In the knowledge of God, not yet disclosed , lay the rejection of the kingdom (and King), the long period of the mystery-form of the kingdom, the world-wide preaching of the cross, and the out-calling of the Church. But this was as yet locked up in the secret counsels of God (Mt. 13.11, 17; Eph. 3.3-10).

This footnote should be carefully examined to see how fatally heretical it is. Whether "at hand" actually means what Scofield says is unimportant. What is important is that Scofield takes it to mean that "no known or predicted event must intervene" before what is "at hand." Hence when Jesus says that the Kingdom is at hand, Scofield concludes that the Old Testament has no prediction of anything that occurs between the moment of Jesus' preaching and his second ad- vent to institute the millennium. This means that the Old Testament contains no prophecy concerning the Atonement. Incredible as this is for an interpretation of the Old Testament , Scofield puts this quite explicitly: "When Christ appeared to the Jewish people, the next thing in the order of revelation as it then stood [i.e., in the Old Testament prophecies] should have been the setting up of the Davidic Kingdom . In the knowledge of God, not yet disclosed [i.e., not prophesied in the Old Testament] lay the rejection of the kingdom (and King) [Scofield's parenthesis includes the crucifixion and resurrection], . . . This was as yet locked up in the secret counsels of God." This is an explicit denial that there is any prophecy in the Old Testament relating to the crucifixion . "The world-wide preaching of the cross" including the events of Pentecost, which Peter said was the fulfillment of a prophecy by Joel, was all locked up in God's secret counsel . Incredible!

Though it may not be spelled out so explicitly, the foot- note to Matthew 5:2 in effect says that sinners during the millennium will be saved-not by the blood, merits, and grace of Christ-but by their obedience to the beatitudes, which are "pure law."

But this contradicts the universal proposition of Acts 4:12: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we

must be saved."

The Scripture, quite the reverse of Dispensationalism, asserts that there is just one way of salvation. True enough, the divine plan in all its completeness, as Paul said in Ephesians 3:5, "in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets"; but Paul's fuller doctrinal explanation is precisely the same covenant that was less fully revealed in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Though this is the fatal error that removes Dispensationalism from the sphere of evangelical Christianity, there are also some minor infelicities, which, though overshadowed, need not be overlooked.

When it comes to Noah, the Scofield Bible professes to see only a covenant of civil government. Supposedly this divine test of man is limited to civil government. If it has any bearing on salvation, it would seem that Heaven is to be achieved through governmental agencies. If it has no bearing on eternal life, the theory faces two difficulties. The first and more important point is that the whole transaction must envisage salvation from sin. This background is the wickedness of the human race as described in Genesis 6. God decided to destroy mankind because of its sins,

Genesis 6:8: But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Here then is the covenant of grace. Noah was not to be punished and destroyed with the others because

Genesis 6:18: I will establish my covenant with you.

Naturally the immediate deliverance is from the flood; but as the flood was the punishment for sin, it is hard to ex- elude an anticipation of a final and complete deliverance. Explicitly in the following chapter, it says

Genesis 7:1: I have seen that you are righteous before me.

The underlying motif therefore is sin and salvation, not merely a flood and escape from drowning. But if this be the case, one cannot suppose that Noah achieved Heaven on the ground that he instituted civil government.

In the second place, it is hard to find any reference to civil government at all. Chapter nine does indeed mention capital punishment; but this can be inflicted, and was inflicted, by the family of the murdered man. This supposition is strengthened by the word “brother” in Genesis 9:5. Civil government simply does not appear. Instead, if anyone wishes to exclude salvation from sin, the passage becomes simply a covenant or promise not to cause another world- wide flood. But though this is the immediate concern, such an interpretation discounts the cause and purpose of the flood.

It is on the Abrahamic covenant that Dispensationalism most obviously founders. A supposed antithesis between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic dispensation, plus the antithesis and mutual incompatibility between both and the New Testament covenant of grace, is a contradiction of both Testaments. Even in the so-called Mosaic dispensation, Deu- teronomy 1:8 and 4:31 briefly and partially, yet unmistakably , appeal to the covenant with Abraham. In an earlier passage, Moses prays for forgiveness on the basis of the promise to Abraham (Exodus 32:13). More clearly, Leviticus 26:42 specifies the Abrahamic covenant as the basis for God’s dealing with the Israelites after the Exodus. The unity of the

covenant and its application during the time of David is ex- pressed in

Psalm 105:8-10: He has remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant.

Note that it is an everlasting covenant, one that did not cease at the Exodus. But, of course, the clearest and most important passage is

Galatians 3:6-9,17: ... as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righ- teousness.” Therefore know that those who are of faith are those who are Sons of Abraham. And the Scripture , foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached beforehand the Gospel to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all nations be blessed.” So then those who are of faith are

blessed with believing Abraham. . . . And this I say, that the law which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

The first few verses of this quotation show that the elect in New Testament times are saved on the basis of the

Abrahamic covenant and are counted as children of the pa- triarch. Further, these verses state that God's declaration to Abraham was in essence the very Gospel that Paul preached. Not only so, but at the time of Abraham, God explained to him that the covenant included the Gentiles. In the next place, Paul expressly affirms that the Mosaic "dispensation" could not disannul the Abrahamic covenant that four hundred and thirty years earlier had been confirmed in Christ. ***In Christ,*** no less. The Mosaic ritual, Paul explains, was a temporary arrangement necessary because of the sins of the Israelites. It was to cease when the Messiah should come. Even during the Mosaic administration, the Abrahamic covenant was not disannulled, set aside, invalidated, or made of no effect. The Abrahamic covenant was operative all through the alleged dispensation of law. No one was ever saved by keeping the law. No one ever kept the law. Salvation, now, then, and always has been by grace through faith alone. Hence, from the fall of Adam there has been one, just one, continuing covenant of grace.

This unmasks another subsidiary, though important, in- stance in Scofield's footnote to Matthew 16:18: . . Israel

was a true 'church,' but not in any sense the N.T. church-the only point of similarity being that both were 'called out' ***[ekklesia]*** and by the same God. All else is contrast."

But not all else is contrast. Israel and the New Testament Gentiles were not only as a matter of fact called out by the same God, they were called out to the same salvation from sin. This salvation in both cases depended on faith in the same promises. To say otherwise, as Scofield does, is to imply that either David or Cornelius failed to arrive in Heaven.

Louis Berkhof ***(Systematic Theology,*** Eerdmans, 1939, [1968], 279), just before disposing of the dispensationalists in four lines, contrasts the Reformed doctrine with some ear-

lier views. He writes,

It [the covenant of grace] is essentially the same in all dispensations, though its form of administration changes. This is contradicted by all those who claim that Old Testament saints were saved in another manner than New Testament believers, as for instance, Pelagians and Soeinians, who hold that God gave additional help in the example and teachings of Christ; the Roman Catholics, who maintain that the Old Testament saints were in the ***Limbus Patrum*** until Christ's descent into hades; the followers of Coccejus, who assert that Old Testament believers enjoyed only a ***paresis*** (a passing over) and no ***aphesis (full*** forgiveness of sins).

As hinted at a few paragraphs back, there are many facets of the doctrine of the covenant of grace that could be included here: the parties to the covenant; its nature, terms, and conditions; its aims and benefits; its administration both with the individual and in the corporate activity of the church. But these topics can be more logically put later.

5. The Incarnation

By the term ***incarnation,*** a word of Latin derivation that could be crudely expressed as ***enfleshment,*** Christianity assumes that there was a person who existed before he was born. His birth, or conception, was the occasion of his appearing in flesh.

John 8:58: Before Abraham was, I am.

Apart from the more profound significance of the words “I am,” Jesus says at least that his existence did not commence in Bethlehem, but that it antedates Abraham. Hence the birth of Jesus was the birth of a preexistent person. That Jesus was preexistent does not of itself prove that he was

God. Arius held that Jesus was a created angel, created before Abraham lived, but nonetheless a creature and not God. It is useless therefore to cite verses that say nothing more than that Jesus existed before his birth. If Jesus was God, if the doctrine of the Trinity is true, preexistence cannot be denied.

Hence the importance of the last verse quoted does not lie in the words “Before Abraham was,” but in the more pro- found concept of eternity embedded in the “I am” that re- calls the words in Exodus. Thus the doctrine of the Incarnation overlaps the doctrine of the Deity of Christ and depends on the doctrine of the Trinity. Some Scripture references are now added.

Matthew 16:16,17: And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.”

Note here not only that Peter asserts Christ’s deity; and not only that Jesus accepts Peter’s confession and indeed calls it a direct revelation from the Father; but note also that Matthew as the author records the event, and this recording is inspired-the words God breathed out onto the manuscript.

There is another form of phraseology that supports Jesus’ preexistence and deity. Matthew 22:44, with its parallels , and Acts 2:34-35 quote

Psalm 110:1: The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.”

Many other verses refer to Jesus as Lord. They are too numerous to list and too well known, but two will be given nonetheless.

Romans 10:9: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord. . . .

2 Corinthians 13:14: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

About two centuries before the birth of Jesus, the rabbis in Alexandria-where the large Jewish population had largely forgotten Hebrew-translated the Old Testament into Greek. This translation, called the Septuagint, uses the Greek word ***Kurios*** for the Hebrew ***JHVH.*** The New Testament, which frequently uses the Septuagint translation, applies this Greek title to Jesus: the Lord Jesus. Thus the authors of the New Testament books identify Jesus as Jehovah.

For example Matthew 3:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3, “the way of [Jehovah]” (compare Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, and John 1:23). 1 Corinthians 1:31 quotes Jeremiah 9:24, “Let him who glo- ries . . . glory . . . that I am [Jehovah].” Isaiah 8:13, “Sane- tify Jehovah” is repeated in 1 Peter 3:15 as “Sanctify Christ as Lord” (Revised Version).

Since these verses help to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, and thus emphasize the deity of Christ, the preexistence of the person born to Mary is also sufficiently established . More particularly with reference to the event of in- carnation, Louis Berkhof- perhaps bearing in mind the Eastern phrase, “God became man so that man might become God,” ***(Systematic Theology,*** 4th ed., 333)-writes, “It was not the triune God but the second person of the Trinity that assumed human nature. For that reason it is better to say that the Word became flesh than that God became man. At the same time we should remember that each of the divine persons was active in the incarnation.”

Berkhof then refers to,

Matthew 1:20: Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. [Compare Luke 1:35.]

Romans 8:3: ... God did by sending his own Son. . . .

Philippians 2:7: ... but made himself of no reputation. . . .

These three verses show the cooperation of the Spirit, the Father, and the Son in the Incarnation. Preexistence does not imply deity, but deity implies preexistence.

Then Berkhof continues with the important remark, “This also means that the incarnation was not something that merely happened to the Logos, but was an active accomplishment on his part.”

If miracles-especially the miracle of the Virgin Birth- disturbed the Modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Soren Kierkegaard, whose influence appeared in the United States only after Modernism began to wane, made more serious objections to the Incarnation it- self. For him eternity is so antithetical to time that there is no possibility of the eternal becoming temporal. Later neo- orthodox theologians tried to preserve some contact between eternity and time by picturing eternity as a vertical line descending and cutting the horizontal time line at a point. Thus the eternal cuts time at a point. Since the intersection of two lines is a point and has neither length, breadth, nor thickness , the contact between eternity and time has no temporal extension. Thus by a geometrical analogy (surely inappro-

priate to the material it claims to illustrate) the events of Jesus’ ministry, three years in length, are reduced to triviality.

Before Barth’s and Brunner’s line that comes down ***senkrecht von oben,*** Kierkegaard himself wrote, “That God has existed in human form, has been born, grown up, and so forth is surely the paradox ***sensu strictissimo,*** the absolute paradox” ***(Concluding Unscientific Postscript,*** 194).

Kierkegaard does not use the term ***paradox*** in its ordinary English sense. In English a ***paradox*** is a charleyhorse between the ears that can be eliminated by rational massage. But Kierkegaard makes it clear that if a paradox, in his sense, can be explained, it is not a paradox. A paradox is an absurdity to the understanding. He makes his irrationalism perfectly clear. He teaches that if God is not absurd, then we must accept pantheism rather than Christianity. Christian faith must be absurd. The paradox is folly to the understanding. Such phrases and the whole tenor of his thought state his main contention that faith is contrary to reason. Logic is to be abandoned. The law of ***excluded middle*** and the law of ***contradiction*** are denied in the paradox of faith (compare ***Concluding Unscientific Postscript,*** 189, 513). There can be no Trinity if God is rational. The Christian God must be absurd.

It is not easy to say how much attention a book on Christian doctrine should pay to these anti-Christian authors. Since they operate on pagan assumptions, it is not surprising that their inferences result in unbiblical conclusions. Even if their implications

are valid-as they may often be-they cannot convince a Christian, for the Christian does not grant the premises . Even so, there is some utility in studying Kierkegaard and Barth. Because dialectical theology has been widely influential since World War II, the Christian should understand what it is that causes aberrations among some Christians and results in once-Christian seminaries with itching ears depart- ing the faith. But besides this reason for knowing a little about neo-orthodoxy, there is another and more fundamental reason . The aim of the orthodox theologian is, of course, to systematize what the Bible teaches. In doing so, however, there is always the possibility that we may make a mistake; and it is equally possible that our worst enemies will point it out. Therefore we have some responsibility to show that their objections apply neither to the Scriptures nor even to our systematization .

In this case, it is not very difficult to dispose of Kierke- gaard's objections. They do not apply to the Scriptural doctrine of the Incarnation. Kierkegaard thinks they do only because he does not understand the doctrine and misstates it in order to refute it. Of course it is impossible and absurd that the eternal be temporal. By mere tautology, that which has no succession in time cannot ***simpliciter*** be that which has succession in time. But the Biblical doctrine asserts no such nonsense. Therefore Kierkegaard is wide of the mark.

The point in question is the impassibility of the divine nature. People today usually think that God has emotions. This vitiates all Christianity. It also indicates the low level to which personal Christianity has fallen since the eighteenth , not to mention the seventeenth, century. To indicate what the earlier, better-educated Christians thought, I quote Augustus Toplady, the Anglican divine who wrote ***Rock of Ages*** and more than a hundred other hymns: "God is not irascible and appeasable, liable to emotions of joy and sorrow; or in any respect passive." Also, "when love is predicated of God, we do not mean that he is possessed of it as a passion or affection" ***(Complete Works,*** 1896, 106, 107, 687).

Again Louis Berkhof is true to Scripture when he writes, "The divine nature did not undergo any essential change in the incarnation. This also means that it remained impassible, that is, incapable of suffering and death."[1] In other words, the Christian position does not assert that a divine person became a human person. Even this is not tautologically ab- surd, for, although God cannot commit suicide, if a divine person became a human person he would not be both at the same time as Kierkegaard's absurdity requires. Much less does the Christian position assert this absurdity. Christ-as the Scripture references will soon show-was a divine Person , the eternal Jehovah, the Wisdom, Power, and ***Logos*** of God; and, while remaining what he was, associated with him- self or assumed to himself a complete human nature. Since this material appears most clearly in Jesus' life and ministry, the many details and the conclusions from them-by which Kierkegaard's misinterpretations are unmasked-will be postponed to the proper subsection.

There is, however, a thought that Kierkegaard's ***Para- dox*** may suggest to a Bible student. Of course a Bible student might and even ought to think of it on his own, for even a minimum of consideration should give anyone some inkling of how stupendous the idea of the Incarnation is. Consider , consider: The Sovereign Eternal God, self-existent and self-sufficient, invisible, who dwells in light unapproachable and alone has immortality, the Almighty God, whose greatness is unsearchable, the blessed and only Potentate, beside whom there is no other, the first and the last, Alpha and Omega, the Omnipotent Creator, the only wise God, clothed with majesty and with honor and with light as with a garment , who has stretched out the heavens like a curtain, who sets his glory above the heavens, whose hand laid the foundation of the Earth: Heaven is his throne and Earth his foot-

stool; the King eternal, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the King of glory-When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you visit him? Consider: Why should the Most High make himself of no reputation, take on himself the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men? Why?

Stupendous as all this is, there is an answer to the ques- tion. And it is not paradoxical absurdity.

6. The Virgin Birth

The New Testament explicitly asserts the “biological miracle” of the virgin birth.

Matthew 1:16,18, 20, 23: ... Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. . . . After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. . . . an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” . . . Behold a virgin shall be with child.

Luke 1:34, 35: Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will over- shadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Concerning these verses it may be noted that the relative ***of whom*** is feminine singular, and neither masculine nor plural. Matthew quotes the Old Testament prophecy about a virgin. Unbelieving scholars have tried to deny that the Hebrew word ***almah*** can mean ***virgin.*** Here two points may be noted: (1) There is no passage in the Old Testament where ***almah*** cannot mean virgin, though in one case the status of the girl is not made explicit; (2) Matthew translates ***almah*** as ***parthenos,*** and Matthew knew enough of both languages to translate it correctly. ***Parthenos*** must mean ***virgin.*** Then more conclusively, the Septuagint, translated by Alexandrian Jews more than a century before Christ, uses ***parthenos*** for ***almah*** in the passage Matthew quotes. Without crediting the accusation that Matthew distorted the Old Testament in order to favor Christianity, a Christian can reply that the Alexandrian Jews had no such prejudice. Nor can they be charged with an ignorance of Hebrew and Greek. Similarly in Genesis 24:43, the Septuagint translators used ***parthenos*** for ***almah;*** and surely Rebekah was a virgin. This argument is in no way weakened by the fact that the Septuagint also uses other words to translate ***almah.***

One further point about Matthew and the destructive critics. It is the remarkable case of the Revised Standard Version. The New Testament was published separately a year or so before the Old Testament was completed. On its first page there is nothing suspicious. But when the entire Bible was published, and the first page of Matthew was not likely to be the first page a reader would look at, there appeared a footnote that had not been put in the New Testament edition. It stated: “Other ancient authorities read, Joseph to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary was the father of Jesus who is called Christ.” It is amazing that unbelieving scholars should resort to such deceptive tactics. No Greek manuscript has such a reading. If ***versions***-i.e., translations-are authorities,

there seems to be only one that makes Joseph the father of Jesus. And if there is only one, why did the Revised Standard Version say ***authorities*** in the plural? After believers protested that the note was a falsehood, the editors of the Revised Standard Version deleted the note from their later editions.

The passage quoted from Luke is even clearer than that in Matthew, if that were possible. One critic simply deleted Luke 1:35 from his translation. It is hard to account for such animosity. During the first third of this century, candidates for ordination would sometimes express doubts about the virgin birth or deny outright such a “biological miracle.” There is no Biblical reason for this opposition, nor is there any, textual or exegetical reason. On philosophic grounds there is no more reason to reject the virgin birth than the resurrection or any other miracle. If God is omnipotent, he can work miracles; if Scripture is God’s revelation, he has worked miracles; and if critics reject supernaturalism, there is no use arguing with them about a single miracle. The real difficulty is their rejection of Christianity as a whole.

Aside from unbelieving enemies, friends within the Christian fold might ask, Why should there be a virgin birth anyhow? Why could not the ***Logos*** in his human nature have had two human parents? Would that not have made him more truly human? In answer to this question two reasons can be given, and there may be others.

The first answer is that this was not the birth of a new person. Other births are births of new persons. No one who reads these words existed in 1850. Ordinary births require two parents, but the birth of a preexisting person is not ordinary . This consideration may not demonstrate the necessity of a virgin birth, but it sounds like a very good reason for expecting something unusual.

The second reason also may not be demonstrative, yet

there could be something to it. All ordinary babies suffer from total depravity because the guilt of Adam's sin is immediately imputed to them. Christ was sinless; he was not depraved. Therefore the guilt of Adam's sin was not imputed to him at the time of his birth. Since the representative sin was the sin of a man, and not of a woman, it might have been more congruent for a sinless mediator to have a mother, but no father. This might not be ***the*** or even ***an*** explanation; but in a perfectly concatenated system there must be some relationship- and even a close relationship-between the sinlessness of Christ and the nonimputation of Adam's sin. At any rate, the New Testament teaches that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

In connection with the virgin birth-and even more so with the preceding section on the Incarnation, and also in anticipation of later implications-we may note that various theologians have asked whether these two related events were necessary. This question does not ask whether, under present actual conditions, it is necessary for us to believe in Christ's birth and death. The question is whether, before decreeing the actual plan of salvation, God could have chosen a different plan in which there would have been no Incarnation? Some theologians framed it this way: Is the idea of Incarnation involved simply in the idea of redemption, or was it antecedently involved in the idea of creation? Or it could be phrased: Would the Second Person of the Trinity have become incarnate even if man had not sinned? Some theologians argued that the Incarnation of a divine person is so stupendous that it must have been included in the very idea of any creation whatever. This reason, however, is transparently fallacious. Even if the work of Christ is more extensive than making atonement, it is by no means clear that he would have had to become incarnate in order to do it.

This problem is more complex than it seems at first, and we shall dig into it later. For the moment, however, let us remember that the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to give his life a ransom for many. He was named Jesus, for he was to save his people from their sins; and as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same, for otherwise he could not have died. More of this later; much more.

7. The Human Nature of Christ

Although the word ***incarnation*** means ***coming into flesh,*** this etymological sense is far from exhausting the doctrine. It is true that the preexisting eternal Jehovah became flesh, or took a human body to himself, but apart from further New Testament instruction one could suppose, as some early Christians actually did, that the ***Logos*** simply took the place of a human soul in a human body. Or, again, since the idea of incarnation is so astounding and since it boggles the imagination to think of the eternal Jehovah's humiliating himself by becoming a man, one could suppose that the human body of Jesus was a phantom-a sort of ghost, a theophany, visible but unreal. On this particular point the account of the virgin birth is pertinent. The Old Testament theophanies were not born, virgin or otherwise. The subject of Christ's person and natures is a large one; the views held in early times were various and the debates were vigorous and even furious. The Patripassians or Sabellians, to quote Tertullian, "drove out the Paraclete and crucified the Father." In other words, God is one Person, not a Trinity of Persons; this one Person ap- pears in three modes; therefore the Person who suffered on the cross was the Father in the guise of a Son. Apollinaris (A.D. 360) taught that the ***Logos*** in the visible Jesus took the place of the human soul as it is in ordinary man. Jesus was therefore true God, but not true man. The Nestorians (A.D. 430ff.) asserted both the deity and the humanity of Christ,

but claimed that he was two persons. Eutyches (c. A.D. 450) believed that the divine nature combined with a human na- ture so that the resulting combination was neither true God nor true man. The unity of the person, however, was strongly asserted.

In A.D. 451 the Council of Chalcedon met and adopted the creed about to be quoted. Authoritatively settling some of these problems, though leaving some others in a state of ambiguity-or at least a nonexplicit status-the Council set forth the doctrine that Christ is one Person with two natures:

Following the holy fathers we teach with one voice that the Son and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same, that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and body, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before all worlds according to his Godhead, but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably, and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and Hypostasis, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only Begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old time have spoken of concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the fathers hath delivered to us.

The wording of this creed was very carefully chosen, and its implications cannot be seen without some study. Since that date the main body of professing Christians have mainly accepted Chalcedon. Though the present treatise is not particu- larly interested in history as such, we may insert the note that during the Reformation the Anabaptists seem to have taught that Christ brought his human nature with him at his incarnation and did not receive it through Mary. This is a rather queer idea in any case; besides which it interferes with his role as mediator.

The following verses are basic for an understanding of Christ’s human nature.

Matthew 4:2: And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry.

Matthew 26:38: Then he said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here, and watch with me.”

Mark 13:32: But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Luke 2:52: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

John 4:6: Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from his journey , sat thus by the well.

John 8:40: But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

John 11:35: Jesus wept.

Acts 2:22: Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.

Hebrews 2:14: Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

2 John 7: For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

That there was a visible body with flesh and bones, a body that ate and drank, and walked here and there, hardly needs further mention. The New Testament provides no basis at all for supposing that Christ's body was any less real than the bodies of Joseph, Mary, Peter, and Paul.

Note that the words just used are "any less real than the bodies of Joseph, Mary, Peter, and Paul." This phraseology bypasses the question as to whether or not Jesus had a "ma- terial" body. Some theologians, orthodox enough, insist on a "material" body. Now, it happens that many of these theologians complain against authors who introduce Platonic terminology into Christian doctrine. Yet these same theologians use and stress Aristotelian concepts, and surely Aristotle was less religious than Plato. The concept of matter, as Aristotle noted, had anticipations in early Greek philosophy; but it can hardly be denied that Aristotle was the first to formulate a definite concept. Even Democritus did not do so, though he could properly be called a materialist. The question here is why various theologians should so strongly insist on the concept of one pagan philosopher while as strongly objecting to that of another. This question has become more pertinent in the twentieth century when science has largely, in fact entirely, banished the concept of ***matter*** and replaced it with that of ***energy.*** I surmise that most college textbooks on Physics, published since 1925, hardly ever use the term ***matter.*** Now, then, rather than engaging in a debate between Newton and Einstein, it seems better to say that whatever body fundamentally is, Jesus had a body of the same composition as those of Mary and Peter.

What needs more emphasis is that Jesus had a human soul, and that the ***Logos*** was not its substitute. In other words, Christ was a man; he was not simplistically "God in a body" as a contemporary evangelist told his television audience. In modern times, forces within the western religious community have attacked the deity of Christ; and of course Islam and other eastern religions have always done so. But it is equally destructive of Christianity to deny Jesus' humanity . Such a denial makes Christ's mediatorial activity impossible and vitiates the doctrine of the Atonement. Hence one must pay attention to the Scriptural basis for asserting that Christ was a man, that is, in ordinary language, that he had a human soul.

Now, the verses quoted, in addition to showing that he walked here and there, also predicate of him psychological activities that are not possible of God. He got hungry, he got tired, he slept. But "he who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep"; "the Creator of the ends of the Earth neither faints nor is weary." Jesus also experienced grief and sorrow . He called himself a man, and Peter called him a man. Deceivers and the antichrist deny that he came in the flesh; but since God's children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself ***in like manner*** partook of the same.

Luke 2 and Mark 13 assert his humanity in most extraordinary terms. As a boy, Jesus grew in wisdom as well as in stature (neither of which Jehovah could do); and he even grew in favor with God as well as with men. In his adult life,

during his ministry, he was ignorant of the date of his second advent. Presumably he was ignorant of other things as well, but the ***Logos*** is omniscient. The Scripture therefore attributes to Christ human psychological characteristics that cannot possibly be predicates of God.

But with all these finite creaturely characteristics so definitely asserted, it does not follow that the Messiah's essential deity was in any way impaired. In its insistence on Christ's human nature, the Bible does not teach what has come to be called the theory of kenosis. This name is taken from

Philippians 2:5b-8: Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped [at], but ***emptied*** himself [King James Version: made himself of no reputation]. . . (Revised Version)

The verb ***kenoo,*** or the noun ***kendsis,*** expresses the idea of ***vain*** or ***empty.*** The noun does not occur in the New Testament ; the verb occurs five times: Romans 4:14 speaks of making faith ***void;*** 1 Corinthians 1:17 speaks of making the cross of Christ of ***no effect;*** in 1 Corinthians 9:15 Paul refers to something that would make his glorying ***void;*** in 2 Corinthians 9:3 it is boasting that should be ***vain;*** and Philippians 2:7 is the fifth instance. It would seem strange to translate this verse as, "Christ made himself of no effect." He surely did not. There is nothing wrong with saying, "Christ emptied himself," though it might be better to retain "made himself of no reputation"; and so far as translation goes, one could, with a minimum of stretching it, say "humbled himself."

All these translations need interpretation. The theory of kenosis suffers from a certain degree of vagueness and

from its modification in several authors. Henry Ward Beecher and others taught that the ***Logos*** so depotentiated himself of all his divine attributes that he completely ceased from his cosmic functions during the years of his earthly life. This view denies that the ***Logos*** took the place of the human soul and makes Christ, at least in his activity, entirely human. A variation of this holds that the ***Logos*** took the place of the human soul as it is in ordinary men, but that no divine pre- rogatives were exercised. Martensen is even more confused. Walter R. Martin wrote a small book for popular consumption , ***Essential Christianity*** (Zondervan, 1962, 28-29), in which he says, "Christ did not exercise at least three prime attributes of Deity while on earth prior to his resurrection. These were Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence." Henry C. Thiessen in his ***Systematic Theology*** describes the kenosis theory as holding that "Christ emptied himself of his relative attributes-his omnipotence, omniscience, and omni- presence-while retaining his immanent attributes-his holiness , love, and truth." Then further down the page Thiessen continues, "Instead of the above mentioned theory, the Scriptures teach, when taken as a whole, that Christ merely sur- rendered the independent exercise of his relative attributes. He did not surrender the immanent attributes in any sense. . . . Thus he was omniscient as the Father granted him the exercise of these attributes."

This last view evinces considerable confusion. In the first place, Thiessen ***(Theology Proper,*** III, "The Nature of God"), along with the kenotists, uses the distinction between substance and attribute: "By an attribute, in distinction from the substance of God, we mean 'any necessary predicate that can be applied to this essence. . . .' (Smith, ***System of Chris- tian Theology,*** p. 12)." If, however, the distinction between substance and attribute be rejected as an Aristotelian imposition , the kenotists and Thiessen also are both left with no

foundation for their views.

In the second place, and a little more immediately pertinent to the "emptying" of Christ, the distinction between "relative" and "immanent" attributes is of little value. The Trinity, Christ included, was omniscient not only before his incarnation, but also in eternity apart from the created world. Omniscience therefore is not a mere relationship to creation. In fact, if the incarnate Christ retained his "immanent" at tribute of truth, how could he fail to be omniscient? Similarly with omnipotence. God did not suddenly become po- tent or omnipotent upon creating the universe. Had God not created anything, he still would have been omnipotent. In the third place, the phrase "Christ merely surrendered the independent exercise of his relative attributes"-even with the addition of "he was omniscient as the Father granted him the exercise of these attributes"-is confusing. Even in eternity Christ's omniscience was not independent of the Father's omniscience. None of the Persons of the Trinity was ever independent. They are one God.

In the fourth place, the humiliation described in Philippians 2:7 is easily understood through the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. His human nature was never omniscient nor omnipotent. An omniscient, eternal nature just is not a human nature. And the divine ***Logos*** took to himself a human nature. But this second Person of the Trinity never ceased being the second Person. His Person, he himself, remained God. As God, or in his divine nature, he continued to "have" or exercise all the attributes he ever had. Consider these verses:

Matthew 11:27: All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the

Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him.

Matthew 18:20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.

John 5:17: But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.

John 8:58: Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

John 10:30,38: I and my Father are one .. . but if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.

1 Corinthians 1:24: But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Ephesians 3:11: According to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 2:2-3: That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:9: For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Hebrews 1:8-12: But to the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness ; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your compan- ions.” And, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will fold them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail.”

Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Matthew 11:27 asserts both omniscience and omnipotence , and especially the predestinating sovereignty of the Son in revealing himself to those whom he chooses. The Son’s knowledge of the Father is put on a level with the Father’s knowledge of the Son. That this equality of knowledge, and the predestinating sovereignty in revelation, is operative during Jesus’ earthly ministry is clear in the fact that Jesus is referring to the successes and the failures of the evangelistic campaign of the seventy (compare Luke 10:17-22).

John 5:17, by itself, would be hardly sufficient to refute the theory of kenosis. Any Christian minister can say, God works and I work too. But the context makes the working of the Father and the working of the Son so coextensive as to be inapplicable to any merely human evangelist. John 10:38 strengthens this disparity. Although there is a sense, a rather weak sense, in which God and the minister are one-for the

sincere minister’s purpose is imperfectly one with God’s-it is rather hard for him to say that he is in the Father and the Father in him. Yet by itself, this sentence also can be interpreted , or misinterpreted, to apply.

The other verses, beginning with 1 Corinthians 1:24, are much more explicit in their denial of kenosis, and with this denial the previous verses receive their proper weight. No sin- cere Christian pastor would claim to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. But does this show that the Incarnate Logos exercised these powers during Jesus' earthly ministry? Yes, it does; unless one wishes to claim that the Father had no power and wisdom for some thirty years. Nor is the reference to Christ's earthly ministry omitted from the context. Verse 18 mentions the cross, and verse 23 speaks of the crucifixion. One cannot maintain that Paul's identification of Jesus with the omnipotence of God is true only after the ascension.

Ephesians 3:11 might possibly be interpreted to mean that the plan of the ages was made in the ***Logos*** from eternity , but that the ***Logos*** lost the plan during his incarnation. This is not only a queer interpretation, but is also made less acceptable by the name of Jesus included in the sentence. Colossians 2:2-3 is similar to 1 Corinthians 1:24. What is probably the clearest verse is Colossians 2:9 where the apostle asserts that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily. It would not be all the fullness if even one attribute had been laid aside, and the ***term bodily*** can apply only to the incarnate Jehovah.

The two verses in Hebrews assert the immutability of Jesus Christ yesterday, today during his earthly ministry, and forever.

But there is one other verse that is particularly interesting . John 1:9, along with 1:4, teaches that the epistemological abilities of every man who is born in the world result from Christ's activity. Since men were born and lived dur-

ing Christ's earthly ministry, it follows that the populations of China, Africa, and America were being enlightened by Christ even between 4 B.C. and A.D. 30. Jesus, during his earthly sojourn, never ceased in any of his divine activities. But taking upon himself a human nature was a humiliation.

This discussion of the kenosis theory was introduced for the purpose of defending the creed of Chalcedon to the effect that the incarnate Person was both God and man. Neither one without the other. The discussion has defended his full deity during the time of his earthly ministry. But to conclude the section on his humanity, there is one further and one all important facet that demands full attention.

Christ is proved to be a man, not only because he got tired and thirsty, but because he died. God cannot die. In fact it is precisely because God cannot die that Jehovah became man.

8. The Purpose of the Incarnation

The purpose of the Incarnation therefore is that Jesus should die. Even from the standpoint of secular history Jesus is famous because he died. He is not famous because he was a great moral teacher. Philosophers and teachers may be- come famous if with intellectual ability they also live long enough. Plato wrote and taught for about forty years; Aristotle for no fewer. Schopenhauer is second rate because he stopped philosophizing after he had written one great book. Can any- one think of a great philosopher who taught for only three years? But however it may be with the secular historians' evaluation of greatness, the Scriptures say that Jesus' pur- pose in life was to die. Otherwise there would have been no Incarnation at all.

Mark 10:45: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

John 12:27: What shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" But for this pur- pose I came to this hour.

Hebrews 2:9,14: But we see Jesus ... for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for every one. . . . Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy . . . the devil.

These four verses state explicitly that Jehovah became incarnate in order to die. There are many others that imply this, even if the assertion is not explicit. For example, the angel told Joseph to name the child Jesus “for he will save his people from their sins.” Doubtless Joseph had no idea of how Jesus would save his people, but with our post-crucifix- ion knowledge we can see that this is a statement of purpose centering on his death. Similarly Mary could not then under- stand the meaning of “Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also,” but she understood later.

A little more explicit is

John 18:37: For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world.

The immediately following words could be used to identify Jesus’ purpose as teaching the truth, and the immediately preceding words as establishing a kingdom. Well, of course the Incarnation had a series of purposes. One states the literal truth in saying that God became incarnate in order to sit by a well in Samaria. But there is no way to eliminate

the idea of death from the process in Pilate’s court. Death is in verses 31, 32, and 19:6, 7, 10.

A more pervasive foundation for this theme is found in

Isaiah 53:7: ... led as a lamb to the slaughter . . . compared with the identification of Jesus as that lamb in

John 1:29: Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Such passages summarize the significance of the Old Testament ritual. The lamb was chosen to die. Christ was the lamb chosen before the foundation of the world. Therefore he came to die.

Furthermore, the idea of God’s coming to Earth and dying is such an incongruent combination that if God really became incarnate and actually died, we are compelled to conclude that such a death must have been a major part of God’s plan. Surely God was not overwhelmed by Pilate’s power: “You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above.” Therefore the necessity of the Incarnation lay in the death of Christ. Jesus came to die.

Some theologians-among whom were Rothe, Dorner, and Martensen-argued that such a stupendous event as the death of God could not be contingent on the accidental and arbitrary act of Adam’s sin. If a mediator is necessary under actual present conditions, a mediator must have been necessary before the fall. But such an argument is not even plausible . Surely the need of a mediator between a sinner and God does not imply such a need between a sinless being and God. There is no Scriptural evidence that Jesus is the mediator between God and the sinless angels. Second, Adam’s sin was not an accident or an arbitrary act. When those theo-

logians argue that the stupendous event of the death of God must have been part of God’s original plan, they indeed state the truth. But this in no way implies that the plan did not include Adam’s sin, that this sin was an accident God some- how could not prevent, or that Christ’s death was not directly related in the divine plan to the occurrence of sin in the human race. Creation is no

more a part of the divine plan than is sin; and to relate the Incarnation to the former only rather than to the latter-or to some other divine necessity, as these theologians do-is a construction motivated by a rejection of the Scriptural doctrine of predestination.

It is awkward to speak of Adam's first sin as being "ar- bitrary" even from Adam's point of view, let alone from God's. Adam deliberately chose to live with Eve rather than to obey God and lose his lovely wife. If this is called arbitrary , there remains no difference between an arbitrary and a deliberate, purposive act.

It is hard to know what some theologians mean by ***arbitrary.*** In the case of human actions, the ***arbitrary*** act may be an act of free will independent from God; and not only so, but also capricious, or unrelated to the agent's serious and constant concerns. In the case of God, since he is perfectly rational, none of his acts can be arbitrary. They all fit teleologically into a single universal plan. Later, a section on the immediate imputation of Adam's sin to his natural posterity and of Christ's righteousness to the elect will further con- sider the question of arbitrary acts, for since God's will is sovereign, all his decrees are arbitrary.

At any rate, the Scripture is clear. In addition to the previous verses, one may use the following for the conclusion that Christ became incarnate in order to die.

Luke 19: 10: For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Galatians 4:4-5: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Philippians 2:8: And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

1 John 3:8b: For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9. Active Obedience

Though the doctrine of active obedience concerns the details of Christ's earthly life, a biographical account-Strauss's ***Leben Jesu,*** Renan's ***Vie de Jesus,*** or more orthodox harmonies of the Gospels-is not essential to the present purpose. The essential is that in all historical or biographical details, Jesus perfectly kept the law of God and was sinless.

Isaiah 53:7,9: ... led as a lamb to the slaughter . . . because he had done no violence , nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Luke 1:35: therefore, also, the holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

John 8:46: Which of you convicts me of sin?

2 Corinthians 5:21: Him who knew no sin . . .

Hebrews 4:15: ... but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 7:26,27: . . . holy, harmless, undefiled . . . who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins . . .

1 Peter 1:19: . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot

1 Peter 2:22: who committed no sin . . .

!John 3:5: in him there is no sin.

A few obvious remarks on these verses are sufficient to make the point. The Isaiah passage was used a few para- graphs above to show that Jesus came to die. But the pas- sage also makes it clear, and 1 Peter 1:19 as well, that the lamb was without blemish, and no deceit was found in his mouth. Although the angel's statement in Luke that the baby to be born would be holy is not conclusive, for holy does not always mean sinless, the other verses so plainly assert the sinlessness of Christ that exegesis and explanation are su- pererogatory: "without sin," "who committed no sin," "in him there is no sin."

Sin is any transgression of or want of conformity unto the law of God. Since, then, Jesus is said to be without sin, he must have perfectly obeyed the law. This is called his active obedience in distinction from his suffering and death, which are his passive obedience, or, simply, his passion.

At this point the exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement strikes a snag. The first four sections-or at least sections two, three, and four-had their locus in eternity past; then sections five to nine somewhat followed the life of

Christ. Nor is the historical account altogether illogical, for the life of Christ is the outworking of the Covenants of Grace and Redemption. The next historical event is the death of Christ. But this presupposes an understanding of sin. Hence to preserve a logical sequence, it is necessary to return in history to the Covenant of Works. Only afterward does the death of Christ make sense.

10. The Covenant of Works

God made a covenant of works with Adam. Dispensationalists usually date the covenant of works from Moses to Christ. The Scriptures describe it as having been made before the fall. The word ***covenant*** does not occur in the earliest chapters of Genesis, but it is clear that God set forth certain conditions that Adam had to fulfill. Unfulfillment meant death. One may most plausibly suppose that, if death is the penalty for disobedience, the reward of obedience would be life. This is really more than a plausible supposition. It seems implied by the ejection of Adam from the garden in order that he might not eat of the tree of life. The tree of life, whose leaves and monthly fruit are good, appears again in Revelation 22:2. Then in verse 14 the blessed are given the right to the tree of life in the heavenly city. What Adam lost is here restored. One may therefore conclude that the covenant of works contained both a penalty and a reward. But because of one single sin the Cherubim with their flaming sword prevented Adam from entering and eating. Had there been no sin, access to the tree would not have been cut off. One single act brought the penalty.

But we proceed too rapidly. The express Scriptural basis for asserting that there was such a covenant-and that any infringement carried a penalty-must be given, at least in part.

This is all the more necessary here because the Arminians (early Methodists and present-day Nazarenes) reject the penal theory of the Atonement. It is perfectly easy to show that Scripture assigns a penalty for a violation of the covenant of works, but the ease in finding verses to quote does not justify their omission.

The following are only a few verses that assert that sin carries a penalty.

Genesis 2:17: You shall not eat [of it], for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Genesis 4: 10ff.: The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.. . . And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! . . . Anyone who finds me will kill me." . . . And the Lord set a mark on Cain.

Genesis 6:7,13: So the Lord said, "I will destroy man.... for the Earth is filled with violence. ... I will destroy them with the Earth.

Genesis 9:6: Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God he made man.

Genesis 15:12,14: Horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then he [God] said to Abram: . . . the nation whom they serve, I will judge.

Exodus 21:12 ff.: He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.. . . And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

He who kidnaps a man ... he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death . . . eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Numbers 16:32,35: And the Earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.. . . And a fire came out from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

1 Samuel 2:22ff.: Now Eli was very old and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel. ... So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.. . . But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless, they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them. . . . Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him. . . . "Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm. . . . And you will see an enemy in my habitation. . . . And there shall not be an old man in your house forever . . . Hophni and Phineas: in one day they shall die, both of them."

In the first of these verses death is established as the penalty for sin. Genesis 4 presupposes not only capital pun-

ishment for murder, but also that Cain's brothers knew of this penalty and were aware of their right to impose it. However , for some reason not fully spelled out, God spared Cain. After the flood had wiped out the race, the principle of capital punishment was made explicit to Noah. The revelation to Abram included a penalty to be imposed on Egypt. Exodus specifies the death penalty for a series of crimes. The pas- sage in Numbers describes the death of three rebels and two hundred and fifty of their followers. Not to lengthen the list from Joshua through Judges-nor to continue throughout the Old Testament-the prediction of disaster on Eli's house forever , beginning with the death of his sons, is sufficient as a conclusion at this point. Note here that God had ordained the sons' refusal to hearken to their father's final rebuke because God intended to kill them.

These verses, however, do not make it very clear whether or not evil men suffer a penalty after death. The sinner is executed, but nothing further is said. Although the results of sin in a future life are still not clear, these verses show a provision for redemption; and perhaps the idea of redemption , the idea of being cleansed from sin, and therefore of standing righteous before God, intimates a future blessedness even if it does not certify a future penalty. Other verses say more, and there now follows a condensation of

Exodus 29:10-37: You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull. Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord. . . . You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar. ... It is a sin offering. You shall also take one

ram . . . and you shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood and sprinkle it all around the altar . . . And you shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement. You shall cleanse the altar when you make an atonement for it. . . . And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy.

These verses may be taken as representative of all similar provisions in the Levitical law. It is not the present pur- pose to read into them the full New Testament explanation of them as anticipatory of Christ and his sacrifice. Rather one should first determine their minimal meaning-the meaning that a fairly devout Israelite of that age could be expected to discern with a little thoughtfulness. The words, “it is a sin offering,” indicate that somehow and to some extent these offerings restore the sinner to God’s favor. They remove from him the necessity of suffering the penalty himself. Obviously they presuppose that sin carries a penalty, and this is the important point just now.

The effects in a future life are not too clear. Yet if God is the eternal sovereign-the maker of heaven and earth, the creator of mankind, the gracious consoler of Eve in giving her a son (Seth) to replace Abel and a line through Enos, which, contrasted with the Cainites, would fear God and produce a man Enoch (who so walked with God that God took him), if too God in the Levitical Law provides an atonement and holiness-if all this is so, could not a fairly devout Israelite of Moses’ day surmise that anyone cleansed by the atoning sacrifice would enjoy God’s favor in a future world? The liberal theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who can find no hint of immortality in the Old Testament, do

not qualify as devout Israelites of Moses’ day.

The New Testament, of course, is more-much more- explicit.

Matthew 3:7: Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matthew 5:22: But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of Hell fire.

Matthew 5:29: It is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into Hell. (See also verse 30.)

Matthew 8:12: But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 10:28: But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Matthew 13:41-42: His angels . . . will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (See also verse 50.)

Matthew 18:8: It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. (See also verse 9.)

Matthew 25:46: And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

In these verses from Matthew, the advance over the Old Testament verses consists in the very clear statement that the penalty for sin is everlasting-as everlasting as eternal life- and also in the more explicit description of how terrible that

punishment shall be. Not to repeat these ideas from Mark and Luke, only one verse from John will complete the Gospels , to which one verse from Acts will be added before giving a list from the remainder of the New Testament.

John 3:36: He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

Acts 13:46: Since you reject [the word of God] and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

The first of these two verses speaks of the wrath of God. Following verses will add to this idea of wrath. The verse from Acts is just one of a great number which, in one way or another, imply that there is punishment of sin. Now come some of the most important verses from the epistles:

Romans 1:18: For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Romans 1:32: Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 5:9: We shall be saved from wrath through him.

Romans 6:21: For the end of those things is death.

Ephesians 5:6: Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience .

Philippians 3:19: ... whose end is destruction . . .

1. Thessalonians 1:10: ... Jesus who delivers us from from the wrath to come.
2. Thessalonians 1:7-9: The Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with ev- erlasting destruction.

2 Peter 2:4,9: For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hell. . . the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the un- just under punishment for the day of judgment.

2 Peter 3:7: ... reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of un- godly men.

Revelation 20:15: And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The immediate point of all these verses is that God has decreed a penalty for sin. Sin is the lack of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. Toward such disobedience God exhibits his wrath. No understanding of the Atonement is possible without a conception of divine wrath. This term occurred in four of the verses just quoted; the term ***vengeance*** occurred

once;***punish, judgment, perdition, everlasting destruction,*** and ***lake of fire,*** all are found. These threats and warnings are directed against ***ungodliness*** (twice), ***disobedience*** (twice), ***the unjust,*** and those not found ***in the Book***

of Life. All this constitutes a penal theory of sin and must therefore require a penal theory of Atonement.

11. The Vicarious Sacrifice

Christ, by dying, suffered a penalty for sin instead of our suffering the penalty that was due us. Verses have al- ready been quoted to show that God imposes on man a pen- alty for sin. Dozens of other verses could also be quoted. The present section will show that Christ was our substitute. This is a most important idea, and although not all pertinent verses will be quoted, a list a little longer than usual is justified.

John 1:29: Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Matthew 20:28: Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

1. Corinthians 5:7b: For Christ, our Passover, indeed was sacrificed for us.

2. Corinthians 5:14: For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died.

Galatians 3:13: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree.”)

Ephesians 5:2: And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling aroma.

Hebrews 9:28: So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second

time, apart from sin, for salvation.

1 Peter 2:24: Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness- by whose stripes you were healed.

1 Peter 3:18: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

John 1:29 recalls not only Isaiah 53, but also passages such as Leviticus 1:4 and 16:21, 22, where the idea of substitution is unmistakably expressed. The verse from Matthew and its parallel in Mark 10:45 put the idea of substitution in the preposition ***anti,*** instead of. Matthew 2:22 says that Archelaus was reigning anti, in the place of, his father Herod. Some other verses, e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:14, use the preposition ***huper;*** this is a word of wider meaning and can be translated as ***in behalf*** without necessarily requiring substitution. For example, suppose a pastor is sick or on vacation. A visitor takes his place. This visiting minister preaches ***for*** the absent pastor and he also preaches ***for*** the congregation. But the preposition ***for*** has two different meanings in these two expressions. The visitor preaches ***instead of*** the pastor; he preaches ***on behalf of*** or ***for the good of*** the congregation. The Greek ***huper*** is similar to the English ***for.*** When the liberals used to claim that ***huper*** could not possibly mean ***in- stead of*** they were wrong. More recent studies of papyri show that ***huper*** was used by a stenographer or professional scribe who wrote for and instead of his employer. Hence the wider ***huper*** in 2 Corinthians 5:14 does not weaken the unambiguous ***anti*** in Matthew

20:28. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 the preposition is again ***huper,*** but the important point is that Christ's death is said to be our Passover sacrifice. This makes Christ's death as substitutionary as any of the Old Testament lambs. Since too the Old Testament lambs had to be without spot or blemish, so too Christ had to be sinless by virtue of his active obedience. Substitution and sinlessness have a direct bearing also on expiation of sin and propitiation of God, for the doc- trine of the Atonement is a closely knit complex of ideas.

One of these ideas, in Mark 10:45 with its preposition ***anti,*** is that of a ransom. It is worthy of a paragraph or two- to put it mildly. Single verses often have a bearing on several topics. The verse in Mark, and likewise in Matthew 20:28, as if it were necessary to defend its genuineness against destructive critics, can be used to show the purpose of the In- carnation (discussed and quoted here in section eight). Christ's death was not an unforeseen accident that obstructed his plan: It was a part, a major part, of that plan. But in addition to this, the verse clarifies the method of the plan. It was the payment of a ransom. As part of the plan, the death must be viewed as a voluntary transaction, not as an involuntary martyrdom. This idea is again plainly stated in Christ's bold reply to Pilate, "You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above."

But let us center on the idea of a ransom. Ordinarily a ransom is a sum of money paid to a slave-holder or to a military authority for the liberation of a slave or hostage. The subject is redeemed. The Old Testament has several references to such a redemption (Exodus 21:30; Leviticus 19:20 and 25:51; Isaiah 45:13). But no ransom was applicable to the liberation of a murderer (Numbers 35:31,32). In addition to such civil circumstances, the Old Testament speaks of ransoms paid to God through his priestly representatives (Numbers 3:49 and 18:15; Psalms 107:2; et al.). These payments averted the divine displeasure. In some of these cases the person himself paid the ransom; in other cases another

paid; and in Christ's case he paid the ransom instead ***(anti)*** of our paying it.

Although the civil ransoms and even the religious ransoms in the Old Testament were payments of money, the ransom paid for our redemption from the penalties of sin was nothing less than Christ's death on the cross. He came "to give his life a ransom for many."

This material, discussed by virtually every theologian, is so familiar that it can be included here only under the excuse of relative completeness. The interweaving of elements of the Atonement is found in most of the references. Not to exegete every one quoted just above, we may note that substitution and the idea of penalty are clear in Galatians 3:13. Christ became a curse for us and so redeemed us from the curse or penalty of the law, the penalty that otherwise we should have to bear ourselves; and finally it may be sufficient to point out the pointed language of the two verses from 1 Peter. Christ bore ***our*** sins in ***his own*** body . . . the just for the unjust.

The volumes on Systematic Theology usually explain and refute other views of the Atonement. The debate has slackened today, if I am not mistaken, because those who reject it no longer attempt to claim that their substitutes are Scriptural. They openly deny inerrancy so that it makes no difference to them what the Bible says. However, a Christian has a better understanding and a better preparation for publishing the glad tidings if he has some knowledge of the earlier controversies. The following will be only a reminder, hardly a summary, and certainly not a history of the doctrine.

One, perhaps the most obvious, objection to a vicarious atonement is the principle that the punishment of a crime must be imposed on the criminal and cannot be justly imposed on any substitute. Berkhof gives a miserable answer to this objection. He states, what is true enough, that in ordinary life "the innocent often suffer as a result of the transgression of others" (378). Of course! If someone robs you, you suffer as a result of his crime. But you do not suffer as a penalty for his crime. No one would argue that you should be put into jail because you are the victim of a burglary.[1] Berkhof further adds, "One who hires another to commit a crime is held responsible." But did Christ hire us to commit a crime for him? Were we his agents in sin? Nonsense. But even Hodge uses this argument: "Where is the propriety of saying that the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, when we see that they actually do thus suffer continually, and everywhere since the world began?" (Charles Hodge, ***Systematic Theology,*** Vol. II, 530). But we do not see that they suffer justly. We see only that they suffer, and we regularly regard them as having suffered

unjustly. A much better answer-and a satisfactory one, in my opinion-combines the idea of federal headship and the sovereignty of God, which two will be discussed in sections 15 and 18 below.

The Socinians, a sixteenth-century group whom we would call Unitarians today, denied that Christ's death was a ransom . The term ***ransom,*** like the parables, is figurative and designates at most a single point of similarity. Both in religion and after a war prisoners are released, but nothing is implied as to the method or considerations for a release. In the case of Christ's death, the effect is to inspire us to live a more self-sacrificing life. On this basis, or on no basis at all, God in his goodness can forgive us. This view, however, stumbles over its own feet because the only point of similarity in the verse is the idea of ransom. The term ***ransom*** does not in strictness mean ***deliverance.*** It designates ***the method of deliverance***. If anything in the passage is literal, it is ***ransom*** itself.

So much for the verse itself, but the verse is embedded in a more extensive scriptural background. This background

includes, includes very definitely, the doctrine of the Trinity. If Christ were a mere man, and not God, his death might very well be nothing more than an edifying example. This is of course what the Socinians believed. They were Unitarians . But if Scripture teaches the deity of Christ, it must also teach that his death was no simple example. Hence a scriptural defense of the Trinity is also a scriptural defense of a substitutionary sacrifice. They go together, and the Socinians deny both. On this point the Socinians cannot be charged with inconsistency; they can be charged with a rejection of Scripture. Let this suffice as an example of objections that have been raised against the scriptural doctrine.

12. Expiation

Although lengthy exegesis of the verses just above is not necessary in order to establish the idea of substitution, substitution is not the whole story. For one thing, not all substitutionary sacrifices are penalties. When a pinch hitter, substituting for a less dependable player, makes a sacrifice bunt, he is not discharging any penalty previously imposed on the regular batter. In a mine disaster where the conditions are such that only one of the two men can get out alive, a single man might sacrifice his life for a father with several children. It is substitution, but not penalty. Christ's death, however, was a penalty

In the previous list of verses, Galatians 3:13 contained the idea of penalty. The curse of the law is the death penalty the law inflicts. Christ became that penalty, or took that curse, for us. Hebrews 9:28, enforced by all the other Old Testament references, pictures Christ as offered up to God in sacrifice bearing the sins of many. This epistle was written primarily to Jews. Not only chapter nine, but much else in the other chapters, reminded the Jews of the Old Testament sac-

rifices and penalties for sin: Surely he has borne our griefs; he was wounded for our transgressions; and the chastisement or penalty of our salvation was upon him, for with his stripes we are healed.

Expiation means the canceling of sin, purging it out, washing it away, covering it up (though not in the contemporary pejorative sense). It is common to speak of expiating a crime by paying the penalty. The English word ***expiate*** apparently does not occur in the King James Version, but the Bible is full of expressions describing the purging away of sins. These are expiated, not by serving a term in jail, but by the shed blood of Christ. First, some verses describe the Old Testament anticipations; second, the New Testament asserts the reality anticipated.

Leviticus 1:4: And he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

Leviticus 4:3,4: If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the

Lord, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the Lord. (Compare the remainder of the chapter, and also chapter 16.)

Leviticus 17:11: For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the al- tar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

John 1:29: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "BeholdIThe Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Romans 5:9: Much more then, now having been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Hebrews 1:3: Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 9:26: He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (compare 10:4-14).

1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Revelation And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

7:14-15: So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

The idea that somehow or other man's sin is expiated is so clearly stated in these verses that there is hardly a possibility that other language can state it more clearly; and not merely "somehow or other," but in one definite way; for, to use one example, Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ purged our sins. It was his work, not ours. But though the basic idea is so clear, a point or two can be noted that may have escaped the careless reader. Expiation is not a moral improvement of the sinner. When in human affairs a man expiates his sin by a term in jail, this does not necessarily, nor even usually, make him a better man. What his incarceration does is to free him from any further penalty. Similarly, when Christ paid our penalty, we are freed from any further penalty. If ***guilt*** means liability to punishment, expiation removes that liability. Paying the penalty may or may not induce moral improvement; it does not remove defilement or depravity; it cancels the guilt-that is all.

Though expiation is such a simple idea that it requires little explanation, it is one of the most important in preaching the Gospel to unsaved sinners. They need to know that their sins can be forgiven, washed away, no longer imputed to them. Hence a few more words on the subject may give it a needed emphasis.

To put it in proper pulpit style, the text might be, "Jesus took bread, and having given thanks and blessed it, he broke it. . . . after supper he took the cup . . . and said, Drink ye all of it . . . this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." These words, with slight variation, occur in Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; and Luke 22:19.

Here Christ called his blood a covenant, thus bringing into focus all the Old Testament had taught about the covenant . It is difficult to stick very closely to the subject, for all Scripture is interwoven, and one passage needs explana-

tion from another. Not only may one refer to the Old Testament here, one may also refer to all that the epistle to the Hebrews says about the covenant. Without disparaging Christ's teaching ministry, this institution of the Lord's Supper indicates that for all ages to come his death will be com- memorated. There was something in his death that his teaching could not do. That something was the remission of sins.

Once more, the blood shed for the remission of sins takes us back to the Old Testament sacrifices.[1] Moses instructed the Israelites to kill a lamb and to sacrifice it. It was a sacrifice made to God. Possibly many of those ancient Jews did not understand that their sacrifice prefigured a later and more perfect sacrifice. Possibly, and as time went on probably, the more devout worshippers surmised that their current sacrifices foreshadowed a greater one. In any case, the sacrifice brought the forgiveness of sins. With this background, Jesus told his disciples that his shed blood would purge away their sins. His death is the cause and remission is the effect.

This rules out any moral influence theory of atonement . Moral influence is not atonement in any case. Moral influence may indeed in some cases result in one's improving his own life. Young men are often so inspired by the conduct of some hero that they want to emulate him in science , in scholarship, in politics, or even in baseball. Possibly Renan and Bushnell were stimulated to imitate Jesus' example of gentleness and love. But Christ's death is first of all directed toward the cancellation of one's past life, and only afterward to the improvement of one's future days. Its purpose was the forgiveness of sins. Moral influence forgives nothing.

Of course expiation is not all there is to the doctrine of the Atonement. The next point is perhaps the most impor-

tant part of this central doctrine of the Bible.

13. Propitiation

This most important element in the doctrine of the Atonement is without doubt the element which heretics the most vigorously hate. H.B. Smith ***(System of Christian The- ology,*** 437, note) makes a pertinent introductory observation :

A writer who became prominent as a controversialist on this subject, wrote, some years ago, "Every tyro in theology knows or ought to know that atonement means nothing more than atonement, that is, the reconciliation of opposing parties." But none but a tyro in theology knows that this is its only sense. Even admitting the correctness of the etymology, it must be said that this way of reducing the large import of language to the smallest possible dimensions, by means of etymology alone, and of deciding theological controversies by an appeal to the primitive sense of words before they had gained their full signification is one unworthy of the scholar and theologian. All the etymology in the world would never be sufficient to show that atonement means only reconciliation-for the very plain rea- son that for hundreds of years it has borne in the English language an additional sense, that is, it includes a designation of the mode in which the reconciliation was affected . . . the doc- trine of expiation, atonement, or satisfaction, made by Christ in his blood.

Not only has the English word ***atonement*** designated a mode in which reconciliation has been effected, but the de- sire to understand that mode has motivated intelligent Christians from the days of the apostles to the present. One of the first attempts, however seriously put forward, seems strangely perverse now. Starting from the undeniable fact that sin brought the human race under the power of Satan, and look- ing at the verse which says Christ's death is a ransom, many early theologians-not including Athanasius-held that Christ's death was that ransom paid to the devil. Such was the view of Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa; but Gregory of Nazianzus calls it blasphemy, and Hilary even states that Christ's death was a penal satisfaction offered to God. Yet Ambrose, a few years later, continued the idea of a ransom to the devil. This probably explains why Augustine made some use of this early doctrine. At any rate, it was a widely received view. But though Augustine says a few things that sound like the early doctrine, his remarks are more vague, and other ideas on the atonement supervene.

Anselm (1109), who, though still possessed by the superstitions about penance from early times, with great originality began to grasp the concept of satisfaction and explicitly rejected satisfaction of the devil. Abelard (1142) sharpened these arguments: (1) Christ redeemed only the elect, and these were never in the devil's power; (2) if the devil seduced man, this gives him no right over man, but makes him deserving of punishment; and (3) the devil could not give man the immortality he promised, and so again could have no rights over him. "By these reasons," says Abelard, "it seems convincingly proved that the devil had ... no

rights against man . . . except perhaps [by] . . . the permission of the Lord who had given man over to him as jailer or torturer for punish- ment" (Migne, II, col. 834).

These ideas were hard for men of those times to assimilate . Bernard of Clairvaux (1153), a muddle-headed mystic, reverted to the earlier view. In opposition to Abelard he asserted that redemption by a ransom paid to the devil is a doc- trine which all doctors since the apostles agree upon. Let Abelard know that the devil not only had a power, but a just power over men. Man was justly held captive by him (and God was under obligation to pay off the devil).

The history is interesting; and unless it had thus occurred , we today might have been as puzzled as, perhaps not Bernard, but Augustine. The aim now is to show that Christ's death was a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. In other words, Christ's death was a propitiatory sacrifice. The word itself-propitiation-is not of frequent occurrence, but it occurs and cannot be disregarded.

Romans 3:25: ... whom God set forth to be a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness , because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

Hebrews 2:17: Therefore, in all things he had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1 John 2:2: And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

1 John 4: 10: In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

These four verses all use the word, verb or noun, ***propitiate.*** The verb in Hebrews is ***ilaskesthai.*** It is incorrectly translated ***reconciliation*** in the King James Version. The New King James Version quoted above has it correctly: ***propitiation .*** There are also about ten occurrences of another word translated ***reconcile.*** Since the latter is not a precise syn-

onym, attention will be restricted to the former. Yet it must be understood that the doctrine of propitiation is not based on these verses alone. Behind them stand the Biblical propositions on the wrath of God-an unpopular topic but indispensable to Biblical religion.

Matthew 3:7: Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

John 3:36: But the wrath of God abides on him.

Romans 1: 18: For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven.

Romans 2:5,8: . . . wrath in the day of wrath . . . indignation and wrath (compare Romans 4:15, 5:9, 9:22).

Ephesians 2:3: . . . children of wrath . . .

Ephesians 5:6: Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (compare Colossians 3:6).

Now, propitiation is some process or other by which the anger or wrath of one person toward another is dissipated . To propitiate means to turn wrath aside, to reconcile, to make a person favorably disposed.

The first meaning listed in Liddell and Scott is ***to appease .*** The second translation is ***to conciliate.*** The third is its particular and peculiar use in Hebrews 2:17. There is no preposition following the verb, and one might think of translating it as "to propitiate the sins of the people." But sms ***are expiated; God is propitiated.*** However, it is equally true that ***sins*** are not ***reconciled.*** Therefore, in either case, a preposition must be inserted in English; and thus the New King James Version is justified in translating it "make propitiation ***for*** the sins of the people."

In the Old Testament, the repentant worshiper offered the sacrifice of a lamb.[1] The burning of the designated parts of the lamb on the altar was not primarily intended to produce any psychological change in the worshiper. The change called repentance had occurred before the sacrifice was offered . After the sacrifice, the worshiper might experience a feeling of relief or forgiveness; but this could happen only because he believed that God had accepted his sacrifice and had turned aside his anger from him. Thus the primary aim of the sacrifice was to appease God's wrath and to reconcile him to oneself

Nearly all Americans know the name of the great Jew- ish holy day, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In Hebrew the word has several forms: ***kapar, koper, kapporet.*** One meaning of this root is ***ransom.*** To quote the ***Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*** (Harris, Archer, and Waltke, I, 453),

Every Israelite was to give to the service of the sanctuary the "ransom" money of half a shekel. . . . This word "ransom" is parallel to the word "redeem" ***{padd,*** which see) in Ps 49:7. There is a warning that a man guilty of murder must be killed- no "ransom" can be given in exchange for his life. . . . ***[Kapar]***

. . . means "to atone by offering a substitute" . . . the priestly ritual of sprinkling of the sacrificial blood. . . . The verb is al- ways used in connection with the removal of sin or defilement, except for Gen 32:20; Prov 16:14; and Isa 28:18 where the related meaning of "appease by a gift" may be observed. . . . The life of the sacrificial animal specifically symbolized by its blood was required in exchange for the life of the worshipper . . . the symbolic expression of innocent life given for guilty life. This symbolism is further clarified by the action of the worshipper

in placing his hands on the head of the sacrifice and confessing his sins over the animal.

See also the paragraphs on ***kippur*** and ***kapporet.***

It can hardly be denied that the Old Testament is the background of the New. Indeed the New Testament would be unintelligible without the Old. Hence when the New Testament writers spoke of Christ's death as a sacrifice, what else could they have possibly meant except an expiatory death to propitiate God and to reconcile him to our guilty selves?

It is now humorous, but still instructive, to note a reviewer's defense of Bousset's ***Religion of Judaism*** to the effect that it contains no exposition of the Jewish theory of sacrifice "because there wasn't any." In this century our enemies mostly agree that the Scriptures teach what we have always said they teach. This phase of nineteenth-century liberalism is defunct.

That the New Testament is firmly based on the Old Testament's conception of a vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice is, not more clearly but more extensively shown, in the epistle to the Hebrews. It uses all the sacrificial language . Hebrews 2:17 has already been quoted with its verb ***ilaskesthai.*** But Hebrews only speaks more extensively, for all references to the blood of Christ carry the same message .[2]

Finally, Christ was the lamb of God. By his accepting the penalty of our sins, he satisfied the justice of God, thus propitiating God and reconciling God to those who had been his enemies, so that God could be both just and the justifier of him who had faith in Jesus.

The paragraph just above said that Christ satisfied the justice of his Father. This demands special mention. From subapostolic times well into the Middle Ages the predominant view was that Christ's death was a ransom paid to Satan . Satan had certain rights over man, whom he had enslaved , and man could not be redeemed without someone's paying a satisfactory ransom price to Satan. Bernard of Clairvaux, tremendously influential, the instigator of the bloody and disastrous second crusade, held this view in op- position to Abelard. He was not so much persuaded that Abelard's theory was wrong and another was right as he was that all theories were wrong and that theologians should not think. He condemned Abelard's influence that resulted in "boys in the street" discussing the doctrine of the Trinity. On the contrary, ecstasy is better than understanding and more is to be learned in trances and visions than by reasoning. He also defended the rapacity of the hierarchy. One of Abelard's students, Arnold of Brescia, agitated for the restoration to the people of the wealth the priests had extorted from them. Bernard had to acknowledge that Arnold was no libertine- he was an ascetic-but charged him with being in league with the devil, hungering and thirsting after the blood of souls. In spite of the fact that two of Abelard's publications were condemned by the Church, Protestants today are apt to rate him as a vigorous Romanist because of his strong insistence on the sacrifice of the mass.

Conservative theologians of the present century often describe Abelard's theory of the Atonement as the moral influence theory. Abelard did indeed stress the idea that Christ's sacrifice stimulates our love and advancement in sanctification . But his theory is hardly the modern moral influence theory such as is found in Horace Bushnell. Abelard held

that Christ paid a ransom, not to Satan, but to the Father. He compares "the results of Adam's sins with those of Christ's obedience and makes use of the principle of merit."* He speaks of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin and uses the expressions of 1 Peter that Christ bore our sins. The trouble is, of course, that Abelard, in spite of his great logical abil- ity, was in this case neither complete nor consistent. He was also disliked, misunderstood, and was the target of many false accusations^

Brehier even considers Abelard to have been a Platonic realist, at least in theology (586, 591), though in philosophy he is clearly an Aristotelian.

Anselm (1109), somewhat Abelard's senior, had already renounced the theory that Christ's sacrifice was offered to Satan. He spoke of it as a satisfaction of the Father's honor. We who speak of satisfaction of the Father's ***justice*** may excuse Anselm on the ground that justice is a component of honor, and the prerogatives which Anselm assigns to honor can easily be transferred to justice; but it remains true that Anselm did not make the doctrine so precise as the Reformers did. Although Anselm's treatise ***Cur Deus Homo*** was a notable advance in the development of theology, it had at least two flaws: one merely peculiar, the other fatal. Peculiarly , Anselm calculated the number of elect saints as equal to the number of fallen angels, so that the population of Heaven would not be diminished by their exclusion.

The fatal flaw is that Anselm professed to obtain the doctrine of the Satisfaction without depending on Scripture. It may, it does, sound incredible that "leaving Christ out of view (as if nothing had been known of him) it [this book] * Robert S. Franks, A ***History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ*** (Hoddard and Stoughton, 1918), Vol. 1, 190.

f Emile Brehier, ***Histoire de la Philosophie,*** 1951, Tome I, #3, 583.

proves, by absolute reasons, the impossibility that any man should be saved without him" ***(Anselm,*** tr. by S.N. Dean, Chicago, 1926, 177). This is from the ***Preface.*** The idea is repeated once or twice; and at the end the final remark of Boso, Anselm's pupil to whom he is talking throughout, is "I see the truth of all that is contained in the Old and New Testament , for . . . leaving out what was taken from the Bible . . . you convince both Jews and Pagans by the mere force of reason" (287).

The first section of this treatise, with the subhead "Intro- duction on Method," stressed the indispensability of Scripture . All the more should it be stressed, because (as will become clear a bit later) Jonathan Edwards and A.A. Hodge, though admittedly they do not exclude Scripture so completely as Anselm, nonetheless derive some of their theses from experience.

That justice rather than honor is the more precise factor , Romans 3:25-26 makes unmistakably evident. One can say with considerable plausibility that Romans 3:21-26 is the most important paragraph in the Bible. Verse 25 says that God set forth Christ-the verb means ***to design, to purpose,*** or ***to set forth publicly***- as a propitiation. The idea of propitiation has as its background the wrath of God, mentioned in Romans 1:18 and specified from that verse on until 3:20. In verse 21 Paul calls attention to God's righteousness. This righteousness has two forms, one which is in some way connected both with Jesus and with those who believe on him, but also in verse 25 the righteousness of God himself. Now the point of all this is that God so arranged Christ's death as a propi- tiation that God might be two seemingly incompatible things: that he might be not only the justifier of him who believes in Jesus, but also that he himself might be just in so doing.

Though this treatise is not a commentary on the Westminster Confession, nonetheless the Confession evi- dences the conclusions and beliefs of its authors and of their numerous adherents. One phrase in VIII, v, is "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself. . . hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father." In addition to Romans 3:25 and 26, the footnote adds as supporting references Romans 5:19, Hebrews 9:14, Ephesians 5:2. This is Calvinism; but it is also Lutheranism. The Augsburg Confession (1530) says briefly, "by his death hath satisfied for our sins" (Art. IV). The Formula of Concord-first written in German, then badly translated into Latin, and then somewhat amended and put into better Latin-though it stresses, as one might expect, justification by faith alone, is painfully deficient as to the work of Christ. Last century I.A. Dorner, a notable though not always the most orthodox of theologians-and for this reason more convincing-stated, "Contem- plating humanity in Christ as making satisfaction to the di- vine Justice, God sees in him, who suffered for us, and in love to the divine Justice offered himself a sacrifice to God ***..." (A System of Christian Doctrine,*** tr. by Cave and Banks, Edinburgh, 1882; Vol. IV, 116).[1]

On the next page, Dorner mentions the satisfaction of justice twice. Page 121 refers to "punitive justice"; the following page speaks of "guilt and actual penal desert" and "a satisfaction to the divine justice." This, I believe, is sufficient evidence of the historic Lutheran position.

It is clear therefore that the entire Protestant Reformation , namely its two branches, Lutheranism and Calvinism, agreed that Christ's death was a sacrifice to propitiate the wrath of God and to preserve his justice as he justified the sinner.

In expounding this doctrine and in defending it against nonbiblical views, the theologians, naturally, have used many arguments. These arguments, though elaborated with the best of intentions, have not always been without fault. Sometimes incomplete disjunctions have been used; important terms are often left undefined, or (though this is not a fault of the authors) if properly defined, they have become obsolete in modern language. The Christian public thereby remains con- fused and uninstructed. For example, earlier theologians would distinguish between distributive justice and governmental justice. H.B. Smith ***(System of Christian Theology,*** New York, 1884, 464-470) distinguishes, or, better, fails to distinguish between distributive justice and general justice. He also refers to public justice: "The Atonement, while it indirectly satisfies Distributive Justice, does not consist in this: it consists in satisfying the Demands of Public Justice" (470). A footnote to this sentence says, "Real, essential justice is what is meant by public justice." Clearly this is all very unclear.

Now some well-intentioned Christians may take offense both at this logomachy and its exposure. Justice is justice, they may say, and Christ satisfied God's justice, period! Yet for several reasons this distaste for clear thinking is unfortunate . First, it leaves a number of questions unanswered; it leaves the Biblical doctrine less explained than necessary. Second, at least two forms of justice must be distinguished, even if the distinction eventuates in headaches. Instead of some ancient terminology, let us speak of civil or financial justice as distinct from criminal justice. The distinction is this: If Mr. X owes Mr. Y a hundred dollars, financial justice is completely satisfied if Mr. Z pays the debt for Mr. X. But if Mr. X robs a bank or murders someone, Mr. Z cannot satisfy justice by taking his punishment. Criminal justice re- quires that the criminal himself, and no one else, must suffer

the penalty. Now, since sin is a crime, not a financial debt, the satisfaction of divine justice without the penalty being imposed on the sinner himself constitutes a major problem. Then in the third place, a fallacious defense of a doctrine not only fails to establish the doctrine, but inclines many people to conclude that it is false. This conclusion, of course, is as fallacious as the theologian's blunder. If argument ***p*** does not prove that ***q*** is true, it by no means follows that ***q*** is false. But as illogicality is widespread, a poor

defense of the Atonement induces quite a few people to reject the doctrine. So far as is possible, the theologian should try to prevent such a reaction; and the surest way to do so is to argue logically For the next few paragraphs now, the attempt will be to explain and defend the conclusions, i.e., the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement, while exposing some of the fallacies used to support it.

The argument will become rather complex. Several problems are interwoven-so interwoven that first, second, and third becomes more of a mere numbering than of a logical progression.

First, if criminal justice requires the penalty to be executed on the criminal himself, how could God be satisfied with a substitute? Second, if God accepted the idea of a substitute , was it absolutely necessary that his Son should be that substitute? Was crucifixion and death, whoever the substitute might be, the only possible means? Could not God have been satisfied with some other penalty? Let us be clear on this. The Scripture teaches unmistakably that as a matter of fact Christ is the only substitute, that there is no salvation in any other name, and that it is necessary for us to depend on Christ's merits alone. This is how it actually is. But could God have chosen a different method? What he actually chose is obvious. What he might have chosen is a different question.

One impressive argument in favor of the cross is Christ's prayer, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me."

The implication is the impossibility of any other method. Nevertheless this prayer in itself shows only a necessity al- ready established. The process had already begun: God had made some promises to Abraham, to David; and Christ had already become incarnate. The process was far advanced. It was too late to change it. So too with ourselves now. We can say that belief in Christ is necessary to our salvation. So it is. This is the actual condition. But none of this directly faces the question, could God have chosen otherwise? The problem is that of the ***absolute*** necessity of Christ's death.

Third, and this is implicated in point two, if God could not have chosen otherwise, can we regard him as absolutely and in every respect sovereign? If he be sovereign, could he not have accepted, not merely a lesser penalty, but even no penalty at all? This question requires us to state the relation- ship between justice and sovereignty, and some theologians have done so in a rather confusing manner.

That God's justice is somehow involved had already been made clear. Romans 3:25-26 cannot be otherwise interpreted . Justice is clearly one of God's attributes. The Shorter Catechism, which every child should have memorized before entering high school, says, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his . . .justice.. . ." It is strange that a very orthodox theologian, like Arthur W Pink, could write even a small volume on ***The Attributes of God*** without mentioning God's justice.[1] We shall do more than mention it.

Jonathan Edwards[2] stressed the justice of God, not only in his famous sermon, ***Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,*** but also in his other sermons and discourses. But as A.A. Hodge says essentially the same things, in greater detail, it is necessary only to recommend Edwards to the contemporary public. John Murray, of recent date, writes in the same tradition , but more popularly and in less detail. Some of his material serves very nicely as a preparation for A.A. Hodge.

These men and others ordinarily say that there was no ***necessity*** for God to save anyone, but if he wanted to save someone, it was ***necessary*** for him to use the method of the cross. For example, "It should be understood that it was not necessary for God to redeem men. The purpose to redeem is of the free and sovereign exercise of his love. But having purposed [at some time or other?] to redeem, was the only alternative the blood-shedding of his own Son?" Then John Murray answers in the affirmative[3] To defend this answer he adds these lines on the next two pages: "Those who think that in pursuance of God's saving purpose the cross was not intrinsically necessary are, in reality, not dealing with the hypothetical necessity of the atonement, but with a hypothetical salvation. For, on their own admission they are not saying that the ***actual*** salvation designed and bestowed could have been enjoyed without Christ, but only salvation of lesser character and glory."

What persons made this “their own admission” Murray does not say. It is tautological and otiose to insist that, had salvation been accomplished by a different method, the saints

in Heaven could have had no memory of Christ’s being crucified . They would, nevertheless, be free from sin and would enjoy all beatific blessings. With the exception of the lack of memory of something that had not happened, the heavenly state would be the same. How can one know that this would be “salvation of lesser character and glory”?

His earlier book gives a somewhat more detailed exposition .* He notes that Augustine and Aquinas both spoke of “hypothetical necessity,” whereas most Protestants defend absolute necessity. The term “hypothetical necessity” means that there were other possible methods, but that God chose this one. Since God could have chosen another method, there is nothing in God’s nature that makes the actual method of the cross indispensable. Murray’s view is of course that salvation was not necessary-there was nothing in God’s nature that made salvation necessary-but since he freely chose to save some, he could not possibly have chosen any other means.

Murray quotes a number of verses to support his position , but it seems to me that none of them proves his point. They all insist and make perfectly clear that God chose the method of the cross. They do not show that a different method was impossible. In addition to the Scriptural references, Murray advances three arguments, each one a logical fallacy . He seems to sense that they are fallacious, for on page 13 he introduced them by saying, “In adducing these considerations it must be remembered that they are to be viewed in coordination and in their cumulative effect.” But the cumulative effect of several fallacies is simply multiplied illogicality . Then on page 17 he argues that this absolute necessity is the only situation in which Christ’s death can be the “supreme exhibition of love.” But this is very doubtful. Some people might favor the exact contrary: If God chose the meth-

Redemption Accomplished and Applied, **Eerdmans, 1955, 11-17.**

od of the cross without being necessitated to do so, his love would have been more clearly, not less clearly, demonstrated.

One must be careful when reading the works of John Murray. He has a remarkable control of the English language, is in most cases quite orthodox, but is sometimes deficient in logic. In addition to the example just cited, his booklet ***The Free Offer of the Gospel***[1] comes to a strange conclusion.

To prepare for the conclusion, the booklet (14), in speaking of Ezekiel 33:4-11, says, “ ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked’-admits of no limitation or qualification; it applies to the wicked who actually die in their iniquity.” Whether this exegesis accords with the Westminster Confes- sion III, 3, 7; V, 6; and XXXIII, 2 is not at present the point at issue; it is mentioned to prepare for the conclusion. On page 15 the booklet repeats, “It is absolutely and universally true that God does not delight in or desire the death of a wicked person.” Still it is not clear how God could fore-ordain the death of a wicked person without desiring it. Then again, the booklet applies Ezekiel 33:11 to all mankind, whereas the text itself mentions only the house of Israel. In the case of Isaiah 45:22-23 Murray’s interpretation implies universal salvation and not merely a universal offer. The mention of God as creator in Isaiah 45:12, 18 “has the effect of bringing to the forefront a relationship which he sustains to all men alike” (20). Of course Murray and Stonehouse do not believe in universal salvation; but their language betrays their confusion: “While, on the one hand, he has not decretively willed that all be saved, yet he declares unequivocally that it is his will and, impliedly, his pleasure that all turn and be saved” (20-21). But if it was his pleasure that all be saved, how could Isaiah say, “He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied”? Job 42:2 says, “No purpose of yours can be withheld from you.” And is not a purpose a desire? And does not God do all his will? In Psalm 135:6 God says, “Whatever the Lord pleases he does.” Had he pleased to save everybody he would have saved them. He did not save them. Therefore he had not pleased to.

Now, it is interesting to see how Murray and Stonehouse try to manage the problem they have created. “God himself expresses an ardent desire for the fulfillment of certain things which he has not decreed. . . . This means that there is a will to the realization of what he has not decretively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree . This is indeed mysterious” (26).

Now note what has happened. The two authors have used exegesis and argument in such a way as to produce a contradiction. But they are so sure of their arguments that they are unwilling to admit that they could have possibly made a mistake. This is not intellectual modesty. When one's thoughts lead one to contradiction, the logical and humble thing to do is to go back and find where the mistake occurred.[1]

Arguments are sometimes intricate, even when the topic is not the Atonement. Indeed on this topic the arguments must become intricate, for the plan of salvation in its en- tirety covers innumerable details. Therefore, prior to a resolution of the problem of justice versus sovereignty-the ab- solute or the hypothetical necessity of Christ's death, the exact meaning of ***necessity*** when referring to God and its relation to the ***free*** exercise of God's love-a discussion on federal headship, that of Adam and that of Christ, seems essential.

15. Federal Headship

The most important Biblical paragraph on federal head- ship is Romans 5:12-21, and the best exegesis is that of Charles Hodge in his tremendous ***Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.*** [2] W.G.T. Shedd's commentary is also very good.

While waiting to obtain and study these commentaries, the reader may pass his time by wading through the next few shallow paragraphs here.

Romans 5:12-21 is obviously a comparison, of some sort, between Adam and Christ. Interesting, and surprising to us, is the fact that Paul expects his readers to know al- ready what the function of Adam was and to learn by that what the function of Christ was. Today the explanation must be given in reverse. That Adam and Christ had similar relationships to certain groups of human beings is perfectly clear. The question is, what was that function? Since there is a similarity , any explanation that does not apply to both Adam and Christ must be wrong.

Pelagius, the opponent of the great Augustine, is proved wrong because Romans asserts and he denies that Adam's sin, not ours, is the cause of death. The analogy is further destroyed when Romans denies and Pelagius asserts that we gain eternal life by our own acts of righteousness. Then, also, Pelagius cannot explain why death, the penalty of sin, is more extensive than the range of voluntary transgressions-infants die before having voluntarily committed any transgression.

In opposition to a somewhat different view which makes death the result of inherent depravity, the verb ***emarton*** in Romans 3:23 and 5:12 does not mean "become corrupt." On the contrary, depravity is a part of death, not the cause of death. Likewise Romans denies that life results from infused righteousness. The ground of justification is no subjective state of ours; the ground is Christ's finished work.

The reason or ground for our death and then for our regeneration is the action of a substitute or representative. Verses 17, 18, and 19 stress one man. The act of one man caused our death, including depravity; and the act of one man caused our resurrection from death. Verses 13 and 14 ex- plain representation; they do not explain imitation or depravity .

To sum up, Adam and Christ were our representatives. They acted for us, instead of us; and what they did is attributed , reckoned, or imputed to us. Those who were represented by Adam, and this includes all human beings with one exception, died by his act. Note above that ***emarton*** means ***sinned,*** not ***became corrupt.*** It is aorist and thus refers to one past act, not to our many present acts. Similarly those whom Christ represented-his people, those God gave to him, the elect-live because he crowned a sinless life with a substitutionary sacrifice, and rose from the dead.

To speak of Adam as our representative is to identify him as the ***federal head*** of the human race. The various difficulties mentioned in the previous few paragraphs come to a head in A.A. Hodge's[1] defense of federal headship.

First, though this will not be the crucial part of the criticism , A.A. Hodge does not rely entirely on the Scriptures. Part of his argument is based on the use of so-called natural reason. Unlike Anselm, he does not totally exclude the Scripture-far from it; but nonetheless he does not appeal to ***Sola Scriptura.*** This appeal to natural reason leads him into some peculiar argumentation.

Let us not suppose that Anselm and the two Hodges were the only ones who grounded their theology, partially at least, in the uninformed intellectual resources of sinful man. H. B. Smith, previously mentioned, did the same. He writes ***(System of Christian Theology,*** 439), "This necessity [of a vicarious Atonement] may be argued on the grounds of man's moral nature: an atonement is eminently adapted to man's convictions and needs as a moral being." If, now, one assumes that man has such convictions, no doubt the vicarious atonement is eminently adapted to them. But adaptation is no proof that such an atonement is necessary. Perhaps other methods also could have been effective. Smith continues: "Man's conscience assures him of the supremacy, the absolute supremacy, of righteousness." But anyone who is familiar with Homeric religion would be inclined to disagree. Anyone familiar with Sodom and Gomorrah would likewise disagree . Smith, of course, could not have known of contemporary American abortionists, but he should have remembered the customs of pagan savages. Then some lines below he adds, "the necessity of an atonement is seen in the fact that it has actually been made. . . . An argument for the necessity of the atonement may also be derived from the general con- sent of mankind.. . . This universality proves [certain points] . . . according to ***natural*** conscience" (440-441).

Both parts of this quotation are unacceptable. First, the fact that Christ was actually crucified does not prove that it was eternally necessary. At least, it does not of itself prove such necessity. Perhaps with some additional premise it might do so. What such a premise might be, we shall discuss later. Then, second, the argument from general consent and natu- ral conscience can in no way be made valid. Hume, Kant, Hegel, Russell, Dewey, the Logical Positivists, and many contemporary theologians entertain no such idea. Confucianism seems to have no such idea, and probably Shintoism has none either, though I am not sufficiently informed about it to say. At any rate, Smith can produce no evidence of any ***universal*** consensus. Empirical observation can never discover anything universal. Hence I claim that Smith's arguments on this point are logical fallacies based on unknowable premises . But now back to Hodge.

In chapter VII he describes Adam in his probationary state as being "as well endowed and circumstanced as any individual of his natural order . . . could possibly be" (78). For this assertion he adduces no Scriptural support and presumably depends on the assumption that the "facts of the case are indubitably proved by the natural reason and universal experience of mankind" (79). But would not natural reason more likely say that inability to sin, impossibility of punishment, and unalterable well-being would have been a better endowment and far better circumstances than the admittedly Biblical description of Adam's probation? Now, natural reason may be mistaken in this judgment, but that is all the more reason for not making this sort of reason the criterion by which one justifies the ways of God to man.

The reader will remember that earlier two types of justice were differentiated. Criminal justice will not impose the penalty on a substitute. But God does so; nor can we argue that sin is not a crime. Hodge indeed wishes to show that God is just in appointing Adam federal head of the race and in imputing the guilt of his sin to his posterity. Hodge is so anxious to emphasize justice that he says, "God, by a strictly judicial, ***not sovereign*** [italics mine], act justly imputes Adam's apostatizing act to us" (112). This is a bold assertion of justice and a bolder denial of sovereignty. But he offers no reason for either one. He simply says, "this imputation . . . simply (a) recognizes our legal oneness with Adam and consequent common responsibility with him for the guilt of his public sin; (b) consequently charges the guilt

of his sin to our account; and most righteously treats us according to the demerit of that sin" (112). But these sentences are not reasons or explanations: They are restatements of what needs to be explained. Undoubtedly the two doctrines are Biblical; the question is whether Hodge's defense of them is satisfactory.

He had previously said, "It is absolutely impossible for a devout mind to admit that God can be the immediate author of sin" (81). This seemingly unexceptionable declaration is, however, defective on two counts. First, is it not at least possible, rather than impossible, that a more remote principal can be responsible for what he causes mediately through an agent? Second, theologians

hardly ever define the phrase “author of sin.” Until the meaning of these words is clarified, an argument in which they play so important a role cannot be evaluated. Arminius, a remarkable exception , defined it as “God sins and God alone sins.” Is this what Hodge means? Even if Hodge does not mean that God alone sins, does he mean that God sins? What is sin? Is it defined by the law? To what law and to what authority is God subject? Can God dishonor his parents or commit adultery ? Is it sin for God to cause a man to sin? If it be, what law did he break? On such an important subject as this, the key terms should be made as clear as possible.

Hodge does indeed say this much: “God cannot originally create agents with an inherent corrupt nature ... for that would constitute him the author of sin” (82). This, how ever , does not define the phrase. If one should say, “murder is sin,” he is only giving an example of sin-he is not de- fining it. So also, to say that an original creation of corrupt natures would make God the author of sin is to give only an example, which is still subject to the question, Why? But there is something worse in that last quotation. If God could not have ***originally,*** in Genesis 1 and 2, created depraved natures, can he later create men as sinners without becoming the author of sin? If doing so in Genesis is unthinkable, is doing so in Exodus permissible? The point is that Hodge will later say that God has been continually and immediately creating inherently corrupt souls for some thousands of years. More of this later.

Hodge definitely wants to defend the justice of God. “God will not inflict . . . evil upon any moral agent whose natural claims as a dependent creature have not previously been justly forfeited” (82). This statement seems to have a hidden presupposition. It seems to depend on the idea that a created human being has natural claims that God must respect . But does not this conflict with the Biblical figure of the potter and the clay? This figure of speech occurs several times in the Bible. Its point is that the Potter, if he does not like a pot, can smash it and make another. Obviously a pot can have no claims over the Potter. He can make one for honor and one for dishonor as he pleases. This accords ill with the idea that a man has any natural claims over God.

What then about a just forfeiture of such claims? A just probation, according to Hodge, must “afford at least as much opportunity of success as liability to failure” (82). But since Christ had been slain before the foundation of the world in order to save sinners, Adam had no chance-there was no possibility whatever-of avoiding sin. Yet Hodge continues, ***“On what ground of justice*** [italics his] does God inflict this terrible” penalty of sin?

16. Absolute Necessity

The Hodges, of course, were neither the first nor the last to speak on this matter. Before them, George Smeaton in ***The Atonement according to Christ and His Apostles*** (Sov- ereign Grace edition, Grand Rapids, no date, perhaps between 1950 and 1970) has several sections on the necessity of the Atonement. He does not organize his work on systematic principles, but rather, as the title indicates, follows the method of Biblical Theology. His more than 500 pages, which are not numbered consecutively in this edition, are a rewarding examination of the Biblical material. Although he is more systematic than he probably realized, his Biblical method sometimes fails to make it clear whether he holds Christ’s death to be absolutely necessary, or necessary only on the basis of the prior non-necessary divine decision to save some. Even when he uses the term ***absolute,*** his language does not make it quite clear which of the two ideas he supports. He seems to ignore, confuse, or mix them. But if he really mixes them, he must agree with absolute necessity in its strongest technical sense. He is, to be sure, quite clear on the absolute necessity that sin should be punished : “punitive justice . . . demands satisfaction for sin. It is as eternal and necessary as anything belonging to his self- existing nature. ... He cannot but punish sin just as ... he cannot lie” (16). Granted: But is a gracious salvation equally necessary? Could God have refused to save anyone ? Some of his sentences, at least if taken alone, cause us to wonder. For example, after quoting the verse, “So must the Son of Man be lifted up,” and after emphasizing the word ***must,*** Smeaton adds, “the ***must*** indicating a necessity flowing from God’s justice and from his decree, if men were to be saved” (17). This sounds as if God was not “necessi- tated” to save anyone, but was necessitated to one method, if any were to be saved. Yet, it is not absolutely necessary to draw that conclusion. His following paragraph is also inconclusive. He is satisfied to say simply, “the atonement was necessary.” The paragraph ends with “the rectitude of God . . . presupposes ... the necessary demand of an atone-

ment” (18).[1]

Yet there are hints that Smeaton disagreed with what the Hodges later said and asserts the absolute necessity of a redemption. Examining the words of Christ—as a Biblical theologian must do-in the subsection entitled “Separate Sayings which Affirm or Imply the Necessity of the Atonement,” he exegetes as follows, of which I shall quote parts and summarize other parts.

“On several occasions the Lord refers to the necessity of his death, but often stops short at the fact that it had been foretold. Was there any deeper reason assigned by him? Yes: there are various allusions, direct and indirect, to a deep inner necessity for his atoning work” (10). Smeaton then speaks disparagingly of some unnamed theologians who “regard the alleged necessity of the atonement in no other light than as a semi-philosophic theory.” Though it is not exegetical as Smeaton wants his arguments to be, but is clearly “semi- philosophical,” he makes a persuasive-though not strictly conclusive-point that “We cannot conceive of such a stupendous [event as the death of God’s Son] if it were not neces- sary.” This almost but perhaps not quite requires redemption to be absolutely necessary-not merely that if there were to be a redemption, Christ’s death would be necessary on that hypothesis. The next sentence, however, seems to return to the hypothetical view: “There could be no other reason ... for God ... to suffer on the cross ... if sin could have been remitted without satisfaction.” Hence with these semi-philosophical arguments Smeaton’s necessity seems to be based

on a reason deeper only than the necessity to fulfill prophecy . Moving closer to exegesis on the next page he adds, “The whole Old Testament system of sacrifices was calculated ... to sharpen the conviction that sin required a higher sacrifice” than that of bulls and goats. That Smeaton does not have absolute ***sovereignty*** in mind is clear from his reference to “supreme justice” which must be satisfied “before salvation can be bestowed” (13).

Defending the purpose of the Incarnation as redemption , so that the ***Logos*** would not have become flesh unless man had sinned, he states, “the Incarnation was . . . not necessary except on the supposition of redemption” (19). Here he is opposing the view that some epistemological or ontological or revelatory function required an incarnation even if the race had remained perfectly righteous. So far so good. Then he adds, “This greatest work of God is still but a free work or deed, not necessary to the Divine felicity, and therefore on the same footing with creation or any other Divine act toward the universe” (19).

The reason, as I see it, why Smeaton does not have the more profound problem in mind is his aim to refute heterodox theologians who think that the infliction of a penalty is not “absolutely” necessary under the present circumstances. These theologians “conceive of God only as a source of goodness . . . but not as the sovereign Lord or moral Governor . . . and that when God does punish in any case, it is as a father, and not as a judge” (14). Even here, where he uses the word ***sovereign,*** his words do not mean that the salvation of anyone is absolutely necessary. This analysis is not a disparagement of Smeaton. Any author who wants to be thorough selects a particular topic. From this central point he may spread out into a few adjacent areas, but he is not called upon to wander too far. He may be ignorant of some remote territories, or he may have detailed opinions on them; but he

need not and usually should not mention them. Smeaton has chosen certain topics and his discussion of those topics is superior to that of many contemporary authors. Now for Hodge.

A.A. Hodge’s repeated emphasis on justice, and his manner of doing so, almost immediately produces the impression that he is subordinating God to some superior law of justice, thus impugning God’s sovereignty. This pinpoints the problem of absolute necessity.

Such an impression is supported by Hodge’s later procedure . His early remarks on the governmental theory (58ff.) assert several times the ***intrinsic*** rightness of the moral law, an intrinsic rightness superior to the divine will: “He wills the precept ***because*** [italics his] it is intrinsically right.” Hence there seems to be something superior to the will of God. But before quoting Calvin to the contrary, one may ask whether Hodge means only that God’s will is subordinate to God’s intellect, and that therefore there is no moral principle supe- rior to God. Such a reply, however, entails a distinction between God’s intellect and God’s will, so that one “part” of God is subordinate to another part. This, combined with the separation of the divine attributes, raises difficulties with the simplicity of God’s being. But we must proceed with the ultimacy of moral principles and the absolute necessity of one particular method of atonement.

In chapter XXI, where Hodge discusses the governmental theory more fully-which theory in his opinion does not properly evaluate morality-he says, “Vice must have, therefore , the ***ultimate*** reason of its attracting divine displeasure ***in itself’*** (336). The italics are mine, but the words “in itself’ certainly suggest that the distinction between virtue and vice does not depend on God’s sovereign will, nor even on his intellect, but on the ultimate intrinsic properties of morality itself to which God must be ***attracted.*** This indeed implies the absolute necessity of the cross, but at much too

expensive a price. We shall also see that in another place Hodge contrasts justice with sovereignty and prefers the former. Do not these words-***ultimate, intrinsic, attract, in itself***-presuppose a principle of virtue independent of and superior to God?

No Calvinist claims that Calvin was infallible; but we all hold him in high regard, and we should not be ignorant of what he said on the subject. Beginning with the question of the necessity of the Atonement, Calvin asserts, “If an inquiry be made concerning the necessity of this, it was not indeed a simple, or, as we commonly say, an absolute necessity, but such as arose from the heavenly decree” ***(Institutes,*** II, xii, 1). Contrary to Anselm ***(Cur Deus Homo,*** I, 12), namely, “When it is said that what God wishes is just, and that what he does not wish is unjust, we must not understand that if God wished anything improper it would be just, simply because he wished it,” Calvin writes,

How exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the divine will, which is in fact and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists. ... If you go further and ask why he so determined, you are in search of some thing greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found (III, xxxiii, 2).

Then further, “Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission, and insist that God permits the destruction of the impious, but does not will it. But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because of his will?” (Ill, xxiii, 8). There is no mistaking Calvin’s meaning. “The will of God is the highest rule of justice.” A moral principle is “just for this very reason, because he wills it.” Calvin and Hodge bluntly contradict one another; and if Calvin was a Calvinist, apparently Hodge was not.

In chapter XVI Hodge makes some caustic criticisms, perhaps applicable to some phrases of some exponents of the governmental theory. It is not my intention to say much about the governmental theory as such, but only insofar as it bases the method of atonement on the will of God. Incidentally , Hodge acknowledges that Dr. Twisse, prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, “and others, held it to be necessary simply because God had determined” so (53, 235). Against the great Westminster Calvinist as well as against the governmentalists Hodge complains, “This theory is discredited by the fact that it is not developed in the first instance by a careful exposition and strict induction from Scripture. Its advocates do not pretend that they generate it out of Scripture ; the most they claim is, that having developed it as a product of speculation, they are able to show that it ***harmonizes*** with all the facts of Scripture” (341). Although Hodge uses the word ***advocates,*** in the plural, he seems to be referring chiefly to Barnes. Now, this complaint is a mixture of truth, possibly error, and at least innuendo.

It is true that Barnes, like Anselm, advances some thoughts “apart from any revelation” and insists that “we cannot think of him [God] otherwise than we do.” With this notion-whether found in Anselm, Barnes, or whomever-I am in complete disagreement. But the ***otherwise*** includes Hodge himself, for he too has appealed to experience and universal consciousness.

Second, a quick reading of the quotation may give the impression that Barnes used no Scripture at all, or only a little, and that carelessly. Hodge apparently thinks that Barnes used only a little, carelessly. Out of 316 pages only thirty- nine appeal to Scripture. This may seem like a small propor- tion, but it is a greater proportion than is found in Hodge’s book. At any rate, the proportion is not the main point. If thirty-nine pages of Scripture can be exegeted in the remainder of the 316, so as to confirm a view, the view would seem

to be fairly well argued. Hodge has not shown that Barnes was careless in his handling of the Biblical material. Maybe he was, but Hodge gives no instances. Further, if Barnes can be opposed for using speculative arguments and natural reason , we must remember that Hodge uses experience also and does not base his conclusions solely on Scripture. Note that Hodge says, “If the

question be asked why we ought to do right, no other answer can be given than that moral obligation in an ultimate fact of consciousness, having its own reason in itself, and from its very nature necessarily supreme" (335). Is it not clear that Hodge has replaced Scripture with human experience, indeed with the experience of depraved human beings whose conclusions cannot be relied upon? Why cannot our position be that God has sovereignly imposed the Ten Commandments upon us? And in closer conjunction with the Atonement, why cannot justice be defined in terms of sovereignty rather than its being left undefined or sovereignty's being impugned? It seems to me quite wrong to say, "Intelligence, moral and personal agency are inconceivable without ***ultimate, unresolvable*** principles of action and thought for which ***no reason*** can be given" (336, italics mine). One must pause to ponder this astounding statement. Hodge is asserting that principles of morality are ultimate principles for which no reason can be given. Why, even Plato's world of Ideas-his supreme principle-was a mind or person, as he says in the ***Sophist.*** But Hodge appeals to a nonpersonal principle for which no reason can be given. To this principle God himself is subject.

The topic of sovereignty, the choice of Adam as our federal head, the limitation of the Atonement to the elect as discussed in section 19 hereafter, and all this material on absolute necessity results in stimulating an attempt by some people to absolve God of determinism and arbitrary action. In our own day, G.C. Berkouwer gradually abandoned Reformed the- ology, denied the inerrancy of Scripture, and accepted an existential or neo-orthodox subjectivism to save God from the obloquy of eternal decrees.

Basing his objections, not on Scriptural statements, but on his private estimate of the results of preaching predestination , he asserts that determinism makes consolation im- possible and produces fear and uncertainty. Maybe it does with some people; with others it gives assurance of salvation . But to accept or reject any doctrine on the basis of the reception given to it is an anti-Christian methodology. When Berkouwer also says that a determining God cannot be re- lied upon, and that such a view destroys the covenant, a logical mind would come to the opposite conclusion. But Berkouwer does not like logic. He further objects to a "specula- tive" doctrine which pictures God's sovereignty "abstractly." Theologians who use these two terms in such a connection usually give them no definition. If there be such things as abstract concepts, for I reject the Aristotelian theory of abstraction-but if there are such-would not ***justification*** and ***sanctification*** be examples? Are abstractions inimical to rev- elation? Is not the doctrine of propitiation abstract? Is not every doctrine? They were all abstracted from Scripture.

Berkouwer's procedure in deciding what to preach and what not to preach is to estimate the degree to which a topic will arouse faith in a hearer. Paul must have been very wrong in preaching the whole counsel of God, for much or at least some of the divine revelation arouses opposition instead. Furthermore, no preacher can arouse faith in an unbeliever. Faith is a gift from God. God chooses those to whom he will give this gift. This is certainly an arbitrary choice, in the sense that no qualities, characteristics, or accomplishments of the sinner induced God to choose him. Call it arbitrary or sovereign: In this case the two words mean the same thing; and surely it contributes more to comfort than to despair, in

spite of Berkouwer's contrary opinion.[1]

Of course some people are assured of their salvation who ought not to be. The Roman church assures many. Others are assured that God is too good to punish anyone. But, as just said, the reactions of auditors are not the criterion for choosing a sermon topic; and in any case the fact that there are innumerable reactions to the same material makes such a choice impossible. The same sermon will be welcomed by one man on the right of the middle aisle and greatly irritate the lady on the left. Paul said, "I urge you, imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1), and he preached the whole counsel of God.

To return for a final note to Hodge's attack on the Governmental Theory, he denies its accusation that the Biblical and orthodox theory implies the doctrine of limited atonement : "the true doctrine . . . does ***not*** [italics his] logically lead to any consequences which can be accurately expressed by the phrase ***limited*** [italics his] atonement" (343). Incredible ! But that is precisely what he says.

Ending these paragraphs on the Governmental Theory, and resuming the discussion of the justice of God in imputing guilt to Adam's posterity, we now proceed to the question , "On what ground of justice does God inflict" not merely later punishment but particularly the "antenatal forfeiture" of the rights of newly created moral agents? Hodge classifies the answer under two methods.

First, the subject may be discussed either on purely rationalistic principles, or on an interpretation of Scripture. Hodge should not only prefer this classification of the several views, but he should himself operate on purely rationalistic principles in conformity with his reliance on “the universal experience of mankind ... as universally conceded.” Actually he classifies the several views as either the affirmation or the denial of antenatal forfeiture . He asserts, what seems dubious, that these two methods amount to the same thing (83, 84).

There is no need to summarize Hodge’s objections to Manichaeanism, for few such dualists remain today. But there are plenty who try to explain ***“how*** and ***why*** men always commence their conscious existence [as?] habitual sinners . . . by affirming the absolute self-determining power of the human will, and the consequent absolute ‘impreventability of sin’ 85) ″).

Here Hodge’s language is confusing, but his thought is clear. These people do not try to explain how and why men always commence their lives as sinners. The theologians re- ferred to deny that babies commence as sinners. They are born, if not righteous, at least sinless. Then by free will they later choose to sin. Hodge perceptively notes that if this were so, one would expect at least a few to choose not to sin.

A different view does a little more justice to the universality of sin. The so-called New England Theology of Samuel Hopkins, the younger Edwards, and some others- though perhaps not popular in its precise original form, and by this time eclipsed by neo-orthodoxy-nevertheless has some descendants among the Arminian-minded groups. For example, a Baptist friend of mine believed that children are sinless until they reach the age of ten or twelve, then they sin, and then they need to be saved. Though the earlier form of this view seems to have based universal sin on the sovereignty of God-an idea Hodge detested and condemns as pan- theism, which it is not, or “virtual pantheism” (89), a phrase whose meaning is unclear-the later form of the theory ex- plains universal sinfulness as an inheritance of the parents’ inherited corruption. This corruption is not a ***penal*** consequence of Adam’s sin, but a result of the natural laws of re- production. In this view, federal headship-with its difficulties relative to substitution in criminal cases-has no standing . Children are guilty of their own voluntary transgressions, not of Adam’s.[1]

Another view which Hodge, not so justly, condemns is that of W.G.T Shedd. It may be called Platonic Realism. Hodge describes it as asserting that “every individual member [of the human race, Christ excepted] was ***physically numerically one*** with” Adam. Now, if this is what Shedd said or thought, Hodge could very legitimately call it nonsense. Adam, Moses, and Paul are not numerically the same physical person. But can we suppose that Shedd, who was at least moderately intelligent, said or thought so? Though Hodge does not cite the pages, he seems to be referring to Shedd’s ***Dogmatic Theology,*** Volume II, 30ff. The passage begins with the words, “The doctrine of the specific unity of Adam and his posterity removes the great difficulties . . . that arise from the injustice of punishing a person for a sin in which he had no kind of participation.” The next page says, “Adam and his posterity were specifically one in the apostasy.” This ***specific*** unity is mentioned a second time on the same page. On page 32, he complains that “Edwards supposes a unity of ***individual*** [italics his] persons aggregated together instead of a simple specific nature not yet individualized by propagation as in Augustinianism.” In these pages, note the repetition of ***specific*** unity.

Now if Shedd had never mentioned numerical unity at all, Hodge would not have written as he did. Shedd does in- deed refer to a numerical unity and, because of the history of realism and empirical nominalism, the language seems strange. On page 35 Shedd says, “Augustine affirms . . . both a ***specific*** and ***numerical*** [italics his] unity. . . . Specific unity is of course the unity of a species. ... A numerical may, or may not be a specific unity.” This last phrase is strange because it is so unplatonic. Plato kept the Ideas or species quite distinct from the individual sensory objects, so that we do not expect anyone to say that a specific unity may be a numerical unity. But Shedd says it. To continue:

In the instance of man the unity is both numerical and specific. The human nature while in Adam is both numerically and specifically one. But when it is subdivided and individualized by propagation, it is no longer numerically one. The numerically one human nature becomes a multitude of individual persons, who are no longer the single numerical unity which they were at first. But they are still specifically one.

I must confess that I feel some sympathy for Hodge as he rejects Shedd; but I also hold that he has misunderstood Shedd's position, which Shedd himself has inexcusably confused.

Shedd began by stressing specific unity. Like a good Augustinian, he sharply distinguishes between species and individuals. "A specific unity," he says, "implies the possibility of the ***division*** of the one numerical substance among the propagated individuals of the species." But the latter half of this sentence is not good Augustinianism. The specific unity is never so divided that a part of it goes to one individual and another part of it to another individual. If this were so, as Plato made clear, no individual would be a man; he would be only part of a man. The species or Idea must be found entire, not divided, in every individual of the species. Now, it seems to me that-no matter how much Shedd oscillated-he meant, when speaking of the ***numerical*** unity of the species, simply that the species rose is one species and the species man is a second species. We cannot attribute to Shedd the utter stupidity of having said or thought that Moses and David were numerically the same individual.

Shedd intends his theory to alleviate the difficulty most people have with the notion that a remote grandchild must be punished for the sin of his distant ancestor. Perhaps it does, perhaps not. In any case, so it seems to me, we are not obliged to satisfy "the profound convictions of the human conscience" (36). Representation can rest on divine sovereignty alone, and really must, for the so-called profound convictions are those of a race whose every member has a mind distorted by sin. But though Augustinianism does not by this justify the ways of God to man, it indeed helps one to understand what those ways are.

17. Traducianism

The various theological doctrines are so interwoven that it is sometimes difficult to know in what order to discuss them. As a professor once said of a work on philosophy, and no doubt of all works on philosophy, so also with theology: One cannot understand the first chapter until after he has understood the last chapter. Shedd had prepared for the subjects just discussed in our previous section by a long pas- sage on the origin of individual souls. He put it in his chapter on "Creation." Hodge might well have done so, for he holds to the immediate creation of every soul at the moment of conception. But Shedd holds that the souls of the children are as much derived from their parents as their bodies are. The plan of the present treatise is to connect the origin of souls with federal headship and the imputation of guilt from Adam. The origin of souls was mentioned in that section, but its discussion was deferred.

Both Hodges are creationists. They both teach that each successive human soul is immediately created by God in bil- lions of cases, billions of separate acts of creation. But A. A. Hodge's defense of this position and his arguments against traducianism are both beset with difficulties. In the first place he acknowledges ***(The Atonement,*** 111) that "without going the length of Realism, it appears probable that the divinely ordained representative ... is conditioned on the generic unity of men as constituting a race propagated by generation." Note the term ***propagated.*** This means that traducianism is at least plausible. But Hodge does not want to go "the length of Realism." But if not, then what? Everyone who has had an introductory course in philosophy knows, or should know, that Aristotle and John Locke proposed an em-pirical method by which sensory observation could be transmuted into abstract concepts, which in turn form the basis for universal propositions. But Aristotle never spelled out the method; he depended on an illustration of an army in rout. Locke was more specific, but Berkeley demolished his argument. Hence the more philosophical readers may here wish to consider whether the generic unity Hodge suggests can be produced without adopting the realism he detests. As for Christ himself , though traducianism-operating through Mary alone-can account for his human soul, his federal headship cannot be accounted for either by creationism or by traducianism. It cannot be accounted for by creationism because even if his human soul had been a special creation, it is the Person and not just the human nature that is the federal head: It cannot be accounted for by traducianism because Christ had no de- scendants. But this is not the case with Adam.

One reason why A.A. Hodge makes such a poor case for creationism is his imperious urge to refute realism. Thus he says, "The doctrine that each soul is severally and immediately created by God at the instant of conception[1] is obvi-

ously and absolutely inconsistent with the realistic view of human nature. ***No Creationist can be a Realist"*** (102). I am not sure that this emphatic statement is altogether correct. For one thing, it may be possible for a creationist and a realist to agree on the

constitution of human nature without agreeing on the immediate origin of each soul. Nor is it true that every realist agrees with Plato. Shedd certainly believed that God created the world, and he did not believe in the preexistence of souls; whereas Plato had no place for any strictly creative Deity. After all, Augustine was a realist and he argued strongly against Plotinus in favor of creation.

Since Hodge is so strongly opposed to realism, one may oppose Hodge on that basis. For example, the theory of imagination by which Aristotle aimed to produce concepts which in turn would make universal judgments possible is open to devastating attack.[2] Then if Aristotelian conceptualism be rejected, only realism and nominalism remain; and the latter must reduce the Trinity to tritheism or atheism. But the more immediate rebuttal, and the one more appropriate to the present treatise, is the Scriptural material.

Hodge seems to think that traducianism is inconsistent with the federal headship of Adam: “Calvin . . . [and others] unite in affirming that we were in Adam representatively; that we really and truly sinned in him because his sin is our sin, really and truly our sin as to its federal responsibility” (103). But far from denying federal headship, traducianism offers a possible-even a probable-explanation of why God chose Adam to be our federal head. Creationism allows only a physical or corporeal, not a spiritual, connection between us and Adam.

Yet Hodge wants “hereditary corruption” (104). But how can corruption be hereditary if every new soul is an im-

mediate creation? Hodge surely does not help himself by his incomplete disjunctions. On two successive pages (103,104) he argues, “these men [Calvin, Beza, Turretin] were not Realists . . . they specifically explain . . . that we were in Adam ***representatively.”*** Hodge’s disguised premises are (1) that federal representation is impossible in realism, and (2) that Adam’s being our representative cannot be harmonized with traducianism. These two premises are clearly untrue, for traducianism not only aims at but succeeds in making representationism more easily understandable. The two do not form an exclusive disjunction as Hodge maintains.

Another poor argument shortly appears. “If the entire genus was in Adam, the entire antediluvian race was, in the same sense, in Noah. If we were guilty co-agents in the first sin of the one ... we must be . . . guilty of every one of the sins of Noah” (106). This paragraph teems with confusion. First, we are indeed descendants of Noah. Second, the entire genus was in Noah and is in us too. Otherwise we would not be human beings. As Plato so clearly said in his ***Parmenides,*** the Idea, or genus, is not like a canopy or tent in which each man is directly under only a part of the covering . The Idea or definition must be complete in every individual case, or in better Platonic language, every man must participate in the whole Idea.

But this in no way implies that we are guilty of any-let alone every one-of the sins of Noah. In fact, we are not guilty even of Adam’s sins-that is, his second, third, and fourth sins. We are guilty only of his first sin. Just because the federal head of the whole human race must be, or most appropriately is, its ancestor, it by no means follows that every ancestor must be a federal head. Hodge’s logic is bad, very bad. Actually he is applying simple conversion to a universal affirmative. The point is that God chose Adam as federal head of the race; he did not so choose Noah. Had he chosen

Noah and not Adam, then the antediluvians would not have been guilty of Adam’s sin. Traducianism is a plausible explanation of federal headship, but it does not require two or more federal heads to make the race guilty.

Hodge’s failure to refute traducianism and realism does not ***prove*** that these two theories are true. There may be bet- ter objections than those Hodge has made. I do not happen to know any

However, one’s decision must be based on Scripture. And there are indeed Scriptural passages which, to put it modestly, seem to favor Shedd rather than Hodge.

Shedd divides his argument for traducianism into three parts: (1) Scripture, (2) Systematic Theology, (3) Physiology. The third part may be interesting, but it is useless. The first and second parts are the same thing. The second simply organizes the first. Therefore Shedd and the present treatise base the case on Scripture.

Shedd begins, “the Bible teaches that man is a species , and the idea [or definition] of a species implies the propagation of the entire individual out of it” (II, 19). This was what was meant a page ago in the reference to a covering tent in Plato’s ***Parmenides.*** That the human race is a species, Shedd defends by the use of the term ***man*** in Genesis 1:26,27. Note that God said, “Let us make man in our image ... let ***them*** have dominion. . . . male and female he created them.” ***Man*** or ***Adam*** did not become a proper masculine noun until Genesis 2:19. Note too that Genesis 46:26 speaks of “the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins” (King James Version). Shedd also quotes half a dozen verses from the New Testament. When Eve was taken from Adam’s side, there is no mention of the creation of a second soul. Eve totally came out of Adam (1 Corinthians 11:8). This supports the view that any child of Adam and Eve was born totally a member of the species.

The entire person, not just his body, is propagated.

One may object that the new soul was immediately created , but that its creation is just not mentioned. Reply: Doc- trines should not be based on silence.

It is not my desire to summarize Shedd’s fifty or sixty pages of Scriptural argument. His work is easily obtainable, and the student is urged to study it. However, whether found in Shedd or elsewhere, more Scriptural references than two or three in Genesis are needed.

That the propagation of the race is only corporeal, and not spiritual or mental also, that only the child’s body and not his soul comes from the parents, seems to be denied in John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” The Greek verb, occuring twice in this verse and five times in the context, is ***gennad,*** begat. It is the same verb that one finds in Matthew 1:1-16. In John 3:6 Christ is speaking to Nicodemus, and “that which is born of flesh” is Nicodemus’ unregenerated soul rather than his physical body. The verb indicates that Nicodemus received his unregenerated soul from his parents. This pre- vents the interpretation that ***sarx*** always refer to a sinful soul. To return to John again, 1:14 says that the Word was made flesh ***(sarx).*** Consider: The Word did not merely take to himself a physical body; he also took a reasonable or rational soul. He got them both through Mary. Similarly, ***sarx*** in John 17:2 does not mean the body-certainly not the body alone-but rather Jesus gives eternal life to souls. ***Sarx*** some- times means man’s depraved nature, but this only enforces the point that it means the soul. A body cannot sin. Therefore , the soul of Nicodemus came from his parents.

John 1:14 has already been mentioned, but one should also notice that the preceding verse denies that spiritual birth depends on heredity (“not of blood”); but though natural birth is not explicitly mentioned, the verse implies that natural birth does so depend. Hence both soul and body come from parents. The soul, as well as the body, is bom (compare again, 3:6).

Acts 17:26 does not say that God hath made of one blood all nations with respect to their bodies alone. The following verse, with its phrase “seek the Lord,” clearly includes a man’s mind or soul. Shedd and others cite other verses which interested students can search out. The accumulation of verses is important because some creationists give the impression that traducianism has only a few verses in its favor,[1] whereas the number is considerable.

The most important argument for traducianism is based on Genesis 2:2, 3. “God . . . rested from all his work.” “In six days the Lord made the Heaven and the Earth . . . and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11). “God rested . . . from ***all*** his works ***(apo panton ton ergon)*** ” (Hebrews 4:4).

Perhaps the reader will permit a paragraph on Charles Hodge also. In his ***Systematic Theology*** (II, 68ff.) he discusses traducianism and creationism. Most of the section on the former depends on the alleged silence of Scripture on the subject; the various passages that traducianists use, he claims, are inconclusive. He even asserts, “The more enlightened and candid advocates

of traducianism admit that the Scriptures are silent on the subject" (68). This means, of course, that Shedd-who used Scripture passages-was either not enlightened or not candid. Hodge understands the word ***flesh,*** in those passages already cited, to mean precisely the body in contrast with the soul. Then when he comes to the trans- mission of inborn depravity, and the difficulty of thinking that God immediately creates sinful souls, he appeals to secondary and mediate causes, thus abandoning the idea of immediate creation: "We do not know how the agency

of God is connected with the operation of second causes, how far that agency is mediate, and how far it is immediate" (69). Certainly this is a surrender of creationism. Traducianists are willing to say that the souls of men are "created" mediately, i.e., by the mediation of parents, just as we may also speak of trees and animals as created objects. But these created objects on my front lawn were mediately created through the seeds or slips from earlier plants.

Charles Hodge at this point refers to his later chapter on original sin as a more explicit defense of creationism and the difficulty with God's immediate creation of sinful souls. This reference I take to be pages 222ff. and perhaps also page 253. But none of this relieves him of his duplicity. On the latter page he allows that "It is moreover a historical fact universally admitted, that character, within certain limits, is transmissible from parents to children. Every nation, separate tribe, and even every extended family of men, has its physical, mental, social, and moral peculiarities which are propagated from generation to generation." But if God ***immediately*** creates the soul of the child, no mental or moral characteristics can be ***propagated.***

The earlier section is equally unsatisfactory. His sub- head was "Realism No Solution of the Problem of Original Sin." The main deficiency in his argument is that traducianism, as a theory of the origin of the soul, never claims to explain original sin. It is a view of the origin of the souls of Adam and Eve's descendants. Beyond that it may add that the derivation of the children's souls from their parents ties in nicely with God's choice of Adam as their federal head. This would have been so even if Adam had not sinned. But while traducianism and original sin are related, for all doctrines are in some way related in one system, the latter must receive its own explanation. Or, as another example, the Atonement as such is not an explanation of our sanctifi- cation. Nor do the sacraments explain our resurrection at Christ's return. Hence Hodge's attempt to refute traducianism, or realism, on the ground that it does not solve the problem of original sin is worthless.

All the less do these pages (222ff.) refute traducianism. The main reason is that Hodge is violently opposed to real- ism. In fact his argument against realism begins two pages back. A few paragraphs ago I urged several objections against Hodge's arguments. Maybe one more is allowable and sufficient :

Realism . . . subverts the doctrine of the Trinity in so far that it makes the Father, Son, and Spirit one God only in the sense in which all men are one man. The persons of the Trinity are one God, because they are one in essence or substance; and all men are one because they are one in essence. The answers which Trinitarian realists give to this objection are unsatisfactory , because they assume the divisibility, and consequently the materiality of Spirit.

This quotation consists of three sentences. The first sentence is doubtful. Hodge does not cite any author. Naturally the Persons of the Trinity are one in the sense that all men are one, and all horses; but it does not follow that the three Persons are one only in that sense. For example, three human beings have three wills; but the three Persons have but one will. Hence the diversification of human beings is not identical to the diversification of the Persons, for which reason we cannot assert that the two unities are completely identical . The second sentence seems to me to be quite true and therefore no objection. Sentence three takes it as an objection and offers an alleged reply. Realists, says Hodge, assume the divisibility of essence and the materiality of Spirit. Hodge capitalizes the ***S.*** Now if pagan Plato was worse than Christian realists, he must have all the more asserted the di-

visibility of the essence. Actually he ridiculed it. Did Hodge never read Plato's ***Parmenides?*** And to suppose that Christian traducianists or Christian realists teach the materiality of Spirit, either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, is ridiculous . Traducianists are traducianists because they believe that not only are the children's bodies derived from their parents' bodies, but also that their immaterial souls are equally derived from their parents' immaterial souls.

Kind reader, permit me to add a personal remark. I consider Charles Hodge by far the best of all American theologians . But his Scottish common sense ***philosophy*** was fortified with too much usquebaugh before he imbibed it.

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. defends creationism in a most unfortunate way. In his ***A Systematic Theology of the Christian*** Religion (Zondervan, 1962,1, 250-252) he speaks three times of Christ having been born with a sinless body: "The body of Christ was perfectly sinless." Nothing is said about a sinless soul. This is peculiarly strange, for-contrary to orthodox doctrine-Buswell teaches that "He, that is, his personal eternal being, his soul, became a human person, a human soul, without in any way ceasing to be a divine person, a divine Soul" (251). But this is Nestorianism unless Buswell means to annihilate the divine Person, and other creationists would not be pleased with this defense of their doctrine.

This section will now conclude with a review of the objections raised against traducianism by Louis Berkhof ***(Sys- tematic Theology,*** 197-201).

Berkhof begins with a short but very fair statement of traducianism, including some of its Scriptural support. He refers to only one verse in favor of creationism, namely, Psalm 104:30. But if this verse teaches creationism, it follows that the souls of all animals and all plants are also immediately created. Now, it is true that the Old Testament assigns both souls and spirits to animals, and if a creation- ist wishes to accept the point, he is consistent. Those who oppose the theory of traducianism in the case of human beings, but assert it of animals, are inconsistent. An interesting , if inconclusive, point. But it certainly keeps God busy creating.

Berkhof's first objection is only half an objection. He begins by appealing to the simplicity and indivisibility of the soul, and concludes that the souls of the parents cannot divide to make a new soul. He offers no Scriptural support for this; and, as previously noted, the soul of Eve seems to be a contrary example. The second part of the first objection is a question: Does the new soul originate from the father or from the mother, or from both? Medieval theologians, as I have heard, held that the body comes from the mother and the soul from the father. That it comes from both is more plausible. Eve's soul was surely a special case; Christ's human soul could have come only from Mary. This was also a special, miraculous case. But inability to answer this ques- tion is no refutation of traducianism, especially if Scripture favors the fact.

Berkhof presses this question in his second objection by asserting that if the new soul is potentially in the souls of the parents, traducianism must be a form of materialism. This is utter nonsense. He also adds that it would make the parents ***creators.*** But since he cannot deny that the bodies of babies come from their parents, he must, if consistent, acknowledge that parents are indeed ***creators*** of bodies. It is strange how a truly intelligent theologian can be so irrational . The third objection is not an objection at all: It is something that traducianists admit, indeed assert, and use as an objection against creationism. Berkhof says, "(3) It proceeds on the assumption that, after the original creation, God works only mediately" (198). This, however, is not precisely an assumption: It is an exegesis of Scripture.

Berkhof also argues that God in regeneration does not act mediately but immediately creates a new soul. Now, it is true that the apostle speaks about a new man and even a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). But if the Greek word in these two verses be understood as ***bara*** is used in Genesis, there would have come into being, ***ex nihilo,*** another person. One must remember that regeneration, in the epistles, is usually called ***a resurrection.*** Resurrection allows the individual sinner to remain himself. Well, regeneration does so too. Creation ***ex nihilo*** produces someone else.

The fourth objection is one that has become all too fa- miliar with us through the Hodges. Traducianism is realism, and realism is bad. Without repeating the philosophic arguments about species, universal propositions, and nonexistent images, we deny, on the basis of arguments already given, that traducianism "fails to give a satisfactory answer to the question why men are held responsible only for the first sin of Adam, and not for his later sins, nor for the sins of the rest of their forebears." This matter will appear again in the discussion on sovereignty.

Berkhof's fifth and last objection is equally faulty. Briefly it is that traducianism would result in Christ's having a depraved human soul. But this assumes that Adam was Christ's representative and federal head. This, however, is not the case, and the Westminster Confession explicitly rules it out: ". . . the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ***ordinary generation "*** (VI, 3). Incidentally, the verb ***conveyed*** suggests traducianism. The birth of Christ was miraculous and is not to be subsumed under the otherwise universal rule.

Berkhof then argues for creationism, first on an exegetical basis. Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it," indicates "different origins" for soul and body. This is not surprising: Genesis 2:7 says so. But neither verse specifies the mode of propagation. God immediately formed earth into a body for Adam; does that mean that God immediately does the same for every individual? How Isaiah 42:5 fits into Berkhof's theory is difficult to say. Zechariah 12:1 says that God "forms the spirit of man within him." But Amos 4:13, with the same Hebrew verb, says that God "forms the mountains , and creates the wind." Does God immediately create every wind that blows down from Canada to chill us each winter? Did not God form a mountain in a Mexican corn- field a few years ago? It took him about a year to do it. Hebrews 12:9, which Berkhof next cites, speaks of God as "the Father of spirits." How can one get creationism out of this? He quotes "Delitzsch, though a traducianist [as saying], 'There can hardly be a more classical proof text for creation- ism.' " One cannot but wonder whether Delitzsch was speaking sarcastically, for if this is the best text creationists can find, traducianists need have no fear. In ancient Jewish soci- ety, and sometimes in American English, the term ***father*** does not mean a boy's immediate parent. Abraham Lincoln said, "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers. . . ." The Jews regularly referred to Abraham as their father (John 8:39). If the verse has any reference at all to the origin of souls, it suggests traducianism, not creationism. Berkhof really gives his case away by adding to the verse in Hebrews 12:9, Num- bers 16:22, which says merely that God is the God of the spirits of all flesh. Well, of course; God is the God of all the universe.

The second argument is the philosophical point that while creationism recognizes "the immaterial and spiritual and therefore indivisible nature of the soul of man ... the traducian theory on the other hand posits a derivation of essence , which, as is generally admitted, necessarily implies

separation or division of essence." This is a misunderstanding of realism, one which the ***Parmenides*** ridiculed. Perhaps Berkhof is thinking of Tertullian. But Tertullian, though a Christian and an important person in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, was, strangely enough, a materialist. Very few Christians have been materialists. The next one I can think of was Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century. More recently, behaviorism has been making headway in Christian colleges; but clearly this is not Christianity. At any rate Shedd and others were not materialists.

The third and last argument concerns Christology and argues that traducianism must make Jesus guilty of Adam's first sin. This was refuted earlier, and some elucidation will follow in the next section.[1]

18. The Sovereignty of God

Many of the matters discussed in the earlier sections- the covenants, the Incarnation, the Satisfaction, and indeed absolute necessity-come to a head under the rubric of sovereignty . One question previously raised was whether God

could have sovereignly dispensed with justice. The two Hodges decide in favor of justice and reject sovereignty. Let the reader understand that this treatise maintains that Christ satisfied the justice of his Father. What the treatise aims to show is that the Hodges and others have formulated an in- correct disjunction between the two. Or, to anticipate, justice is itself based on sovereignty. This includes the idea that the Atonement was absolutely necessary. The theology of Charles Hodge is impeccable on nearly every point, yet some of his paragraphs (as I have indicated in other publications) suffer from confusion.

The question, How is justice related to sovereignty? can arise only within the sphere of Calvinism. Lutheran theology is more anthropocentric than theocentric. Krauth, an influential Lutheran theologian, in his ***The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology (\23ff.),*** claims that Arminius was largely influenced by Lutheranism. Krauth's decisive example is Arminius' choice

and denial of the five points of Calvin- ism: It was Arminius, not some Calvinist, who selected the TULIP as the essence of Calvinism. On this, says Krauth, Arminianism and Lutheranism are in accord. Some semi- Calvinists are in partial agreement. A.H. Strong ***(Systematic Theology,*** II, 635) remarks, "We prefer to attribute God's dealings to justice, rather than to sovereignty." This statement is immediately connected with the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity, but it is reasonable to suppose that Strong would say the same thing of the Atonement also. The statement is vague, suggesting a mere preference that would al- low some role to sovereignty if one should press it. Strong supports his preference by five considerations. The first is, "A probation [in the case of Adam] is more consistent with divine justice than a separate probation of each individual." If we end the sentence here, the reply is that most people would insist that a probation of each individual is more just, while imputation more clearly depends on sovereignty. Actually the sentence continues: "of each individual with [his] inexperience, inborn depravity, and evil example, all favor- able to a decision against God." But with the exception of the evil example, the conditions falsify the situation. Adam was equally inexperienced, and a probation for each individual could only occur if each were innocent as Adam was. That is, the theory rejects inborn depravity. Hence, the argument fails on two counts. Second, "A constitution which made a common fall possible may have been indispensable to any provision of a common salvation." The answer is, "may have been" is insufficient. To prove his point, Strong should have said "must have been." Perhaps it is wise to omit Strong's other reasons. They all seem irrelevant to me, but the reader can read Strong for himself and decide.

However, as was just said, the problem is essentially a problem for Calvinism because, unlike the other theologies, it stresses both justice and sovereignty. The question is, How are they related?

On this subject Charles Hodge has a peculiar paragraph. It seems to contradict itself. The subhead ***(Systematic Theology,*** I, 539) is "The Decrees of God are Free," and the following quotation is a part of it:

They [the decrees] are rational determinations, founded on sufficient reasons. This is opposed to the doctrine of necessity , which assumes that God acts by a mere necessity of nature , and that all that occurs is due to the law of development or of self-manifestation of the divine being. This reduces God to a mere ***natura naturans,*** or ***vis formativa,*** which acts without design. The true doctrine is opposed also to the idea that the only cause of events is an intellectual force analogous to the instincts of irrational animals. The acts performed under the guidance of instinct are not free acts, for liberty is a ***libertia rationalis,*** spontaneity determined by reason. It is therefore

involved in the idea of God as a rational and personal being that his decrees are free. He was free to create or not to create ... to act or not to act. . . not from any blind necessity, but according to the counsel of his own will.

This paragraph contains considerable confusion; but before examining it, it will help to quote parts of a following paragraph in which Hodge more clearly shows his basic orthodoxy .

The decrees of God are free in the sense of being absolute or sovereign.. . . The decrees of God are in no case conditional. The event decreed is suspended on a condition, but the purpose of God is not. It is inconsistent with the nature of God to assume suspense or indecision on his part. If he has not absolutely determined on what is to occur, but waits until an undetermined condition is or is not fulfilled, then his decrees can neither be eternal nor immutable.

This latter paragraph is much clearer than the former. We may agree with the former that the decrees, including of course everything connected with the Atonement, are "ra- tional determinations." By this phrase I understand that the whole plan of history is teleological. Prior events prepare for later events. Judas' betrayal prepared for the arrest and the crucifixion. But contrary to what Hodge says, this does not rule out "the doctrine of necessity." While one must reject the idea that there is any development in God, there is indeed development in history. Nor is the word "mere" very clear when Hodge says that God does not act by a mere necessity of nature. If the term ***nature*** is meant to indicate the physical universe-Mother Nature as some poets call it, and ***natura naturans*** as Spinoza said-of course we agree with Hodge's statement. Furthermore, Hodge's reference to Spinoza seems to support the idea that he is thinking of the universe. Spinoza was a pantheist who frequently used the phrase ***Deus sive Natura.*** But Hodge seems to me to have confused Mother Nature with the nature of God. The important question is whether God acts

necessarily by his own nature. Could God have willed to save no one? Could God have willed that Anthony should have been victorious, or that the Due de Guise should have defeated Henry IV? If one says that the defeat of Anthony was necessitated and that God could not have willed otherwise, it does not follow-as Hodge seems to say it does-that God would have acted without design. Nor does the doctrine of necessity re- quire that God's intellectual force be analogous to the instincts of irrational animals. At best Hodge has in his attack on Spinozism used language that can be applied to views that are not at all Spinozistic. And one of these views is the Christian doctrine of God and his decrees.

One of the terms the Hodges use with confidence and satisfaction is ***freedom.*** God was free to create or not to create ; God was free to save or not to save men; but if he freely chose to save any, he was necessitated to sacrifice Christ. In this he was not free. It is reasonable to suppose that this language somewhat reflects the discussions on the free will of man. At any rate, the idea of God's freedom should be clarified . Some types of freedom are obviously irrelevant to the present discussion: A man may be free from disease, free from prejudice, or free from his previous wife. Though these meanings are irrelevant, one notes that freedom is often-almost always-freedom ***from*** something.

Spinoza is an exception, for his freedom is a freedom ***to.*** A grain of wheat is free to grow if it is planted in good soil rather than having fallen on a rock where a bird can pick it up. The bird is more free than a grain of wheat because, if this rock had no grain of wheat on it, the bird can fly and find food elsewhere. A man is more free than a bird because

he can survive in many more circumstances. Thus, Spinoza says, freedom is not the ability to do either of two things in the same circumstance, but the ability to do the same thing in many circumstances.

Arminian and Romish freedom is the power of contrary choice. There is nothing-absolutely nothing-in any circumstance in Heaven above, or Earth beneath, or the waters un- der the Earth-but especially in Heaven above-that necessitates a given volition. The opposite choice is always as possible as the one chosen.

But what might divine freedom be? One thing is clear. There is no power, circumstance, or principle external to God that necessitates or even induces him to do anything. Of course, before the creation of the world there were no circumstances at all, though some philosopher might say that there were eternal principles external to him. But for the Christian there was nothing before he created something. But does this mean that God could have chosen not to create?

The confusion that permeates discussion on this subject arises from the rather natural impulse to understand the will of God as similar to the will of man, or, more accurately, similar to what many theologians think the will of man is. In particular, they picture God as earlier undecided, and later at a moment in time God makes a choice. The theologian may indeed recognize that there is no external motivation, but he still holds to the possibility that God could have willed otherwise .

This confusion is due to the fact that the authors often forget that God is immutable. Grotius seems to have argued that no one form of Atonement is absolutely necessary. The law, he maintains, is a product of the divine ***will*** and not something inherent in his nature. Therefore God ***is free to*** enforce, to abrogate, or in any way to alter the laws. Grotius is not the only one who seems to assume that God's will is ***free*** in

the sense that he can change his mind at any time. Freedom, however, should be defined and the implications of the definition should be stated. For example, human freedom may consist in the circumstance that one's conduct is not determined by physicochemical law. From this definition, if accepted , it follows that the universe is not a mechanism. But, so far as this definition goes, human conduct can be necessitated by a divine teleological law. As for the freedom of God, he is surely free from control by any superior power, for there is no power superior to God. But as immutable by nature- see Grotius' distinction between will and nature a few lines above-God's will and action are unalterable.

Hodge, who rejects Grotius' view of the Atonement, is perhaps a little, but not much, better. God, he says, "wills the precept ***because*** it is ***intrinsically*** right. . . . There must be an absolute standard of righteousness." Such a statement places a standard of

justice outside of God. The standard is ***intrinsically*** right, hence independent of God's sovereignty- indeed, sovereignty has been abandoned. Hodge, however, wants to avoid this implication, for unlike Grotius, Hodge immediately adds, "This absolute standard is the divine nature . . . the divine intelligence." This addition gives the impression of maintaining divine sovereignty as against any external power or principle. But it faces an equally difficult objection. It raises the question as to the difference between will and nature. What is nature? Do we not speak of the nature of this or that? Then must we not speak of the nature of God, the nature of God's will, the nature of God's intelligence ? Nature is not a constituent of anything. It is simply the thing's characteristics. God's nature, like a dog's nature, is such and such because such are the characteristics of the dog or of God. The nature is simply the way the dog or God acts. There is no ***nature*** that controls God's will. As Isaac Watts once wrote, "Dogs delight to bark and bite, for 'tis

their nature to."[1]

In addition to examining the term ***nature,*** one must ask what is ***will***? If we speak of the human will, we refer to a somewhat momentary act of choice. After having considered the relative desirability of this versus that line of action, or (what is the same thing) between an action and doing nothing-such as investing in AT&T or just leaving the money in the checking account-and having puzzled over it indecisively for a period of time, we come to a conclusion and make our choice: We decide and do it. Then when we start to study theology and to consider the will of God, we are apt to think or subconsciously suppose that God makes decisions. He willed to create, he willed-after some deliberation-to save some, and so on. Though we may not say so out loud, we suppose that God was puzzled: He could create or he could refuse to create; he could or could refuse to save some; and if he decided to save some, he could use any means imaginable .

Now, although these choices are all of one nature, all subject to the same considerations, Hodge and others want to give the last question an answer different from their answer to the prior questions. This seems to me to be logically inconsistent; for if it relieves God of indecision on the last point, it pictures him as indecisive on the prior points, and assigns to him a relatively momentary act of choice. This makes God a temporal creature, or if not a creature, at least a temporal being.

Such a view is utterly inconsistent with divine omni- science. The immutable God never learned anything and never changed his mind. He knew everything from eternity. This ***everything*** includes both the number of mosquitoes in Jackson Hole and the number of planets in the solar system.

Underlying these two examples is the creation of a temporal universe. For time began with the creation of the first non- omniscient angel.

Without claiming infallibility, and certainly not omni- science, I believe the above to be substantially what the Bible implies. Perhaps one should quote a few of the more clearly supporting verses. This is all the more appropriate because many, even most, of the volumes on Systematic Theology are strangely deficient at this point. Fortunately the indispensable Charnock fills the gap. Yet as Charnock shows, most of the Scriptural references are examples, rather than universal claims. If God knows the number of hairs on our heads and calls all the stars by name and notices the fall of every sparrow, we are encouraged to believe that he knows everything . There are nonetheless certain more general statements and inferences from his other attributes. Some of the latter will be quoted first.

The first of these verses is one that can easily be misunderstood , but neither should it be undervalued.

Psalm 147:5: Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; his understanding is infinite .[1]

1 Samuel 2:3: The Lord is a God of knowledge.

Colossians 2:3: ... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

These three, especially the latter two, are sufficiently universal and should, even by themselves, be considered conclusive. The next two might not seem universal by themselves , but it would be difficult to deny their implications.

Isaiah 46:10: . . . Declaring the end from the beginning . . .

Hebrews 4:13: There is no creature that is hidden from his sight.

Could anyone be bold enough to assert that there are some non-creatures which might not be manifest in his sight? The following verses show that God's knowledge neither in- creases nor diminishes because he is immutable and eternal.

Exodus 3:14: I AM who I AM.

Psalm 90:2: From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Malachi 3:6: lam the Lord, I do not change.

1 Timothy 1:17: ... to the King eternal . . .

James 1:17: ... the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Now come some verses that give examples, remarkable examples, of what God knows. Charnock cites dozens of such verses and expounds them all at length. Less than half a dozen

God's knowledge would be incomplete, if not unsystematic. The number of prime numbers equals the number of numbers because both are infinite; so that if God's knowledge were infinite, there would always be an extra item beyond the last. There would be no completeness. It is true that there can be an infinite "number" of propositions by counting the series: Today is Tuesday, it is true that today is Tuesday, it is true that it is true that today is Tuesday, *ad nauseam.*

should suffice here. They all tie in with the doctrine of the Atonement.

John 13:18: I know whom I have chosen.

Romans 9:11: The children not yet being born . . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand. . . .

Ephesians 1:4: ... chose us in him before the foundation of the world. . . .

Ephesians 1:9: ... according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself. . .

2 Timothy 2:19: ... The Lord knows those who are his.

Notice that the first and fifth verses quoted, not to mention the others, make sense only if there are some whom God did not choose and are not his.

From the immutability and omniscience of God it follows necessarily that there is indeed no other possible method of salvation-not, however, for the reasons Hodge gives, but simply because of this immutability. In much of this discussion , the authors speak as if God on one occasion produced an act of will and on another occasion he made another voluntary act. The Westminster Standards, however, reproduce the Biblical position that God is immutable. Therefore not only is the propitiatory method of atonement absolutely necessary , but also the number of mosquitoes in the world at any given instant. Every detail is a part of the all-comprehensive divine decree. God foreordains whatever comes to pass. Everything is necessary. This view exalts the Sovereignty of God. This view exalts God. Do not think that the reference to mosquitoes was flippant. William Cullen Bryant was no Calvinist and his theology is deplorable; yet on one occasion he stated the truth, even if he could not properly

apply it to himself. A Christian can detach his lines from the Bryant theology and repeat with appreciation these words from ***To a Waterfowl·:***

There is a Power whose care

Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,

The desert and illimitable air Lone wandering, but not lost.

He, who, from zone to zone,

Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,

In the long way that I must tread alone Will lead my steps aright.

This settles the question as to whether the method of the Atonement is based on sovereignty or on justice, and the question whether God could have refused or neglected to save anybody. Not a chance. As previously asserted by the present writer, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross satisfied the justice of the Father. But now it should be clear that justice is one facet of sovereignty. There is no moral principle superior to God. I can say that there is no moral principle superior to the will of God. God's will and God's intellect are identical. Justice is what God thinks. To suppose that anything could have been otherwise is to suppose that God could have been otherwise than he is. The salvation of the elect is a part of the sovereign plan by which the universe goes on. God had to create-not because there was some power external to him, but because he is God. A God who might not create, or would not have created, is simply not the Biblical God.

In this twentieth century, people like to be modern and up-to-date. Anything even ten years old-not to say two hundred or two thousand-is passe, benighted, medieval, stupid, unenlightened, erroneous, illogical, and just plain false. We today are educated. As one sweet little third-grader told her mother: I don't need to learn arithmetic; I'm developing a so- cial consciousness. That is why Johnny can't read . . . theology.

Some Christians, ***mirabile dictu*** and ***gloria in excelsis Deo,*** still remember ***Rock of Ages.*** Of course they do not know that the author wrote on the present subject any more than they know of his other 149 hymns. Here is something quite new and up-to-date, so far as the present generation is concerned.

Augustus Toplady wrote, among other things, ***Observa- tions on the Divine Attributes.*** [1] The simplicity of God and the identity of all the divine attributes, used above to settle the relation between justice and sovereignty, Toplady ex- presses in the following words. “Although the great and ever blessed God is a Being absolutely simple ... he is, neverthe- less, in condescension to our weak and contracted faculties, represented in Scripture as possessed of divers properties, or attributes, which though seemingly different from his essence, are in reality essential to him, and constitutive of his very nature” (675, 1). Toplady then specifies “his eternal wisdom, the absolute freedom and liberty of his will, the perpetuity and unchangeableness, both of himself and his decrees, his omnipotence, justice, and mercy.”

The material is so good that it demands great restraint not to quote the entire article, twelve pages of long double columns. Fear not, modern reader, I shall give only a few short paragraphs.

God is ... so perfectly wise that nothing . . . can elude his knowledge . . . ‘Known unto God are all his works from eternity .’ Consequently God knows nothing . . . which he did not know and foresee from everlasting.. . . Whatever he foreknows to be future shall necessarily and undoubtedly come to pass.

For his knowledge can be no more frustrated . . . than he can cease to be God. Nay, could either of these things be the case, he actually would cease to be God.

Some people argue that knowledge or foreknowledge does not necessitate anything. Even a man may know that an event will occur tomorrow, but this does not mean that he causes it to happen. Perhaps so. But if he does not cause it to happen, there must be some other cause which does; for unless it were certain, he could not know it.[2] Now, then, since omniscience shows that all events are certain, it follows that if God does not cause them, there must be a cause external to and independent of God. In other words, God has ceased to be God. Toplady recognizes this in this para- graph: “God’s foreknowledge, taken abstractly, is not the sole cause of beings and events; but his will and foreknowledge together. Hence we find, Acts 2:23, that his determinate counsel and foreknowledge act in concert, the latter resulting from and being founded on, the former” (675).[f] Note that ***fore- knowledge*** is dependent on determinate counsel. This is not true of a man. For example, I know that Christ will return. The event is determined, certain, and necessary. But I did not determine it.

Just a few more lines from Toplady: “Whatever comes to pass comes to pass by virtue of this absolute omnipotent will

of God, which is the primary and supreme cause of all things.

. . . The will of God is so the cause of all things as to be itself without cause; for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything” (677). Later in the volume (784- 819, all double columns) there is his article, “The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted.”

In contrast with the types of interest prominent among the relatively conservative Christians of the present day, those of an earlier age can be instructive. William Cunningham, Professor of Church History at New College, Edinburgh, re- counts[1] an interesting attack on Dr. Chalmers by Sir William Hamilton. The latter denounced the former as a fatalist , a pantheist, and as being ignorant and suicidal in theology . His reason was that Chalmers taught the doctrine of philosophical necessity. Cunningham’s conclusion was that the Westminster Confession permits but does not teach philosophical necessity, that Chalmers not only was at liberty to accept that view, but that also his orthodoxy was impeccable.

On a lower level-a much lower level-***The Presbyterian Journal,*** November 18, 1981, includes an article by the Reverend Donald A. Dunkerley entitled “Hyper-Calvinism To- day.” This author is to be highly commended because he knows what hyper-

Calvinism is and he states the definition clearly. Most popular writers and preachers neither state nor know it. Hyper-Calvinism is "that view of Calvinism which holds that 'there is no world-wide call to Christ sent out to all sinners, neither are all men bidden to take him as their Savior.' Hyper-calvinists . . . maintain that Christ should be held forth or offered as Savior to those only whom God effectually calls" (14).

It seems that there are such people, people who are derisively called Hard-shell Baptists. There must be very few such, and I do not know of any Presbyterians who qualify. Dunkerley himself acknowledges that they are "an almost negligible minority."

Yet, though he knows very well what the term means, he wants to extend its pejorative overtones to people to whom the term does not apply. His method is to ask rhetorical questions which he wants his readers to answer in the affirmative , when clearly the correct answer is negative. In spite of his acknowledgment that hyper-Calvinists are an almost negligible minority, and after describing various forms of evangelism , he complains that "we lack and urgently need in our day [a] compassionate evangelism." Well, this is true, but in its context it seems to mean that hyper-Calvinism is almost the worst aberration of the twentieth century. Perhaps of the eighteenth century also, for Whitefield-whom he cites with approval-hardly evinces the evangelistic methods he seems to require.

Of course, the Bible commands us to preach the Gospel to all men. To a hyper-Calvinist who insisted that a minister should preach the Gospel only to the elect, Clarence Edward Macartney, if I remember correctly, replied, "You point out to me which persons are the elect, and I shall confine my preaching to them."

But when Mr. Dunkerley wants to tell everyone that "God loves you," I wonder how he can defend that phrase when not only Jacob, but Esau also is in the audience.[2]

Such then is my view of sovereignty, and my replies to assorted objections. ***Deo soli gloria.***

19. The Extent of the Atonement

This concluding section could be written as somewhat of an anticlimax. All the important points have already been expounded, and of course they imply that Christ died specifically to save the elect and no others. Unless a person believes in universal salvation, he must believe that some are lost; and if some are lost, one can most reasonably sup- pose that many if not all who were drowned in the flood were lost; and surely many if not all who perished physically in the fire rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah also perished eternally. Given these assumptions one may ask, Did Christ, while on the cross, intend to save these people? Obviously not, for they were already in Hell and there is no second chance. Thus from the consideration of many pas- sages in Scripture we can infer that the extent or application of the Atonement is limited to the elect. All the doctrines of Scripture are logically interdependent. Since the most pertinent doctrines have already been discussed, any further appeal to Scriptural passages is anticlimactic and unnecessary.

However, this procedure-or lack of procedure-would incite the Arminians to a storm of protest. They would charge that we are substituting "mere human logic" for Scriptural revelation, and on a point where the Scriptures beyond all dispute emphatically support their view. Didn't God so love the world, every person in the world, that he wanted to save all? Furthermore, unlike the almost nonexistent hyper-Calvinism, Arminianism has numerous adherents in America. Without counting the Lutherans, who have similar views (at least on this particular subject) one surmises (since accurate statistics are not available) that Arminians form a large majority of so-called fundamentalists or evangelicals. Therefore those who understand the Scriptures must be constantly combatting Arminianism, for it is so widespread. Anyone

who notes the actual procedures of evangelism in this country-some groups ignore both sin and repentance-can hardly ignore the vast difference between the preaching of various evangelists. A radio sermon the other day provided a somewhat amusing example. The preacher was making a certain point and refuting other possibilities. Possibility number one fails because verse so and so rules it out. Possibility number two collapses on these other verses. And possibility number three is simply Calvinism-period. What could possibly be more devastating? Thus the question is not limited to what some ignorant people call the dry bones of theology; it concerns the actual preaching, the actual message, of evange- lists who are very much alive and present.

The main idea of Arminianism in connection with what Calvinists call Christ's Satisfaction is that Christ died in order , not to save some, but simply to make salvation possible to all. According to the theory, Christ died for all men ***alike*** and not "specially of those who believe." The Father did not give to Christ a "peculiar people" or a "promised posses- sion." Christ never procured reconciliation for anyone. But if so, how could Isaiah say, "He shall see his seed. ... He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied"? At any rate, according to the Arminians, Christ never actually pro- cured the reconciliation of anyone: He merely removed the obstacle of divine justice so as to make all mankind salvable. The Atonement has no efficacy in itself so far as application goes. For that matter, on their theory, the ransom might not have released anyone. In other words, Christ did not intend to save anybody, nor did his death insure the salvation of anybody. Salvation is an additional work of man's free will. One man is more spiritual than another, or more clever, or more determined; and so of his own natural ability he takes advantage of the chance that Christ offered equally to all. If any person wishes to be reconciled to God, the man himself

must do something of his own free will to produce the reconciliation . He must apply redemption to himself. Arminianism, as noted above, contradicts Calvinism at every point; and here we see it contradicting the obviously Biblical teaching that man is dead in sin. His will is not totally depraved; without regeneration he can exercise faith. Though no one accuses the Arminians of being Roman Catholics, the two agree on one point at least-a fatal point; namely, that while Christ's sacrifice was necessary for salvation, it is not ***sufficient.*** Man must add some meritorious work of his own.

To support the doctrine of the L in TULIP, Limited Atonement, it is sufficient to deduce it logically from other doctrines or other parts of the doctrine of the Atonement. But we are not unwilling to adduce Scriptural passages that more directly and explicitly assert it. First, however, a minor division of the subject.

The application or extent of redemption can be divided into two parts. The word ***application*** suggests some method of applying redemption; the word ***extent*** clearly refers to the number or identities of those who are saved. Redemption is applied by the Holy Spirit. He resurrects the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, to newness of life. He changes a man's recalcitrant will into a believing will. He works faith in us. This part of God's plan is better discussed under the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit. Here we are more closely concerned with the ***extent*** of the application.

As for the Scriptural material, even the Arminians must admit that many verses have a bearing on several topics. An ordinary prophecy of a future event, such as the release of the Jews by Cyrus, supports the doctrine of omniscience, supports the view that Israel was a chosen nation, and teaches us something of how God uses civil rulers. Hence we cannot permit the Arminians to prohibit us from referring to the covenant of redemption (section 3, above). The Father gave to his Son a certain number of people to redeem. This body of people is God's peculiar possession. It does not include everyone, for "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The not very bright preacher, quoted by Mr. Dunkerley, who found difficulty with John 3:16 probably had no greater problems with it than Mr. Dunkerley himself, for clearly he misinterprets it. Romans 9:13 should help them both.

Emphasizing the substitutionary nature of the Atonement, Smeaton ***(The Atonement,*** 174) says,

The redemptive efficacy of his death is described as taking place within a given circle, and as bearing upon a given company of persons. . . . The Lord's sayings on this point are so express that we are not left in any doubt whatever that the atonement was offered specially for the persons who [actually] receive the benefit of his death. ... Its extent coincides with its effects.

On the next page,

Our Lord calls the object of his atonement his sheep (John 10:15).. . . They are already called his sheep because they were given to him in the divine decree, and known as his own. . . . Christ did not die in a merely indeterminate way and in uncer- tainty whether he should have a flock, but with special objects of redemption [particular individuals] before his mind. ... He died for the sheep,

not for the wolves. Smeaton has several pages refuting Arminianism and Semi-Pelagian views.[1]

The crux of the matter lies in Christ's and the Father's intention. Did Christ intend to save some, or none? Did he

intend to save the Sodomites? What was his purpose? Two verses from John's Gospel obviously bear on his intention.

John 10:15: I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 17:9: I do not pray for the world.

In answer to any Arminian or other sort of misinterpretation , let it be said that the intrinsic merit of Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to buy the redemption of any or all. The question is, Whom in particular did he actually buy? Three more verses coincide in answering this question.

Acts 20:28: . . . the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

Romans 8:32-33: . . . delivered him up for us all . . . God's elect.

Ephesians 5:25: ... as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

If anyone says that while of course Christ died for the sheep and the church, he also redeemed others, let such a one quote the verse that says the Sodomites are now in Heaven. Since this obviously cannot be done, the Arminians use verses of more general application.

1 Timothy 2:4,6: . . . who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave himself a ransom for all. . . .

Now, first, the context shows clearly enough that the two words "all men" mean men of different social position and different races: Gentiles as well as Jews, kings and other civil officers. In addition to the context, the verses them- selves clearly do not apply to every human individual singly. The verse says, "who desires all men ... to come to the knowledge of the truth." But God did not will to send preachers of the Gospel to central Africa in the tenth century nor to the American Indians. The same is true of Europe and China in the tenth century before Christ. Hence "all men" in these verses do not mean every last human being who has ever lived.

In case anyone should want to reply that God really wanted to, but was prevented by some circumstance or other, the irrefragable answer is

Psalm 135:6: Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in Heaven and in Earth, in the seas and in all deep places.

We now pass to another phase of the same problem. If the Arminians and the neo-orthodox accuse us of depending too much on logic and clear thinking, the Arminians also-if not the neo-orthodox-sometimes depart from specific verses and try to deduce conclusions. They argue that only on the basis of a universal atonement can an evangelist offer salva- tion to all his audience and urge all to accept it. This is an attempt at logic, even if the attempt is poor. Some Baptists speak of the promiscuous preaching of the Gospel;, the Presbyterians usually use the term "the free offer of the Gospel." Can such preaching occur on Calvinistic principles?

By the connotations of the English language, the phrase "the free offer of the Gospel" can be easily misunderstood. It sounds like "free will"-a doctrine both Calvin and Luther rejected.

The previous section on sovereignty explained that God was free from subjection to any external circumstance. Yet he is not free from himself. He cannot undeify himself. What

then does the "free" offer of the Gospel mean? Does it not mean that salvation is of grace and is free in the sense that we do not have to earn it, in fact cannot possibly earn it? This is indeed a sort of freedom, but hardly the free offer of the Gospel.

Louis Berkhof ***(Systematic Theology,*** 397) gives a six- part definition of the term: (1) the offer of salvation does not pretend to be a revelation of the secret counsel of God; (2) this offer is always conditioned by faith, a faith contingent upon the operation of the Holy Spirit; (3) this offer does not consist in the declaration that Christ made atonement for every man and really intends to save each one; (4) it is not the duty of the preacher to harmonize the secret counsel of God [as to which individuals will be saved] with his declarative will; (5) Dr. Shedd said that God may call upon the non- elect to do a thing that God delights in; and (6) the universal offer of salvation serves the purpose of disclosing the aversion and obstinacy of man, and if it were not made, sinners might say that they would have gladly accepted if it had been offered to them.[1]

It seems to me that the phrase "the free offer of the Gospel" is a poor one, especially since many, unlike Berkhof, make no attempt to explain it. The phrase "promiscuous preaching" might do, but perhaps the "unrestricted preaching of the Gospel" would be better. Since the hyper-Calvinists are so few in number, the strong emphasis on the "free offer of the Gospel" is at best unneeded, and in my experience sometimes woefully misapplied. In one case it was mis- applied to a person who did a fair amount of street preaching . In fact, since it is hardly possible (in fact impossible) to know that everyone in a congregation is already regenerated,

it is hard to guess where-on the hard-shell position-any Gospel preaching could take place.

It should be obvious, therefore, that the "free offer of the gospel" is not at all inconsistent with the doctrine of the Limited Atonement. The former identifies the people to whom preachers should preach: everybody. The latter refers to the intention of Christ to redeem certain unnamed individuals. And that Christ did not intend to redeem everybody is sufficiently stated in the verses quoted and others. It is also validly deduced from the Biblical position on the Sovereignty of God. Other Biblical passages describe the means by which the Atonement was accomplished: federal headship and traducianism. More central are Satisfaction, propitiation, and expiation, each one a phase of the vicarious sacrifice. This sacrifice became possible through the virgin birth and Christ's active obedience, all of which go back to the covenants of grace, of redemption, and thus again to the sovereignty of God.

On one occasion, which I remember well, at a seminary service, several students-even advanced students-became vocally angry because I had preached that

It pleased God in his eternal purpose to . . . ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man . . . unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be . . . redeemed. . . . The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself. . . hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased ... an everlasting inheritance ... for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.. . .

To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same . . . effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey.

That is the Gospel, and it ought to be preached to all men.

***** *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* **Leeds and Philadelphia, 1811. Vols. VII, VIII.** *The Atonement,* **Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962, 10.**

1 Revised as *What Do Presbyterians Believe?* (1965)

2 Combined as *William James and John Dewey* (1995)

3 Combined *as I & II Peter* (1980) and revised as *New Heavens, New Earth* (1993)

4 Combined as *Predestination* (1987)

5 Chapter 5 of *Religion, Reason and Revelation*

1 **Chapter VIII, section 1.**

1 **Among true Christians today-I do not speak of the apostate denominations-there is a distressingly widespread ignorance of what God is. Of them it can be truly said that they have created God in their own image. In technical terms their religion is anthropocentric, not theocentric.**

1 Some left-wingers might so argue, for they hold society responsible, while the criminal is supposed to be merely sick.

1 Compare Charles Hodge, ***Systematic Theology,*** Vol. II, 501-508.

1 **B. B. Warfield,** *Biblical Doctrines* **(Oxford University Press, 1929, 405- 411), gives a detailed analysis of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, noting clearly the different motivations of the two men.**

2 Compare B. B. Warfield's devastating ridicule of liberalism's attempt to rid the New Testament of the ideas of expiation, reconciliation, and propitiation : ***Biblical Doctrines,*** chapter nine, "Christ our Sacrifice," especially pages 429ff.

1 One evidence of Dorner's defection from strict Lutheran orthodoxy is the word ***humanity*** in this quotation. The Formula of Concord stresses the co- operation of both natures: "To overthrow both errors we unanimously believe , teach and confess that Christ is truly our righteousness, but yet neither according to the divine nature alone, nor according to the human nature alone" (Article III, 1).

1 **A. W. Pink, in common with others, makes use of false disjunctions. On page 12 of this volume he says, "nor is God known by the intellect. 'God is Spirit' (John 4:24), and therefore can only be known spiritually." But** *knowing* **is** *ipso facto* **intellectual. "God is just" is a proposition to be understood. No doubt sin hinders and even prevents a man from knowing this truth; but if we are at all to know that God is just, we must use our intellects, our minds, our understanding, for this is**

what knowledge is. One man's mind may be "spiritual," i.e., illu- mined by the Holy Spirit, and another man's mind not; but whatever either of these men knows is known intellectually When the Holy Spirit controls a man's

2**thoughts, the thoughts are still thoughts. To repeat, knowing or understanding is** *ipso facto* **intellectual; and false disjunctions are to be rejected because they distort the message of the gospel.**

1 **Prepared with the cooperation of Ned B. Stonehouse and presented by them as a report to the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1948; reprinted with slight corrections, no publisher, no date mentioned.**

1 A briefer but better discussion of this one point is given by Gary D. Long, ***Definite Atonement,*** Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976, 14-16. The remainder of the book also is excellent.

2 **Hodge's brilliance appears all the more clearly when contrasted with Dabney's attempt to refute him.**

1 ***The Atonement,*** Philadelphia, 1867.

1 **In the Appendix, 529-531, Smeaton talks about ABSOLUTE NECESSITY as being the view of both the Lutheran and the Reformed churches. But the context does not clearly rule out the possibility that God could have sovereignly decreed a different method of salvation. Yet he rejects the view that "Forgiveness of sins and justification of grace lies absolutely in the divine imputation; that is, in God's counting it enough."**

1 For a masterful analysis of Berkouwer, compare ***Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election,*** Alvin L. Baker, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1981.

1 An interested student should read an account of Placaeus and the French National Synod at Charenton, December 1644-January 1645.

1 Note well that these words absolve from the charge of misrepresentation everyone who reports that creationism teaches the ***immediate*** creation of each and every soul.

2 Compare my ***Three Types of Religious Philosophy,*** 2d ed., The Trinity Foundation, 1989; chapter 3. See also several other of my books.

1 Louis Berkhof, ***Systematic Theology,*** 200: "The few scriptural passages . . ., no clear teaching of scripture. . . ." At least Berkhof is honest enough to apply these remarks to both views.

1 In spite of the life and death seriousness of the doctrine of the Atonement-a seriousness which on one occasion forced Peter to cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man," and by which the more conscientious person is affected more than the less conscientious-some unintentional humor occasionally relieves the tension. In a sermon before the London Baptist Congress, from which he quotes in his ***Systematic Theology*** (II, 673-674), A.H. Strong, combining a defense of the true human nature of Christ with some reference to his federal headship, wrote: "Jesus ... is the representative of all humanity. Consider for a moment what is implied in your being a man. How many parents had you? You answer, Two. How many grandparents ? You answer, Four. How many great grandparents? Eight. How many great-great grandparents? Sixteen. So the number of ancestors increases as you go further back, and if you take in only twenty generations, you will have to reckon yourself as the outcome of more than a million progenitors." If so, may I add that if you take it back to Noah your ancestors-not in aggregate , but in that generation-will be several billion; whereas as a matter of fact they are exactly eight. Two at the time of Adam.

1 The hymn, with animadversions on childhood, never became popular in the churches.

1 Though this verse helps to confirm God's omniscience, it must not be pressed too far. The Hebrew word does not mean ***infinite.*** In fact, Hebrew seems not to have any word meaning infinite. ***Mispar,*** the word in this verse, means a ***number.*** It can mean a small number or a large number. David sinfully wanted to know the relatively small number of his people. God knows the relatively large number of the stars. It is a delicate question whether God's knowledge is infinite in the English sense of the word. If it were,

1 Pagination from ***The Complete Works of Augustus M. Toplady,*** London, 1869.

2 The illustration is faulty from the start because no man knows what will happen tomorrow

f I have not quoted an intervening paragraph which asserts that though man acts "from the first to the last moment of his life, in absolute subserviency ... to the purposes and decrees of God concerning him; notwithstanding which he acts freely and voluntarily as if he was ***sui juris,.. .*** absolutely lord of himself." Translating this, and John Gill's term ***coaction,*** into twentieth-century English, it means that man is free from the compulsion or "co- action" of physicochemical mathematical equations. But that the will is not free from God, and that it is God who makes us willing, is stated in the Westminster Confession, X, i; compare IX, 3.

1 ***The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation,*** first published 1862, London, 1967, 471-524.

2 In the article, it seems that the hyper-Calvinist and Mr. Dunkerley misunderstand John 3:16, and that the latter's doctrine of assurance is at variance with the First Epistle of John.

1 William Cunningham, ***Historical Theology,*** Banner of Truth Trust, 1960, II, 237-370, gives a most detailed and almost fatiguing account of the Calvinistic view of the Atonement and follows it with 130 pages of argument against the Arminians.

1 These six statements are verbatim, but omissions are not indicated by the usual three dots.

Chapter 7 – Salvation

The title Salvation is doubtless too broad as an accurate indication of this chapter's contents. But it is not so narrow as one of its common uses. Some untutored people use the term as a synonym for regeneration. They speak of someone or themselves as being "saved" at a certain time, without having in mind any notion of justification or sanctification. Salvation, however, includes these. It is regeneration plus all the spiritual blessings that succeed upon it. For this reason salvation is incomplete without resurrection and glorification in heaven.

Nevertheless, eschatology with the promise of resurrection, the return of Christ, glorification, heaven, and the penalty of hell too, is such an extensive topic, that though all of it is a part of salvation, it will be reserved for the final chapter. The main topics here are Regeneration, Faith, Justification, and Sanctification. This is already too much for one chapter, and to alleviate the length there will be a division into parts.

Part I - Regeneration and Grace

The actual, personal, or subjective first stage in salvation from sin and divine wrath is regeneration. This word derives from the picture of a new birth in the Gospel of John. Everyone knows, or perhaps in this post-reformation decadence not everyone knows that Jesus told Nicodemus

John 3:3 Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

This figurative language is not the only nor even the most frequent description of the initial event of Christian life. The idea of death in sin leads to speaking of life as a resurrection.

Eph. 2:5 When we were dead in sins, [God] made us alive to [with reference to] Christ... and resurrected us ...

This initiation of the new life is also referred to as a new creation and even as an adoption.

II Cor. 5:17 If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.

Eph. 2:10 We are his product, created by Christ.

Rom 8:14-15 Our Father ... sons of God ... The Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

Of these four figures of speech, new birth, new creation, and adoption, give hardly any hint of the characteristics of ordinary life preceding this change. The idea of creation, ex nihilo, could suggest that there was no pre-existing 'matter", that is, no person existing prior to this creation. Similarly, the new birth. Adoption presupposes a person existing previously, but there is no hint as to his condition; in fact, adoption does not even necessitate being an orphan. The idea of resurrection furnishes the more complete picture. Creation and adoption clearly indicate God's initiative; and all four more than hint at the absence of any human role in the event. But the idea of resurrection most clearly requires, not only a pre-existing person (as creation and new birth do not), but also describes his condition as one of death. And the death is death in sin.

To the few verses just quoted and the references to some others, a few more will now be added. After these an attempt will be made to express the literal meaning and truth of these figurative expressions, so that we may have some clear ideas about what regeneration actually is.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Gal. 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Col. 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

I Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

The subject of all these verses is, presumably, regeneration; and just above this was identified as the first stage of subjective salvation. The term, however, has not always been so restricted in meaning. Romanism uses the word to designate everything from the first stage to complete salvation in heaven. Both the Lutheran and the Calvinistic theologians also have given it a wide sense, including sanctification if not glorification. Calvin (Institutes HE iii 9) wrote “In this regeneration we are restored ... and this restoration is not accomplished in a single moment, or day, or year; but by continual and sometimes even tardy advances the Lord destroys the carnal corruptions of his chosen ... terminated only by death.” In later history, the nature of the very first stage of this process has attracted more attention, and it might as well be called regeneration. if the readers understand that the discussion is limited to the initiation, the begetting of or the resurrection to a new life.

Birth and especially resurrection are never the acts of the person bom or resurrected. Lazarus walked forth only after God had restored him to life. The person resurrected never has any active role in the event.

The doctrine of complete human passivity in regeneration was directly attacked by the Council of Trent. The document states, "If anyone shall say that the free-will of man, moved and excited by God, does not cooperate by assenting or yielding to God, exciting and calling him in order that he may predispose and prepare himself to receive the grace of justification, or that he cannot refuse his assent, if he chooses, but that he acts altogether like some inanimate thing, and is merely passive, - let him be anathema."

This is still the official position of Romanism; and Arminianism is indistinguishable from it. The will, free and independent of God, is able to resist and overcome the omnipotent power of God. "In the moment of decision," says one American evangelist, "prayer is useless, for not even God can help." Therefore these people say that the unregenerate sinner can and must cooperate with God in his regeneration. Not only so, but also in his unregenerate state he can prepare himself for that event. This of course implies that man, before regeneration, is not dead in sin; as the Scripture repeatedly asserts. Romanism and Arminianism, therefore, contradict the position of the Westminster Confession that "man ... being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." (IX,3)

That man is completely passive in regeneration is both an explicit teaching of parts of Scripture and a necessary consequence of other parts. A dead man cannot prepare himself for resurrection. Did

Lazarus squirm a little in his grave as a preparation for the moment Christ would call him forth? Was Paul as he made his way toward Damascus preparing himself to be a Christian?

One detail should doubtless be put out of the way immediately. The Romanists caricature the Lutheran and Reformed doctrine as an assertion that man is an "inanimate thing" or puppet. Now it is true that Luther used some vigorous figures of speech to describe 'man's sinful estate. He called man a stock or a stone. But to take this as a literal statement of Protestant theology is both to exhibit poor literary insight and to confess bewilderment at Luther's vigor.

Man is not a puppet, awkwardly controlled by strings. In fact, the operator cannot completely control the puppet's motions. God can. Nor is man a stock or stone, however forceful the figure of speech may be. Luther, Calvin, and all the Reformers held that natural human psychology was operative both before and after regeneration. But regeneration itself is not something a man does: it is something that is done to him. Strictly speaking, regeneration should not be called an "experience" at all, as it often is. Lazarus experienced his walking forth from the tomb; he experienced his new life; but did he "feel" the act of resurrection? "Conversion" and the further activities of the new life are ordinary elements of consciousness; but, if regeneration is the implantation of a new habitus, as will later be argued, it is certainly not a conscious event. The same conclusion follows if regeneration is a creative and therefore instantaneous divine fiat. Conscious states extend through time.

Thus regeneration or resurrection from the dead is an act of God, not an act of man. Man cannot even cooperate; for being dead, i.e. unable to do any spiritual good, he is without any power to prepare himself for this change.

The Old Testament expresses this view as clearly as the New:

Ps. 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Ezek. 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:

Ezek. 36:26,27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Ezek. 37:13,14 And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, o my people, and brought you up out of your graves. And I shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

If all this is not sufficient to convince the Pope and any stubborn Arminian, there is one further passage so clear and unambiguous that attempts to evade its force are ludicrous.

John 1:12,13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were bom, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The latter verse says two things: it says how regeneration does not take place and how it does. Contrary to a common Jewish opinion, a person does not become a child of God by descent from Abraham. The regenerate have not been "bom of bloods," — bloods, plural, to indicate descent by human heritage. Neither are Christians bom of the will of the flesh. Since the term flesh often carries

an evil meaning in the New Testament, the phrase is to be understood as denying birth on the basis of ordinary fallen human nature. But then, neither is a Christian born by an act of his own will - “nor of the will of a man." Human will is completely ruled out by the last two of these three, wrong answers to the main questions. Well, if none of these three describes how a person is bom again, how then does it happen? The answer is unambiguous: not by the will of any man, but of God.

And was not the figure of birth chosen for the purpose of ruling out the person's own activity? The baby has no will to cause birth. Of course, the parents have; but this was ruled out in the first of the three suggested methods. Rule out parentage, common human nature, the individual will, and God alone remains.

Allow two more verses to serve as an anticlimax:

James 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.

I Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again ...

The next question is, what precisely is regeneration? In these decadent days, some seem to think it consists in walking down the aisle and shaking hands with an attractive evangelist. Or, if few are so far from the truth, many equate regeneration with a vivid emotional upheaval. Others might allow the possibility of a calmer experience. But not so many would deny that it was an experience at all.

Yet the figure of a new birth rules out experience as much as the figure of creation does. Adam did not experience his creation; and in our first and natural birth, if we did experience a momentary pain, we never had any memory of it. The evangelist who with great emphasis proclaimed, "I was there when it happened and I ought to know,” just did not know. Being bom gives no baby a knowledge of gynecology. We may be and are later conscious of some of the effects of birth. But since it was God who acted, we cannot remember the act we never did.

What then precisely did God do? In technical, unpopular, theological language, God imposed a 'habit' upon us. The Aristotelian term 'habit', or the scholastic term habitus, needs some explanation.

Let us look at the hands of two persons. Whatever minuscule differences there are between them, they are substantially alike. If the persons were hidden from view and only their hands could be seen, one could hardly tell which pair belonged to which person. But actually, though invisibly, there is an enormous difference between them; for one of them can only awkwardly and slowly run a scale, whereas the other perfectly executes a Mozart sonata. These hands possess a habitus that the other person's do not have.

This illustration is defective, as all illustrations are. The musician’s habitus, or habit, is the result of hours and years of practice. This is how habits are formed. But there is one habit that is not formed this way. It is as supernatural as if God took a man without musical training and enabled him immediately to play Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. But instead of musical ability, regeneration consists in the implantation of faith, not faith in curative powers of snake oil, but faith in the saving power of Jesus Christ.

At this point, between regeneration and faith, it is appropriate to insert a paragraph or two on the idea of grace. Not that such paragraphs will contain much more than what has already been said, or at least implied, for the material on regeneration is particularly clear on the point that it is God's work, not ours. Of course, after regeneration there comes a process of sanctification, to be considered in the next chapter, in which process there is ample room for our good works. But even so, we depend on

grace to accomplish them. It is hardly necessary to quote verses to show that the Scriptures teach a theory of grace; but pro forma and for consistency a very few may be given.

Rom. 5:15 The grace of God and the gift of grace, by the one man Jesus Christ, has abounded to many.

Rom. 5:21 So also shall grace reign through righteousness to eternal life.

Rom. 11:5 There is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption according to the riches of his grace. Eph. 2:8 By grace are ...

Titus 3:7 Being justified by his grace.

Let these half dozen verses represent a hundred others. Grace and gift, as in Eph. 2:8, go together. Grace is very simply defined as 'unmerited favor.' When God gives us anything we have not earned, anything he does not owe us, anything we have not merited, it is a gift of grace. The sunlight is a gift of grace, but naturally we are here interested in salvation and its accompanying benefits. These have abounded to us, as Rom. 5:15 says, by reason of the one man Jesus Christ. That there remains a remnant of the Jewish people who accept their Messiah and Lord is "according to the election of grace." No less connected with election and predestination is the grace accorded to Gentile believers. The gift of belief or faith is also grace: it is not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. Therefore Titus 3.:7 can say that we are justified by grace, rather than the more common phrase 'justified by faith,' because faith is one part of God's grace. That regeneration is a work of grace is most obvious of all because a man has no active part in it at all.

None of this is hard to understand; but in the history of theology those who shied away from the Scriptural position on election and predestination could not help diluting, compromising, or completely denying the role of grace.

Before the discussion of clearly heretical views begins, one may consider for a moment a theory of so-called common grace that is undoubtedly Biblical. If there is anything wrong with it, the fault lies in its defenders' overemphasis. Since it is no part of saving grace, it is best mentioned briefly and then passed by. This grace is called common because it consists of benefits which God confers on all men indiscriminately. They are common to the regenerate and the unregenerate alike. The verse usually quoted is:

Mt. 5:45 He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

This can be called grace, if it be agreed that it is both unmerited and a favor or blessing. But though sun and rain are essential for food, in comparison with eternal salvation they are rather trivial. The frivolity may disappear, however, if the preaching of the gospel to all and sundry is an unmerited favor. One theologian argues that the gospel is both a savor of life unto life and also a savor of death unto death. To the reprobate the preaching of the gospel is no favor because as it increases their knowledge, it increases their responsibility and condemnation. Better if they had never heard the gospel. One can reply, nonetheless, that in some cases the preaching of the gospel may restrain an evil man from some of his evil ways. Since therefore sins are not all equal, and since some are punished with many stripes, but others with few, the preaching of the gospel results in the lessening of the punishment. Thus preaching would be a small favor, a modicum of grace. We note it and pass on.

If this theory of common grace is Biblical, and its only fault is frivolity, the Lutheran view, in a logical series of degrees among defective explanations, departs the least from the teaching of Scripture. Grace is a matter of salvation, not just sunshine, and therefore of greater importance. Bishop Martensen of Seeland, Denmark, whom Soren Kierkegaard so unfairly lampooned, is a good example of the Lutheran position. To quote from his Christian Dogmatics (pp. 362, 363): "God's grace is universal; and from eternity, it has been concluded that all shall be gathered together under Christ as the Head. In eternity God looks on all human souls according to this essential testing—looks over them as possible subjects of regeneration ... Dualism does not appear till time begins ... Election of grace ... from the sinful mass ... But this Dualism prevails only in time; as it is excluded from the eternal counsels of God, ... Grace must submit to the commandments of time ... it must submit to the limitations of human freedom. "

Most obviously God's grace is not universal, for God did not extend saving grace nor give the unmerited gift of faith to Esau and Judas. Furthermore, God in eternity could not have been ignorant of the events of history, for Christ was slain from the foundation of the world and Judas was selected for the purpose he accomplished. Martensen's "Dualism" was therefore present in God's eternal plan; it is not "excluded from the eternal counsels of God." Nor must grace "submit" to anything.

After criticizing Calvin for having "confounded predestination with the election of grace," and for having made the separation of the saved from the lost not merely temporal but with "foundations in the eternal counsels of God," Martensen continues: "Augustinian theologians have often maintained that the operations of Christianity are never fettered by natural restrictions, but that grace can accomplish its object 'what, when, and where' it will. They think that by this doctrine they extol the power of grace. But this is not only contradicted by the universal experience of church history, it is in itself false; it magnifies the second creation at the expense of the first, which on such a principle is violated; it glorifies the Son at the sacrifice of the Father's glory" (p. 369).

This Lutheran position, however, cannot be maintained. Not only is this not contradicted in church history; it permeates the history of the Old Testament, not to mention the doctrinal material of the New. Augustinianism no doubt maintains the Biblical teaching that "The operations of Christianity are never fettered by natural restrictions;" but it is not so obtuse as to deny that the manifestations of grace are integrated with "natural" conditions. Moses could not have led the Israelites through the Red Sea, if the Red Sea had not been there. The point is that God put the Red Sea there in the first place. Similarly Christ met Paul on the "natural" road to Damascus; but this did not "Fetter" God. God surely accomplishes his precise purposes when, where, and how he pleases. Just why Christ's meeting Paul, at that place at that time and with that light and voice, "violates" the first creation, Martensen does not explain. Even less explicable is how any of this glorifies the Son at the "sacrifice" of the Father's glory.

Regardless of how vociferously a Calvinist objects to these points of Lutheran doctrine, it ought to be said again that Kierkegaard's charge against Martensen of hypocrisy, paganism, and other things was completely undeserved. Let a strong Calvinist, alongside of passages he wishes to refute, quote one to defend the Bishop's sincerity and good reputation. "The children of Israel, who are a permanent type of an elect nation, were emphatically the elect people; yet there was only a small remnant of elect individuals among them (a holy election) who represented the true and spiritual Israel. So do we find it in every Christian nation. All perhaps have been baptized and incorporated into Christ's kingdom and outwardly united to him, and yet in every period there is to be found but a small number of really awakened and regenerate persons in whom Christianity dwells as a subjective and personal life" (p. 373,374).

The Roman Catholic position on grace is far less Biblical than the Lutheran. It is also excessively complicated. The New Catholic Encyclopedia has lengthy articles on the subject, and its history of the doctrine is very thorough. For the present purpose it may be noted that A Catholic Dictionary, edited by Donald Attwater (3rd ed., 1961) and given a cardinal's imprimatur, lists fifteen sub-species of "grace": actual, baptismal, efficacious, elevating, and on to substantial.

Baptismal grace is a "special aspect" of sanctifying grace.

Efficacious grace is "that grace to which the will freely assents, so that the grace always produces its effects. ... It is an article of faith that this grace does not necessitate the will, although its result is inevitable."

"Grace, Irresistible. The supposedly irresistible efficacy of divine aid, by which, according to Calvinism, man, though free from any physical necessity, is forced to well doing." The short article then quotes the Council of Trent's rejection of the Protestant position.

"Grace, Prevenient. Actual grace enlightens the mind and fires the will with a view to the work of: salvation. In this string of the will there are two moments; the first of these is a grace which moves the will spontaneously, unfreely [!], making it incline to God ... The heavenly inspirations may be accepted freely or rejected freely by the aroused will. If they are accepted, it is in virtue of a further grace ... called consequent or cooperating grace."

"Grace, Sufficient. The grace which for lack of cooperation of the receiver goes without the effect for which it was bestowed and thus is opposed to efficacious grace ... " (Pascal wryly remarks that sufficient grace is not sufficient.)

At this point we arrive at: consciousness or experience; therefore the subject now becomes faith.

Part II. Faith.

Secular philosophers, at least some of them, have been as much interested in faith as Christians have. Brand Blanshard, The Nature of Thought (Vol. I, pp. 112 ff, 286, 303), a work of superb scholarship, discusses faith or belief. Long before Blanshard, Plato had a theory of opinion. For Plato opinion was a mental state distinctly inferior to knowledge, though in some cases nearly as useful. Perhaps with this in mind some Christian theologians attempt to place faith above opinion and below knowledge. Blanshard and Plato do not discuss saving faith; nevertheless the Christian student faces their problem also, as well as one of his own: he must first give an account of faith as such, and then he must, if he can, enumerate the distinctive characteristics that make one faith saving, while another is not.

I. Biblical Background

Before the systematic analysis begins, some Biblical material and even a few extra-biblical remarks are in order. No one needs to be told that the Bible has a great deal to say about faith. Almost as obvious, the fact that Abraham is the outstanding example of faith was a part of the refutation of dispensationalism in the previous chapter. Rom. 4, Gal. 3, Heb. 11, and James 2, all, not merely mention, but emphasize Abraham. But before Abraham there was Noah. Gen. 6 may not use the word faith, but it makes clear that Noah believed what God said and obeyed his directions. Clearly therefore faith is not a New Testament novelty.

Nor should the role of faith during the Mosaic era be minimized. There is a Hebrew term only twice translated faith, sometimes translated truth, or truly, but which is frequently translated believe. A

negative instance is found in Ps: 78:21-22,32:

"Anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God ...

For all this they sinned still, and believed not for [in] his wondrous works.

For all the New Testament material, which we too often read without thinking much of its meaning, there are some passages that cause difficulty. James 2:20 speaks of a dead faith. He describes it as a faith unproductive of good works. Precisely what a man of dead faith believes is not too clear. One thing is clear: the word faith here cannot mean 'personal trust' in the sense that some popular preachers impose on it. 'Dead trust' would be an unintelligible phrase. Clearly James means a belief of some sort; and the only belief James mentions is the belief in monotheism. Islam therefore would be a dead faith.

There are some other varieties of faith which may be mentioned as this subsection concludes. Matthew 13 apparently refers to what some theologians call "temporary faith." Hodge (ΙΠ, P. 68) writes, "Nothing is more common than for the Gospel to produce a temporary impression ... Those impressed, believe." But Hodge does not say precisely what they believe. He hardly acknowledges that the person in the parable who is represented by the stony ground believes anything, even though we read "heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it." This sound as if the stony man believed some or even all of the gospel. However, the previous verses describe such men as "seeing, see not; and hearing, hear not; neither do they understand;" following which Jesus quotes Isaiah. A person can indeed hear words without understanding them, but can he thus believe them, and can he receive them with joy? Clearly there are here some troubles that we must ponder.

Other theologians speak of an "historical" faith, by which, strangely, they do not mean only a belief in the truth of historical events recorded in the Bible, but also in some, many, or perhaps all the Biblical norms of morality. Possibly the rich young ruler would exemplify this sort of faith. He certainly believed that he had kept all the commandments; but unfortunately this was a mistaken belief. How much else of the Old Testament he believed, Gen. 17?, is not clear.

One further point may be made before the systematic exposition begins. It has more to do with church history than exegesis. In the second century a wide spread heresy almost engulfed and destroyed the Church. It was Gnosticism. The name comes from the word gnosis, knowledge. Later theologians have sometimes contrasted faith with knowledge. This is the wrong contrast, for two reasons. First, II Peter 1:3 says that everything pertaining to godliness comes to us through knowledge. There are many supporting references. The Pastorals have several. The second reason is that the knowledge of which the Gnostics boasted was a theory of cosmology, including highly imaginative accounts of what happened before Gen 1:1.

Admittedly, the Gnostics were devoid of Christian faith; but the contrast is not between faith and knowledge- it is a contrast between the different objects known or believed. The Gnostics knew, or believed in, thirty eons, a docetic incarnation, and a pseudo-atonement. The Christians believed a different set of propositions. Since, however, some students of evangelistic zeal may question the value of a "merely secular, psychological" analysis of belief, it is best to show the importance and necessity of saving faith. Then as saving faith is recognized as a species of generic faith, the analysis will have its proper setting.

2. Necessity of Faith

Faith, like regeneration, is necessary to salvation, if for the moment we defer discussion of infants, imbeciles, and the insane. Because necessary to salvation, it is necessary for theology. Since, too, faith is the first phase of conscious Christian life, it is likely to attract one's attention sooner than the prior regeneration or the subsequent sanctification. The following verses will show that faith is necessary. Host assuredly they teach more than this, and references to them must later be made in explanation of other phases of the doctrine. But they are given here for the sole purpose of pointing out the necessity of faith.

Jn. 3:15,16 Everyone who believes in him has everlasting life. ... He who believes in him shall not perish.

Acts 16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.

Strictly speaking, these two verses do not show that faith is necessary to salvation. They show that faith is sufficient. If someone believes, he has eternal life. No one is lost who believes. But these two verses, if taken alone, allow for the possibility that something else could be substituted for faith. Suppose I am driving south on Interstate 65, and in Kentucky I come to Cave City. The attendant at the gas station, says, if you take routes 9 and 231 you will surely get to Murphreesboro. True enough. But it is also true that if I continue on 1-65 and 24 I shall get to Murphreesboro just as well. Now ...

Mk. 16:16 He who believes and is baptised shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned.

teaches not only that faith is sufficient, but also that without faith salvation is impossible. However, since some scholars do not regard this as part of the canon, three other verses follow.

Jn. 3:18 He who believes in him is not judged: he who does not believe is judged already.

Jn. 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life: but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life.

Heb. 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please [God],

These verses are sufficiently explicit: but the general doctrine of justification by faith alone is a stronger proof than a few sample verses. The passages on justification may not be so explicit: it is necessary to combine them and draw inferences. But the conclusion is the more compelling because the base is broader.

3. The Language

Since faith is of such importance, and even if it were not of such importance, theology must determine its meaning. Those who wish to talk about it ought to know the nature of faith as such, and as well the nature of that particular kind of faith which is necessary for salvation. Herman Hoeksema ("Reformed Dogmatics. Grand Rapids, 1966, p. 479) begins his chapter on Saving Faith with this paragraph: "Saving faith is that work of God in the elect, regenerated, and called sinner whereby the latter is ingrafted into Christ and embraces and appropriates Christ and all his benefits, relying upon him in time and eternity." Aside from the fact that some of the verbs in sentence are too vague to be useful, one may admit that the sentence is true. But it is not a definition of faith. To say that faith ingrafts us into Christ says less than to say roast beef gives us nourishment. The latter does not tell us what beef is. Nor does the former tell us what faith is.

Theological terms need to be defined; they need to be understood; or else we do not know what we are talking about. To make progress toward a definition, we begin with the usage of the language.

The Greek verb —for the noun is hardly less frequent — means believe. So it was translated in the previous verses quoted. Here will follow some instances of its ordinary use, both in pagan sources and in the Bible also.

The Biblical verses from the Septuagint are not chosen because they are Biblical, but, like the pagan sources, they show how the word was used in pre-christian times. When the New Testament authors began to write, they perforce used the common language.

Aristotle, De Anima 428 b 4: "The sun is believed to be larger than the earth."

Aristotle, Meteorologica 343 b 10 - On a certain point "it is necessary to believe the Egyptians."

Thucydides I, 20 says "it is hard to believe every bit of evidence about them."

Ps: 78:22 in the Septuagint translation says that the Israelites "did not believe in God."

Isa. 53:1 Who has believed our report?

Even though this is the common usage—and in a moment a large number of New Testament passages will show the same thing-a number of theologians give the impression that the translation believe is misleading. They want to make "faith" something other than "mere" belief. The following lengthy list has some bearing on this contention.

Jn. 2:22 They believed the Scripture.

Jn. 3:12 If I told you about earthly matters and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

Jn. 4:50 The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him.

Jn. 5:47 If ye believe not that man's writing, how shall ye believe my words?

Jn. 6:69 We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.

Jn. 8:24 If ye believe not that I am [what I claim to be] ye shall die in your sins.

Jn. 8:45 Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me.

Jn. 9:18 But the Jews did not believe. . . .that he had been blind.

Jn. 11:26 Do you believe this?

27 Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ.

Jn. 11:42 I said it that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Jn. 12 :38 Who hath believed our report?

Jn. 13:19 Ye may believe that I am he.

Jn. 14 :29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you might believe.

Jn. 16:27 And have believed that I came out from God.

Jn. 16'30 We believe that thou earnest forth from God.

Jn. 17:8 have believed that thou didst send me.

Jn. 17:21 that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Jn. 20:31 These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

I Cor. 13:7 Love believes everything.

In reading over these verses carefully, the student should note that the object of the verb is sometimes a noun or pronoun denoting a statement (word, this, things, writings), and sometimes a person (in this list, me; in other verses God), and sometimes there is no explicit object at all. The significance of this should become apparent in a moment.

But first it is clear that the Greek verb pisteuo is properly translated believe, and that this Greek verb and the English believe mean precisely the same thing. The important point now is to see what the object of this verb can be. Obviously it can be, and in the Bible usually is, the truth. Of course a person may believe something false; but even so the nature of the psychological act of believing, called faith, is the same, for the man who believes a falsehood believes it to be true.

In the Scriptures many of the instances of the verb have as their explicit object the noun God: for example, Abraham believed God. This should not be taken to signify something different from the other instances. What Abraham believed was the promise of God. Whenever we say that we believe a person, we mean that we accept his statement as true. If we say that we believe "in" a person, we mean that we believe he will continue to speak the truth.

Kittel (Vol. VI, pp. 203-208) has these things to say. "There is nothing distinctive in the NT usage ... as compared with Greek usage. ... Pisteuein eis is; neither Greek nor LXX. ... Pisteuein eis is equivalent to pisteuein oti. to regard credible or true. Pisteuein eis XJ ... simply means pisteuein oti I. apethanen kai aneste. ... In John especially pisteuein eis and pisteuein oti are constantly used interchangeably. Cf. also Acts 8:37 ... This is proved also by the passive expression episteuthe (cf. I Tim. 3:16) and the fact that pistis eis is equivalent, not to pis tis c. dat. but to pistis c. gen. obj ... "

Two pages later it says, "Pisteuein ... often means to believe God's words. Belief is thus put in Scripture (Jn. 2:22) in what is written in the Law, in what the prophets have said (Lk. 24:35)... in Moses and his writings (Jn. 5 :46 ff.)." Cf also pp. 208, 222.

In opposition to Kittel's linguistic studies, some theologians and many ministers wish to minimize belief and detach faith from truth. Louis Berkhof tends in this direction. Since at this time he commands wide-spread respect and since many schools use his book, it proves profitable to conclude this subsection with a few paragraphs concerning his views. The material comes from his Systematic Theology, fourth edition, 1969, Part IV, chapter 8, pp. 493 ff.

He admits that John 4:50 uses the verb pisteuo in the literal sense of believing that a proposition is true. Naturally, for the explicit object is the word or sentences that Jesus had just spoken. Similarly John 5:47. Berkhof even allows Acts 16:34, Romans 4:3, and II Timothy 1:12 to mean belief in the truth of a proposition, although the explicit object of the verb is God or Christ.

In spite of these instances, where the predicate is the noun God, though the actual and immediate object is a proposition, and particularly in contrast with the instances where the object is explicitly a proposition, Berkhof says, "On the whole this construction is weaker than the preceding" (p. 494),

where pisteuo means confident trust in a person. But why weaker? Would it not be more accurate to say that this construction with a proposition as the object is more literal and accurate than the preceding abbreviated expressions? Berkhof continues, "In a couple of cases the matter believed hardly rises into the religious sphere, John 9:18, Acts 9:26 ... " But if these are instances of ordinary usage, such as "The Jews did not believe that he had been bom blind," it should show all the more clearly what the ordinary meaning of "believe" is. No religious motif is there to distract one's understanding. It is true that the object of belief in such instances does not rise into the religious sphere; sometimes the object may be banal or trivial; but the point at issue is not the object of belief or faith, but the nature of faith and the meaning of the verb pisteuo.

From page 493 on Berkhof speaks as follows. Pistis (the noun) and Pisteuein (the verb) "do not always have exactly the same meaning." He specifies two meanings of the noun in classical Greek. "It denotes (a) a conviction based on confidence in a person and in his testimony, which as such is distinguished from knowledge resting on personal investigation; and (b) the confidence itself on which such a conviction rests. This is more than a mere intellectual conviction that a person is reliable; it presupposes a personal relation to the object of confidence, a giving out of oneself to rest in another."

The lexical information of this quotation is accurate enough; but the comments are groundless. Why is confidence in a person's truthfulness more than "a mere intellectual conviction that a person is reliable"? What is intended in the pejorative use of the word "mere"? Why is a conviction of another person's honesty and reliability not a "personal relation"? And can any intelligible sense be found in the phrase "a giving out of oneself to rest in another"?

However, to continue the quotations from page 494 on, we read that in the New Testament "the following meanings [of the noun pistis] should be distinguished: an intellectual belief or conviction, resting on the testimony of another, and therefore based on trust in this other rather than on personal investigation, Phil. 1: 27 [which rather obviously refers to the doctrines of the gospel], II Cor. 4:13, II Thess. 2:13 [the object here is truth] and especially in the writings of John; and (b) a confiding trust or confidence ... Rom. 3:22, 25; 5:1, 2; 9:)0,32. ... This trust must be distinguished from that on which the intellectual trust mentioned under (a) above rests."

But, why? No reason is given. Rom. 3:22 does not support him, nor does 3:25. Nor do the other verses. They make no distinction such as Berkhof makes. They simply speak of faith. By saying five lines below that "This last [yielding to Christ and trusting in him]i s specifically called saving faith," Berkhof implies that the conviction of the truth of the gospel and "intellectual trust" is not saving faith. Romans is a great book, and we are willing to quote it, more than willing; anxious; Romans 10:9 says that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." As the Old Testament makes abundantly clear, the heart is the mind; and believing that God raised Christ from the dead is as intellectual an exercise as believing that two and two are four. Emotions cannot believe anything.

On page 495 Berkhof continues, Faith "is also represented as a hungering and thirsting ... In eating and drinking we not only have the conviction that the necessary food and drink is present, but also the confident expectation that it will satisfy us."

There are two things wrong with this paragraph. First, it literalizes a metaphorical expression. Of course having food present before us does not nourish us. It must be eaten. Similarly, having the gospel presented to us, so that we understand the meaning of the words does not save us: it must be believed. The truth must be confessed with the mouth and believed with the heart. The term confess. I believe, excludes hypocrisy. But Berkhof seems to confuse the presence of food with the belief in

the good news; whereas it is the eating that represents the belief. Then in the second place, “the confident expectation that it will satisfy us" (though Paul hardly had any confident expectation as he joumed to Damascus) is itself an intellectual belief. It is a thought that we entertain. It is an idea that we accept. Any belief is an intellectual event. Emotions cannot believe.

From page 501 to 505 Berkhof discusses various types of faith: opinion, certainty, historical faith, miraculous faith, temporal faith, and saving faith. Briefly, for it will be discussed later, saving faith includes an intellectual element (notitia); it also, he says, has an emotional element. This emotional element he identifies as assensus. But assent, throughout the history of theology and philosophy, has always been volitional, not emotional. Furthermore, he fails to overturn this age long understanding of the term, for he nowhere shows that there is anything emotional about assent. Indeed, he gives himself away by admitting that “It is very difficult to distinguish this assent from the knowledge of faith just described." Must we not conclude that Berkhof s account of faith is utterly confused?

There are, he says, other instances of the verb believe where "the deeper meaning of the word, that of firm trustful reliance, comes to its full rights." But. Berkhof, like others, fails to show how this "deeper meaning" differs from the straightforward literal meaning. Among the many instances of the verb believe, there is, to repeat, a difference of objects. One may believe that two and two are four, and this is arithmetic; one may also believe that asparagus belongs to the lily family, and this is botany. Botany is not mathematics, of course; but the psychology or linguistics of believe is identical in all cases. Therefore, one should not confuse an analysis of belief with an analysis of numbers or plants. Christ's promises of salvation are vastly different from the propositions of botany; but believing is always thinking that a proposition is true. The further development will also support this conclusion.

4. Person or Proposition?

While Professor Berkhof serves as a good example, many other Protestant theologians also, both Lutheran and Reformed, tend to make a sharp distinction between 'a confident resting on a person' and 'the assent given to a testimony.' 'Confident reliance' is supposed to differ from 'intellectual assent.' This position is often bolstered up with references to pisteuein eis: but a few paragraphs back Kittel disposed of such a contention. English also has the same usage. As modernism developed and suspicion attached to this or that minister, people would ask, Does he believe in the Virgin Birth, does he believe in the Atonement? One did not ask, Does he believe the Virgin Birth'? The preposition in was regularly used. But of course the meaning was, Does he believe that Christ was born of a virgin? To believe in a person is to be confident, i.e. to believe that he will continue to tell the truth. But Berkhof (p. 494) says, "Confidence ... is more than a mere intellectual conviction that a person is reliable; it presupposes a personal relation to the object of confidence, a going out of oneself to rest in another." If anyone stops to think, he will easily see that such language is completely unintelligible and gives no understandable meaning.

In spite of the popularity, and supposed superior spirituality, of such a view, it seems to rest on a mistaken psychological analysis. Even Berkhof admits, with at least an appearance of inconsistency, that "As a psychological phenomenon, faith in the religious sense does not differ from faith in general... Christian faith in the most comprehensive sense is man's persuasion of the truth of Scripture on the basis of the authority of God" (p. 501). This is an excellent statement and should be defended against Berkhof s earlier contrary assertions.

The present textbook wishes to insist that believing or faith is an activity of the mind. It is something that the person does. Not that it is an overt physical action, but it is activity, intellectual activity, none the less.

Herman Hoeksema denies this. He makes faith a habitus. It was explained above that regeneration is a habitus. But as the musician's habitus gives its evidence by the musician's execution of a Mozart sonata, so the habitus of regeneration produces the activity of believing. Hoeksema says that the habitus faith makes the soul "peculiarly fit to apprehend spiritual things. It is the fitness to believe, in distinction from the act of believing itself (p. 480). Me genoito!

Not at all; faith is believing. It is the activity of the regenerated sinner's mind. This is not to deny that faith is a gift of God. God causes us to believe. We cannot believe unless God himself makes us willing. And faith is the will to believe. When Paul saw the light and heard the words as he approached Damascus, he indeed saw and heard. These were his actions, however much God had caused them. Now, one of Hoeksema's troubles is that he accepts an extreme form of faculty psychology. He says, "there is no reason" whatever to limit faith to intellect or will; but we must rather conceive the truth of the matter in this way, that from the heart of man the spiritual habitus of faith controls both intellect and will" (p. 484). We reply, faith is believing.

Because of the pietism of those people who might well be called super-devout, but more because of twentieth century anti-intellectualism in the forms of existentialism and so-called neoorthodoxy, this section under the subhead of person versus proposition will conclude with a few more Scriptural passages. The word gospel itself means good news. Mark starts with the beginning of the good news; and in 1:15 after describing Jesus as preaching the good news reports that Jesus commanded the people to believe this information. Information consists of propositions to be believed. But rather than a lengthy examination of the Gospels[1] it seems better to consider some less well known verses in Acts.

The word logos, unfortunately translated word in John 1:1, is better translated Treatise in Acts 1:1. A treatise is presumably a mass of information. Acts 2:41 says that the people received the word, the message, the information gladly. It does not say that they received a person without a message. Logos in this verse could well refer to Peter's sermon. And certainly the next verse speaks of doctrine or teaching ididachet. In Acts 4:29, 31 we have the term word again, but the meaning is obviously message or sermon. Naturally sermons are composed of propositions. When the servants of Cornelius came to see Peter in Acts 10:21, the apostle asked them, For what.. logos, reason, did you come to see me. Reasons are propositions that explain other propositions.

More pointedly the meaning of logos, the importance of true declarative sentences, and also their relation to persons (for this material bears on the alleged separation between persons and propositions) — more pointedly the significance of the word logos is clarified in the remainder of the chapter, especially Acts 10: 36-38, and 44. Here the reader must follow the example of the noble Bereans and open the Bible to examine whether these things be so. In verse 36 God sent a word to the children of Israel; this word was a message of peace through Jesus Christ. It was a sermon, a series of propositions. This same message is designated by the term rhema in the following verse. Whereas logos can mean any expression of reason —it can mean a mathematical ratio, a book, a question, an argument — the term rhema regularly carries the connotation of words, words as listed in the dictionary, that is, just plain ordinary words. (That logos and rhema can be and often are identical is clear in the Gospel of John.) These words were published throughout all Judaea and Galilee. And the following verse (v. 38) shows that this Logos - or these rhemata are the works of Jesus Christ. For the person of Jesus is not a person without an intelligible message. Subtract the words and the person cannot be known. Then in v. 43 all that believe on him, that is, all who believe the words preached, receive forgiveness of sin. And verse 44 uses the term rhemata again.

For those who are linguistically inclined it might be wise to mention in passing that we are not really talking about words. Words like dog, chien. Hund, are only symbols. They are symbols of thoughts.

So that when we identify a person with his words, the point is that the person is what he thinks. The person is his mind. Paul exhorts us to have the mind of Christ, that is, to think his thoughts. But the theory of language needs another publication.

Acts 15:6 says that the apostles came together to consider this matter. The Greek word is logos. It refers to the question whether or not the Gentiles should be circumcised in order to be Christians. The next verse speaks of the word of the gospel. It is not a single word, but an extended message. Verse 32 speaks of a large or great word (in the singular). It refers to two long speeches. Finally, to bring this tedious list to an end, Acts 20: 7 tells how Paul's five or six hour sermon (logos) put a young man asleep.

All these references show that logos should hardly ever be translated word. It means thought or mind or reason, so that John 1:1 can be compared with the wisdom of God and the mind of Christ as given in I Cor. 1:24 and 2:16. Faith consists in believing the word.

5. Historical Note

Since the early. Christians, before A.D. 325, had not settled upon the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not surprising that they had no clear view of faith. Tertullian spoke about believing on authority rather than by personal investigation and knowledge. After Athanasius, Augustine had more to say. Faith, for him, was voluntary assent to the truth. This is more to the point than Tertullian's very good, but quite inadequate, remarks. The present volume defends the Augustinian position.

The Thomistic view of faith may well be introduced by a reference to an earlier medieval theologian, Hugo. Hugo of St. Victor proposed a definition of faith that was widely accepted both before and after the Reformation: "Faith is a kind of mental certainty concerning absent realities that is superior to opinion and inferior to knowledge." Thomas then notes an objection to Hugo's view. A mean must always be homogeneous to its two extremes. Since both science and opinion have propositions as their objects, the objects of faith must likewise be propositions. But contrary to this the Apostles Creed, an expression of faith, says, "I believe in God the Father Almighty;" and this is different from the proposition, “God is Almighty." Therefore faith concerns a reality, not a proposition. Further, in heaven faith gives way to vision, as I Cor. 13:12 says; this is a vision of God himself, not a proposition; therefore similarly the object of faith is a person, not a proposition.

Thomas Aquinas, noting the divergence between these two views, states his conclusions in his Summa Theologica. (Blackfriars edition, Vol. 31, pp. 11 ff). "The way the known exists in the knower corresponds to the way the knower knows ... For this reason the human mind knows in a composite way things that are themselves simple. ... From the perspective of the one believing, the object of faith is something composite in the form of a proposition ... In heaven ... that vision will not take the form of a proposition, but of a simple intuition."

This quotation will puzzle anyone who has not studied Thomism. Yet it does have a certain plausibility. Naturally, trivially, tautologically, the way the known exists in the knower corresponds to the way the knower knows. Less plausible is the idea that something so simple as not to be a proposition, something that has no subject and predicate, can miraculously turn into a proposition; or that a proposition, true because the predicate is appropriate to its subject, can be known otherwise. Can the term cat be a truth? The proposition, 'this cat is black,' may be true; but can a subject minus a predicate be true all alone by itself?

The following is much less plausible: Thomas insists we cannot believe anything that is false. At least he says, "Nothing can be the completion of any potentiality ... except in virtue of the formal

objective of that power. For example, color cannot be the completion of sight except through light. ... Nothing therefore can come under faith except in its status within God's truth, where nothing false has any place. ... We can only conclude that nothing false can be the object of faith."

Such was not Augustine's view, for in his defense of faith, against its repudiation by science, he used as an example the belief of a boy that a certain man and woman were his father and mother. In the case of babies adopted in infancy this belief is often false.

Some pages further on (Blackfriars' edition, p. 61) Thomas gives a fuller explanation. "The verb to think can be used in three senses. The first is the widest sense any act of intellectual knowing. ...The second is a narrower sense, where thinking designates a thinking of the mind that is accompanied by a certain searching prior to reaching complete understanding in the certitude of seeing.....The third sense is an act of the cognitive power [and has no part in this

discussion] ... In its first and broadest sense, 'to think with assent' does not bring out the precise meaning. ... If, however, to think is understood in its proper sense, the text does express the meaning distinctive of the act of belief. Among the acts of the intellect, some include a firm assent without pondering thus when someone thinks about what he knows scientifically. ... Other mental acts are ... inconclusive ... suspicion ... opinion. The act of believing, however, is firmly attached to one alternative, and in this respect the believer is in the same state of mind as one who has science or understanding."[2]

Since this is not a treatise on Thomistic theology, the conclusion is only that Thomas, with many details, defined faith as assent to an understood proposition.

Somewhere in a discussion on faith, the Romish view of "implicit" faith should be considered. When an Italian or Irish peasant asserts that he believes whatever the Church teaches, though, of course, his knowledge of what the Church teaches embraces no more than one percent of the Tridentine confession, he is said to have implicit faith. Even an educated Catholic, a professor of philosophy in a secular university, did not know the essential element that makes baptism valid. But all such people profess belief in whatever the Church teaches. Protestantism has always rejected this proposition as absurd. It should be clear that no one can believe what he does not know or understand. Suppose a person who knows no French is told, "Dans ce roman c'est M. DuPres qui est Ie meurtrier': can he believe it? Certainly the Scripture does not countenance such ignorance. The sacred writers constantly emphasize doctrine, knowledge, wisdom, edification. The well known verse, Matt. 28: 20 ,says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." Nothing is to be left untaught. A person cannot "observe" a doctrine or obey a command unless he knows it. Faith is strictly limited to knowledge.

This note on implicit faith serves to introduce Calvin's discussion in the Institutes, Book III, chapter ii. Ridiculing implicit faith he says, "Is this faith to understand nothing? ... Faith consists not in ignorance, but in knowledge. ... By this knowledge [that God is propitious to us through Christ] I say, not by renouncing our understanding, we obtain an entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. ... The apostle [in Rom. 10:10] ... indicates that it is not sufficient for a man implicitly to credit [believe] what he neither understands nor even examines; but he requires an explicit knowledge of the Divine goodness. ... Faith consists in a knowledge of God and of Christ" (III ii 2,3).

Further: "Paul connects faith as an inseparable concomitant with doctrine, where he says ...’’as the truth is in Jesus ... [and] 'the words of faith and good doctrine'... Faith has a perpetual relation to the word. ... 'These are written, that ye might believe.' ... Take away the word, and then there will be no faith left. ... We must further inquire what part of the word it is, with which [saving] faith is

particularly concerned. ... When our conscience beholds nothing but indignation and vengeance, how shall it not tremble with fear? ... But faith ought to seek God, not fly from him. But suppose we substitute benevolence and mercy [and Calvin quotes a number of verses], ... Now we shall have a complete definition of faith, if we say, that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit" (6 and 7).

With due respect to Calvin, one may ask whether or not this definition tends to confuse faith with assurance. More on this later. It may also be doubted whether the definition is "complete." At least there is more to be said. It is clear, however, that Calvin emphasizes knowledge, in particular the knowledge of God's promise. Hence the object of belief is a proposition.

In reading Calvin one must consider the date of the Institutes. This work was first published in 1536. The final edition, much enlarged, came in 1559. The Council of Trent was called in 1542; it recessed in 1547 and resumed in 1551. It recessed again from 1552 to 1562; and its final decisions were confirmed by the Pope in 1564. Thus, Calvin began writing before the Council convened; he finished his work before the Council concluded; and hence his description of Romanism could not be accurately based on the Council's conclusions. He had to use concrete examples from actual authors and preachers. The result is that some of his descriptions of Romanism are not true of what later became the official Roman position.

For example, in ΠI ii 8, he says, "They maintain faith to be a mere assent, with which every despiser of God may receive as true whatever is contained in the Scripture." Now, maybe some brash or stupid Schoolman said this; but it is not the post-tridentine position. In the twentieth century Catholic Encyclopedia, faith is stated to be "fiducial assent." Nor is it clear that a despiser of God can receive as true whatever-some things no doubt, but everything?—is contained in the Scripture.

However much we oppose the Roman church, even to asserting the Reformation view that the Papacy is the anti-christ, it is unnecessary, and we do our cause no good, to misrepresent these idolaters. Hence, as a matter of history, there follows a section on the decrees of Trent. These decrees contain much that is wrong. They teach that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, and that in justification God makes us just. They assert human cooperation and deny irresistible grace; and many other things, including of course the abominations of the Mass. However, and nonetheless, there are some remnants of Christianity. The quotation following concerns faith, and though mixed with stultifying error, there are some good phrases.

Sixth Session, chapter viii: "We are therefore said to be justified by faith because faith is the beginning of human salvation. ... without which it is impossible to please God. ... We are therefore said to be justified freely because none of those things which precede justification— whether faith or works—merit the grace itself of justification ... otherwise grace is no more grace."

Then follow (Chapter IX) a repudiation of Reformation heretics, (Chapter X) the increase of justification; then on keeping the Commandments, presumption and predestination, perseverance, (Chapters XI,XII,XIII) etc.

After Chapter XVI come some Canons opposing the Reformation view of Justification. For example, "If anyone saith that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ... to the exclusion of (infused] grace and the charity that is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, arid is inherent in them. ... let him be anathema" (Canon XI).

Even here this is not so bad as it sounds to postreformation ears; or at least the error is often incorrectly identified. The Romanists included in their term justification what the Reformers and the Bible call sanctification. This latter of course requires infused grace and love. A more accurate identification of the Romish error would be their complete blindness to Biblical justification. They used the term, but they omitted and denied God's judicial, justifying acquittal, of which more will be said later.

In addition to the decrees of Trent, something from the Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council (A.D. 1870) forms an interesting historical note. "Chapter ΠΙ, On Faith, Man being wholly dependent upon God, as upon his Creator and Lord ... we are bound to yield to God, by faith in his revelation, the full obedience of our intelligence and will. And the Catholic Church teaches that this faith, which is a supernatural virtue, whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things which he has revealed are true. . . because of the authority of God himself... But though the assent of faith is by no means a blind action of the mind, still no man can assent to the Gospel teaching, as is necessary to obtain salvation, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit who gives to all men sweetness in assenting to and believing in the truth. Wherefore faith itself, even when it does not work by charity, is in itself a gift of God, and the act of faith is a work appertaining to salvation, by which man yields voluntary obedience to God himself, by assenting to and cooperating with his grace, which he is able to resist."

This is certainly not Reformation theology, and some of its phrases clearly contradict the teaching of Scripture. Nevertheless it may appear that Calvin did not correctly anticipate the Tridentine Symbol when he gave the Romish definition of faith as "a mere assent which every despiser of God may receive as true whatever is contained in the Scripture."

In addition to the fact that Calvin wrote before the Council of Trent assembled, and finished writing before it concluded, misunderstandings, especially on our part today, can arise because of changes in the meanings of words over four centuries. Calvin says "the assent which we give to the Divine word ... is from the heart rather than the head, and from the affections rather than the understanding." Since the Scripture never contrasts the head and the heart, but frequently contrasts the heart and the lips, one ought to suppose that by head Calvin meant the understanding and by heart the will. Nor is "the obedience of faith," which he quotes in the very next sentence, an "affection," but a volition. Obedience is always voluntary. A few lines below Calvin speaks more clearly: "It is an absurdity to say, that faith is formed by the addition of a pious affection to the assent of the mind, whereas even this assent consists in a pious affection, and is so described in the Scriptures" (ΠΙ ii 8).

If much that Calvin says exposes the errors of Rome, these last words should warn evangelicals not to belittle assent, 'mere' assent of the mind, for this voluntary acceptance of the truth is itself a pious action (if not an 'affection').

The Larger Catechism (Question 72) will serve as a conclusion for this historical digression.

"Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit and word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation."

Unfortunately there is one phase in this answer that seems to deviate from Calvin, and for which the proof text follows an inaccuracy in the King James translation. Not to extend this subsection unduly, the student may study the exegesis of Ephesians 1:13, in Hodge and other commentators. Though it

differs somewhat from Hodge, the student may consider this translation: "In whom also you received an inheritance, having heard the word of truth, i.e., the gospel of your salvation, in [or by] which [neuter] also having believed, you were sealed. ..."

6. Psychology

Though the Larger Catechism does not address itself directly to the psychological analysis of faith or belief) this problem is one that has merited the attention, not only of Christian theologians, but also of secular philosophers. These secularists, even when they are not so successful as the theologians, have one advantage; to wit, their task is simpler because they do not consider religious complications. Many theological discussions fall into confusion because elements necessary to saving faith are assigned to any belief whatever. Here one must first try to analyze belief as such, and then characterize those beliefs, or that belief, which justifies.

The most usual evangelical analysis of belief separates it into three parts: notitia. assensus. and fiducia. or understanding, assent, and trust. Perhaps even theologians who use this analysis might omit fiducia, if they confined themselves to belief as such; for in a colloquial manner a person who believes that Columbus discovered America in 1492, or in 1374, is not taken as an example of trust. Yet is he not actually an example of confidence?

Thomas Manton in his Commentary on James expresses the usual evangelical view quite well; and he distinguished, well or poorly, between saving faith and other faiths. The passage is too long to quote, so a condensation, sometimes verbatim, sometimes not, must suffice.

Quoting James 2:19 about the devils Manton remarks that the faith here is a "bare speculation" and cannot possibly save anyone.

That this faith cannot save is very true. It is no more than a belief in monotheism. This the Moslems possess. But however it may be with Moslems, it seems incorrect to call the faith of devils a bare "speculation." This word often is used to refer to some proposition that is so unverifiable as to be more likely false than true. Granted, Manton also calls it a knowledge; and this is better, because on this point, if on nothing else, the devils believe the truth.

He continues: "Thou believest; that is, assentest to this truth."- Belief therefore is an act of assent to the truth. Yet Manton adds, believing is the "lowest act of faith.” In view of the Scriptural commands to believe, this sounds very strange.

Is there than a higher act of faith? And if so, is it higher because it has a more detailed object, i.e. a greater number of propositions? But in this case it would still be an ordinary act of believing. Or is it higher because some element beyond the act of believing is present?

Manton continues with the object of this belief. "There is one God. He instanceth in this proposition, though he doth limit the matter only to this." This is a now rare usage of the verb, not noun, to instance. It means, to give an instance; the proposition, 'there is one God,' is therefore an instance or specification of what the man believes. Manton suggests that the man believes or assents to "other articles of religion." This is doubtless true, for nearly everyone who believes in any sort of God believes something else about him beyond bare existence. That the man has an extensive Jewish or Christian theology, however, is not clear.

"Thou doest well", quotes Manton; "it [the scriptural phrase] is an approbation of such assen:,so far as it is good and not rested in."

Again Manton has described the act as voluntary assent. Naturally, all assent must be voluntary. But what also needs to be noted here are the words "rested in." When we say we rest in, or should not rest in, this or that, do we mean that in addition to notitia and assensus there is some other psychological element in saving faith called "resting"? Or does it mean that saving faith, rather than being psychologically different, must be an assent to other propositions in addition to monotheism? The latter seems to be the case, whether or not Manton meant it so. We should not -rest in," i.e. be satisfied with the single proposition, 'There is but one God.' This proposition even the devils accept. But for salvation men must not only accept the monotheistic proposition, but as well other propositions relating to the Atonement.

On the next page Manton notes that the devils assent to this one truth and to other truths revealed in the word, even to "many truths in the Scriptures" (on the following page). But how much of the Bible the devils believe, justification by faith perhaps, is a question that we in our ignorance of satanic psychology cannot answer. Manton apparently wants to maximize the devils' orthodoxy.

"Bare assent", says Manton, "to the articles of religion doth not infer true faith. True faith uniteth to Christ, it is conversant about his person." Two factors seem to be confused in Manton's mind: the psychology and the propositions. Does this quotation mean that saving faith, in addition to belief in monotheism, must also include the Chalcedonian Christology? Certainly an assent to Chalcedon, however "bare," is "conversant about his person." Or does Manton's statement mean that the devils themselves subscribe to Chalcedon, and that "conversant" is a psychological element in addition to assent? It Would seem so because otherwise no contrast could be made between "assent to the articles of religion" and "conversant about his person."

Faith "is not only assensus axiomati. an assent to a Gospel maxim or proposition; you are not justified by that, but by being one with Christ. It was the mistake of the former age to make the promise, rather than the person of Christ, to be the formal object of faith."

The mention of the person of Christ is pious language. Similar expressions are common today. One slogan is, "No creed but Christ." Another expression, with variations from person to person, is, Faith is not belief in a proposition, but trust in a person.[3]

Though this may sound very pious, it is nonetheless destructive of Christianity. Back in the twenties, before the Methodist Church became totally apostate, a liberal in their General Conference opposed theological precision by some phrase centering on Christ, such as, Christ is all we need. A certain pastor, a remnant of the evangelical wing of the church, had the courage to take the floor and ask the pointed question, "which Christ?"

The name Jesus Christ, at least since 1835 in Strauss' Leben Jesu, has been applied to several alleged persons. Strauss initiated the "Life of Jesus Movement." It ran through Ernest Renan to Albert Schweitzer.[4] But the persons described are nothing like the person described in the Creed of Chalcedon, nor, for that matter, are they alike amongst themselves. It is necessary therefore to ask, which Christ, or, whose Christ? The Christian or Biblical answer is the Creed of Chalcedon. A person can be identified only by a set of propositions.

This is what Manton refers to as “the mistake of the former age.” Thomas Manton was a Puritan of the seventeenth century, and when he speaks of "the former age," he is not referring to apostate Romanism, but to the Reformers themselves. Hence he is a witness that they defined faith as an assent to the promise of the Gospel. By the same token, he wishes to introduce some other element into faith in addition to this act of will. What is it? He answers, "There is not only assent in faith, but

consent[5]: not only an assent to the truth of the word, but a consent to take Christ. ... True believing is not an act of the understanding only, but a work of all the heart."

A careful study of these words, ,and of the complete context in Manton, plus a comparison with the Scripture, should conclude that Manton is confused. The first point is that the word consent receives no explanation. It makes a pleasant alliteration with assent, but literary style is no substitute for analysis. Is "consent" an act of will? Ordinary language would make it seem so; but if so, how is it different from assent? If "consent" is not voluntary, and if it cannot be an act of the understanding either, what sort of mental state is it? Then too, when he says that "true believing is not an act of the understanding only, but a work of all the heart," he is not accurately confronting "the former age." The former a~e never said that true believing, or false believing either, is an act of the understanding only. The former age and much of the Eater ages too specify assent in addition to understanding. They make this specification with the deliberate aim of not restricting belief to understanding alone. One can understand and lecture on the philosophy of Spinoza; but this does not mean that the lecturer assents to it. Belief is the act of assenting to something understood. But understanding alone is not belief in what is understood.

Manton himself acknowledges, "I confess some expressions of Scripture seem to lay much upon assent, as I John 4:2 and 5:1; I Cor. 12: 3; Matt 16: 17; but these places [Manton strangely says] do either show that assents, where they are serious and upon full conviction, come from some special revelation; or else, if they propound them as evidences of grace, we must distinguish times."

Now, Matt. 16:17 is not clearly a special revelation. It can well be, and more probably is, an illumination such as God gives to every believer. Nor is I Cor. 12:3 a special revelation: it refers to all men—it is a completely general statement—and cannot apply only to the few recipients of special revelation. Unless therefore one wishes to be very dogmatic about Peter in Matthew, all of these verses, in Manton's opinion, are to be set aside, are to be explained away, by "distinguishing the times.” True enough, God administered the covenant in the Old Testament in a manner different from his administration of the New. Then too, but the differences are much less important, the apostolic age, and the following two centuries, faced difficulties that do not so directly trouble us now·. But such historical differences are entirely irrelevant to the present discussion. Whether the propositions and promises of the Old Testament were more vague and less specific than those in the New, and whether the truths of the Gospel seemed more "contrary to the ordinary and received principles of reason" there than now [which is much to be doubted), all this is irrelevant because the mental act of believing is the same in every age and every place. Manton's account of faith is therefore confused, and it has led him to set aside some instructive New Testament material.

The crux of the difficulty with the popular analysis of faith into notitia (understanding), assensus (assent), and fiducia (trust), is that fiducia comes from the same root as fides (faith).[6] Hence this popular analysis reduces to the obviously absurd definition that faith consists of understanding, assent, and faith. Something better than this tautology must be found.

7. John Owen

If now Thomas Manton has deserved mention, all the more so does his younger and greater contemporary, John Owen, who, among other things, wrote a four thousand page commentary on Hebrews. Here his smaller four hundred and fifty page book on Justification bv Faith compels our attention. The page numbers are those of the Sovereign Grace edition of 1959.

On page 70, Oven begins an examination of the nature of faith. But the reader must take care. The examination is introduced thus: "Of the nature of faith in general, of the especial nature of justifying

faith, of its characteristical distinctions from that which is called faith but is not justifying. ..."

No objection can be made to such an examination; but the student should take care to understand what the nature of faith is in general. Justifying faith is a species of faith, and if one does not know what faith in general is, one cannot know' what the faith is that justifies. Does Owen keep this distinction clear?

Unfortunately he does not make it sufficiently clear to us. In fact he says, "The distinctions that we usually made concerning faith. . . I shall wholly pretermit: not only as obvious and known, but as not belonging to our present argument." Owen seems to have had an optimistic view of his generation." But even if these distinctions were as obvious and well known then as he says, they are not so today. But even "pretermitting" much, Owen cannot escape giving some indication of what the act of believing is.

His very next paragraph speaks of a non-justifying "historical faith." It is not because this faith has much to do with history that it is called historical. In addition to events to history, this faith believes the promises of the Gospel. "But it is so called from the nature of the assent rital. his) wherein it doth consist." Apparently then there are two kinds of assent. What this difference specifically is, Owen does not say. He indeed says the difference does not lie in the object of the faith, the proposition believed, but in the nature, or psychological characteristics of this particular type of assent. We would like to know what this different psychology is.

Owen is quite clear that "all faith is an assent upon testimony" (p. 72)'. "Divine faith is an assent upon a divine testimony." Obviously divine testimony is different from human testimony; and as the great Puritan said, the effects of some beliefs differ vastly from the effects of other beliefs. But differences in effects as well as in objects are irrelevant to the question whether there are species of believing. It is to be feared that some notion of-species of beliefs' has been confused with 'species of believing.' Nor is a reference to a temporary faith as opposed to a permanent faith any more relevant. In fact Berkhof fop, cit, p.501) who follows Owen, adds that temporary faith may last all through one's life, that it is not necessarily hypocritical and that it includes a stirring of the conscience. No wonder he remarks that ’’Great difficulty may be experienced in attempting to distinguish it from saving faith,." This view also bears on the doctrine of assurance. Yet Owen says, "Justifying faith is not a higher, or the highest degree of this faith, but is of another kind or nature." Yet all his evidence shows not a different type of believing, but a different object of belief. He refers to: (1) different causes, (2) different objects of a previous or preparatory belief, and (3) different objects of faith (p. 80), though he had previously ruled out objects as the difference.

As Owen's account continues, the confusion grows worse. Not only does he misunderstand the Roman position, describing their faith as an assent that does not produce obedience: but also he is dissatisfied with "such a firm assent as produceth obedience unto all divine commands" (p. 801). For Owen, faith seems to have three main characteristics, the third of which has eight subdivisions.

The first of these is assent to the truth: "all divine faith is in general an assent unto the truth that is proposed unto us upon divine testimony." The second point is rather a reassertion of the first. The only difference seems to be that the first refers to some limited number of truths a given individual happens to know, while the second includes "all divine revelation." Now, it is not likely that a new Christian, recently justified, understands and assents to every proposition in the Bible. After a life-time of study a learned theologian could hardly know so much. But, one may say, even the new Christian assents to Biblical infallibility. Quite so, that is a single proposition. Does he then have implicit faith in all the other Biblical propositions? On the contrary, Evangelicalism excludes the Romish doctrine of implicit faith. Hence justification cannot depend on our assent to all revealed

truth. Justifying faith must be an assent to some truths, not all. Even Owen himself, after having said "all divine revelation," restricts justifying faith to some truths only. But in addition to whatever, all or some, is believed, Owen insists that justifying faith must include certain causes and adjuncts.

His third paragraph begins with an explicit denial that faith is an assent, no matter how firm and steadfast, no matter how perfect an obedience it produces. Nor does it equally respect all divine revelation, but only some. And then follow eight points, mainly negative.

(1) Assent is not an act of the understanding only. Since, however, no one ever said it was, but all at least include it, one may takE.~ Owen's first subpoint merely as an attempt to be complete.

(2) "All divine truth is not equally the object of this assent." If it were, the statement that Judas was a traitor would as much effect our justification as that Christ died for our sins.

(3) Justifying faith cannot exist without a previous work of the law. This may be true, though the sudden conversion of Saul might make the word previous a logical rather than a temporal succession. In any case, and no matter how true, this does not contribute to an analysis of the act of believing.

(4) Point four is very confused, and point (5) asserts, what is at best doubtful, that the devils in James assent to everything in the Bible. Point (6) asserts that hope and trust are not contained in a "mere" assent to the truth, "but they - hope and trust - require mental actions other than what are peculiar to the understanding only." But is not Owen off the track? Of course hope and trust require the volition of assent as well as an understanding of the promise or hope.

Point (7) strays completely away from Scripture and depends entirely on introspective experience. Thus his objection to assent here is given solely on his own authority, rather than upon the authority of Scripture.

(8) Point 8, however, is indubitable because tautological. "That faith alone is justifying which hath justification actually accompanying it. . .. To suppose a man to have justifying faith and not to be justified., is to suppose a contradiction." Of course it is; but for that very reason it is a fallacy to conclude "Wherefore it is sufficiently evident that there is somewhat more required unto justifying faith than a real assent unto all divine revelations."

Owen continues for several difficult pages. He objects to identifying the object of faith with Christ's promise of forgiveness. Instead he maintains that Christ himself is the object of justifying faith. Although this sounds very pious, Owen and others might not have said this, if instead of the term faith they had used the Scriptural word believe. When we believe a man, we believe what he says. Nor does it help Owen's view to insist on the Scriptural phrase, believe in Christ, as something essentially different from believing Christ. As we said before, believing in a man may indicate a willingness to believe what he will say in the future as well as what he has said in the past. But belief must always have a proposition as its proper object, and therefore must be assent. Owen, let it be repeated for the sake of clarity, does not deny that assent must always somehow be included in faith. Speaking of the promises of forgiveness he says, "It cannot be but that in the actings of justifying faith, there is a peculiar assent to them. Howbeit, this being only an act of the mind, neither the whole nature nor the whole work of faith can consist therein" (p. 87). Now it may well be said that the work or results of faith are several; but such results, such as the preaching of the gospel by an evangelist, are not justifying faith - they are works of righteousness, none of which justify; but if faith or believing itself is not an act of the mind, there remains no hope for finding it anywhere else. Dare we suggest it is the work of the fingers, lungs, or stomach?

All the foregoing comes from Owen's chapter on the causes and object of justifying faith; and this may to a certain extent excuse the confusion. The following chapter is the nature of'Justifying faith; and it would seem better to have described what belief is before specifying the object of particular beliefs.

At the beginning he remarks that the faith he is discussing is a sincere faith. So be it. Assent is always sincere. No matter what a person believes, he believes it sincerely. A person does not always sincerely state what he believes. He may obscure or even deny his beliefs. But assent to a proposition is ipso facto sincere.

Owen then gives negative as well as positive examples. "The unbelief of the Pharisees ... is called the 'rejecting of the counsel of God'... most of those who rejected the Gospel by their unbelief, did it under the notion, that the wav of salvation and blessedness proposed therein was not a way answering divine goodness ..." (p. 94-95). Surely this quotation is a statement of truth; but it confutes much that Owen has said, for whereas the disciples assented to Christ's statements when they understood them, the Pharisees assented to or believed contradictory propositions. Therefore, one must reject what Owen says a few' lines below; to wit, "unbelievers ... may give an assent unto the truth of it [the gospel], so far as it is a mere act of the mind." This is logical nonsense, psychological impossibility, and theological confusion. His only defense here, just a few lines below, is that he is no longer talking about sincere faith but only insincere faith.

However severe this criticism of Owen may seem, let not the student suppose that Owen is to be despised. He is one of the greatest Puritans, and we should be extremely happy if we could make as few mistakes as they did. Furthermore, for all the confusion on this point, Owen nonetheless seems to acknowledge that believing is voluntary assent to an understood proposition. Put aside questions as to the object or objects believed, recognize that phrases not containing the words voluntary or assent may nonetheless have the same meaning, and realize that the act of belief is psychologically the same no matter do what is believed, and it is hard to find a phrase descriptive of belief better than voluntary assent.

Thus in his great commentary on Hebrews, at chapter eleven, verse 8, Owen says, '"By faith we understand,' that is, by faith we assent unto the divine revelation. ... we come not only to assent unto it as true, but to have a due comprehension of it [creation] in its cause, so as that we may be said to understand it... Those who firmly assent unto divine revelation, do understand the creation of the world, as to its truth, its season, its manner, and end." Perhaps Owen is too optimistic as to the extent of our understanding; but any rate faith or belief is a volitional assent to an understood proposition.

Since chapter six on The Atonement quoted the Lutheran theologian John Theodore Mueller and disagreed with him, it may be interesting briefly to note what he says about the elements of faith. On page 325 he uses the common three-fold division of knowledge, assent, and confidence. But he seems-and this puzzles a reader-to restrict knowledge and assent to uninterpreted historical events. Surely he cannot have meant this, for obviously a person can believe a doctrine as well as an historical event. Some modification, fortunately, occurs on the next page, where he says, "However, if the term notitia is understood in the sense of true spiritual knowledge of Christ... and the term assensus is conceived as spiritual assent to the promises of the Gospel ... then both of these terms include the fiducia cordis."

Even on the puzzling page he said, "Faith which justifies is not merely a knowledge of history ... but it is assent to the promise of God ...” And two pages earlier (p. 323) he asserted, "Saving faith is always fides actualis (not the Romish implicit faith), or the apprehension of the divine promise by an act of the intellect and will."

If a Reformed theologian begs to differ with the Lutheran on some very important points, he may still be gratified here. Some supporting verses are now appropriate. Promises in the Bible, all of which require assent, are too numerous to quote; but the following touch on knowledge.

John 17:3 This is life eternal, that they might know thee . . .

II Cor. 4:6 ... hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Phil. 3:8 I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

I John 5: 1, 5 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is bom of God ... Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (Note the emphasis on knowledge in verses 18, 19, 20).

So much then for defining faith as volitional assent to an understood proposition. But which of all possible propositions is the object of justifying faith?

8. The Object

If the Romish doctrine of implicit faith be rejected, and if it is impossible, at least in any five minute period, to believe every declarative sentence in the Bible, it is natural to ask, Which of all these propositions is the one by whose means a sinner is justified?

This question obviously issues from the wording of some of Owen's paragraphs. It is not irrelevant to the preceding discussion. But it is a question no one can answer. Years after Athanasius wrote the Nicene Creed a so-called Athanasian Creed was formulated that pronounced damnation on everyone who did not believe its numerous propositions on the Trinity. The propositions themselves are on the whole very good; but less than one percent of the Christian community can recite them from memory. Possibly not more than twenty-five percent have even heard them. No Calvinist would assert that salvation requires us to believe them explicitly. On the opposite end of the scale from those who would insist on the wording of the Athanasian Creed, some independent churches write their own creed of five or six articles with fewer words than this one article on the Trinity. But are these few the irreducible minimum for salvation? The question above asks for precisely those beliefs which are necessary for justification.

Consider the case of Justin Martyr, one of the earliest heroes of the faith. Did he really have saving faith? But he was a Christian, was he not? He died for the name of our Lord and Savior. He must have been regenerated and justified, must he not? But it is doubtful that any strong Lutheran or Calvinistic church today would have admitted him to membership. Quite possible the strife-tom church in Corinth, troubled with fornication, law-suits, and idol worship-its members do not seem to have denied Christ's resurrection, but only the resurrection of believers-had a better theology than his. But to what propositions did he assent that he might be justified?

Now, Justin Martyr was not a moron. Morons have doubtless been regenerated and justified. Some members of extremely primitive tribes also, with their minds incredibly confused. What propositions did they believe? Is there any passage in Scripture that identifies, in a scale of decreasing knowledge, the very minimum by which someone can still be justified?

But even if a minimum of propositions could be listed, below which number justification were impossible, it would still be the wrong question with a perverted outlook. The Church is

not commanded, encouraged, nor even permitted to be satisfied with a barest minimum of theology. The command requires the maximum possible:

Matt. 28:19,20 Teach all nations ... instructing them to observe all whatever I commanded you.

There seems to be no other conclusion but that God justifies sinners by means of many combinations of propositions believed. For which reason a minister should not confine himself to topics popularly thought to be "evangelistic," but should preach the whole counsel of God, trusting that God will give someone the gift of faith through sermons on the Trinity, eschatology, or the doctrine of immediate imputation.

Part III - Justification.

The two basic and essential principles of the Protestant Reformation, in scholastic terms called the formal principle and the material principle, are (1) the Scripture alone, its inerrancy as the very word of God, to which we must add nothing and from which we must subtract nothing; and (2) Faith alone, the doctrine of justification by faith without any admixture of human works or merit. These two are the chief and indispensable parts of the defini tion of the term evangelical. Deny the inerrancy and logically no Christianity is left at all. Deny the two alone and we have Romanism.

The opponents of evangelical Christianity — there is no Christianity that is not evangelical — attack on both fronts. The first chapter of the present volume examined the attack against the Bible. This chapter will mention the less well-known attack on the doctrine of justification and then proceed to expound the same.

Luther in particular and virtually the entire Protestant movement emphasized justification by faith alone. On the corner stones of many Lutheran churches one can read the name Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is no exaggeration to say that justification by faith alone was the driving impetus of the Reformation. Even the later Arminians tried not to deny it.

However, today the ecumenical movement seeks reconciliation with Rome. This is true, not only of the Anglicans, but even of several Lutheran bodies. Incredible as it may seem, a contingent of Lutheran theologians, meeting at Wartburg (what memories the name Wartburg stimulates!) Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, made plans to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in a joint conference with the Roman Catholics. The name Reformation Sunday, it is planned, will become Reconciliation Sunday. Doesn't anybody have an ink-well to throw at the devil? The arguments for rapprochement are similar and even verbally identical to those used in the sixteenth century. Because of this Lutheran development, because of the liberal rejection of all Christian doctrines, and because even the early Arminians, perhaps unwittingly, undermined the doctrine of justification, this essential element of Christianity needs special emphasis today.

1. Definitions

The plan now is to give a brief statement as to what Romanists and Arminians consider the essence of justification and then to state the Calvinist definition.

Both Sola Scriptura and Sola Fide are contrary to Romanism. As explained in an early chapter, Romanism adds tradition and papal infallibility to the Scripture- witness its rosaries and crucifixes, its sacraments and its priesthood, its idolatry and Mariolatry. It also lacks the doctrine of justification by faith alone. To do justice to the Romish doctrine of justification, the simple contrast between justification by faith and justification by works is not quite accurate. The underlying defect in Romanism at this point is rather the lack of any doctrine of justification.

One should say, the lack of any Biblical concept of justification. What the Romanists call justification most assuredly depends partly on works; but what they call justification is not what the Bible means by the term. Their use of the term is essentially the equivalent of sanctification. Of course this requires good works. But what is lacking in Romanism is the concept of a divine judicial pronouncement of acquittal, plus some other elements yet to be enumerated.

It is therefore essential and elementary to define the term justification; i.e. to state what the word means in the Bible, particularly the New Testament. For this purpose, instances of its use are now quoted.

Luke 7:29 The publicans justified God.

Luke 7:35 Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Rom. 3:4 That thou [God] mightest be justified ... and mightest have the victory when thou art judged.

Rom. 3:20 By works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Rorn. 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace.

Rom. 3:26 That he might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Rom. 3:28 A man is justified by faith apart from works of law.

Rorn. 5:1,9 Being justified by faith ... justified by his blood.

Some of these verses and many others in addition speak of justification by faith alone apart from good works. This is the substance of the doctrine. But at this point the preliminary

question is, What does the word justification mean? This may appear as 'mere semantics' to some: cannot anyone define his technical terms as he pleases? Yes, he can; but our aim is to determine how it pleased the Holy Spirit to define this term. We want to know what the Bible teaches: not what some non-biblical religion teaches. Definition in any case is no trivial matter. The more important a subject is, the more precisely must its terms be defined.

The Liddell and Scott lexicon lists these classica usages: to set right (from a fragment of Pindar); proved or tested (passive participle); hold or deem right...; pronounce judgment: do a man right, chastise, pass sentence on; pronounce or treat as righteous, vindicate. Arndt and Gingrich, briefly, have: to do justice to someone, vindicate, acquit, make free from (cf. Acts 13:38) and, to quote, "In I Corinthians 6:11 edikaiothete means you have become pure." The last assertion, however, is more than doubtful: The context by no means requires a meaning not found elsewhere in the New Testament, as many commentaries will show.

Lexicons get their information from the Greek texts themselves. We can begin this work by examining the list of verses just quoted. The main question is, Does justify mean to make a man just, or to declare that he is (already) just.

It is incredible that even Romanists should have missed the meaning. The first verse quoted says, "The publicans justified God." How can anyone think that the publicans made God just? Next, the metaphorical phrase, "Wisdom is justified of all her children," obviously means that the results of wisdom demonstrate the goodness of wisdom. Wisdom did not wait to become good until her children made her so. The third verse again speaks of God's being justified. God is judged, and

pronounced just. God is not made just; he is pronounced or acknowledged to be just. The fourth verse, "By the works of the law no flesh shall be justified," supports the same conclusion because the works of the law are essential to sanctification. Hence justification, which excludes works, is not any part of the process of becoming subjectively righteous. This verse and the remainder in the list emphasize another aspect of the doctrine of justification, but they are also instances of the same usage. The conclusion therefore is: The verb to justify means to acknowledge someone as just or righteous, to vindicate or to acquit him of accusations. It does not refer to any moral change by which a previously unjust person is made subjectively good. On the contrary, it is a judicial pronouncement, which in itself does not alter the character of the accused in any way.

The definition, however, is not the full doctrine. It merely tells us what the Bible means by the word.

2. An Act

The whole doctrine, succinctly stated in the Shorter Catechism, is "Justification is an act of God's free grace, whereby he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. " The subheads will now follow this outline.

Justification is an act of God's free grace. This proposition is most directly derived from the meaning of the main term. The Shorter Catechism has another question: "What is Sanctification;" to which the answer in part is, "Sanctification is a work of God's free grace. . . ." The contrast between act and work is deliberate, as are all the words of the Catechism. They were meant to distinguish between an instantaneous pronouncement and a life-long process.

As alluded to earlier, this distinction must be kept in mind in opposition to Romanism. The Roman Catholics have no concept of a judicial acquittal. For them, justification is a long process of moral improvement. But in favor of the term act in the Catechism, the meaning of the Greek verb is decisive. When the publicans justified God, they did not initiate a long, drawn out process of moral purification. They made a judgment. - It was a momentary act.

Although the publicans were not official, legal judges, God is; with the result that one may properly call his act of acquittal forensic. It is the judicial act of a competent judge in absolving an accused person from the penalty of the law. That this is a forensic act is indicated by some other verses now to be quoted.

Rom. 5: 16 For the judgment was from one to condemnation, but the free gift was from many trespasses to justification.

Rom. 8:33 Who shall bring any accusation against God's elect? God is the justifier. Who is the condemner?

It is obvious that condemnation is not a moral change for the worse in the condemned man. When a judge condemns a man for a felony, he does not make him a lawbreaker. The judge declares that he has already broken the law. The judge declares that he is a criminal and is guilty as charged. But this declaration is not a moral process in the prisoner. Since now, in these both verses, justification and condemnation are antithetical, the one is as much objective and forensic as the other, and as little a moral process.

3. Pardon

The previous chapter, under the subhead of Expiation, discussed the cancellation of sin by the work of Christ. Here the concern is the application of redemption to believers, particularly in connection with justification. The former is the prerequisite of the latter.

Now, essential as it is, in view of Romanism, to know that justification is a forensic judgment of acquittal, more/a good deal more, must be said concerning its effect on the justified sinner. This eventually includes, as an inevitable consequence, the whole process of sanctification, but at the moment we are concerned with what occurs at the time of justification. Several things occur with or are included in justification. The first, at least in the order the Catechism gives, is pardon of sin. As a matter of fact, the English word pardon occurs rarely in the King James Bible. It seems strange that the Catechism chose it. But though the word is rare, the idea is frequent. It is expressed in terms of forgiveness, remission, purging away, washing, cleansing, and the like. The list is:

Isa. 40:2 Her iniquity is pardoned.

John 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted.

Acts 2:38 Repent... for the remission of sins.

Acts 13:39 By him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

I Cor. 6:11 But ye are washed ... sanctified . . . justified.

James 5:15 It shall be forgiven him.

I John 1:9 He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

That God is a God of mercy, and that "there is forgiveness with thee" (Psa. 103:4) is not something a Bible student would likely doubt. He might suggest, however, that the verses quoted do not clearly place pardon in the act of justification. In reply, one might say that Acts 13:39 connects justification and belief, and that this is connected with freedom from the law of Moses, i.e. freedom from its penalty, and we may infer that freedom from penalty is the equivalent of forgiveness.

I Cor. 6:11 makes a clearer connection between justification and pardon or washing. Washing surely indicates some sort of escape from sin; and for all its figurative style it is still a rather momentary than an incessant life-long process, like sanctification. In fact, it is more than doubtful that "you were sanctified" (aorist tense) refers to the process of sanctification. Rather, as the noun in I Cor. 7:14, it refers to being set apart or dedicated to God. Thus, a momentary act is indicated. With this understanding, the verse definitely connects pardon or washing with justification. But it is not so much these disjointed verses that so strongly connect forgiveness with justification, as it is the pervasive meaning of the term itself as already s explained. When a judge pronounces acquittal, the accused is discharged from all obligation to pay the penalty.

That John Wesley and the Arminians do not regard justification as a judicial act of acquittal is evident from Sermon V in Sermons on Several Occasions (1746). "Least of all does justification imply that God is deceived in those whom he justifies, that he thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are." Before continuing the quotation one may note that this last phrase denies that Christ's righteousness can be accounted to sinners. Of course God is not deceived into thinking that his saints are subjectively and perfectly sinless; but the Scripture surely declares that righteousness is imputed to us and that justification is the contradictory of condemnation. Now, the quotation continues, “

... Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy because another is so. He can no more confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham." Again, if this were so, then neither could God "confound" me with Adam, and therefore I did not die "in Adam." Clearly an error in one place reappears often throughout any system of theology; and naturally so, because a system is as logically consistent as its author can make it.

Wesley thus restricts the meaning of justification to pardon. "The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon." To be sure, he adds that the Father pardons us "for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son;" but why the Father needs propitiation in order to pardon can hardly be made clear on Wesley's premises. Paul gives the why. That God mav be just and the justifier" etc. The Calvinist of course does not deny that God pardons our sins, but he finds in Scripture more than pardon in the doctrine of justification.

The difficulty, however, is not yet entirely dissolved. Arminians are likely to contend that acquittal and pardon are incompatible. If a man is pronounced innocent, he cannot be pardoned, since if innocent he has no crime that needs pardon; but if he is pardoned, then he cannot be acquitted, for pardon is based on his having committed a crime and thus his being ineligible for acquittal.

This difficulty would be serious if the conditions of the divine judgment seat were limited to the conditions of a human court. When in human affairs a Governor of a State or the President pardons a person who has broken the law, it is indeed an act of mercy, but it is not an act of justice. Justice is simply set aside. There are often good reasons for this; and in any case that is the most a merciful executive can do.

But God, if we may so speak, faces a problem that no human judge can meet. The pertinent verse is found in one of the most important paragraphs in the whole Bible. It would be difficult to find any passage of comparable length that so succinctly and completely presents the Gospel in its entirety. Of these half dozen verses, the quotation is:

Rom. 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The difference between a human court and the divine assize is that the former does not maintain strict justice. The "problem" God faces was howto be just, completely just and righteous, and at the same time to justify the ungodly. Its verse quoted and its predecessor speak of God exhibiting his righteousness. As a matter of fact, there is no mention of pardon at all in these half dozen verses. Were salvation merely a matter of pardon, God could simply forget justice and the law and let the guilty sinner go free. Pardon, ordinary pardon, requires no atonement. God's salvation does. This disposes of the Arminian objection.

4. The Ground of Justification

The question here to be answered is, On “what ground, or for what reason goes God justify a sinner? The answer to this question also shows how God can himself be just and also the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus.

Since all men are sinners, totally depraved and utterly unable to do any spiritual good, it is obvious that God cannot acquit them on the basis of their conduct. Even if someone at age nineteen could from that day forth perfectly keep the law of God, he could not be acquitted on such a basis, for he had already broken the law· before he became nineteen. It is no defense against a charge of murder, that one has now given up his previous habit of murdering people.

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that, whatever other grounds or reasons God may have, so far as the sinner himself is concerned, the benefit is conferred upon him by God's free grace. The following passages exclude all human works and assert unmerited favor.

Rom. 3:20,24 By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. ... being justified freely by his grace . . . (cf. 27-28)

Rom. 4:4,5 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned by grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Ga 1. 2: 16 .... not justified by the works of the law, ... because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, (cf. 3: 11).

Eph. 2:8 By grace are ye saved.

But while the theme of grace excludes all human merit, it does not specify the ground or reason for which God extends his justifying grace to anyone. To acquit is to pronounce innocent, righteous, acceptable in God's court. Now, if God, who does not lie, pronounces a sinner righteous, what is such righteousness and where does it come from? How can God be both just and justifier?

The Shorter Catechism, whose order this section somewhat follows, said, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone." Thus this document, written for the instruction of children, asserts that the ground of justi fir'lation is the righteousness of Christ.

Something has already been said about the active obedience of Christ. Had he not been altogether innocent and perfectly righteous, had he offended in one point, had he sinned, he would himself have deserved his punishment, which then could not have availed for anyone else. This is all part of the doctrine of the vicarious, propitiatory atonement. But now that he did not suffer for himself, he paid our penalty and God imputes his righteousness to us. On the ground of Christ's righteousness, therefore, as imputed to us, God is both just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus. The present subhead therefore merges into the next.

5. Imputation and Federal Headship

That Christ's death was a vicarious sacrifice, that he paid our penalty, that he was our substitute is the equivalent of asserting his federal headship. He was our representative, and what he did in this capacity is reckoned or imputed to us. Adam was also our representative or federal head, and what he did in such capacity had also been imputed to us. A page or so further on it will be necessary to discuss Romans 5:12-19. At that point one should note, what seems strange to us today, that Paul argues for the federal headship of Christ on the basis of Adam's position; whereas we, with our modern mind-set, must defend Adam's headship on the basis of Christ's position.

First of all, and aside from Romans 5:12-19, is a selection of verses that mention imputation. These will illustrate the usage and meaning of the term, and then the doctrinal discussion can follow.

Rom. 4:3-8 Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness, (cf. James 2:23, imputed! ... the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

... his faith is counted for righteousness . . . unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works . . . Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

II Cor. 5:19 God was in Christ.... not imputing their trespasses unto them. II Tim. 4:16 Let it not be imputed to them.

Philemon 18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.

As various translations show, impute (logizo) means to reckon or to put to one's account. The verses from Romans 4 say that God counted something as righteousness for Abraham; this something was a gift of grace to Abraham; it was not a debt that God owed him. Because of this gift sin was not, or no longer, counted. Now, what was it that God imputed to Abraham for righteousness? If one should restrict his reading to just one or two verses in Romans four, or to James 2:23, it would seem that God accepted the subjective act of believing in place of actual righteousness. Belief then would be taken for the righteousness necessary for Abraham's acquittal. Does it not say, "His faith is counted for righteousness"? However, this seems to imply that God set aside the requirement of perfect obedience, disregarded the maintenance of justice, and pardoned Abraham on the basis of his belief in God's promise. Thus, Abraham's own act would be the ground of justification; and he could boast of his insight into spiritual affairs, an insight others did not have, for he was a better man than they. However, Romans 4:5 does not stand alone. It has both an immediate context and a wider context. The immediate context says two things: (1) Abraham had no ground for boasting; (2) verse six says that the something which was imputed was, not faith itself, but righteousness. The Arminian dependence on verse five, for the view being discussed is Arminianism, is plausible only so long as the context is ignored, not only the immediate context, but even more the passage in the preceding chapter. Note that after Paul includes the whole human race under sin, he summarizes the doctrines of the atonement and justification in 3:21-26. Here we have Christ's propitiation and God's justice. Now, if faith as the mental act of believing is sufficient for pardon, if not for acquittal, where is the need for an atonement at all? Must not the justice of God be maintained? If God knew that he was going to lower his standards after man sinned, why did he establish stricter standards in the garden of Eden? Well, then, after Paul in Romans 3:26 insists on divine justice, he uses Abraham as an outstanding example of justification. But having already described the work of Christ, he shortens his phraseology, expecting his readers to bear the preceding section in mind. This should be sufficient for Romans 4 and James 2. But there is a still wider context to support the conclusion that the basis of justification is Christ's merit, and not our act of believing. A very important part of this context is Romans 5:12-19. But since Arminianism has been mentioned, let us continue with it for a while, since this discussion too will help to clarify the subject matter.

First of all, let it be stated that we do not wish to misrepresent the Arminians any more than we wish to misrepresent the Romanists. Let it also be acknowledged that at least some Arminians repudiate the objections above stated relative to faith rather than Christ's righteousness as the basis for justification. Arminius himself (as quoted by Wiley) wrote, "Justification is a just and gracious act of God by which ... he absolves man from his sins. . . on account of Christ and his obedience and righteousness ... " Wesley defined justification as "that act of God the Father, whereby for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he sheweth forth his righteousness by the remission of the sins that are past."

Both of these quotations seem to rule out faith as the basis of justification; both mention Christ's propitiation, obedience, and righteousness. They might in some other respect be incomplete; they might restrict the effect of justification to pardon alone; but what they assert seems Scriptural.

More surprising to those who have criticize Arminianism is Article IX of the Twenty-Five Methodist Articles: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the sake of Christ."

This is taken from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, verbatim with the exception of the final clause. Perhaps that change is significant; it has to do with imputation; but at least it does not restrict justification to bare pardon.

Wiley himself, who gave these quotations, shows some vacillation. On page .382 he says, "Here it is evident that forgiveness and justification are synonymous terms, the one explanatory of the other, but with a shade of difference." However, on the next page he indicates considerably more than a "shade" of difference: "The justified sinner is accepted as righteous ...

It is thus distinguished from mere forgiveness." But he does not stay with this, because later (p. 395) he adds, "The sole ground of justification being faith in the blood of Christ... works of the law are immediately excluded." Here faith is the sole ground of justification: Christ's active obedience is ruled out. And further on the same page he continues, the word imputation "is never used in the sense of reckoning or accounting the actions of one person to have been performed by another. A man's sin or righteousness is imputed to him when he is actually the doer of the sinful or righteous act."

These verbatim quotations, and their contexts which any student can look up, are sufficient to show that without any misrepresentation Arminianism differs substantially from Calvinism. What follows is more than sufficient.

After the previous quotation Wiley continues by summarizing three theories of imputation. First is the "Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ." This is generally known as the Hyper-Calvinistic or Antinomian theory of Justification" (p. 396).

If now we do our best not to misrepresent Arminianism, we would be pleased if Arminians made a similar effort. Aside from the fact that Hvper-Calvinism is a pejorative term, usually left undefined, and recklessly asserted even of weak Calvinists, Wiley's subhead, "Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ" fits Hodge, Warfield, and the Westminster standards themselves (cf. Conf. XI, 1,2, Larger Catechism, 70,73). That this doctrine "is generally known as the ... Antinomian Theory of Justification" is ludicrously false and positively slanderous. What other creed of any other church places so much stress on the Ten Commandments? Have the Arminians ever read the Larger Catechism, Question 93: "The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto ..." If this be hypercalvinistic antinominanism, let us have much more of it.

Wiley has further objections . The Calvinistic position, he says, "overlooks and undervalues the subjective work of the Spirit in imputation of righteousness." But, to reply, justification is an objective judicial pronouncement; it is not a change in the sinner's subjectivity at all. Regeneration produces subjective effects, particularly faith) and sanctification inevitably follows justification. An alleged faith that results in no good works is not saving faith at all. But justification is a decision from the bench. The Arminian holds, says Wiley, that "the faith by which we are justified ... has in it the inherent power of righteousness." So it does, but not as Wiley thinks. The righteousness, an imperfect righteousness, that faith produces in the worst or best of sinners is not the perfect righteousness on the basis of which he is acquitted of all guilt.

Further incompetent objections to Calvinism follow. Wiley (p. 397) quotes from Wesley's Sermon on Justification. "God can no more confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham." Remarkable! As if God could not distinguish Christ from the person to whom he has imputed Christ's merit. Then again, beginning with a Calvinistic quotation, Wiley adds, "'He who claims for himself the righteousness of Christ presents himself to God, not in the habit of a righteous man, but in

glorious attire of the Divine Redeemer.' This attitude is not characteristic of the humility of the genuine Christian."

But even John Wesley translated Zinzendorf, “

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,

My beauty are, my glorious dress.”

This is precisely the point: we stand before God's throne, dressed in the righteousness of Christ alone.

Zinzendorf was not much of a Calvinist, so that perhaps Wesley had less qualms about translating him. But Horatio Bonar added:

"Thy righteousness, O Christ, Alone can cover me."

And Edward Mote sang:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness

Dressed in his righteousness alone Faultless to stand before thy throne.

All other ground is sinking sand."

To complete what Wiley would doubtless call this diatribe against Arminians, note that on page 400 he says, "it is faith itself, as a personal art of the believer, and not the object of that faith that is imputed for righteousness." This means that our subjective or psychological act of believing, is imputed or put to our account — and naturally so, for it is our own personal psychology - instead of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Hence we are acquitted, declared innocent, not because we are innocent, but because we believe. The Arminians may say and hope that this believing is not to be classed as a "good work"; but surely it is. It is such a good work that for them it produces regeneration; regeneration does not produce it. For to continue, Wiley writes, "Justification ... cancels guilt... [regeneration] renews the moral nature ... The two, however, are coincident in time, for they are accomplished in answer to the same act of faith" (p. 402; cf. pp. 416 ff). Surely this makes faith a work too good to be true.

The discussion now approaches a more expository form. The doctrine of the federal headship of Adam and immediate imputation of Adam's sin to all his natural posterity depends chiefly on the exegesis of Romans 5:12-19. It is doubtless a difficult passage; but there is one exceedingly clear point, and this clear point is the key to the main message. It is extremely clear that the passage draws a parallel between Adam in his relation to the race and Christ in his relation to the elect. Furthermore this basic thought sufficiently disposes of the main objection Berkouwer belabored. While various theologians bemoan the injustice of God if he imputes guilt apart from the individual's own personal act of sin, they all, perhaps with the exception of Pelagius, are quite satisfied to have God impute righteousness apart from the individual's own personal perfect obedience to the law. Consistency requires one or two positions: either there is no immediate imputation of guilt or righteousness, or there is immediate imputation of both. If what is called vicarious ethics is acceptable in the case of righteousness, no one can consistently object to vicarious ethics in the other case. And conversely, if one rejects the immediate imputation of sin as immoral, logic requires him to reject the immediate imputation of righteousness as equally immoral, for precisely the same reasons. Now, then, the exegesis.

Romans 5:12-21, as was said before, draws a parallel between Adam and his natural descendents on the one hand and on the other hand Christ and his spiritual descendants. The passage, no need to quote it now, begins by stating that sin entered the world of humanity by the act of one man. It was not the act of Eve, for she was deceived and Adam was not; nor was the introduction of sin and death due to Adam's succeeding sins. It was through his (one) sin, or through the (this) sin, that death came. The cause was the one act of the one man. If anyone suspect that in view of the exact wording of the verse, the idea of one has been given too great an emphasis, the reply is that verses 15, 16, and 17 make this emphasis is more than sufficiently explicit. The cause of death coming upon all men was the act of the one man - "because all sinned."

But how can all have sinned, when only one man, by one act, committed a single sin? Those who hold to straightforward justification by works (and this is not Romanism), and those or some of those who assert free will, answer that Adam's posterity followed his bad example, so that their later personal transgressions caused their death. To this the reply is, (1) The text does not say that all Adam's posterity "have sinned"; the text says they all "sinned", (this is an aorist tense, denoting a single act, not a perfect, indicating a continued series of acts or a present state); then (2) this aorist is in keeping with the idea of the one man and his one act. Note particularly the adverb "thus:" one man sinned and thus all died. Death was the punishment for sin, and since they all died, they must all have been guilty of the one act of the one man. The implication is that Adam and Christ were both our representatives: the one for death, the other for life; but both our substitutes.

Verse 12 is not a complete sentence. Verses 13-18 form a parenthesis and a subparenthesis; then verse 19 rephrases verse 12 and completes the parallel. Note that in verse 12 there occur words "and thus" but in verse 19 the words are "thus also." The former does not, the latter does complete the parallel. However, since this is not a Commentary on Romans, only one point will be made for verses 13-14, which is that Adam is a type of Christ. There are of course important differences between these two, which differences are indicated in verses 15-17. But there is one great similarity: they both substituted for us, they were both our federal head, one in sin, the other in righteousness.

The connection with justification and imputation becomes clearer in verse 18. Adam as the substitute for all his natural posterity and by his one sin caused our condemnation; Christ, also by substitution, and by one righteous act of acquittal (verses 16 and 18) gave all his spiritual posterity justification of life. By Christ's obedience, both active and passive, the many shall be established as just.

So much should be enough for the conclusion that Adam's sin was imputed to us and Christ's righteousness also to his chosen people, characterized as those who receive the free gift of righteousness.

There is another important point to be observed in this paragraph; but its discovery requires a little meditation. The point is that in both cases the imputation is immediate, i.e., without means. The two views may be contrasted as follows: Adam's s in produced his moral degradation, a depraved nature, and tendencies to sin, all of which were transmitted to his posterity by natural generation; this inherited depravity caused posterity to sin, and Adam's sin was imputed to them by means of inherited depravity. In this view the death of a descendent is due to personal depravity. The other view is that depravity is not the means or method of imputation, but its result.

In support of this latter view one must note that the death Adam incurred was not physical death alone. It was spiritual death, of which physical death is only a part. God had said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely elie." Adam died that day; though his physical life continued for nine centuries. This means that a depraved nature is a punishment for sin. This sin is the ground of the punishment; hence the punishment or depravity cannot be the means of imputation. It is the

imputation that makes the depravity a just penalty. Therefore Adam's one sin must have been imputed without depravity as a means, much more without subsequent sins as a means, for these follow naturally from the depraved nature. Imputation of sin therefore is immediate imputation.

The Scriptural basis for this is not hard to understand. One must, however, consider the objections of those who do not want to see the Scriptural position, probably because they are committed to some foreign philosophical position. One needs also to consider how immediate imputation is integrated with federal headship, for an objection at one point affects all others. A chapter from. Berkouwer makes a good example.

6. Berkouwer

Berkouwer (Sin, 1971) seems to accuse federal theology of attributing caprice or arbitrariness to God, if he imputes guilt and sin to other men on the basis of Adam's first sin. In support of this accusation he refers to the attempt of Shedd ann others to establish a "realistic" connection, between Adam and his posterity in their common human nature. Thus the realists arrive at some sort of personal identity with Adam so that posterity personally sinned when Adam sinned; and therefore God did not arbitrarily impute guilt and sin to anyone who had not himself personally sinned.

The motive behind Shedd and others in the earlier history of theology is to vindicate God's justice by denying that he imputes guilt to any man for a sin which that man did not personally commit. To condemn m£ for what another man did is unjust.

The individual identification of John Doe with Adam is difficult to maintain. Plato himself, the founder of Realism, never confused Socrates with Aristotle. Surely Adam and I are not the same person. .Berkouwer points out that even Bavinck side-steps the problem by qualifying the identity of the two persons by phrases such as "in a certain sense," "virtually," "potentially," and "seminally." Such evasions may point at the difficulty, but they are far from solving it. Shedd tried to solve it by a so-called "realism" that merged all men into Adam. Hence when Adam sinned, I myself personally sinned, and hence God does not so much impute Adam's sin and guilt to me, as he imputes my own.

At this point it is necessary for us to distinguish between problems, which, though related and even overlapping, are nonetheless distinct. The general problem of realism is one. In philosophy the term realism denotes any theory that holds it possible to know the "real" object and not just a representation of it. Aristotle therefore was a realist though not a Platonic realist.

Since the present writer cannot accept the Aristotelian theory of abstraction, as well as much else in that encyclopedic philosopher, this volume is based on what may loosely be called Platonic realism though actually Philonic realism; for there are varieties of even "Platonic" realism. Briefly, realism is necessary to make knowledge possible. It was the well nigh universal position of the Church until Thomas Aquinas rejected Augustine; and it became, at least more than any other philosophy, the somewhat tacit position of Calvin and the Reformed Church.

Undoubtedly realism can be used in the manner to which Berkouwer objects. His account of Bavinck's vagaries and Greijdanus' rather clearly unbiblical construction.s are well taken. But realism itself does not require "a clear distinction between the ground for imputation in the case of Christ's righteousness and the ground in the case of Adam's sin" (p. 439, n. 10). Realism and federalism are far from being incompatible. There may of course be realists who reject federalism; but there are also nominalists who reject federalism.

For this reason a certain awkwardness runs through Berkouwer's discussion. He writes, "We can only do justice to realism, however, when we inquire exactly what is meant by this 'co-sinning.'" This would be true if the men he has mentioned were the only realists. In that case "realism" would be nothing else than the realism of these men. But Berkouwer gives the impression that refutation of these men destroys all forms of realism. If it did, Berkouwer would be obligated to provide a different epistemology. He would have to adopt nominalism, or the Aristotelian theory of abstraction, or some form of representationism.

Aside from such basic philosophic choices, Berkouwer's objections to Bavinck and Greijdanus are well taken: "It is very striking that when we ask that perfectly legitimate question, we receive no clear answer" (p. 440). But his awkwardness appears when he tries to tie in the preexistence of the soul. To be sure, Plato's realism, or better, Plato's general philosophy defended pre-existence. Augustine, on the other hand, explicitly repudiated pre-existence without discarding realism.

The immediate conclusion is therefore that Berkouwer reduces to absurdity the particular form of realism adopted by Bavinck and others; but the refutation is based more on the Scriptural concept of imputation than on any philosophic difficulty in generic Platonism.

In the next chapter Berkouwer considers Federalism. If the biological unity of the race, to which Bavinck had virtually reduced realism, is not sufficient to explain the relation between Adam's sin and the sin of his posterity, what other theory is there for this purpose and also for the purpose of explaining the relationship between the righteousness of Christ and that of his people? The first half of the problem is not the fact that some people suffer because of the sins of others, but the idea that some people are punished for the sins of others, to wit, the sin of Adam. Does not this idea conflict with the justice of God? Are the imputation and representation of the federal theory just?

The difference between federalism and Bavinck's form of realism lies in the fact that Bavinck and Greijdanus consider men as personally co-sinning in Adam, whereas federalism asserts that God regards all men as sinners on the basis of God's having chosen Adam as his posterity's representative.

Berkouwer makes very clear his belief that "Consistent realism cannot be allied with federalism" (p. 451, n.12), If he had said, 'The biological unity of the race and the federalist view of representation cannot both be the explanation of universal human sinfulness,' everyone would have to agree. Berkouwer, however, objects even to Honig's statement that the physical unity is of great importance, even though inadequate as an explanation of original sin. But this statement by Honig is surely unobjectionable, and indeed unavoidable. Does Berkouwer think that federalism must deny the "physical unity" of the race? Of course not; but then once again Honig, whatever else he may have said, is correct that this obvious unity does not explain original sin.

Because of its importance the point at issue allows for emphasis. An imputation of guilt, sin, and punishment to a man who has not individually committed a sin is capricious and arbitrary, according to these "realists."

The tacit but plausible assumption in this view is that a wise, rational, just God cannot act arbitrarily. But perhaps these theologians do not reflect sufficiently on the nature of arbitrariness in a sovereign Being. Take for an example some less explosive matter. The solar system presumably contains ten planets. The exact number is unimportant. Now, an omnipotent God could have created, for all we know, a solar system with only seven, or as many as thirteen planets. Is not therefore the present number arbitrary? Did it not depend on God's choice? Hence an accusation that federalism is false because it pictures God as arbitrary carries no weight. Ultimately everything that God does is arbitrary.

Now suppose someone was to reply: Of course God is sovereign and the ultimate cause of everything; but this does not make his choices arbitrary because in everything he does, he acts for a purpose. Purposeful actions are not arbitrary.

This reply is, of course, no more than a definition of the term arbitrary. The term should indeed be defined, for it is rather clear that those or some of those who charge God with caprice are not too sure of what they mean by the word. So far, so good; but the reply itself is not of great help to the "realists" mentioned. Their opponents can still object that though God always acts purposefully, yet if he entertained immediate imputation as an essential means of his end, he would be acting unjustly.

Turning the question around, and inquiring whether the theory of mediate imputation -one cannot discard imputation altogether, for the Bible mentions it too often - escapes the charges leveled against immediate imputation, one might consider one of its advocates.

Placaeus, a French theologian, tried to avoid arbitrariness, not by a realistic theory, but by asserting that mankind inherited a depraved nature from Adam, anrl on the basis of this depravity God adjudged them guilty. The Synod of Charenton in 1644, Greijdenus the realist, Shedd in America, and others not so attached to realism easily pointed out the flaw in the theory of mediate imputation. The question is obvious: On what basis does God cause degeneration in Adam's posterity? Or, as Shedd put it, "Why should the effect be imputed, and not the cause?" Placaeus thus did not escape arbitrariness; he merely located it in a different spot.

Since it seems impossible on any ground to escape arbitrary sovereignty, why should one try? Why not embrace it[7] Berkouwer and Barth quote Polanus: "The reason for this truth [of imputation] is nothing other than the will of the Creator." Barth, and no doubt Berkouwer agrees, calls this a strange and bitter truth, but he also calls it indisputable. Indisputable truth, however, can be strange and bitter only to those who feel more comfortable with error than with truth.

In spite of Berkouwer's declaration that "federalism is unable to answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, the federalist is satisfied upon two grounds: first, the exegesis of Romans 5:12ff, and second, the concept of justice.

The subject of justice is doubtless a more profound theological and philosophical matter than the exegesis of a single passage'; but it is less detailed. The question is, What is justice, which acts are just and which are not, and does God's justice differ from ours? Human obligations to act justly can easily be defined by referring to the divine commandments. For man, stealing is unjust, so is murder, and any other infraction of the moral law. But what is divine justice? It cannot be the same as human justice because, for one thing, the Ten Commandments do not apply to God. God cannot steal, for he is the owner of all wealth. God cannot honor his father and mother; nor covet, and so on. Therefore, when we say that God is just, we use the predicate in a somewhat different sense from that by which it is predicated of men. This view, which frequently stimulates expressions of horror on the part of devout and pious saints, has been almost uniformly accepted by theologians who on other matters disagree considerably.

The solution must be that men are just, or unjust, as subject to the laws God imposes on them. But God is just in the sense of imposing these laws. If one asks, why is an act just, the answer must be, because God commanded it. But what answer can be given to the question, was God just in issuing this particular commandment?

Only two answers have been tried in the history of philosophy. Plato, especially in his Euthvphro. and Leibniz posited a principle of justice superior to God. Of course, Plato's Demiurge, maker of

heaven and earth, was neither omnipotent nor sovereign. There was a World of Ideas above him, to which he owed moral conformity. The World of Ideas itself, the supreme reality, contained the Idea of justice, and can even be taken as a personal God; but the Demiurge, not the Ideas, was the maker of heaven and earth. With further Platonic scholarship, we have nothing to do at the moment. Leibniz, with his astounding theory of the best of all possible worlds, pictured God - to put it in modem terms - as looking over all the blueprints of worlds he had in his filing cabinet. Some were poor, some were better, and one was the best of all possible worlds. So God created our world on this plan. In such a view God is not sovereign; there is a principle of goodness and justice independent of his will and he must submit to it in order to be a good God.

Calvin and Descartes had a different view. For Descartes there is no "best of all possible" worlds. Any world that God might have created would have been good simply because God would have had created it. This present world is good for the same reason. Goodness depends on God's decision.

Maybe Descartes (died 1650) took this view from John Calvin (died 1564). In any case, Calvin wrote, "Augustine justly complains that it is an offense against God to inquire for any cause of things higher than his will" (Institutes, I, XIV, 1). Later, in two chapters or a whole book that should be repeatedly studied, he says, "The will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired therefore why the Lord did so, the answer must be, Because he would. But if you go further and ask why he so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found" (III xxiii,2). Then he explodes the pretensions of those who try to solve the present problems by inventing a distinction between a decretive and a permissive will. Calvin remarks, "Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission, and insist that God permits the destruction of the impious but does not will it. But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will?" (Ill, xxiii, 8; cf. Ill, xxiv, 14).

Similarly Zanchius in his Absolute Predestination says: "Whatever comes to pass, comes to pass by virtue, of this absolute omnipotent will of God, which is the primary and supreme cause of all things" (I, Position Six). "His will is the rule of all things. He did not therefore will such and such things because they were in themselves right... but they are therefore equitable and right because he wills them ... Bucer likewise observes, 'God has no other motive for what he does than ipsa voluntas, his own mere will, which will is so far from being unrighteous that it is justice itself" (I, Position Seven). And finally, "Whatever things God wills or does are not willed and done by him because they were in their own nature and previous to his willing them, just and right, or because from their intrinsic fitness he ought to will and do them; but they are therefore just, right, and proper because he, who is holiness itself, wills and does them" (V, Position Three).

These passages should be studied all the more careful because contemporary evangelicalism has so deteriorated from the doctrine of the Reformers that the latter seems strange now. There are still some, however, who hold to the Reformation principles.

There is one theme in Berkouwer that deserves explicit commendation. He excoriates the several theologians who, either through incompetence or, worse, through a cowardice to acknowledge the clear implications of their positions, take refuge in pseudo-pious protestations of humility and finite comprehension. In the sixteenth century, when such tremendous progress was being made, the absence of some distinctions that were later drawn is not surprising. Calvin himself cannot be blamed for not arriving at a clearer distinction between saving faith and assurance, nor for not going further toward the immediate imputation of Adam's sin than some now tantalizing references to Adam's being the "trustee" of human nature and the one who lost God's gifts not only for himself but also for others. However, after the distinction between imputed guilt and inherited depravity had been made,

and after the Westminster Confession contrasted the guilt's being imputed with the corruption's being conveyed, a theologian must face the problem anti give his opinion in clear language. He may fail through incompetence, but to evade is dishonest.

Notes

1

Cf. mv Johannine Logos. Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1972.

2

The notes in the Blackfriars' edition list other passages that go into further details.

3

no sense be thought favorable to what Manton calls "the mistake of the former age" i.e. the mistake of the Protestant reformers, in his superbly scholarly volume, The Semantics of Biblical Language. Oxford University Press, 1961, reduces the pseudo-evangelical view to unscholarly ruins.

4

Cf. Geerhardus Vos. The Self-Disclosure of Jesus

5

Possibly the first systematic theologian to use this term was John of Damascus or Damascene: "fides est non inquisitus consensus;" i. e., "faith is an unquestioned consent."

6

The Latin fides is not a good synonym for the Greek pisteuo.

7

Parenthetical note. Perhaps a realist might be found or imagined who would say that since Adam is generic humanity, the sin of generic humanity (this realist's substitute for the Platonic Idea) is ipso facto, the sin of every man. This surely seems to avoid arbitrariness, but at an impossible price, for the Scripture describes Adam as an individual human being, not as a Platonic Idea, and his sin was a temporal act, not an eternal characteristic of an eternal idea.

Chapter 8 - Sanctification

Foreword

It has been twenty years since the first editions of *Sanctification* and *Today's Evangelism: Counterfeit or Genuine?* – both written by Gordon H. Clark – were first published by The Trinity Foundation. Since that time the attacks on Systematic Theology continue unabated, not just from Romanists and Charismatics (Papists and Enthusiasts in Luther's day), but also from those who claim theProtestant Reformation as their "tradition." The irrationalism in the church of the twentieth century continues apace in the twenty-first. In the Evangelical and even in the Reformed camp all the *solas* (*sola Scriptura*, *sola fide, sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, and *soli Deo Gloria*) are under attack, as are most of the *loci* of Systematic Theology. This is especially true in many, if not most, seminaries today. Many of the leading "teachers" in the neo-Calvinist movement pay lip-service to the teachings of the Reformers and historic Reformed Systematic Theology, but then deconstruct those very teachings. Then there is the popular movement of The Purpose Driven Life and Church of Rick Warren, which adopts the pragmatism of the corporate world and the entertainment paradigm of Hollywood, and asks the unbelieving, unregenerate what they want in "church" and delivers it to them. A newer development in the last few years is the Emergent Church, which seeks to throw off the rational thinking of Systematic Theology for mystical nonsense and return the church to Pre-Reformation darkness.

What is needed in these days of increasing ignorance – much of it, willful – and increasing darkness in much of what is called the "church" today is the light of the one true Gospel of Grace alone by Faith alone in Christ alone and its clear, non-contradictory

presentation taught in Systematic Theology. A return to “What saith the Scripture?” is most needful in this present hour. It is because of this need that The Trinity Foundation is pleased to publish *What Is the Christian Life?* which combines the second editions of*Sanctification* and *Today’s Evangelism: Counterfeit or Genuine?* into one volume.

The doctrine of sanctification continues to be under attack both by those who believe and teach that we are “to let go and let God,” and by those who believe and teach that we are sanctified by our works. Today, however, there is a new subtle attack on the doctrine of sanctification by the “Grace Movement,” and their call for “Gospel Sanctification,” by which they mean that all we need to do to be sanctified is to hear and focus on the Gospel; for the law, according to these unbelieving men, “only leads to legalism.” Instead of being sanctified by the whole truth of God’s Word (both Law and Gospel) the “Grace Boys” truncate God’s Word ignoring the third use of the law as a guide to how we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as our self.Sanctification is just as much the work of God as is justification. Sanctification is accomplished through the means of the whole counsel of the Word of God. The church has become a desert of truth patrolled by wolves instead of green pastures tended by true under-shepherds. Here is what the *Westminster Confession of Faith* teaches on the role of God’s law in the Christian life:

> Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet it is of great use to them…in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful conditions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God’s approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man’s

> doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace. (19:1)

Evangelism is just as much under attack today, for the Gospel itself is under attack. If the church is unclear about or does not know the Gospel, what sort of message is being proclaimed? Today in the Reformed churches such heresies as the Federal Vision, the New Perspective on Paul, Shepherdism, and others are accepted as faithful interpretations of Scripture and those who hold to these heresies are considered "brothers." Then you also have the rise of clericalism verging on sacerdotalism in these "Reformed" churches where interpretation of the Scriptures and evangelism is carried on solely by the minister, and only in the "church" building. The emotional manipulation popularized by Charles G. Finney in the "Second Great Awakening" continues with pleas from the evangelist to "give Jesus your heart" (the same heart, which according to *Jeremiah* 17:9, "is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked"). Very little exposition of the Scripture is given as to what the Gospel is, or of why it is needed (the first use of the Law). Again we need to go to the Bible to understand the content of the "Good News," and how it is to be promulgated. To echo Dr. Robbins' last statement in his foreword to the first edition of *Sanctification*, "it is our hope that this book will eliminate some of the confusion surrounding the doctrine of sanctification [and the content and the method of the Evangel – the Good News] in the church today," and that it will also be a reproof to those who teach error and heresy in the name of Christ. Our Lord's words are ever true and much needed today:"Sanctify them by thy *Truth*. **Thy Word *is* Truth**" (*John* 17:17, emphasis added).

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1. Introduction

In colloquial Christian conversation the term *salvation* is very frequently misused. There is a story of a Salvation Army lassie in London who approached a man on the street and asked, Are you saved? The man happened to be an Anglican bishop. He replied to the question, Do you mean *sesōumenos, sēzomenos, and sōthesomenos*? Which being interpreted, means, have I been saved, am I being saved, or shall I be saved? Poor lassie. In plain English, salvation is a broad term that includes regeneration, justification, adoption,sanctification, and glorification. The present study concerns sanctification.

Regeneration is an act of God. By it he instantaneously produces an effect in man, a change in which man is totally passive. *Jeremiah*13:23 puts it rather picturesquely: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” Co-temporaneously God does something else that is not a change in man at all. Justification is an instantaneous judicial act of acquittal. Sanctification, however, is neither instantaneous, nor is a man passive therein. It is not instantaneous because it is a time-consuming, subjective, life-long process. Nor is it an act of God alone. It is indeed dependent on the continuous power of God, but it is also the activity of the regenerated man. Both God and man are active. Sanctification is the Christian life.

Since the external conditions of individuals, and even more their mentality and psychological quirks, differ enormously, any descriptive account of the Christian life would bog down in multitudinous details. Nor can biography be normative. Scripture, however, gives some general principles. No matter how different Chinese Christians may be from American Christians, no matter how different two Christians of the same

nationality are, we are all tempted, we all sin, we all grow in grace, and we all persevere, though by multiple methods, at various velocities, and to different degrees.

2. Conversion and Repentance

Since the term *sanctification* commonly refers to the life-long battle against sin, it is not usual to include regeneration in the concept. Regeneration initiates the Christian life, resurrecting the dry bones and clothing them with flesh – something only God can do – but the first conscious human activity in this new life is faith. Faith, human activity as it is, is still a gift from God. This activity, or its first moments, may be called conversion. The previous state of mind is replaced by belief in the atoning death of Christ. The man consciously changes his mind – for repentance is a change of mind – and turns from his old thinking toward the Savior. *First Peter*2:25 reports concerning his addressees, who had been previously straying like lost sheep, that they had now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. *Acts* 11:21 is less flowery, but more exact: “A great number believed and turned to the Lord.” In theological language this turning is called *conversion*. The German pastor of the Presbyterian Church at 19th and Susquehanna in Philadelphia, back in the 1920s, in the *Schlussversammlung* of an evangelistic series, dramatically illustrated it by executing an about face in the pulpit as he said, “*Bekehren ist umkehren*.”

If, now, one wishes to examine what is simultaneous, or what the logical relations are, one could say that repentance itself more commonly connected with aversion from sin than with belief in the Trinity, is an act of and a part of faith. Believing is indeed an act of the human self, caused by God to be sure, and totally impossible except for regeneration and God’s gift; but it is nonetheless a humanvolition. It is the first act in a Christian

life. Dead bones cannot believe; but when clothed with flesh they live, and they live a life offaith. By means of this volition God justifies the sinner on the ground of Christ's merits. This judicial pronouncement inevitably, if some people do not care to say automatically, sets in motion the life-long process of sanctification. The purpose of justification, or at least one of the purposes, and the immediate one, is to produce sanctification. The earliest stage of this is conversion, so early that it might be identified with the first act of faith itself. Consider some of the Scriptural material, both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament.

Psalm 19:7: The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

Psalm 51:13: Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Isaiah 6:10: Make the heart of this people fat…lest they understand with their heart and convert.

These three Old Testament verses indicate that turning to the Lord, or conversion, depends on understanding his laws. If a person does not understand, his fatty heart will not turn. But the New Testament gives more details as to the nature of the turning.

Matthew 13:15 has "This people's heart is waxed gross...and their eyes have they closed, lest at any time they…should understand with their heart and should be converted." (Compare *Mark* 4:12, *John* 12:40, and *Acts* 28:27.)

These four verses repeat Isaiah, to wit, that unless a person understands – not botany or mathematics, but theology – he cannot be converted. This idea has puzzled many Christians and has no doubt contributed to the prevalence of Arminianism. If the phrase "understand with their heart" is taken to mean faith, the conclusion will be that faith temporally

precedes regeneration. But the verse says no such thing. First of all, note that God may, but need not, use means to accomplish his ends. Obviously creation *ex nihilo* could have no means. On the other hand, when God saved the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians, he used a strong east wind. Now, God could omnipotently regenerate a man without using any means (if it should so please him), and in a sense he does so. But he has so ordered the situation that there are conditions. A condition preceding faith is an understanding of the propositions to be believed. No one can believe that of which he knows nothing. Saul, the persecutor, understood Christian doctrine better than the Christians did. The people referred to in *Matthew* 13:15 deliberately avoided an understanding, for fear that it might convert them. Hence understanding the Gospel, at least understanding some of it, must precede regeneration alone as the east wind preceded the escape of the Israelites. But understanding alone is not faith. Faith is believing what one understands. A theologian or philosopher understands many theories he does not believe. In regeneration God causes the sinner to believe what heretofore he had only understood. As Paulsaid, “Faith cometh by hearing.” This is the means God uses.

Consider also *Luke* 22:32: “Satan hath desired to have you, but…when thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren.”

One may ask, Was Peter converted twice? Does not conversion occur only once? The answer is two-fold. First, the verb *to turn* is not a very precise term. Repentance is a more exact one. Second, many people backslide. They turn away from the Lord, succumb to temptation, and, like David, turn again to the Lord. Some popular expressions in modern times give the impression that conversion, like regeneration, occurs only once. Thus because *conversion* is a flexible word, it is better to consider repentance. Repentance too can be misunderstood, but even its

colloquial use does not tie it so strictly to a momentary occurrence. The exposition therefore requires other verses, one of which bears directly on the connection between conversion and repentance.

Acts 3:19: Repent therefore and turn again…

Matthew 4:17: Repent, for the kingdom is at hand.

Acts 5:31: To give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Revelation 2:5: …except thou repent.

In the New Testament there are about sixty instances of the noun and the verb. The first one quoted above relates repentance to conversion. The chronological sequence seems to be that a sinner changes his mind and then turns to God. But, after all, changing one's mind (in this context) is itself turning to God. *Repentance* is to be taken literally, while *turning* is a figure of speech. The other verses do not so explicitly relate conversion to repentance. The nature of the latter shows it to be, not so much identical to conversion, as inclusive of it. Conversion therefore may be considered as the first phase of faith and repentance. These two, faith and repentance, as one and the same, are intellectual life and action. This might not have been guessed from the verb *to turn*. But the verb *repent* is explicitly to *change one's mind*. It is the replacement of a totally secular set of ideas by at least a few Christian propositions. The first act of replacement may be momentary as an initial act; but the replacement is permanent. One continues to believe in the lordship and the resurrection of Christ forever – as the doctrine of perseverance will soon show. But the replacement of secular and erroneous ideas with Biblical doctrines continues in a life-long process. Newly born Christians, in varying degrees, inevitably become bettertheologians as time goes on.

The people who will read this book will probably be divided into two groups, perhaps not sharply separated, but in various degrees interested in one phase of the discussion more than another. One of those groups may view the other as only superficially interested in sanctification, willing to dabble in theory because of curiosity but not much interested in the personal and practical increase ofholiness. These latter may view the so-called practical Christians as well meaning, but only superficially and unintelligently committed to Christianity. As thus more sharply contrasted than the continuum justifies, both groups have blundered. The two ends of the spectrum have blundered the most; the center may be well adjusted. Since, however, the non-theoretical and non-theological group would be more inclined to pick up a book on sanctification, it may be proper here, almost at the beginning, to point out a very clear directive to holiness. The very few pages to this point should show the indispensability of studying the Scriptures. No doubt the Christian who wants to be a better Christian should pay his debts promptly and do an errand for his sick neighbor, but he learns such duties and others more important only by studying the Bible. *Ezekiel* 25 and *Revelation* 16 may not tell anyone what to do this afternoon, but eighteen months from now, or seven years from now, they will be precisely what is needed. Hence the first indispensable step after regeneration is Bible study. Theology is the road to holiness.

While it is important to note that repentance is a continuous and life-long change of mind, rather than a momentary emotional upheaval, it is equally necessary to characterize the new ideas by which the mind is changed. Obviously it is not a change from believing that the Dodgers will win the World Series to the belief that the New York Yankees will. An excellent statement of the change of mind required is given in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

> Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience.

Some further verses are

Jeremiah 31:19: …turn thou to me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did not bear the reproach of my youth.

Luke 1:77-79: To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Acts 2:37, 38: Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 6:18: Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 7:10: For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

The verse in *Jeremiah* shows that the act of turning from sin to God is one that God himself causes. Or, as another verse says, it is a grant or gift from God, for Peter in *Acts* 11:18 concluded, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” It cannot be too greatly emphasized that repentance, the change of mind, is produced by God. We are indeed conscious of

some change; we are aware that once we did not believe in sin and salvation and now we do; but Bible study will teach us that God caused the change.Repentance is a gift.

The verse in *Luke* also states that the knowledge of salvation is a gift from God; and in addition it indicates the blessings of salvation in contrast with the darkness of sin and the shadow of death. Thus each verse adds one or more ideas to the explanation of repentance.

The religious world of the present century has witnessed a tidal wave of anti-intellectualism. Inundated by the outright irrationalism of the Neo-orthodox and the existentialists, popular religion holds every intellectual decision – the acceptance of an intellectual doctrine – to be either insincere or trivial, and that only emotion is genuine and "authentic." With the prevalence of such views, a further repetition of the *Catechism* seems called for. Repentance includes an "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ." Before regeneration a sinful human being does not think this way. He believes that God is too good to condemn anybody, and, besides, he himself is quite respectable. But the gift of faith changes his ideas. Jesus, whom he previously admitted to be an admirable ethical teacher, he now believes to be the Lord of Glory. The sins he has loved, he now hates, or at least begins to hate, for regeneration is not instantaneous perfection. By this change of mind he turns from sin to God; or, more accurately, this change of mind *is* his turning to God. Nor can this turning or conversion occur without a full purpose and endeavor to obey God's law. There is nothing insincere in this. To use John Calvin's remark, it is the pious assent of the mind.

Repentance, not just its initial phase, but as a life-long state of mind, is to be further explained by the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints; but the points already made can be

accentuated by contrast with aberrant theories; after which perseverance will fall into place.

3. Aberrant Theories

Pelagius

Pelagius, a British monk about AD 400, of all the professedly Christian writers before the twentieth century, sponsored the most extreme and most unbiblical theories of regeneration and conversion. Now, an aberrant theory of regeneration logically affects the account of grace, the atonement, and all other doctrines. Thus Pelagius affirmed free will and denied depravity. The idea of repentance must be altered as well, and so also sanctification. Not only does a wrong principle logically affect the entire body of theology proceeding from it, but, further, there are historical effects. Augustine in his defense of grace prevented the western church from becoming entirely Pelagian, but it became semi-Pelagian nonetheless. Then in modern times Arminius turned back, perhaps more than he realized, from Reformation Calvinism to the semi-Pelagianism of Rome. Hence Pelagius still influences theology today.

Reformation theology holds that Adam was created positively righteous. Not only does *Genesis* 1:27 pellucidly imply as much, but*Ephesians* 4:24 and *Colossians* 3:10 repeat it. This makes Adam's fall difficult to understand. How could a man created righteous have even been tempted, not to mention succumbing to it? Some theologians simply say that Adam was created righteous but mutable. This begs the question. How could one perfectly righteous, and therefore without evil desires, be mutable so as to sin? Many theologians avoid the problem. H.B. Smith concludes that it is insoluble. A.H. Strong (*Systematic Theology*, Volume II, 585*ff*.) briefly describes about a dozen attempts, but he himself offers no explanation. It seems

to me that supralapsarianism is the only answer. Otherwise one must be content to say merely that Romanism's solution is even worse than those of the theologians mentioned. Romanism holds that man was created morally neutral, but then God gave Adam an extra gift of righteousness. This hardly makes sin any more understandable. Whether the righteousness was original or a later gift has no bearing on the matter. The paradox is how a perfectly righteous being could sin. The same problem occurs with the initial sin of the now fallen angels. Pelagius simply held that Adam was created morally neutral: *ut sine virtute, ita sine vitio, i.e.,* neither virtuous nor sinful. His body was mortal, and physical death was not and is not a punishment for sin. Since Adam had no original righteousness to restrain him, Pelagius easily explains sin on the basis of free will.

Since this view conceives of sin as nothing other than a voluntary transgression of the law, Adam's sin could not in itself injure his posterity, nor affect their free will – naturally, because a *free* will is one that cannot be affected. Therefore at birth every infant is in the same state as Adam was at creation. There is no original sin or inherent corruption. Julian, a disciple of Pelagius, wrote, "Nothing inman is sin, if nothing is of his own volition or assent.... No one is naturally evil." On this view sin cannot be inherited, and to us Adam is only a bad example.

After having taught several thousand college students over a period of sixty years, I am aware, not only of a lack of historical information on their part, but, worse, of a disinterest in history. Many of these students retain this disinterest for the remainder of their lives. Therefore, if they are church-goers, they dislike sermons which explain the views of antiquated theologians. What they fail to note is that these antiquated views are very modern. With hardly an exception the sects repeat the ancient heresies.

One of Pelagius' basic propositions, repeated in modern times by Immanuel Kant, was that "ability limits obligation." Man must have plenary ability to do whatever God can righteously require of him. If God commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," then every man has complete ability to obey the command perfectly. Man has free will. This theory of plenary ability was not only adopted by Immanuel Kant and many secular thinkers; it was also the basis of John Wesley's doctrine of sinless perfection. Neither God nor sin can limit free will.

The besetting sin of false theology, if it professes to be somewhat Christian, is the substitution of incorrect definitions for the Biblicaldefinitions. In this case an important example is the term *sin.* One must constantly keep in mind that sin, for Pelagius, is not "any want of conformity unto," but only voluntary "transgression of the law of God." Children are not born in iniquity; they remain innocent until they voluntarily disobey a divine law. They are not guilty of Adam's sin; neither are adults. Adam is not our federal head, nor canGod impute either sin or righteousness to anyone except the individual voluntary agent. Each must pass his own probation, as theNeo-orthodox also say. God would be the "author of sin" unless a man is condemned or justified solely on the ground of his own individual conduct.

Augustine made a crushing reply: Why, then, does the Church baptize infants? As a matter of fact, Pelagius answered this question by saying that infants are baptized in order to wash away their future sins; but Augustine's question had its effect because Pelagius' answer was so clearly contrary to the view held throughout the Church.

At any rate, Pelagius admitted that most if not all adults have sinned. What then is to be done? First, baptism, as just reported, cleanses a man of his sins. But, second, the man must “repent” and decide to keep the law of God perfectly. That it is possible to keep the law perfectly is evident from the fact that past sins, past voluntary transgressions, cannot bind a free will. Then, third, God does not command the impossible. Ability limits responsibility. Repentance is therefore a decision never to sin again. Not only does Pelagius make a place for repentance, he can even speak of grace – he can call grace unmerited favor; but the favor is not the irresistible action of the Spirit on our minds and wills. For Pelagius “grace” consists of (1) the natural freedom of the will; (2) therevelation of God’s law; and (3) the remission of sins by baptism. Thus all men can, and many who know God’s revelation do, live without sin.

Augustine vigorously attacked Pelagianism; but his victory was neither complete nor enduring. In the fifth century Pelagianism or an inconsistent semi-Pelagianism spread through southern France. This was combated by a decree of the sixth century Council of Orange – to be quoted after noting that by the ninth century Calvinism had only the feeble voice of the martyr Gottschalk. The decree declares

> If anyone assert that by reason of man’s prayer the grace of God is conferred, but that it is not grace itself which causes that God is prayed to, he contradicts the prophet Isaiah (65:1), and the Apostle Paul (*Romans* 10:20) saying the same thing, “I was found of them that sought me not and have been manifest unto them that asked not after me.” If anyone maintain that God waits for a willingness in us to be purged of sin, and does not allow that the very willingness to be cleansed of sin is wrought in us by the infusion and operation of the Holy Ghost, he resists the Holy Ghost, saying with Solomon, “The will is prepared by the

> Lord," and with the apostle, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (*Philippians* 2:13)

This is an excellent statement of the Calvinistic position and shows that the Biblical doctrine was still professed by a good portion of the visible church. God does not wait for a willingness on the part of the sinner before purging him of his sin. The will is not free, for God works in us "both to will" as well as "to do," and his working is of his own good pleasure. But this pure Gospel was soon to be obscured in the night of superstition.

Council of Trent

Romish views of repentance, or penance, now follow historically before more modern views are considered. Augustine had vigorously attacked Pelagius and secured his condemnation. He defended a view of grace which one can at the very least call far more Biblical than Pelagius' view. In later life he dropped his own earlier, not-so-extreme, theory of free will and wrote forthrightly onpredestination. But as he was writing, the barbarians sacked Rome and ushered in four centuries of anarchy and ignorance. The utter anarchy was fairly well eliminated by Charlemagne, but with his death ignorance continued and superstition increased until theProtestant Reformation. It was during these centuries that Augustine's theology was obscured; and the official position of Romanism was finally formulated by the Council of Trent. This position is not Pelagianism: that much of Augustine remained. But it has been and is properly called semi-Pelagianism. What then is the Romish doctrine of repentance, or, more exactly, penance, a sacrament which they substitute for Scriptural repentance?

In the first place Romanists believe in baptismal regeneration. By the intention of the priest the holy water regenerates the

infant. This has one distressing consequence. Since it is the intention of the priest that validates the baptism, the parents can never be sure that their child has been baptized. No doubt priests almost without exception have the right intention. But there was one who confessed that for some years he had baptized, or better, gone through the motions and the formula, intending to damn the child. This may be a unique exception; but it is possible that several other priests had simply not intended what the church intends. Hence these infants were not baptized validly and so not regenerated. A valid baptism, however, is supposed to remove all sin. The Council of Trent, Sixth Session (January 13, 1547) decided:

> The instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism…. He maketh us just...(chapter VII). No one ought to make use of that rash saying…that the observance of the commandments of God is impossible for the one who is justified, for God does not command impossibilities…. From which it is plain that they are opposed to the orthodox doctrine of religion who assert that the just man sins, venially at least, in every good work…. (Chapter XI; compare also Canon XXV)

The Reformed doctrine is that although some sins are more heinous than others, none is "venial," but all are deadly in that they all deserve the wrath and curse of God. That baptism makes us actually just before God, and that, at least sometimes, we do not sin evenvenially in our good works, is bad enough. But what is worse, Romanism also teaches that a sinner can do more than God requires of him. These so-called works of supererogation are deposited in the Treasury of the Saints and are later issued, by order of the Pope, to other sinners who have not done enough. In this way Rome teaches that although Christ's sacrifice is necessary to salvation, it is not sufficient. Additional human merits must be added.

The distribution of these extra merits and the forgiveness of sin now depend on the Romish substitute for repentance, namely the sacrament of penance. Canon VI says,

> If anyone denieth either that sacramental confession was instituted or is necessary to salvation, of divine right; or saith that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone...is alien from the institution and commands of Christ, and is a human invention, let him be anathema.

Canon IX continues,

> If anyone saith that the sacramental absolution of the priest is not a judicial act, but a bare ministry of pronouncing and declaring sins to be forgiven...let him be anathema.

Canon XII also:

> If anyone saith that God always remits the whole punishment together with the guilt, and that the satisfaction of penitents is no other than the faith whereby they apprehend that Christ has satisfied for them, let him be anathema.

Canon XIII:

> If anyone saith that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is nowise made to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by the punishments inflicted by him...or by those enjoined by the priest, nor even by those voluntarily undertaken, as by fastings, prayers, alms-deeds, or by other works also of piety, and that therefore the best penance is merely a new life, let him be anathema.

The Council of Trent, sitting off and on for several years after Luther’s death, produced these formulations. But their substance had been in effect for some centuries. The young Luther in all his piety sought holiness and sanctification by the only methods he knew. But he was always apprehensive that he had not done

enough, had not fasted enough, had not flagellated himself enough, not earned enough merits for salvation. As a professor of theology he studied Paul's *epistle to the Romans*, and as a very intelligent scholar he began to understand the Scripture as contrasted with Romish superstition. He then discarded the medieval methods of sanctification and adopted what for his age was an unknown doctrine. He started to preach what Trent so definitely condemned.

Note that these Canons assert the necessity of sacramental confession to a priest secretly; that the priest's absolution is not "ministerial and declarative" as the Protestants hold, but a "judicial act;" and finally note again that Christ's satisfaction is not sufficient, but that to the work of Christ we must add punishments enjoined by a priest, plus the greater merit of voluntary fastings, *et cetera.*

No orthodox Protestant would deny that repentance requires an amendment of life – this is surely the doctrine of sanctification – nor that it requires restitution when restitution is possible. But (1) in most cases no restitution is possible, and (2) when there is, our sins are not forgiven for the sake of other good works, nor for whatever temporal punishments God may inflict; but our sins are forgiven on the basis of Christ's merits alone. Augustus Toplady may have been thinking mainly of justification at the time, but what he wrote covers the whole Christian life:

> But not for works which we have done,
>
> Or shall hereafter do,
>
> Hath God decreed on sinful man
>
> Salvation to bestow.

The Papal system, however, claims to earn merits by penance.

The wording of the Council of Trent is of course definitive and authoritative. It is interesting, however, and instructive to read a recent statement from a Romish Dictionary on “Grace.” Under the heading of “Penance” it says:

> i. Penitence, or repentance, a virtue disposing a sinner to hatred of his own sin.... It is a necessary condition of forgiveness.
>
> ii. Public. [some history of the early church to the XVIII century.]
>
> iii. Canonical. Prayers and good works, *e.g.* fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, retreat, imposed by ecclesiastical authority...either instead of or in order to obtain release from, a penalty.
>
> iv. Sacramental. After hearing a penitent’s confession and before giving him absolution, a confessor must impose a penance....

Then also, “Penance, the Sacrament of.” “A sacrament of the New Law instituted by Christ in which by the absolution of a priest, acting as judge, sins committed after Baptism are forgiven to a person who confesses them with sorrow and a purpose of amendment....” And there follows a quotation from Trent.

With respect to the sorrow for and hatred of sin, referred to above, the Romanists speak of perfect contrition, by which sin is forgiven even before Penance, “though the obligation of confession remains.” But since few people experience perfect contrition, there is an imperfect contrition, called “attrition,” lesser in value, but “necessary and sufficient for the valid reception of the sacrament of Penance.” Thus the action of a priest is a substitute for New Testament repentance.

Arminianism, in the person of John Wesley, who was neither a profound nor precise theologian, seems to have had a doctrine of two types of repentance. Wesley's second type may be more in accord with Scripture, but the first is without Scriptural support. In one place, speaking of faith and justification, he says, "God for the sake of his Son pardoneth and absolveth him who had in him, till then, no good thing. Repentance, indeed, God had given him before, but that repentance was neither more nor less than a deep sense of the want of all good and the presence of all evil." 1

Note carefully what this says. Before God pardons a man, there is no good thing in him. Repentance was in him prior to his pardon. Therefore repentance is no good thing, even though it was a gift from God. Any theory of holiness based on such confusion can be no good thing.

Instead of pursuing the term repentance, however, it is easier to follow what Wesley said about faith, perseverance, and entiresanctification. The complex of ideas will show that even if he sometimes uses the term *repentance* in a more Scriptural manner, the whole is incompatible with perseverance and free grace, and therefore constitutes an aberrant theory of sanctification.

In the *Doctrinal Summaries* of the second annual conference in Bristol, on August 2, 1745, the following questions and answers were formulated (Outler, editor, *John Wesley*, 150):

> Q. 12. Can faith be lost but through disobedience?
>
> A. It cannot. A believer first inwardly disobeys…. Then his intercourse with God is lost, *i.e.*, and after this [he is] like unto another man.
>
> Q. 13. How can such a man recover faith?
>
> A. By repenting and doing the first works.

The Lutherans as well as the Arminians teach that a regenerated person can nullify his regeneration. Mueller (*Christian Dogmatics*, 354) writes,

> It is clear doctrine of Scripture that believers in Christ may fall from grace or lose their faith, Luke 8:13, 14; I Tim. 1:19. This is proved also by the examples of David and Peter. This truth must be emphasized over against the Calvinists, who affirm that believers, when committing mortal sins, lose indeed the exercise of faith, but not faith itself.2

But let us continue with the Arminians.

Since Wesley says that the believer may through disobedience lose his faith and his intercourse with God, and can only recover his faith by that "evil" repentance and first works, Wesley must, if consistent, assert that a man once regenerated can nonetheless fail to arrive in Heaven and on the contrary be eternally lost in Hell. If he is not to be lost, it appears that he must be regenerated a second time. Scripture contains no such idea. Regeneration initiates an everlasting life.

Calvinistic perseverance versus Wesleyan sinlessness is the main point in this discussion of sanctification, but first here is Wesley's reference to Calvinism made the same day.

> Q. 23. Wherein may we come to the very edge of Calvinism?
>
> A. 1. In ascribing all good to the free grace of God.[!] 2. In denying all natural free will and all power antecedent to grace. And 3. In excluding all merit from man, even for what he has or done by the grace of God.

With respect to sanctification more precisely, the formulations of Wednesday, June 17, 1747, were:

> Q. 1. How much is allowed by our brethren who differ from us with regard to entire sanctification?... But what do we

allow them?

A. We grant: 1. That many of those who have died in the faith…were not sanctified throughout…till a little before death. 2. That the term "sanctified" is continually applied by Paul to all that were justified…. 4. That consequently it is not proper to use it in that sense [saved from all sin] without adding the word "wholly," "entirely," or the like….

Q. 3. What then is the point wherein we divide?

A. It is this: whether we should expect to be saved from all sin before the article of death?

Q. 4. Is there any clear Scripture promise of this – that God will save us from all sin?

A. There is. "And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities," Psalm 130:8. "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you…. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you," Ezekiel 36:25, 29. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Corinthians 7:1.

In the following Question and Answer he quotes:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3:8; "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;…that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and

without blemish," Ephesians 5:25, 27; and "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Romans 8:3, 4.

Q. 6. Does the New Testament afford any further ground for expecting to be saved from all sin?

A. Undoubtedly it does. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," Matthew 6:13; "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thessalonians 5:23; also John 17:10-23 and Ephesians 3:14, 16-19…. Prayers for entire sanctification, were there no such thing, would be a mockery of God….

Q. 9. But how does it appear that this is to be done before death?

A. First, from the very nature of the command, which is not given to the dead but unto the living.

He then quotes *Titus* 2:11-14 and *Luke* 1:69-75.

The significance of all these verses must not be passed over in silence; but before their consideration it is well to record Wesley's rejection of some points on which he was misunderstood.

On Tuesday, August 15, 1758, the formulation was: "Q. Did you affirm that perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake? A. We continually affirm just the contrary." And a few lines below he adds, "Everyone may *mistake* [*italics* his] as long as he lives."

However, to continue with Wesley's ideas and exact words. He explains that perfection does not mean perfect complete knowledge or omniscience; nor does it rule out incorrect interpretations of the Scripture – even blatant heresy? – "nor can we expect till then after death to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection belongeth not to this life…. But if you would infer [from David's andAbraham's sins] that all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live, this consequence we utterly deny" (Outler, editor,*John Wesley*, 254, 257, 260).

Wesley argues at length that it is invalid to infer from the fact of David's sin, of Peter's denial, or of other apostles' sins, that no one can attain sinlessness before death. Wesley is clearly correct in labeling such arguments fallacies: "The holiest men among the Jews did sometimes commit sin." No one need demur at his pointing out the fallacy. The inference is indeed invalid; but this does not mean that the conclusion should be denied. A conclusion can be true for some other reason than the silly premise of a stupid syllogism. For example, All dogs are vertebrates; George Washington crossed the Delaware; therefore David wrote the twenty-third Psalm. Obviously the conclusion does not follow from the premises. A reverse example is: All the heroes of Homer's *Iliad* died young; Alexander was a hero of Homer's *Iliad* therefore Alexander died young. Here two *false* premises *validly* imply a *true* conclusion. To be a good theologian, one must know how to use syllogisms.

The last quotation from Wesley was made for the purpose of showing that Wesley affirms the possibility and the actuality of some men's achieving entire sinlessness before death. He relies on John's words, "he that is born of God sinneth not;" and he emphasizes "their plain, natural, and obvious meaning." But he fails to notice that this plain, natural, and obvious meaning would guarantee sinless perfection to every Christian from the moment of his regeneration on. John did not restrict his

statement to a few octogenariansaints. He speaks to all his Christian readers. Wesley merely remarks that John did not contradict himself when he also said, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,” because even the man who has attained sinless perfection sinned earlier in life. Then he adds, “We fix his conclusion: a Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.” If this were so, then Wesley was not a Christian when he wrote these words.

This raises the question whether Wesley had a correct idea of sin. It is hard to see how he can accommodate David’s declaration, “I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This does not refer to adultery on his mother’s part. It means thatDavid was guilty of sin before he was born. But aside from any rejection of original sin, though one must insist on its implications for overt sinful acts, Wesley seems deficient on these too. Can no “mistake” be sinful? Of course the Calvinist holds that a mistake in arithmetic is a noetic effect of sin. Are not all mistakes such? Ignorance *per se* need not be sin, for God has not revealed all truth to us; but are not mistakes in understanding Scripture sin? The Calvinist does not limit sin to voluntary transgressions. He holds that “any want of conformity unto” as well as any “transgression of the law of God” is sin. Wesley’s view of sin is essentially Romish. Maybe even worse if he insists that there is no inherited guilt.

In this argument it is interesting to see Wesley relying on the “plain, natural, and obvious meaning” of John’s words, and then to note his attack on Calvinism, where he rejects the plain and obvious meaning of “elect from the foundation of the world” and revises it to “they were not actually elect, or believers, till many ages after, in their several generations” (*Predestination Calmly Considered*, XVIII).

Wesley must also understand *Romans* 7 as a description of Paul's early life, which therefore has no bearing on his later life or on the achievements of other Christians. But *Romans* 6, 7, and 8 are not a mere personal biography of Paul. They answer the antinomian objections of the Pharisees, and thus they are a statement about the Christian life as such. If *Romans* 7 seems to be disheartening, one ought to remember that the chapter divisions are not in the manuscripts, and that *Romans* 7:25 and 8:1*ff* are its conclusion.

Note that *Romans* 7:22 could be said only of a regenerated person. The man here delights in the law of God, and further the phrase "the inward man" rather clearly suggests "the new man" of other verses. Then too, the war described, with the armor of *Ephesians*6:11*ff*, can only occur in a Christian life. Finally the man himself, Paul the apostle, thanks God for a future deliverance and a present "no condemnation." This cannot be the case of one who enjoys only a "no-good" repentance.

It is now time to consider the passages which Wesley uses to defend his doctrine of sinless perfection. There were four groups of these given in the preceding quotations. The first group was: *Psalm* 130:8, "He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." *Ezekiel*36:24-25, "I will take you from the nations… and bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols…." *Second Corinthians* 7:1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilements of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

It should be evident to everyone that *Psalm* 130:8 does not promise sinless perfection before death. Any true Christian, even while at a deplorably low degree of sanctification, can say truly that God has redeemed me from all my iniquities. He has been

bought by the blood of Christ and is redeemed. Even if an Arminian object to such a strong statement, and if he wants to equate redemption with sinless perfection, the verse does not say "in this life, before the article of death." The verse is a prediction of the future and not a statement of a past or present fact.

The passage in *Ezekiel* can and most probably does refer to the return of the dispersed Jews to their own land. If this be so, it holds out no promise of sinless perfection to Gentiles. Nor does it clearly promise sinless perfection to any Jew. Whatever it promises, it promises to the whole nation, and surely the Jews were not all sinless from 400 bc to ad 30. The most obvious reference is to the cessation of idolatry. Considering the history of the era, it can scarcely mean much more.

The third passage is addressed to the Christians at Corinth, and by implication to all other Christians. It is an exhortation to cleanse ourselves of all defilement. Wesley thinks it would be deceit or fraud for God to command anything impossible for us to accomplish. The *Shorter Catechism* says, "No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." *Romans* 3:9, 10 and 8:8; *Galatians* 5:17; and *1 John* 1:8 are all accurately reflected in the *Catechism*. If not, then God never imposed any commandments on the unregenerate, and if there is no law, there can be no condemnation, so that the unregenerate are automatically sinless.

God commits no fraud in commanding the impossible. Must Calvinism insist that Paul should have said, "Cleanse yourselves of all defilement except x, y, and z"? We are to perfect our holiness as a student of French tries to *perfectionner son français*. But of courseWesley argues, as did Pelagius before him, that since ability limits responsibility, perfection does not require an American tongue to pronounce French perfectly. Such

a maxim conflicts with the doctrine of total depravity and the fact that the unregenerate man is dead in sin and utterly unable to do any spiritual good. The only way Wesley can apply the commandments to sinners is to assert theirability to please God. But the Scriptures say that without faith it is impossible to please God; and yet the unregenerate is under obligation to keep the commandments. It has already been mentioned, and it will become clearer later on, that Wesley minimizes the seriousness of sin by his lack of ability to speak French.

The second group of verses Wesley uses to defend sinless perfection is: *1 John* 3:8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." *Ephesians* 5:25, 27, "…as Christ also loved the church… that he might present it to himself…having no spot or wrinkle… holy and blameless."

Without quoting *Romans* 8:3, 4 we may note the confusion of mind that plagues Wesley in his use of these two passages. If *1 John*3:8 teaches sinless perfection before death, in that the works of the devil shall be destroyed, then the perfect Christian should not die.Death is the work of the devil, and, with the grave, is to be thrown into the lake of fire. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. Therefore if Christ is to destroy the works of the devil, without exception, death must also be destroyed before we die. As said before, Wesley was not a very profound thinker.

The same type of reply applies also to his use of *Ephesians* 5:25, 27. Aside from the fact that the reference is rather clearly to an eschatological future, its application to the present age would imply that all the members of the church are to have no spot or wrinkle and be holy and blameless in the present age. This implies that Calvinists are not in the church and that Arminians are all perfect. Similarly, if *Ephesians* 3:16-19 imply sinlessness before death, they would also imply a

veritable deification – all the fulness of God – and that too in the present life.

There is one more point. Arminians sometimes use *Hebrews* 6:4-6 to prove their theory of losing eternal life. Here are some persons who were once enlightened and had been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, but who have now fallen away. A Calvinist may try to understand "enlightened" and "partaker" in some external sense, such that a not too vicious sinner, attending church through custom, is restrained from grosser sins. But more likely the Calvinist will maintain that verse nine shows the passage to be, in grammatical terminology, a condition contrary to fact. At any rate, if this were not so, the Arminian still can take no pleasure in the passage, for whereas Wesley says that the fallen man must repent over again and repeat the first works, this passage says it is impossible for such people to renew themselves to repentance.

If the student wishes to examine the many other passages Wesley uses, he would do well to consult a half dozen commentaries. He will find that the same general type of reply as made here can be applied to them also. However, the subject is not yet exhausted, for the Bible teaches perseverance. This is the positive side of which the negative was the rejection of repetitive regenerations and sinless perfection.

1. *John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler (Oxford University Press, 1964), 205.

2. The term *exercise* here is too vague to determine whether this is a correct statement of Calvinism.

The discussion now begins to become complex. In opposition to Wesleyanism, one could launch into the doctrine of perseverance. But this doctrine is also an answer, or at least a partial answer to questions about assurance, and assurance is part of the doctrine ofsanctification. Therefore we shall first examine assurance, as explained by Bishop Ryle; and after that we shall try to complete this part of the subject by an examination of perseverance.

Bishop J. C. Ryle, a most devout Christian, wrote a now well-known book on *Holiness* (reprinted by Kregel, 1952). Its second chapter has the title “Sanctification.” He defends the importance of the doctrine by saying, “Unless we are sanctified, we shall not besaved” (15). The *Catechism* defines “Sanctification [as] the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live unto righteousness.” Bishop Ryle says much the same thing: “Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when he calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from his sins in his own blood, but he also *separates* him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life. The instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the Word of God.”

Here Bishop Ryle has gone beyond the *definition* of sanctification, as neither the *Shorter* nor the *Larger Catechism* does, and adds a statement of the method by which sanctification can be carried on. It is the study of the Word. The present treatise very strongly recommends Bible study, very strongly indeed.

Bishop Ryle, however, seems to allow an exception: “generally the Word of God, though he [the Spirit] sometimes uses afflictions and providential visitations ‘without the word’ (*1*

Peter 3:1).” That God may use afflictions for this purpose can hardly be doubted; but one may doubt that sanctification can ever proceed without the Word. The verse Ryle uses does not really support his wording. Peter pictures a Christian wife of a pagan husband. She has already given him the Word, and he remains stubbornly disobedient to it. Thus the man already knows the Gospel, and it annoys him. Repetition would only irritate him further. Therefore Peter advises the wife to cease her preaching the Word and to win him by her pious *behavior* (the *King James* term *conversation* is an antiquated usage). But it should be obvious to all that no man can be won to Christ without having heard the Gospel. Furthermore, Ryle is supposedly speaking of sanctification. Peter refers to regeneration. If then Ryle’s interpretation of Peter were true, a man could beregenerated without the Word and faith would not come by hearing. But no one is regenerated without the Gospel except those very few and exceptional cases who, like John the Baptist, were regenerated in their mother’s womb. It is even more impossible to be sanctified without the Scriptures, for only the Word instructs us in the methods to be used.

If anyone object to these remarks as carping criticism of a godly man, Bishop Ryle himself justifies them. “The subject before us is of such deep and vast importance that it requires fencing, guarding, clearing up, and marking out on every side. A doctrine which is needful to salvation can never be too sharply developed or brought too fully to light.” And he continues in this vein for several more lines. If Ryle thought such exactitude a desideratum in the nineteenth century, how much more is it necessary in this sloppy, anti-doctrinal, anti-intellectual twentieth century! The present age has modified a line of poetry and acts on the principle, “Ignorance is bliss, ‘tis folly to be wise.” A certain Presbytery in 1981 licensed a seminary graduate after an

examination in which he was not able to answer a single question put to him. Unfortunately I was the only presbyter who asked him a question. Well, maybe, fortunately.Sanctification depends on a knowledge of the Word, and God's Word is worthy of "fencing, guarding, clearing up, and marking out on every side."

This emphasis on Bible study and doctrine can never be too great and hardly ever too much repeated. Toward the end of his book Ryle (with more devotion to the Church of England than I like) produces a monumental paragraph, needed today much more than then.

> The men who have done most for the Church of England, and made the deepest mark on their day and generation, have always been men of most decided and distinct doctrinal views. It is the bold, decided, outspoken man, like Capel Nolyneux, or our grand old Protestant champion Hugh McNeile, who makes a great impression, and sets people thinking, and "turns the world up-side down." It was "dogma" in the apostolic ages which emptied theheathen temples and shook Greece and Rome. It was "dogma" which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation and spoiled the Pope of one third of his subjects. It was "dogma" which 100 years ago revived the Church of England in the days of Whitefield, Wesley, Venn, andRomaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame .... Let us cling to decided doctrinal views, whatever some may please to say in these times, and we shall do well for ourselves, well for others, well for the Church of England, and well for Christ's cause in the world. (298)

Omit the name of Wesley and reduce the Church of England to one reference, and the whole could have come down *senkrecht vom oben*.

Realizing, in opposition to Wesley, that *Romans* 7 describes Christian struggles and not an unregenerate lack of struggle, Ryle comforts Christians by pointing out that the struggle is itself an evidence of sanctification rather than an evidence of its lack (21). He explicitly rejects "sinless perfection." His interests lead him to picture what seems to have been a common phenomenon of religion in England, but one that can hardly be found in America today. His aim is to show what sanctification is not. The first point is:

> True sanctification then does not consist in *talk about religion*. This…ought never to be forgotten [note the emphasis]. The vast increase of education in these latter days makes it absolutely necessary to raise a warning voice. People hear so much of Gospel truth that they contract an unholy familiarity with its words and phrases and sometimes talk so fluently about its doctrines that you might think them true Christians. (24)

Today in America public education has so silenced the teaching of the Bible, while utilizing pornographic text-books, that about the only Biblical event that most people know is the story of David and Goliath. Some do not know even that. I have had students in the university who told me they had never read a single line in the Bible at all. They know all about sex and drugs, but nothing about sanctification. Of course, Ryle is right in denying that sanctification is "flippant language… about 'conversion, the Savior, the Gospel, finding peace, free grace;'" but today if the term *conversion* is sometimes used, the Savior is not mentioned, and *free grace* conveys no meaning whatever. Would that there were some hypocrites in this era: It would be evidence of social improvement.

Ryle continues to show what sanctification is not. It is not the "animal excitement" produced by wild evangelistic campaigns. Nor does it consist in the opposite "outward formalism and external devoutness" (28): "constant attendance on church services, reception of the Lord's Supper, and observance of fasts and saints days, in multiplied bowings and turnings…and the use of pictures and crosses." This denial is still pertinent for Romanism and Anglicanism, but otherwise unimportant today. What may be more to the point in the case of Pentecostals and holiness groups today is his denial that sanctification consists in "retirement from our place in life." Ryle has in mind "monasteries and convents," but the phrase can include the less extreme forms such as the Mennonites' white bonnet. There was also the girl of marriageable age who, when asked politely, not superciliously, by a secular gentleman, what were the tenets of her religion, answered, "Well, in the first place, we do not wear

lipstick.” The gentleman made no reply to her, but later he told others he could not be interested in what came in second place. No doubt a Christian woman should be modest, but modesty in ancient Rome was more a matter of avoiding elaborate, jeweled hairdos than bikinis.

Turning from what sanctification is not, Ryle says positively, “Genuine sanctification will show itself in *habitual respect* to *God’slaw*” and what is the same thing, “Genuine sanctification will show itself in an *habitual* endeavor to do Christ’s will” (27). In fact he repeats the same idea in five paragraphs. Once more this enforces the necessity of the major requirement for advancing insanctification, *viz.*, Bible study. The distinction between divine requirements and silly superstitions can be maintained only by a careful exegesis of Scripture.

There is one point at which I believe Ryle and others to be confused or at least careless. After quoting “There is a time to weep and a time to laugh,” Ryle declares “but there is no time, no, not a day, in which a man ought not to be holy. Are we?” This confuses two senses of the term *holy*. The Old Testament refers to things and persons as holy in being set apart for the Lord’s service. The instruments in the Tabernacle were holy; and the priests were holy, though not always sanctified. This type of holiness is not what is meant by the verse which says, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is not true that only priests, shall see the Lord. Even the verse itself apart from priests, and if detached from the rest of Scripture, can give a false impression. The point is that there are degrees of holiness and sanctification. In an absolute sense, the question, “Are we” holy, can be answered only in the negative. One should ask, Am I increasing in holiness? Ryle of course is well aware of all this, but authors, like the present also, slip into inexactitudes which can confuse careless readers. Ryle continues, “A man may go to great lengths and yet never reach

true holiness" (34). This form of expression seems to present holiness as a seamless robe, an all or nothing. Of course Ryle adds, "A holy man will*endeavor* to shun every *known* sin." He "will *strive* to be like our Lord…. A holy man will *follow after* meekness…temperance…purity of heart…" (36, 37). Then he says explicitly, "Sanctification is always a progressive work" (39). Perhaps I am overly critical of his previous inadequate phrases; but if so, it is because I have had contacts with alleged sinless perfectionists and some contemporaryPentecostalists.

The perfectionist groups, Wesleyans and Pentecostals, seem to have the idea that after a struggle or two, a Christian, a true Christian, who has the "full gospel," arrives at a state of perfect peace and victory. Foreign to their thought is the hymn

> Must I be carried to the skies,
>
> On flowery beds of ease,
>
> When others fought to win the prize,
>
> And sailed through bloody seas?

To counteract such ideas Ryle's fourth chapter warns the readers of "The Fight." In addition to the holiness groups who think they have already attained, there are others who avoid fighting only because they are not inclined to do so. The former have ostensibly stopped fighting; the latter and much more numerous group has never begun.

Ryle quotes several pertinent verses: "Fight the good fight," "mortify your members which are upon the earth," and *Romans* 7:23, 24. The difficulty in writing a "how to" book lies in the fact that the situations, the temptations, and weaknesses of individual Christians are so various that what applies concretely to one Christian is of no interest to another. Once I was faintly acquainted with a minister who had a drinking problem, on Saturday nights, too! But a hundred others are not so tempted, not in the least. I have been better

acquainted with at least four ministers who committed adultery. But I hope a thousand others have not. One minister, whom I knew slightly, during the Great Depression of the 1930s resorted to theft to feed his family. The Presbytery, in striking his name from the roll, was nonetheless very sympathetic.

Hence when Ryle says that the Christian soldier must fight the flesh, must fight the world, must fight the devil (52, 53), he speaks the truth, but says nothing very helpful. Perhaps a personal counselor could be helpful, for he would be acquainted with the individual's needs. Ryle's Scriptural quotations, of course, and his exhortations are good, and each Christian can apply them to himself. But the most important of all, because indubitably fundamental is the exhortation to study the Scripture: "A religion without doctrine ordogma is a thing which many are fond of talking of in the present day." And many, many more in this ecumenical, Neo-orthodox, existential century. But "No man will ever be anything or do anything in religion, unless he believes *something*" (57). Ryle then very properly urges a belief or faith "in our Lord Jesus Christ's person, work, and office." You and I then must apply the principles to our individual problems.

Nearly everybody, well, every serious and honest person, would profit from reading Ryle. But since there is so much repetition, it would seem better to read a page a day for ten days rather than a hundred pages at one sitting.

One subhead under the general title of Sanctification or Holiness is Assurance. Calvin and the first generation of Reformers seem to have held that assurance is inseparable from faith. Whoever is not assured of his salvation is simply not saved. This view may have been encouraged by the severity of Romish persecution, the exuberance of a newly found faith, and the utter impossibility of finding assurance in penance

and good works. But as the persecutions diminished and as calmer study could be undertaken, the Westminster divines, a full century later, wrote, “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he is partaker of it” (XVIII, 3).

I must confess I do not like the word *infallible* in this context. The Pope claims infallibility, but if this is a false claim, it seems strange that it can be asserted of a thousand or a million Protestants. One of the older divines, whose name I have forgotten, illustrated infallibility by the knowledge of a ship captain’s guiding his ship into a harbor. Though the captain was ignorant of many things, and mistaken about many others, he *infallibly* knew the channel. But is it not possible, as it actually happened in 1983 when a naval vessel struck a sand bar in San Francisco Bay, that a storm could have closed the previous channel? Scripture is infallible; nothing else is. We all can and we all do make mistakes.

Ryle does not seem to realize this. Nor do many others. Those who are so assured about assurance do not seem to understand the difficulties. Once I had a very friendly conversation with a college professor who was strongly Arminian. I remarked that one difference between Calvinism and Arminianism was that the latter denied the possibility of assurance. “Not so,” he replied, “I’m right now completely assured of my salvation. If I should die this moment, I know I would go to Heaven. Of course,” he continued, “if I should live until tomorrow or next week, I do not know whether I shall be saved or not.” This raises the question of the value ofassurance. Assurance of salvation does not mean that you will get to Heaven. Assurance that a good restaurant serves good food does not guarantee that it serves good food. My major professor in graduate school took his wife out one Saturday night to a restaurant which he had often patronized.

Before the night was over, he had died of food poisoning. His assurance had been misplaced. Many people are assured of all sorts of things. Some are sure that drinking vinegar will cure warts. But assurance guarantees nothing.

Like so many other authors, Ryle does not face the difficulties squarely. He begins by noting Paul's assurance and confidence expressed in *2 Timothy* 4:6, 7, 8. "The Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust" (101). There can be no quarrel with Ryle's four main points: (1) Paul's assurance was Scriptural; (2) a man may have no assurance and yet be saved; (3) assurance is desirable; and (4) assurance is seldom attained. No quarrel? It seems to me that millions of people, even many who do not profess to be Christians, are sure of arriving in Heaven. Quite commonly it is said that God is too good to punish anyone. Maybe Ryle's words correctly described the conditions in England a century ago, but it is doubtful that it is true in America today.

Having the opinion that assurance is rare, Ryle extends its possibility to every Christian (103). He allows that Rome denies this possibility. True. And also, "the vast majority of the worldly and thoughtless Christians among ourselves oppose the doctrine." Possibly true then, but very likely false now. However, *Job* 19:25-27, *Psalm* 23:4, 6, *Isaiah* 26:3, and 32:17, *Romans* 8:39 on to *1 John* 5:19 insist that assurance is possible. Not only was assurance possible in apostolic times, but "many have attained to such an assured hope…even in modern times" (105). This certainly seems to be what the Bible teaches; but Ryle, at least so far, has not told us how to attain such assurance and how to distinguish it from careless presumption or from what Louis Berkhof calls "temporaryfaith," so little temporary as to last a lifetime.

On the second point Ryle clearly asserts that some true "believers never arrive at this assured hope" (107). His third point, that "an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired," hardly needs any discussion at all. He spends seven pages on it.

His fourth point is "some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained." He lists "a defective view of the doctrine ofjustification." But this is far from showing that a correct understanding of justification must result in an infallible assurance. The same reply is applicable also to the second reason: "slothfulness about growth in grace." It is likely that the contraries of these deficiencies are *necessary* for assurance, but there is no evidence that they are *sufficient*. This makes the argument irrelevant. His third reason only repeats the second. And that is the end of the argument. The final three pages of the chapter are excellent exhortations to holiness, but they propose no sure method for attaining infallible surety.

Perhaps someone will say that it is wrong to seek for a method of achieving assurance. It is a gift of God, we cannot earn it; there is nothing for us to do except to hope that God favors us. Well, it is true that assurance, like faith, is a gift of God, but thoughregeneration and faith can have no preparation on our part, assurance or at least sanctification requires certain actions by us. Perhaps*method* is not the proper term, but John tells us that "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." The usual exegesis of "these things" that John wrote is that faith, love, and obedience, while they do not automatically produce assurance, are nonetheless requirements for being a candidate, so to speak, to receive it. Actually love is one form of obedience, since it is commanded, and hence belief and overt obedience are the two prerequisites.

There is, however, a difficulty. It is the same one Luther struggled with before he discovered the doctrine of justification. In Romanism he was supposed to earn his salvation by good works, penance, flagellation, and various monkish practices. But, being very sincere, he was troubled because he could never be sure that he had done enough. A similar difficulty arises here. If we wish to distinguish a valid assurance from a false assurance, how can we know that we have a sufficient theological knowledge and a sufficient degree of obedience to have met the requirements? Do we love deeply enough? Have we satisfied John's criteria? Is there any devotional writer who has forthrightly faced this problem? It is hard to believe that none of them has thought of it. If as previously stated, Louis Berkhof's temporary faith can last a lifetime, how can the true be identified in contrast with the false?

5. Perseverance

As a partial answer to the perplexities of assurance, as an unmasking of the Wesleyan divergence from Scripture, and as a further step in developing the subject of sanctification, perseverance, the fifth of the five points of the Calvinistic TULIP, compels attention.

In opposition to the Arminian doctrine that a man may be regenerate at breakfast, lost at lunch, and re-regenerated at dinner, or what is much worse, never regenerated again and finally lost, the *Westminster Confession* says, "Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved" (XVII, 1; compare 2 and 3). This doctrine is so frequently and forcefully stated, in both the Old and New

Testaments, that it is hard to explain how any Christian can be an Arminian.

To begin with, *Job* 17:9 says, “The righteous shall hold to his way, and he who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger.” This verse in the book of *Job* is a statement by Job himself and not one by his false friends who, though they may have spoken the truth at times, are condemned toward the end of the book. Hence we may trust it as true, rather than question it as possibly an evil pronouncement. The verse rather clearly, indeed unmistakably, indicates that a regenerate sinner will persevere. Though he may stumble and fall, though he may be temporarily overcome by weakness, he shall hold to his way; and not only so, but also he will grow stronger and stronger.

Next is *Psalm* 84:5-7, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are the ways of them…. They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God.” These verses also are pellucid. There is no hint of any falling away. See also *Psalm* 94:14, “The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” Then come *Psalm* 125:1-2, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever.” Establishing the doctrine of perseverance is furthered by referring to its basis in the eternal decree and in the immutability of God, as the last two verses indicate. The very nature of God, as described in the Bible, guarantees perseverance. Arminianism simply does not have the Biblical concept of God.

Then too, the words of *Isaiah* 40:28-31 should be ineradicably engraved on every Christian’s memory: “Hast thou not known the everlasting God…fainteth not neither is weary…He giveth power to the faint and…increaseth strength…they that wait upon

the Lord shall renew their strength…shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

With a great effort it is just possible to imagine an Arminian reply to these verses. Does not *Psalm* 125 refer to those "who trust in the Lord"? If they cease trusting, they will not abide forever. Similarly Isaiah speaks of those "that will wait upon the Lord:" and naturally if they get tired of waiting, they will not appear before God in Zion. This Arminian exegesis might achieve plausibility if other verses were missing such as *Psalm* 24:5-7, already quoted, and several others yet to be quoted. However, the two verses in dispute, *Psalm*125:1-2 and *Isaiah* 40:28-31, are not so easily fitted into an Arminian interpretation. The former speaks of "his people." Not only cannot they be removed, but also the Lord is round about them forever. If the Lord is round about Joe Doaks of Speedunk today, he will be round about him forever, and Joe D. can never be lost. Similarly *Isaiah* 40:28-31 indicates that there are Christians, to whom the Lord will give power and strength. If they are now waiting upon the Lord, the Lord will cause them to mount up with wings as eagles. Nor do these words apply to some Christians only. The promise is without exception.

We now pass on to *Jeremiah* 32:40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Observe carefully that the covenant is everlasting, not temporary. God will not cease to do them good. He will instill permanent devotion in their hearts, so that "they shall not turn away from me." This is another refutation of the perverse exegesis alluded to a paragraph or two ago. Notice that God will, and they shall. The fruition of the everlasting covenant depends on God's decree and power, and because of this they shall never turn away.

Since the Calvinist accuses the Arminian of proving too much by his interpretations, so the Arminian might say that the Calvinistic Jeremiah promises too much. Do not Christians turn away? Do they not sin? And does not the Calvinistic interpretation contradict the evident facts? All Christians, except a few, and these only late in life, are imperfect. We agree, except for the exception. Calvinists admit and insist that all, even those near death, continue to sin. But if the words of Jeremiah are given an Arminian interpretation, favorable to sinless perfection, a conclusion follows that no Arminian can accept, *viz.*, it is not just a few people at death's door whobecome sinless, but every Christian from the moment of conversion on. This was said before in connection with *1 John* 3:9, and it applies here as well, for there is no exception to the *they* and the *them* in *Jeremiah* 32:40; nor is the "not depart" limited to a short time before one's death.

Perseverance does not mean uninterrupted progress at the same or an ever increasing rate. In ordinary affairs we speak of a man persevering who falls, blunders, receives set-backs, but who recovers and struggles on. This is why Calvinists use and prefer the term*perseverance* rather than the Arminian deceptive phrase "eternal security." The latter in itself gives no hint of struggle; the former does.

If the Old Testament is so clear on this matter, it is really not necessary to quote the New Testament also. But as such an omission would surely be misunderstood by the Arminians, and since in any case we wish to know what the New Testament says, here are some verses.

John 10:28, 29: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. MyFather, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

It must be a most elementary student and immature Christian who is unfamiliar with *John* 10:28-29. And it must be a most confused mentality that cannot understand it correctly. “They shall never perish.” Could anything be easier or plainer? Who are the “they”? They are Christ’s sheep; Christ knows them all by name; he gives them eternal life, a life that is everlasting. Clearly a life that lasts only a year or two is not eternal. “They shall never perish” is written with a double negative, and double negatives in Greek do not make an affirmative, but an emphatic negative. As if that were not enough Christ adds, “Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Relative to this phrase I either read or heard an Arminian say that although no man can pluck a Christian out of God’s hand, the word *man* means “no other man;” but the man himself can pluck himself out of God’s hand. I have no documentation for this, and it may not be typical of all Wesleyans. But at any rate, the word in the New Testament is *tis*, anyone, including the man himself as well as Satan. Then to pile emphasis upon emphasis Jesus continues, “My Father is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

To escape such utterly unambiguous verses the Arminians are forced to invent utterly ridiculous misinterpretations, for otherwise they would have to repudiate their beloved free will and become Calvinists – a disaster not to be contemplated.

If these numerous quotations begin to bore the reader – and well they may because they all say the same thing with utter clarity – nonetheless let the reader submit to still more boredom. It makes the doctrine of perseverance painfully clear. Therefore supererogatorially we quote *Romans* 11:29, for Paul is no less clear than Jesus was. The verse may be translated “the gift and calling of God are irrevocable” (*New American Standard*). Next comes *1 Corinthians* 1:8, “…our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus

Christ." If the Arminians say that the verse teaches sinless perfection, they must accept the conclusion that all Christians will become sinless, not just some of the more superannuated. Well, all Christians will indeed become sinless at the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; but the Arminians have in mind only a very few, and these became sinless (some of them) a thousand years before the day of Christ. This is not what *1 Corinthians* 1:8 means. *Philippians* 1:6 is equally explicit, even more so, for it says that God, if ever he begins a good work, will perfect it until the day of Christ. This is utterly inconsistent with theArminian view that God fails to continue his goodness and that a regenerate Christian can finally be lost. Paul expands the sense of the verse in 2:13. He exhorts us to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling. What a fine Arminian sentiment! We must work out our own salvation! But this is not the end of the sentence; Paul continues, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." The Arminian theory of free will allows the most devout Christian to nullify God's plan by a rebellious will that God cannot control. But this verse teaches that not only does God control our external works, but also that he controls our veryvolitions. Whatever God's pleasure is for our will that we will. Now, it is God's pleasure to complete and perfect the work he began in his elect. Therefore the elect shall never perish and no one can bring them to ruin, neither Satan, nor the individual himself.

Peter agrees with Paul. In his first epistle (1:3-5) he says, "God…hath begotten us…to an inheritance incorruptible reserved for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The first line of this quotation affirms that the inheritance is incorruptible; toward the end the heirs are in view. These heirs of salvation are kept by the power of God, until their salvation is

complete at the last day. In the beginning God chose a people for salvation. These people the Father gave to Christ. Since God is immutable, he cannot relinquish his people and purpose; therefore either he lacks power and his purpose fails, or he is omnipotent and succeeds.

To bring to an end such an interminable list of verses, we shall return to *Isaiah* 14:24, 27. “The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, ‘Surely just as I have intended, so it has happened, and just as I have planned, so it will stand…. For the Lord of Hosts has planned, and who can frustrate [it, or him]? His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back?” Verse 24 is immediately directed against the Assyrians; but the reason is not that the Assyrians are weak. The argument is that God is omnipotent, and therefore one can be sure he will defeat the Assyrians because none of his purposes can fail. The Arminians must deny that God is omnipotent, assert that he changes his mind, or that he did not purpose to save anyone in particular. They must also deny omniscience, for if he really knew that Peter would be saved and that Judas would be lost, free will could never alter their destinies. Omniscience allows no alternate possibilities.

To conclude this subhead on perseverance, it is well to note – though the idea can hardly have been missed through the discussion – that perseverance is inseparably conjoined with the eternal decree, unconditional election, and the covenant of grace. Each is supported severally by various Scriptural passages, but logically they form an indestructible, systematic whole. Any other theory ofsanctification is simply not Christianity.

6. The Sacraments

To many readers it may seem strange that a discussion of the sacraments should occur in an exposition of sanctification. Does

notsanctification, negatively, have to do with resisting temptation to drunkenness, with breaking the habit of lying, with controlling anger and the tendency to malicious gossip? And positively with practicing patience, hope, aiding the poor, and having a quiet time every morning? John Bunyan's description of the Christian life in *Pilgrim's Progress* has no sacraments in it. If indeed the sacraments merit a discussion, should it not come under the heading of ecclesiology, or be given a division of its own? How can baptism and the Lord's Supper be a means of grace and advance one's degree of sanctification? Or, even if the Lord's Supper, bringing to mind the death of Christ, has some sanctifying effect, how can baptism and particularly infant baptism be productive of Christian achievement? No doubt the sacraments are commanded, and the church should administer them; but can they be means of grace by which sin is conquered and holiness advanced? Yet Charles Hodge put "The Sacraments" in chapter XX, under the title "The Means of Grace."

Something can indeed be said even for the rite of baptism. At the very least, when a baptized person witnesses the baptism of another in a church service and sees the sign of the divine promises, he is reminded of those promises; and similarly to being assured by therainbow today that God's promise to Noah is still good, he will be strengthened in his faith. But there is more, at the very least more emphasis, in the New Testament. It seems to me that superstitious sacramentalism has its opposite extreme in the carelessness and lack of reverence found both in some of the evangelistic independent churches and also in the socialistic leftwing denominations. A sincere Christian should try to be entirely Scriptural. The apostle Paul frequently exhorts the Christians to consider their baptism, and he appeals to it in connection with their sanctification. *Romans* 6 is

addressed to those who had been baptized sometime in the past: “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (*Romans* 6:3, 4).

Therefore [!] we ought to live a life of sanctification and struggle against sin. This chapter, where Paul refutes the antinomian charges against justification by faith, makes emphatic use of the significance of baptism. Note *Romans* 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him [in the baptism into Christ’s death] that – in order that – the body of sin might be destroyed….”

Further Paul’s appeals to baptism as significant for sanctification are found in *Galatians* 3:27 and *Colossians* 2:11, both of which should be understood in the context of their respective chapters.

If now this is sufficient to indicate some connection between the sacraments and sanctification, it is requisite to study the nature of asacrament as such, *i.e.*, the characteristics common to both sacraments, and then the special characteristics of each one. The questions that arise with respect to the sacraments as such include (1) the definition of a sacrament, (2) the identification or number ofsacraments, and (3) their force, value, or significance. Without this knowledge sanctification will be retarded.

The answer to the first of these questions also determines the answer to the second. What is a sacrament? The *Shorter Catechism*replies, “A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.”

Romanism holds that there are seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, andmatrimony. Although the Council of Trent insists that all of these were

instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, extreme unction and matrimony seem to have no such basis. Extreme unction has no Biblical basis at all, and matrimony, certainly ordained of God, is not restricted to Christians. Orders or ordination is a New Testament procedure, for *1 Timothy* refers to bishops and deacons, and in 4:14 speaks of ordination by the presbytery. The ministry, however, is not a sensible sign representing something it is literally not. Water is. If confirmation is the reception into the congregation of a new communicant member, it too is not a sign; nor does there seem to be in the New Testament any rite of reception other than baptism. Penance, as practiced by Romanism, might be a sensible sign, but it is regularly regarded as the actual suffering of a penalty. At any rate, *repentance*, as taught in Scripture, is not a sign, but a literal reality. Therefore the only *sensible signs*, *representing the benefits of the new covenant*, and *instituted by Christ*, are the signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The more important point, however, is the significance and efficacy of the sacraments. Although Canon VII of the seventh session of Trent (March 3, 1547) speaks of receiving the sacraments *rightly – etiam si rite ea suscipiant –* the adverb *rite* merely means "according to the customary usage." Thus in the next canon there occurs the phrase that Protestants have always condemned: "*exopere operato*." The canon reads, "If anyone saith that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *through the act performed*, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of grace: let him be anathema." And the next canon speaks of baptism, confirmation, and orders as "imprinting in the soul a character, that is, a certain spiritual and indelible sign,…"To insure that imprinting, the only internal disposition, as differentiated from simply "going through the motions," *ex opere operato*, is the intention of the priest to do what the church

does (Canon XI). As Attwater's *Catholic Dictionary* says, "Sacrament: A sacred sensible sign…to confer that [sanctifying] grace on the soul of the recipient. A sacrament is not fulfilled *by the fact that one believes in it* [Protestant italics] but by the fact that it is made…. Sacraments cause grace…."

Note here that a recipient's belief in the sacrament does not make it efficacious. It takes effect "by the fact that it is made" – *ex opere operato*. Whether the recipient believes or does not believe seems immaterial. Romanists admit, we grant, that if the recipient imposes some obstacle in the ceremony, the sacrament has no effect. But such an obstacle is not so much ignorance or a lack of faith as it is a deliberate rejection of the sacrament's function. The sacrament works, *ex opere operato*, in infants, in the ignorant, and even in pagans who carelessly or with a shrug of the shoulders permit a priest to go through the motions. The recipient need not believe in the efficacy of the sacrament. Only the priest need believe, or at least intend to do what the church says.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* apparently tries to avoid the opprobrium of such a doctrine and uses language that seems to require faith in the recipient. But, first, this hardly agrees with the official position of the Roman church that the sacrament works *ex opere operato*. And in the second place the words of the *Encyclopedia* may require nothing more than implicit faith, which is no better than ignorance and may comport with undiscovered heresy.

Protestants sometimes refer to this view as reducing the sacraments to the level of magic; and one can also observe priests mumbling some Latin phrases over crucifixes and other pieces of jewelry. The force of this distaste for Romish ceremonies, however, does not lie precisely in the word *magic*: but rather the more profound and Biblical position

that God does not use magic. Magic formulas are supposed to work automatically, *ex opere operato*, regardless of belief in them. But the Scriptures show that God requires knowledge,understanding, faith, and sincerity on the part of the worshipper. Repentance is a change of mind, not the act of wearing a hair shirt; and it is a change of mind, not on the part of a priest, but on the part of the convert. Repentance, participating in a sacrament, likeprayer – prayer that God will receive – demands sincerity and obedience. In the prophecy of *Isaiah* God issues appalling denunciations against the Israelites in their no doubt meticulous ritualism. Not only were their *sacrifices* abominations, but God also refused to hear their *prayers*. Jesus, too, in *Matthew* 15:8 quotes *Isaiah* 29 and says, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, ‘This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.’” Does this really mean that if the priest had good intentions, it made no difference whether or not the people believed in it?

In opposition to the Romish position that a sacrament conveys grace to a recipient even though he does not believe in it, the following data are applicable:

Acts 2:41: Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

Acts 10:47: Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Romans 4:11: And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also….

The force of the two verses in *Acts* does not lie in any explicit assertion that the recipient must be a believer. They state that the recipients in question were as a matter of fact believers. Their force, however, depends on the absence, throughout Scripture, of any commendatory examples of unbelieving recipients. In the case of infant baptism the parents must have faith; but this apparent exception, which Baptists will no doubt emphasize, is to be considered below under baptism. The other sacraments, however, are administered to adults: eucharist, penance, orders, matrimony, confirmation, extr eme unction. Now, it seems peculiar that the sacrament of orders, the ordination of a priest, is effective even though the ordinand does not believe in it. The result is that an unbelieving priest can then administer these rites with effect, if only, while he does not believe in them, he still intends to do what the church intends.

But back to the last list of verses. More positive than the first two is *Romans* 4:11. The sacrament is there described as the seal of the faith which the recipient had before he received the sacrament. This passage is not to be taken simply as one instance among many, as the verses in *Acts* were. On the contrary, this passage describes the institution and purpose of the sacrament. If circumcision was instituted as a sign of the faith Abraham already had, then the Romanists have no grounds for asserting that in other instances the recipient need not be a believer. The same point is emphasized in *Romans* 2:25-29: "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but…. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly…but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly…of the heart, in the spirit…."

Unrighteousness nullifies the rite. The outward motions or the outward profession is useless. He is a believer who is one inwardly. The situation described in these verses allows the priest to be pious and sincere. He may have the strongest intentions to do what the church does. But if the recipient is an

unbeliever, the priest's ministrations are useless. It is not the performance of the ritual, nor the intention of the priest, but the belief of the recipient that makes the sacrament.

Consider the following as well:

> *1 Corinthians* 11:27-29: Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body.
>
> *1 Peter* 3:21: The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The first of the above two passages is utterly conclusive against Romanism. It states that a person may partake of the Lord's Supper and instead of receiving grace will receive condemnation, as being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. In such a case the sacrament is not effective *ex opere operato*. With this warning the Apostle commands the prospective recipient to examine himself. The individual must assure himself that he believes, and only so should he receive the elements. And then verse 29 repeats the sentence of damnation on unbelievers, or a sentence of sickness and physical death on careless believers. This is decisive and incontrovertible. The verse in *1 Peter* corroborates the preceding by insisting on a good conscience – regardless of how other phrases in the verse are exegeted. But since *1 Peter* is not so detailed and explicit, nothing further than corroboration need be made of it.

If it now be agreed that the recipient must have faith, even if in an unusual and regrettable case the minister does not, Protestants

are willing to say that the sacraments are effective means of grace. But the grace and the effect are not what Rome says they are.

It is therefore requisite to make a few more remarks on the efficacy of sacraments. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ceremonies commanded by Christ. Therefore the church must administer them until Christ returns. They are signs: Baptism signifies purification, and the Supper pictures Christ's death. The sacraments are also seals which confirm our faith, and as such are means of grace. A seal, in earlier legal practice, showed that a document was genuine. If seals are no longer so widely used, at least they were familiar necessities in Biblical times (compare *1 Kings* 21:8, *Nehemiah* 9:38, *Isaiah* 8:16, *Jeremiah* 32:10, *Daniel* 12:4). In the case ofAbraham and his descendants, circumcision was the seal God placed on his promises. One might argue that God and God's promises do not need seals: nevertheless God used seals to strengthen our assurance.

However, if God has made no promises, if the document is blank, if there is nothing to seal, the seal obviously is useless. Hence with the seal there must also be the Scripture whose truth is thereby authenticated. Sacraments are not to be celebrated apart from the Word.

A magical formula operates of itself; it needs nothing further. Hence Romish worship most frequently has its sacraments without the Word, whereas Calvinism always stresses the sermon – the preaching of the Word. Without the Word the sacrament seals nothing. For a sacrament to be effective, it must be understood; and the more extensive the understanding the greater the effect. SupposeNebuchadnezzar had sent a sealed document to the Chinese. Unless the Chinese had a translator, the document would mean nothing to them. This is why the

Protestants from the first insisted on translating the Bible into the common languages, while the Roman church, until only a few years ago, opposed translations for the people. Incidentally, this is also why Paul insists that the miraculous gift of speaking in foreign languages, during the apostolic age, should not be used in public unless translation were also given. Thus “There is never any sacrament,” says Calvin, “without an antecedent promise of God, to which it is subjoined as an appendix…. Asacrament consists of the Word and the outward sign. For we ought to understand the *word*, not of a murmur uttered without any meaning or faith, a mere whisper like a magical incantation…but of the gospel preached…” (*Institutes* IV xiv 3, 4).

While far from exhaustive, this is perhaps enough on the sacraments as such. Some omissions will be filled in as each sacrament is discussed separately.

Baptism

Virtually all churches that claim to be Christian administer the rite of baptism. Exceptions are the Salvation Army and the Quakers. Such groups are guilty of disobeying God’s command, for the command to baptize and the command to teach the Gospel occur in the same verse: *Matthew* 28:19: “Teach all nations, baptizing them....” *Acts* 2:38: “Repent and be baptized.”

The solemnity of the sacrament, and the necessity that the church should administer baptism – though baptism is not absolutely necessary for the salvation of a given individual – can be seen in the formula Christ imposed: “…baptizing them in the name of theFather, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

This formula should always be used. The minister may say “I baptize thee…,” or, “Robert, child of the covenant, I baptize thee…” or even, “This servant is now baptized…,” but always it

must be “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” But the formula itself is not enough. The recipient must have believed and must have repented, if he is an adult. The minister ought also to believe in the sacrament. If a false minister is pastor of a truly Christian congregation – and this has frequently and unfortunately been the case in the twentieth century – his administration of the rite does not nullify it, for the essential point is the faith of the recipient. But if the rite is performed in and by a heretical or apostate church, then even if the formula is used, it is used only as a mockery, in rejection of God’s Word, not only by the minister individually and unknown to the congregation, but officially by the denomination, known publicly. Such a ceremony is not Christian baptism.

Now although nearly all professing churches practice the rite of baptism, they do not all practice it in the same way or with the same intent. The points of difference include (1) by what external means should baptism be administered, (2) who should administer therite, (3) to whom should it be administered, and (4) with what intent, that is, what is the meaning of the rite and what does it accomplish?

The first of these questions divides in two. Should water alone, or could sand also, be used? The churches that teach baptismal regeneration, to be discussed as point (4), insist that baptism is essential to salvation. Now, it is obvious that the thief on the cross was not baptized with water. For his sake and for the sake of others who may be converted in unusual circumstances – dying of thirst in the middle of the Sahara – the Roman church allows baptism by sand; or if on barren rock or without human companions, baptism “of desire” will do.

There is something strange in this. Canon II on Baptism (March 3, 1547) reads, “If anyone say that true and natural water is not of necessity for baptism...let him be anathema.” Canon V then

adds, “If anyone saith that baptism is...not necessary unto salvation, let him be anathema.” But, then, Canon IV on the Sacrament in General (same session) had already said, “If anyone saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation…and that without them, or *without the desire* thereof….” Hence Romanism allows for a baptism without water and without any visible sign or motions. This does not agree with the New Testament. Its examples and its precepts show that water is essential to baptism, but baptism is not essential to Heaven.

This leads to the second half of question one: If baptism can be administered only by the application of water, should the water bepoured, sprinkled, or should the person be totally immersed? Some such question was raised in the early sub-apostolic church. While it should be maintained that the Scripture alone, and not the immature and confused second century church, settles the question, some instruction can be gained from the *Didache*¯. In chapter seven it says, “Baptize…in running water, but if thou hast no running water, baptize in other water, and if thou canst not in cold [because the convert is old and infirm?] then in warm. But if thou hast neither [how could the church have neither, and do the following?], pour water three times on the head….” As a testimony to the practices of the early second century, it shows that water was essential, and that it could be applied by pouring. The mention of running water might suggest to some the method of immersion, though this would be an invalid inference; and one also wonders why baptism could not be performed in a lake.

Lutherans and Calvinists do not insist on just one specific method of applying the water. The Lutherans generally pour, as the*Didache*¯ indicates. The Calvinists generally sprinkle. But both acknowledge that immersion is permissible. The Baptists of course hold that immersion is essential and that sprinkling and

pouring are not permissible. One reason the former resist immersion is that too many people think it is necessary, and to accede to their erroneous notions would be to strengthen a wrong idea.

One part of the Baptist defense is that Christ, after being baptized by John, came *out of* the water (*Matthew* 3:16). The preposition, however, is *apo*, which means *away from*. For example, *Acts* 3:19 “from the presence of the Lord;” and *Acts* 5:41, “from the presence of the council,” and *Acts* 7:45, “from before the face of our fathers.” Hence this preposition gives no support to immersion: Jesus walked away from the Jordan river. Another Baptist verse would be *Acts* 8:38-39. Both Philip and the eunuch “went down into the water,” and they both “came up out of the water.” In this case the people went into and came out of the water – the prepositions are*eis* and *ek*. They surely got their feet wet. But if this meant immersion, Philip would have been immersed as well as the eunuch, for the motions indicated apply to both.

So much for prepositions. Another part of the Baptist argument depends on the verb *baptizo*.

The verb *bapto* occurs only three times in the New Testament, and in none of these is the reference to baptism. The verb means to dip – the end of the finger, a morsel of bread, or a robe. On the other hand *baptizo* occurs about eighty times, plus about twenty-five instances of *baptisma* and *baptismos*. Whether these words are precise synonyms for immersion can be discovered by examining their usage. It is strictly a matter of the Greek language.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, made about 200 bc, in *Daniel* 4:33 (*LXX*, 4:30), states that Nebuchadnezzar was baptized with the dew of heaven. He may thus have been very wet, but he certainly was not immersed.

While the Apocrypha is not canonical, it is nonetheless a Jewish production in the Greek language, and as such is evidence of what the word meant in those days. *Ecclesiasticus* 34:25 (*LXX* 34:30) connects the verb *baptize* with purification. One must wash or baptize oneself after touching a dead body. *Numbers* 19:13, 20 show that purification from contact with dead bodies was performed by sprinkling. Hence the verb in the Apocrypha designates sprinkling.

In the New Testament the verb for baptize and another verb for washing are interchangeable. For example, *Luke* 11:38 uses baptize for washing the hands before meals, while *Matthew* 15:2, 20 and *Mark* 7:3 use the other verb for the same thing.

Mark 7:4*ff* says that cups, pots, and couches were baptized. It may be that the word *couches* is the insertion of a copyist and should not be regarded as a part of Scripture. But the point here is merely Greek usage. The copyist knew Greek and he wrote that couches were baptized. Now, a cup would very likely be immersed; a brazen vessel would be more difficult to immerse; but it can hardly be credited that couches, on which several people reclined at dinner, had to be immersed. Their baptism was simply a washing.

Hebrews 9:10, 13, 19, 21 are exceptionally clear. Baptist works on baptism do not give a satisfactory explanation of these verses. Alexander Carson is one of the best Baptist defenders of immersion; yet his discussion of these verses is lamentably weak. On one occasion a very good Baptist friend and a fine Biblical student when asked how he interpreted these verses changed the subject and did not reply. Of course, Carson’s poor attempt, and the failure to find a better Baptist attempt are not conclusive. But the verses in*Hebrews* are conclusive.

In Greek the divers washings of *Hebrews* 9:10 are divers *baptisms*. Let everyone check for himself. Even if one cannot read Greek, he can see that the word begins with *b*, and the third letter is the algebraic sign for *pi* (p). There are a *t* (t) and an *i* (i) easily recognizable. The whole word therefore is baptisms. These washings were of course purifications. Now, all the purifications mentioned in this chapter of *Hebrews* were performed by sprinkling. Some of these sprinklings were sprinklings of blood. Others were with water, as in verse 19. No doubt one of the Old Testament passages alluded to is *Leviticus* 14:50-52, where both blood and water were sprinkled. The passage in *Hebrews* then concludes with references to purging and purification. It follows therefore that the action of sprinkling can be referred to as a baptism.

After so much heavy argument, the discussion on the mode of baptism will have to be concluded with a bit of humor; though I trust it will not offend my good Baptist friends. In *1 Corinthians* 10:1, 2 the Israelites are said to have been baptized in the cloud and in the sea. In *1 Peter* 3:20 the flood is said to represent baptism. Now, while the Israelites and Noah may have been sprinkled a little, it was the others who were immersed.

The conclusion here is that Scripture nowhere requires immersion; that no clear cases of immersion are described; that sprinkling and pouring were common; and hence to insist on immersion is to add to God’s requirements.

The second point listed above was a minor one: Who should administer the rite? Anyone? Even a heretic or pagan? Or only an ordained minister? The answer to this question depends largely on the efficacy of baptism. Rome, and with qualifications the Lutherans also, hold that baptism produces regeneration. Rome makes baptism absolutely essential to salvation, and invents a place, neither Heaven nor Hell, for infants who die

unbaptized. Hence Rome allows anyone, pagans or heretics, to baptize. If the Lutherans rule out pagans and heretics, they at least allow any Christian believer including women, to perform the rite.

The Calvinists usually frown on lay baptism. Since Christ appointed a form of government for his church, and since he indicated the election of officers to administer its ordinances, the regularly ordained minister is the proper person to perform the rites. It is reported that the Huguenots, during the terrible sufferings of their persecution, having no ordained ministers, went for years without the sacraments. Or, running great danger, they would try to smuggle a young candidate for the ministry out to Geneva for ordination and then smuggle him back again. But the Scottish Presbyterians held that exceptional circumstances may cautiously call for irregular procedures. Thus Charles Hodge (*Systematic Theology*, Volume III, 525) says, "for any man, under ordinary circumstances, not duly appointed, to assume the functions of the ministry, is irregular and wrong." The wording seems to allow irregularities in extraordinary circumstances. In fact, what is worse than lay baptisms, some Puritans, in prison and about to be executed, celebrated the Lord's Supper alone. We honor and sympathize with the martyrs; but the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, are congregational affairs, requiring the preaching of the Word. It is therefore strange that a Puritan, facing martyrdom under Bloody Mary, should follow the Romish invention of private communion.

The third of the four questions now is: To whom should baptism be administered? This question also divides in two. Should unbelievers be baptized or believers only? And, should infants be baptized or adults only?

In the New Testament, so far as adults are concerned, the practice and the teaching were to baptize on confession of faith: Repent and be baptized. The Philippian jailer and all his family were baptized straightway after he asked, ‘‘What must I do to be saved?” This is a far cry from the Romish practice of baptizing the heathen in crowds, as for example upon the conversion of Clovis, or apparently upon the conversion of no one in Buddhist lands.

At the same time, it must be noted that the apostles gave very little Christian instruction. The Jews at Pentecost knew the Old Testament and needed only to learn that Jesus was their Messiah; but the jailer surely knew little if anything, yet he and his household were baptized after one sermon. The next day Paul left the city. Later in church history there were catechetical classes, lasting a few months or even a few years. Though this bears the appearance of wisdom, it was not the practice of the apostles. Yet they certainly required a profession of faith.

The second half of this sub-question also divides into two: Should infants ever be baptized, and if so, which infants?

The basic authority for baptizing infants is found in the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. Infants, male infants, were circumcised. Now, as the Lord’s Supper grew out of and replaced the Passover meal, so baptism replaced circumcision. The most definite passage on the subject is *Colossians* 2:11, 12 where baptism is called the circumcision of Christ. The less definite but more pervasive material concerns the continuance of the Abrahamic covenant, as found in *Galatians* 3:15*ff*.

In this connection one should note that it is not necessary to find explicit New Testament justification for every Christian doctrine. The Old Testament is a part of the Bible also. To be sure, the Mosaic ritual was a temporary expedient. To continue the sacrifice of lambs today would be to deny the efficacy of

Christ's sacrifice. But while the ritual is fulfilled, the covenant of grace remains the same in all ages. A relatively minor, though for that very reason pertinent, point concerns the condemnation of incest in *1 Corinthians* 5:1*ff*. The New Testament gives no details concerning the limits of consanguinity and affinity in marriage. They are found in *Leviticus* 18. See *1 Corinthians* 1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20; 6:16; 9:9; 10:7 and others, plus frequent verbal allusions that cannot quite be called quotations in the modern sense. In chapter five, however, Paul does not quote *Leviticus* but clearly *Leviticus* is the only place that affords Paul a basis for his condemnation. The correct principle of interpretation is not the Baptist one of discarding everything in theOld Testament not reasserted in the New; but rather the acceptance of everything in the Old not abrogated by New Testament teaching.

Therefore to be more explicit, be it noted that the Old Testament church and the New Testament church are the same church. Not only does *Acts* 8:38, "the church in the wilderness" so assert, but even clearer is *Romans* 11:17-24. There was a root; one of its branches was Israel; this branch was broken off; a Gentile branch from a wild olive tree was grafted into the good root; and God can and will at some future date graft back the natural branches into their own olive tree. The whole, as *Galatians* 6:16 indicates, is the Israel of God. Since, now, children were members of the ancient church, and were given the sign of the covenant, so also now.

Anyone who wishes to exclude infants from the church is under obligation to show that the New Testament alters the procedure that dates back at least to Abraham. It is the Baptist who must bear the burden of proof. He must explain how it comes about that children, who were members of the church before the time of Christ, are now excluded from the church. All other Christians are satisfied with the household baptisms of *Acts* 16:15, the jailer

in *Acts* 16:33, and the household of Stephanus in *1 Corinthians* 1:16.

The other subdivision of the question is a more difficult one: Whose children should be baptized? It is not at all difficult to show that a child of two believing parents should be baptized, nor even that a child of only one believing parent should be. *First Corinthians*7:14 is sufficient. The difficulty arises when one considers the case of a child whose parents were perhaps baptized in infancy, who attend church services with some regularity, and who want their child baptized, even though they themselves have never becomecommunicant members. Today in the United States the very large majority who are in regular attendance are communicant members. But it so happens that regular attendants who are not communicants want their children baptized. Should the church acquiesce?

In Europe and in early America the children of baptized but non-communicant members were regularly baptized. Robert EllisThompson, in *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States* (1895, 14) reports: “The absence of regularly constituted sessions for the administration of church discipline, and the refusal of baptism to the children of baptized persons who were not communicants, marked the local congregation as un-Presbyterian.” That is, communicant membership was not essential for the parents of infants to be baptized; and the author notes that this was the rule in all the Reformed churches.

The argument was that there is a visible and an invisible Church. The members of the latter are precisely God’s elect; but many members of the former are not. Ishmael and Esau were both circumcised. Furthermore, since the promise and covenant extend to a thousand generations, the visible church today may and ought to baptize infants of unbelieving parents who want them baptized, on the

basis of their ancestors' faith. Surely not every Israelite, at any period of its disappointing history, was regenerate; yet no priest would have hesitated to circumcise the children of such parents. But in New England, as was not true in Europe, an inference drawn with respect to the Lord's Supper deserves mention at this point. Like baptism, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper came to be regarded as a sacrament of the visible church. The grandfather of Jonathan Edwards argued that regeneration is not a necessary qualification for admission to the Lord's Supper. In fact the sacrament itself is a converting ordinance. Increase Mather opposed this view; Jonathan Edwards in time came to oppose it also, for which cause he was dismissed from the pastorate he had inherited from his grandfather. Presbyterians generally followed Mather and Edwards in this regard.

Now, even if it be granted that baptism may properly be administered to children of non-professing parents, the inference to a similar stance on the Lord's Supper is fallacious. The two sacraments should be distinguished. The distinction is this: Admitting for the sake of argument that the covenant extends to thousands of generations, one must still remember that the apostle commanded each person to examine himself and so let him eat, on pain of eating and drinking damnation to himself. Obviously Paul did not intend the Supper to be a converting ordinance. The radical individualism of regeneration prevails.

But now, beyond admissions for the sake of argument, what must be said on the substantial question? Does the Bible require or prohibit baptisms to the thousandth generation? If it does, and if a generation is roughly thirty years, a thousand generations from the time of Christ would include just about everybody in the western world. Then the church should have baptized the child of an intensely Talmudic Jew whose ancestor in 50 bc was piously looking for the Messiah. Or, George Whitefield should have baptized Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and

Tom Paine, as children, because one of their ancestors played a small role in the Reformation. Strange as this may seem to many, it ought to have been done if the Bible so teaches.

Some very eminent theologians have so held. The strictest view has not been universal; it is more American than European. The view that only the children of professing parents should be baptized seems to have been the result of colonial revivalism. An historian might care to determine whether Tennant was its originator. In those days, as also in the early twentieth century, the Presbytery of New York was lax in doctrine, while the Philadelphia Presbytery was noted for orthodoxy. Gilbert Tennant, pastor in New Brunswick, New Jersey, too vigorously castigated the Philadelphia ministers for their dead orthodoxy. This led Synod to condemn Tennant on charges of slander and to exclude him with one of his associates from the Synod. Tennant eventually repented, but at the moment the New Brunswick Presbytery withdrew from the Synod and the New York Presbytery followed them. The Synod then tightened its ordination vows, which from the Adopting Act of 1729 allowed candidates for ordination to state their scruples or disagreements with the*Confession*. The Synod now required unconditional subscription.

There was a strange mixture of ideas in the minds of these revivalists. In theology they were more lax than the Philadelphia ministers were; but they were more strict with reference to baptism. But though strange, it is understandable. Their pietism and evangelistic zeal led them to place great emphasis on conversion as a traumatic experience. Zeal in preaching false doctrine was better than preaching the truth without zeal. Let it be noted that this was not the case with Whitefield. He preached the truth with zeal. He did not, however, use a mourner’s bench or a sawdust trail. Tennant, on the other hand, can be called the forerunner of Finney – that

disaster which Christianity suffered in the next century – though of course, being a century earlier, Tennant was far more orthodox than Finney.

This emotional pietism, as it demanded a particular type of experience for regeneration, tended to view the ideal church as consisting entirely of regenerate persons sharing such an experience. The logical result is the Baptist position; but in Presbyterianism it stopped short at requiring faith of the parents who wanted their children baptized. But if it did not result in Baptist practices, it involved a change in the theology of baptism. This now is the fourth question: What is the meaning of baptism and what does the rite accomplish?

The Presbyterian position is neither Baptist nor Anglican, and of course not Romish. The discussion of the older view, that ofbaptismal regeneration, will come first.

One of the verses used to support baptismal regeneration is *John* 3:5: “Unless one is begotten of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” Does this mean that the rite of baptism produces regeneration and that no one without water baptism can enter Heaven? An examination of the context can alone give the answer.

Point one: Nicodemus was a Jew, honestly seeking the truth. Therefore Jesus, in explaining the earlier phrase “unless a man is born over again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God,” had to appeal to what Nicodemus already knew, *i.e.*, the Old Testament. Jesus could not assume that Nicodemus knew something foreign to the Old Testament. This is not the surmise of a modern theologian: It is the plain meaning of verse 10: “Art thou the [outstanding] teacher of Israel and knowest not these things?” Clearly Jesus was basing his teaching on the Old Testament.

Point two: Therefore the meaning of *water* must be determined by the Old Testament. In the Christian era water might suggest baptism, Christian baptism, but in the historical circumstances the preceding usage is what was meant, not something later about which Nicodemus had had no opportunity to learn. Now, the previous usage differs from the later in several respects: It was not Trinitarian; it could be repeated, even several times, whereas Christian baptism is administered just once.

Point three: In the Old Testament baptism or washing with water symbolizes cleansing from sin. In *Isaiah* 4:4 the Lord *washed* away the filth of the daughters of Zion; *Zechariah* 13:1 mentions a *fountain* for sin and impurity; *Malachi* 3:2 predicts a purification, by fire indeed, but also by *soap*, which no doubt requires water. Then further, the combination of water and spirit in *John* has its background in many Old Testament passages. *Psalm* 51:2, 7, 10 combine the washing, a clean heart, and a right spirit. *Isaiah* 44:3 also.

Point four: The Kingdom of God is also something Nicodemus should have understood. It is an Old Testament idea, for God is King. The term itself does not occur in *1 Chronicles* 29:11, but the idea is emphatic. Explicit are:

> *Psalm* 22:28: For the kingdom is the Lord's and he is the governor among the nations.
>
> *Psalm* 45:6: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.
>
> *Psalm* 145:11: They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.

To these add *Isaiah* 24:23, *Daniel* 2:44 and many other references. Since such passages teach about the Kingdom, one can at least hope to find, in the Old Testament, the conditions of membership in that Kingdom. The conditions are repentance,

faith, trust, sacrifice, redemption, the new heart, the Spirit – all Gospel terms. Is it then peculiar that *water* should be there also?

The conclusion is that Jesus was teaching the Old Testament to Nicodemus, and that therefore there is no reference in *John* 3 to Christian baptism, and therefore again no theory of baptismal regeneration.

Another New Testament verse requires mention in this connection. Baptismal regeneration is sometimes supported by an appeal to*Titus* 3:5: “By the washing of regeneration and the renewing of [or, by] the Holy Spirit.”

The Anglican and Romish argument is that washing regenerates. But this interpretation causes grammar to suffer. The second half of the quotation, in which *the Holy Spirit* is in the genitive case, obviously means that the Holy Spirit renews us. The Holy Spirit is a subjective genitive.

The Holy Spirit renews us; neither we nor anything else renew the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot be the objective genitive. Similarly it is regeneration that does the washing; it is not the washing that washes regeneration. To get anything like baptismal regeneration out of these words, it would be necessary to rearrange them so as to say, “the regeneration of washing.” This would mean that regeneration is produced by washing. But this is the reverse of what the Apostle wrote. Therefore the Reformed churches in baptizing adults assume, even if mistakenly, that they have already been regenerated. On this understanding regeneration cannot be conceived as produced by the rite of baptism.

If the preceding is a sufficient refutation of baptismal regeneration, the Baptist position will not so much require a formal refutation as a positive statement of the Presbyterian

view. Baptists regard baptism as a sign of regeneration; and regeneration is to be recognized by a profession of faith. Presumably most Baptists would admit that the Holy Spirit can regenerate infants, and some no doubt concede that he does. *Luke* 1:44 says that the babe in the womb of Elizabeth leaped for joy when the mother of the Lord came to visit them. Contemporary murderous abortionists do not like this verse. Of course a newly born infant cannot express his faith. No matter, say theLutherans, infants can and some infants do have faith because some infants are justified and justification is by faith alone. This is an impressive argument; but Presbyterians, thinking of a theological expression of faith, allow other means of justification for the incompetent exceptions such as infants and the insane. The Baptists do not allow these exceptions, neither do they allow for faith in infants, and hence they will not baptize them.

Some Presbyterians claim to baptize infants on the basis of "presumptive regeneration." "Presumptive election" would be a better basis. But this is only a partial answer to the main question.

That baptism, the sign of washing and purification, is somehow related to regeneration should not be denied; but the Baptist view of that relationship is untenable. They rebel at the apparently empty formalism of the established churches in Europe. They observe that too many "baptized" infants give no later evidence of regeneration or election, which is unfortunately true. But neither Tennant's ideal of a regenerate ministry, much less that of a regenerate membership, is possible. If this is true of churches that baptize infants, it is equally true and equally regrettable of churches that immerse adults. There are millions of apostate Baptists, with their champion of a generation ago, Harry Emerson Fosdick. Every church, with the possible exception of a few very small congregations, has its black sheep. This was the

case in the churches of the New Testament and remains true today. Therefore it is impractical to operate on the belief and impossible to operate on an asserted fact, that all church members are regenerate. Adult baptism does not avoid the difficulty.

The problem is solved by insisting that the New Testament Gospel is the same as that given to Abraham. Baptism is the circumcision of Christ. The terms of the Abrahamic covenant provide the rules for the administration of baptism. The New Testament application of the covenant cannot be more restricted than that of the Old. In fact, it is wider, for girls are now baptized. Since therefore it is wider not narrower and since infants were then included in the covenant, they must not be excluded now.

That some or even many remain dead in sin after receiving the sign of the covenant, is no greater an objection to infant baptism than it is to circumcision. Ishmael and Esau bore the sign of the covenant. So too did Simon Magus and Hymenaeus, presumably unregenerate, or Diotrophes, Demas, Alexander, and others who made shipwreck of the faith.

In spite of the fact that they are criticizing the divine provisions of the Abrahamic covenant, so definitely said to be operative today (*Galatians* 3:7*ff*), Baptists and others will ask, “But, then, what good is baptism?” Of course one might ask in return, “What good is adult immersion? It does not regenerate, and some of you deny it is a means of grace. What then is left?”

Now, Presbyterians can answer these questions better than Baptists can. To repeat, baptism has all the value of circumcision.

Romans 2:25: For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy

circumcision is made uncircumcision.

Romans 3:1, 2: What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 4:11: And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

Doubtless this is not so much value as some might expect. But if so, these expectations are not Scriptural. Perhaps the Calvinist must say that while baptism symbolizes internal blessings, it guarantees only external.

However, this is still a means of grace, *i.e.*, something God uses to show us his favor. For one reason, the rite, entered into sincerely, helps to fix the Word in the convert's mind. The Word is necessary. Baptism is not a magic incantation. It does not exercise "physical causality," as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes it, referring to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (3a62); a physical causality such that "the sacramental rite is directly involved in the infusion of grace in a manner analogous to that in which an instrument, such as a pen or brush, is said to be the cause of an effect, the written page or picture." No, the rite of baptism, though a visible performance requires understanding, intelligence, mind.

When God made his covenant with Abraham, in *Genesis* 17, he explained its terms. There are approximately nine verses of explanation before circumcision is mentioned. Then follow five verses explaining circumcision. To this is added the promise of a son to Sarah. Here something peculiar appears: The covenant will be established in his son Isaac, not in Ishmael; nevertheless

Abraham circumcised Ishmael, along with servants who had been bought with money and were not of his family. Thus at the initiation of the rite there was explanation. In *Joshua* 5:2-9 where the uncircumcised second generation are circumcised, there is no explicit mention of an explanation to these people; the book explains the event to its readers; but it is almost impossible that Joshua would or could do this on a nation-wide scale without giving them an explanation. Thus the minister today must explain its significance to those who present themselves. Even the Philippian jailer, baptized so suddenly, received some instruction; and what was lacking in time was more than compensated for by the preceding miracle. Baptism pictures the washing away of sin by Christ's blood. We are baptized into his death, as the Baptists are fond of repeating. This is true; but it is incomplete: We are baptized in the name of the Trinity, not just Christ's death alone. This must be explained. The rite itself presents the promise of the covenant in the form of an action. As a picture of the washing away of sin, baptism is a "visible word." Now, the difference between the audible and the visible Word is this: The word is preached in general terms to everyone. Baptism is administered to this one individual person here and now, showing him that the covenant is not merely some corporate arrangement in general, but showing him that God gives to him individually the promises of thecovenant. This is absent when baptism is not accompanied by the Word, or where the words are Latin which the people do not understand.

The Protestant Reformation was a tremendous break with the encrusted superstitions of a thousand years. It is no derogation to the Reformers to suggest that they did not completely wipe out every last trace of so entrenched a superstition. The *Second Helvetic Confession* seems to retain a bit in its words, "*Nam intus regeneramur* – in it we are regenerated." The *French*

Confession of 1559 is: "*parçe que là nous sommes entés au corps de Christ, à fin d'être laves et nettoyés par son sang*…by it we are grafted into the body of Christ, so as to be washed and cleansed by his blood…." And then, "*Ainsi nous tenons que l'eau étant un element caduc, ne laisse pas de nous testifier en verité le lavement intérieur de notre âme au sang de Jesus-Christ*." In English: "Thus we hold that the water, though a powerless element, nevertheless truly testifies to us the internal washing of our soul by the blood of Jesus Christ."

The less important question of who may properly administer baptism can form a concluding paragraph on this subject and serve also as a transition to the discussion of the Lord's Supper.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper should be administered only by an ordained minister. One reason for this prescription is that God has appointed a government for his church, whose officers are lawfully called and presbyterially ordained. These officers are stewards of the mysteries of Christ: *1 Corinthians* 4:1: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of Christ."

Paul was an apostle and a minister; Apollos and Sosthenes were ministers but not apostles. So too every minister is an ordained steward of God (*Titus* 1:5, 7). Consider also: *Luke* 12:42: "And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? ' "

This verse shows dearly that a steward is an officer appointed by the Lord to rule his household. There may be several wise, discreet, and trustworthy members of the household, but not all are stewards. The one appointed by the Lord has the function of portioning out the Lord's meat to the others. The others do not have that function. The following verses from Luke and Paul

show that this divinely appointed government is to continue until the Lord's return.

> *Acts* 20:28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

> *Ephesians* 4:11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers….

Since the sacraments are means of grace, as the Word is, the work of a steward or minister is not only to preach but also to administer the sacraments. Thus the household is fed. The figure of speech, so frequent in the Scriptures, of sheep and shepherd shows that sheep need someone to feed them. They need to be led to green pastures. When they wander astray, various tragedies occur. But if any devout Christian may properly serve communion, the distinction between pastor and flock, between feeder and fed, is abolished. There may be some extenuating circumstances, as was the case with the Huguenots, when it might seem justifiable for a pious member to organize a communion service; but to put the Supper in the charge of a random member, however pious, when there are pastors easily available, as the Anabaptists did, is a violation of God's appointments.

Not to extend the argument unduly, a conclusion or summary may be had by returning to *Ephesians* 4:11-13. The passage says that Christ gave some members of his body the function and office of apostle. Obviously he did not give this to many. He also gave to some the office of pastor and teacher. The purpose of these offices is to perfect the saints. Perfecting the saints includes the administration of the sacraments. This function was given to some, not to all.

One of the major points of contention during the Protestant Reformation was the nature and effect of the Lord’s Supper. This prominence did not depend merely on the general dispute about sacraments, but on the fact that this sacrament was celebrated in every local church every day. Each person was baptized just once in his lifetime; marriage might occur twice or even three times; but many peasants and every priest took communion daily. Hence a difference in administration here was much more visible to the populace than even the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Since an earlier section discussed the nature of sacraments in general, there remain here the particular aspects of this sacrament.

The *Shorter Catechism* says:

> Q. What is the Lord’s Supper?
>
> A. The Lord’s Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment, his death is showed forth: and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

The Lord’s Supper represents a complex of ideas. The broken bread represents the broken body; the wine represents his poured out blood. But also as a supper or meal it also represents nourishment and a family friendship. By participating worthily we are assured of our union with Christ, of the forgiveness of sins, and of eternal life. Although Christ’s sermon in *John* 6 was not an explanation of the Lord’s Supper – because for one thing he was preaching to a hostile audience – yet the Supper is a symbol of the reality there announced.

Now, it happens that these simple ideas have, in the history of the visible church, been overlaid with major superstitions as well as with minor misunderstandings. The Baptists sometimes

complain that infant baptism introduced many superstitious excrescences on the simple rite. While it is true that baptism was corrupted by the addition of non-Scriptural ceremonies – though it is hard to show that infant baptism was their cause – the sacrament of the Lord's Supper became the occasion, not the cause, of still greater and more dangerous superstitions. We must therefore consider, chiefly, the differences among the Romish, Lutheran, and Reformed doctrines. These differences are not all of equal weight. One of the minor differences, whether or not the bread should be leavened orunleavened, can be disposed of first.

Probably no church absolutely forbids the use of unleavened bread; but the Romish church requires, and some Protestant congregations regularly use, it. This practice has a Biblical plausibility, for no one denies that Christ and the disciples had to use unleavened bread. However, the fact that they had to use it – the divine regulations for the Jewish Passover required the removal of allleaven from every home – left them no choice. Had there been both leavened and unleavened bread on hand, and had Christ then chosen the unleavened bread, the example would have been normative for the church. But in the absence of a visible preference, the kind of bread used is a matter of indifference. Except insofar as the Puritan principle denies to the Church the authority to add requirements to or subtract requirements from the forms of worship, the use or non-use of unleavened bread is not so much a question of theology as a matter of curiosity.

The truly important point of contention is the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation. In conformity with the principle of sacramentarianism Rome takes the verse, "This is my body" as a literal, rather than as a figurative statement. "I am the door" is clearly figurative, since Christ is not a two inch thick wood

panel. But Rome, and Luther too, insist that *Hoc est corpus meum* is literal.

Between Rome and Lutheranism there is a difference, of reasonable importance, which may be briefly mentioned and dropped. The Romish view is that when the priest miraculously turns the bread and wine into the literal body and blood of Christ, the change is permanent. And hence after the service they can put pieces and drops of God in a vase on the altar and bow or genuflect to it. The Lutherans restrict the effect of the priestly miracle to the duration of the service. Afterward only bread and wine remain, and the minister can take it home to dinner or feed it to the birds.

Some of the Protestant population wonder how bread can be literal flesh when it looks like, feels like, and tastes like bread. Rome has an answer to this objection. In keeping with Aristotelian philosophy, Rome distinguishes, with respect to all sensible objects, their substance from their qualities. Aristotle's basic categories of thought and reality were substance, quantity, quality, relation, position, affection, and some others. Transubstantiation means that the *substance* of the bread becomes flesh, while the *qualities* of the bread remain what they were.

The doctrine of transubstantiation was enforced by Pope Nicolas – and Popes are infallible in matters of doctrine – on Berengarius by prescribing, as his form of recantation, language to the effect that the body of Christ was locally present, felt by the hand, bruised by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat. Luther also said as much, though the Lutherans might not care to be so blunt. To support the local and physical presence of Christ's body in the bread, the Lutherans invented the doctrine of the *communication idiomatum*:*i.e.*, that the human nature of Christ shares in the eternal attributes of Deity. Thus the

physical body is omnipresent, and so there is enough of it to go around for all the communion services in the world. But once transubstantiation is admitted, the Romish view that the elements remain the literal body and blood seems more consistent than that the remaining body and blood fly back to Heaven.

Those who stress the so-called literal meaning of the word *is*, or better, the literal meaning of the word *body*, and refuse to allow the bread to be the sign or symbol for the body, fall into inconsistency when they proceed to the other element. If the Scripture says that the bread is the body, it does not say that the wine is the blood. What Jesus said, and the words Paul reports, are "This cup is the new testament in my blood." Now, if one wish to insist on literal interpretation, it is not the wine but the cup, a silver vessel, that is-what? Not the blood of Christ, but the new testament in his blood. Hence a literal silver cup is literally the New Testament. One may also wonder whether a certain literal rock in the Sinai was literally Christ and whether that piece of stone locally and literally rolled along as the Israelites proceeded. Presumably the substance of the rock was turned into Christ himself though it retained the qualities of hardness, shape, and texture it had before.

The distinction between substance and quality in the doctrine of transubstantiation might be taken as an amusingly fancifulapplication of Aristotelianism – it is certainly not Platonism – were it not that it entails the view that the Lord's Supper is a redemptive sacrifice, and that therefore it is a repetition of Calvary. But Scripture says: "Nor yet that he must offer himself often, as the high priest [does with] the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered…but now *hapax* (once for all)…so Christ was offered *hapax*(once for all) to bear the sins of many" (*Hebrews* 9:25-28).

Of all the evil inventions of Rome the most Satanic is the transubstantiation of the Lord's Supper into a sacrificial mass. The Romanists believe that the mass is a sacrifice by which we obtain from God the remission of our sins. Now, the passage from *Hebrews*just quoted occurs in a context that declares Christ to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The Mosaic priests served for a limited time – one high priest was succeeded by another. But Christ had no successors. This permanent priesthood renders unnecessary and indeed impossible any later priest who might claim to offer a sacrifice for sin. Therefore any man who claims to be a successor of Christ denies Christ's priesthood.

Of course the Romanists say that their mass does not abolish Christ's sacrifice, but merely repeats it, and that therefore the Romish priests do not supplant Christ, but merely assist him in the repetition. But *Hebrews* does not allow this evasion. Consider:

> *Hebrews* 7:23*ff*: Truly they were many priests…by reason of death. But this one [Jesus], because he remains forever, has an unchangeable priesthood…who has no need, as the [previous] high priests had, of offering a sacrifice day after day…. For this he did just once (*ephapax*) when he offered himself.

The point is that there were many Jewish priests because the death of one necessitated the administrations of another. But Christ's death did not put an end to his priesthood, and therefore he has no successors. The claim to be a successor to Christ in the priestly office is to claim that death ended Christ's priesthood.

Furthermore, if the mass is a sacrifice to atone for our sins, then the cross of Christ is denied its power. The Romanists have altars in their churches. They are erected in contact with the back wall so that no one can stand between the altar and the wall.

The Reformed Episcopal denomination and a few particular Protestant Episcopal congregations require the communion table to be far enough away from the wall as to permit the minister to stand behind it. This is to show that the table is not an altar. A church that has an altar substitutes itself for the cross on Calvary. But if Christ has secured eternal redemption for us, and saves us "to the uttermost" (*eis to panteles* = completely, wholly, for all time), reliance on a later sacrifice denies the effectiveness of Christ. Christ said, "It is finished"; Rome says, "We will finish it for him."

The anti-Scriptural implications of the mass are many. Here is one more. The Lord's Supper is a Thanksgiving service: It is called the*eucharist*. In it we receive nourishment from God and thank him for his mercies. But the mass is not something God gives to us, it is a sacrifice we give to God for the expiation of our sins. In the Lord's Supper God gives and we receive; in the mass man gives and God is supposed to receive. Now, if the mass is a sacrifice, the idea of communion, if not obliterated, is degraded; for a sacrifice-mass can be offered by just one person, *i.e.*, private masses without a communing congregation. Mass therefore changes communication into excommunication, as Calvin neatly puts it, for the priest separates himself to eat and drink by himself.

The Reformed theologians to a greater degree than the Lutherans corrected the impiety of the mass. In the historical situation it was necessary for them, not only to point out how the Papists contradicted Scripture, but positively to explain what the Scriptures taught.

The learned volumes on Systematic Theology usually at this point offer some objections to the views of Zwingli. This Swiss Reformer actually antedated Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* by a year or so. He is often represented as describing the Lord's

Supper as a memorial service *and nothing more*. Calvin insisted on something more. The *Institutes* (IV xvii 18) say, “not a mere reception of it in the imagination or apprehension of their mind, but a real enjoyment of it as the food of eternal life.” By this and similar expressions Zwingli’s view is usually adjudged defective and Calvin’s more complete. However, the difficulty is to determine what Calvin meant by “something more.” One readily agrees that the value of the Lord’s Supper does not reside in the recipient’s having a visual image of the scene on Calvary. A mere visual image has no intellectual content. But why cannot the value of the sacrament be located in the “apprehension of their mind”? Paul says we are to examine ourselves so as to discern the Lord’s body. To *understand* that the bread is a symbol of Christ’s broken body, and to understand further what Christ actually accomplished on the cross, is surely more than to have a visual image. Why should not this apprehension of the mind be the factor by which the sacrament takes effect in the believer? How else could it take effect? When Calvin says, *not* the apprehension of the mind, but a real enjoyment of it as food, he drops from literal statement to figurative. What is meant by *food*? Are we not nourished or edified by *understanding* the significance of the sacrament?

Now, Zwingli is often berated for reducing the Lord’s Supper to a “mere” memorial service. But it is hard to explain a memorial of Christ’s death that is nothing more. Surely participation in such a service produces some spiritual result. Even in human affairsMemorial Day produces or reproduces, perhaps faintly in these later years, some clearer notion of good citizenship. When therefore Zwingli acknowledged that the sacraments were intended to be significant emblems of the great truths of the Gospel, and that they were intended to teach these truths, it is hard to see how anyone can deny that teaching is a means of grace. When he also says, “It is impossible that anything external

should stabilize or confirm the internal faith of a man," he may be thinking of *ex opere operato,* the mere external motions. Teaching and significance can be truly called internal. Charles Hodge himself, after his moderate but negative remarks on Zwingli, says, "On this subject [the source of the sacrament's power] it is taught [by the Reformed doctrine] negatively that the virtue is not in them."

Hodge seems to think that Zwingli reduced the sacraments to the level of the rainbow: ''They were to him no more means of grace than the rainbow or the heaps of stones on the banks of the Jordan. By their significancy and by association they might suggest truth and awaken feeling, but they were not channels of divine communication" (*Systematic Theology,* III, 499).

Maybe a little caution is needed here. In the first place neither the rainbow nor the Lord's Supper is in the strictest sense a communication from God. The first communication was made verbally to Noah and the second to the apostles. The signs or symbols can be understood only by those who have received the verbal revelation. Of course the two communications differ in content. One is a promise not to destroy the world by a second flood. Surely Zwingli did not reduce the Lord's Supper to the level of the rainbow. But though the two communications differ in this important respect, they are both means of grace. Looking at the rainbow reminds us of God's promise and so edifies us and renews our faith. So too does the Lord's Supper – with its more important message of course.

Then too, three pages later, Hodge's truly excellent statement does not seem to go beyond Zwingli's thought:

> There is therefore, a strict analogy, according to the Reformed doctrine, between the Word and the sacraments as means of grace. (1) Both have in them a certain moral power due to the truth which they bring before the mind. (2) Neither has in itself any supernatural power to save or to sanctify. (3) All their supernatural efficiency is due to the cooperation or attending influence of the Holy Spirit. (4) Both are ordained by God to be the channels or means of the Spirit's influence, to those who by faith receive them.

> Nothing is said in the Bible to place the sacraments above the Word as a means of communicating to men the benefits of Christ's redemption. On the contrary, tenfold more is said in Scripture of the necessity and efficiency of the Word in the salvation of men, than is therein said or implied of the power of the sacraments. (III, 502)

Now, it may be that the present writer is too generous toward Zwingli, but it is also possible that some later Calvinists have demanded from him statements more explicit than those he wrote. Since Zwingli rose on the horizon at the very dawn of the Reformation, he was and had to be more concerned with his opposition to Rome than with the development of a greatly detailed theology. Thus his account may be truncated. Furthermore, we in later centuries, who have not faced his dangers, and with a language that has changed over the centuries, may not be able to judge his words aright.

At any rate Calvin would not reduce the Lord's Supper to a mere memorial service. To quote a more modern author, A. A. Hodgesays:

> Its truth [the truth of the Reformed view] as opposed to the meagre Zwinglian view…is established as follows: (1) That the sacraments are not only signs of the grace of Christ, but also *seals* of the gospel covenant offering us that grace upon the condition of faith is evident from [*Romans* 4:11]…the sacraments are the seals of that covenant. God in their appointment binds himself to the fulfillment of his promises…. (2) As seals attached to the covenant it follows that they actually convey the grace signified, as a legal form of investiture, to those to whom, according to the terms of the covenant, it belongs. Thus a deed, when signed and sealed, is said to convey the property it represents because it is the legal form by which the intention of the original possessor is publicly expressed, and his act ratified. (*Outlines of Theology*, 596-597).

That this differs from the "meagre" Zwinglian view, A. A. Hodge substantiates by a quotation from Limborch:

> It remains to say that God, through the sacraments, exhibits to us his grace, not by conferring it in fact through them, but by representing it and placing it before our eyes through them as clear and evident signs…. And this efficacy is no other than objective, which requires a cognitive faculty rightly disposed that it may be able to apprehend that which the sign offers objectively to the mind…. They operate upon us as signs representing to the mind the thing whose sign they are. No other efficacy ought to be sought for in them. (602)

Limborch here uses the term *exhibit*, which term Hodge emphasizes as strictly Calvinistic: "It is evident that the

term *exhibit* has retained in our standards the former sense of *conveying, conferring*. As in medical language, ‘to exhibit a remedy’ is to administer it” (591). Yet Limborch was an Arminian of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*(translated by Cave and Banks, 1882; Volume IV, 317), says, “In his last years Zwingli returned to his former standpoint, according to which the Holy Supper is not merely a sign of a past thing and commemoration thereof but a means of grace and present gift.”

Part of the difficulty in this matter is the figurative language, if not in the term *sign*, at least in the term *seal*. But even if the strictly legal use of a seal (now generally abandoned, in this country at least) is emphasized, it is not the seal itself – a piece of wax or an ink stamp – but the content of the document that is determinative. Limborch may mean no more than this. Zwingli apparently was willing to accept the phrase “a means of grace.” Yet Hodge does not like this. He seems to think that Zwingli’s view prevents the sacrament from being a means of grace, for he says in disparagement, “Thus the sacraments are *only* effective means of the objective presentation of the truth symbolized” (591).

Yet why cannot an effective means of presenting the truth be a means of grace? At this point Hodge seems to echo, perhaps faintly, but nonetheless seems to echo some of the Romish magic. To the contrary, the Bible places the value of the sacrament on a strictly intellectual or intelligible level. It is no magic. The believer must examine himself and be convinced once again that he understands what he is doing. He must believe the doctrine he understands. He must discern the significance, or eat damnation to himself.

Perhaps some of these earlier writers missed or underestimated a distinction that many people hardly think of. The distinction is

that between the elements on the Lord's table, or Romish altar, and the communicants' partaking of them. When the Romanists claimed that the elements are transmuted into literal flesh and blood, reserved on the altar and bowed to, it was salutary to insist that they are mere signs. But when the devout believer – not a person who does not believe in them – partakes of them, there comes into play all that the recipient understands. Thus since the communicant deliberately, intentionally, and understandingly partakes, the service becomes a means of grace. How could it be otherwise? For the preaching of the Word itself, even apart from the sacrament, is also a means of grace.

Sanctification, the Christian life, the life and organization of the church involve more than the two sacraments, and more in particular than the general principle of perseverance. The *Westminster Confession* has chapters on "Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day," "Lawful Oaths and Vows," the "Civil Magistrate," "Marriage and Divorce," the "Church" (ordination, elders, deacons), "Church Censures," "Synods and Councils." In addition to these chapters in the *Confession*, there are volumes and volumes on these subjects. But perhaps the junior in seminary will agree to forgo them until next year.

7. The Christian Life

The title of this section, The Christian Life, is somewhat peculiar because the preceding sections, Assurance, Perseverance,Sacraments, are as much parts of the Christian life as anything else. The section on the sacraments has shown that attendance upon the Lord's Supper is a means of grace and a part of sanctification. Regular church attendance is also a means of grace. Here there is a peculiar difference between American customs and European

in this matter. In the United States, if because of illness or carelessness, people are lax in weekly attendance, they make a special effort to be present for the sacrament, with the result that the congregation is usually larger on communion Sunday than on other Sundays. In Europe it is the other way around. Fewer people participate in theLord's Supper. In fact I have seen and heard the minister, at *L'Oratoire* in Paris, dismiss the general congregation and invite those who wish, to gather forward for communion. At least three-quarters of the congregation left. So did I, but presumably not for the same reason. Though I attended the church as a recognition of St. Bartholomew's Massacre, I did not wish to join in a thoroughly liberal communion service. Few who walked out could have had the same reason. Perhaps they held communion in greater awe, and themselves as more unworthy, than Americans do. Yet even some Americans do. Once I inveigled a school chum of mine, in later life, to accompany me to church one Sunday morning. As I was only visiting the city, I was unaware that they would celebrate the Lord's Supper. My chum had been raised by fairly conscientious Presbyterian parents, but had, unfortunately, long ceased church attendance. When the elements were passed, he whispered that he had been taught that participation required some preparation through the preceding week, and that therefore he would not partake. If only more of his early training had survived! However, the Christian life includes other activities also.

The regular worship of God in the ordinary church services is one of these activities. Christ's words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (*Matthew* 4:10), very obviously are not restricted to the weekly worship service. They have to do with daily temptations. But they apply to Sunday also. *Hebrews* 10:25 says, "Stimulate one another to good deeds, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."

Perhaps it is not necessary to dwell on the nature and excellencies of Deity which not merely justify but which command our obeisance. These attributes have been largely examined in my book on the Trinity. Here it must suffice merely to mentionomnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence as reasons for acknowledging God's transcendent glory by our worship. They are so overwhelming, when one pauses to consider them, and so awe-inspiring, that many theologians, for this and other considerations, stress God's incomprehensibility. But in doing so, some of them distort the truth. If the divine incomprehensibility means that we do not know, and cannot know, everything that God knows, there can be no objection. This truth is all too comprehensible. But in an attempt to glorify God, some theologians exaggerate incomprehensibility and make God utterly unknowable. The mystics are the most consistent on this point: Barth makes God the "totally other"; but there are also some who even clearly assert that God can be known, and yet so emphasize incomprehensibility as to contradict their more orthodox assertions. One such theologian, who indeed uses the phrase "thinking God's thoughts after him," denies the phrase in another place by insisting that God's knowledge and the knowledge possible to man do not coincide at any single point. Consequently if God knows that David was king of Israel, we cannot know it. Indeed, since God knows everything, we can know nothing at all, for there is not a single point of coincidence between his knowledge and what we call our knowledge. But an essential part of divine worship is to know God and to know him correctly. That is why God has given us a revelation. What good is a revelation if it does not give us understandable truths? How can we praise God by singing "Lord God Almighty," if we do not know that God is Almighty? In a context where one would hardly expect a recommendation ofintellectualism, *Isaiah* 33:6 says, "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times and strength of

salvation.” One can never worship the God of truth by deprecating the intellect. Acceptable worship of God, as an important part of sanctification, requiresknowledge.

What in this context seems to need more emphasis than the attributes of God is the negative proposition that there must be no other object of worship. Few Americans worship graven images, though only by devious definitions do Romanists claim to avoid suchidolatry. In fact, not only does the Bible condemn three dimensional statues, but *Numbers* 33:52 includes pictures as well. In apostolic times some people began to worship angels, and though this is more plausible than a worship of images, or even of the sun, let alone snakes, *Colossians* 2:18 and *Revelation* 19:10 and 22:9 forbid it. Indeed in the last two of these verses the angels themselves forbid it. Nor should any prayer be addressed to the Virgin Mary. All honor to the blessed Virgin, but she is of lower rank than the angels, and she recognized the need of a Savior in *Luke* 1:47.

Ordinarily we in America do not think of avarice, gormandizing, or even pride in our exemplary character as idolatry; but Scripture does. Professional sports are the god of many Americans, and they worship them on every Lord’s Day, as well as on Monday evening. Any activity which dominates our interest, has first place in our desires, and thus shuts God out, or reduces him to a secondary or tertiary status, is idolatry. Gormandizing, frequent in the Roman Empire, is not a particularly widespread sin in America, nor evengourmetizing; but Paul in his day could point to people whose god was their belly.

References to gluttony and baseball may serve to introduce the various virtues which God commands us to exercise. They are so numerous and are introduced more to fit the immediate needs of a particular congregation than to fit the need of a logical

arrangement, that we must list them in a haphazard fashion. For example, *2 Peter* 1:5-7 lists faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience,godliness, brotherly love, kindness, and charity. Though not logically arranged and though not clearly distinguished one from another, for they overlap, one should realize that actions of these types, actions which non-Christians imitate externally, are acts of worship. They are not sacraments, usually they are performed outside a church building, individual rather than congregational, but they are all worship. After writing eleven chapters of profound theology, Paul in *Romans*, chapters 12 to 14, and somewhat in the final two chapters, gives a list of virtues with more explanation than Peter gives.

Since the joys, the trials, the responsibilities, and exigencies of marriage occupy such a large proportion of an ordinary person's life, and since its origin was in Eden, not as a mere legal enactment or social convenience, but as a divine institution, and since in America at the end of this twentieth century divorce, homosexuality, and premarital sex are so largely destroying civilization, the Biblical principles need great emphasis. Marriage counselors generally, and occasionally even some Christian counselors, do not always give good advice.

One virtue, needed in marriage often more than elsewhere, is patience. Not only did Peter include it in his list, but *1 Thessalonians*1:3, *1 Timothy* 6:11, *Titus* 2:2, *Hebrews* 10:36, and *James* 1:4, plus a dozen other verses also, encourage us to be patient. The trouble with counseling, however, is its difficulty in distinguishing between patience and shirking responsibility. On the other hand, what one wishes to call responsibility may appear to others as irresponsible harshness. Where Christians are persecuted by anti-Christiangovernments, as was the case in ancient Rome, sixteenth century Europe, and in Cuba, Russia, and parts of Africa today, patience is more easily understood, if

less easily practiced. *Acts* 14:22 teaches that “we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.” *Romans* 12:12 tells us to persevere, endure, be patient in tribulations.

In spite of what some devotional writers say, I am not sure that patience is the correct response to Satanic temptations. Something more active seems requisite.

Hope is another virtue which advances one’s degree of sanctification. Peter did not include it in the list quoted, but his two epistles mention it four times. The Bible, however, does not recommend hope *per se*. It is not concerned with a hope for a raise in salary or for a promotion in the company. *Job* 27:8 asks the rhetorical question, “What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?” Or ‘‘What is the hope of the godless…?” (*New American Standard Version*). Even a hope of Heaven may be evil, as it is when grounded in some supposed human merit. The really important thing is not the subjective experience, but the objective reality. Hope is virtuous only when directed toward godly ends. Several *Psalms* issue the command, “Hope thou in God.”*Psalm* 71:5 says, “Thou art my hope, O Lord God.” *Jeremiah* 17:7 assures us that “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” In *Colossians* 1:27 Paul calls Christ “the hope of glory,” and *1 Timothy* 1:1 adds, “the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.” Hope in Christ includes, naturally, the hope to receive all his blessings. The references are so numerous, both in the Old Testament and the New, that it must suffice here to encourage the reader to look them up in a concordance.

Yet someone may say, Hope is indeed a virtue, and that the Bible sufficiently recommends it is undeniable; but how does one achieve, produce, or exercise it? I am despondent and everything happens for the worst. Rembrandt painted

masterpieces, but that bit of information does not tell me how to paint. How then does one come to hope? To such a melancholy soul one may first give a rather peculiar answer and afterward something more intelligible. Assuming that the questioner is a Christian, and sincere, we can assure him that he already hopes, even if he is barely conscious of it. To believe in Christ is *ipso facto* to hope for salvation. One might alter a verse and say, Lord, I hope, help thou my hopelessness. Of course if he is not a Christian, he is without hope even though he has lively hopes. As was said before, it is the object not the subject that supplies the value. But there is also a second answer. It is: Study theScripture. We grow in grace by increasing our knowledge. Gradually, not all at once, but slowly, by meditating on God's law both day and night, despondency will decrease and hope will increase. When Christian in his Pilgrimage was locked in the dungeon ofDoubting Castle by Giant Despair, on the very night before he was to be killed he remembered he had a key that could unlock the prison doors. He just had not thought of it before, occupied as he was with his plight and its dangers. So as the sun was beginning to rise, he opened the door and ran. When Giant Despair tried to chase him, the Giant fell down in an apoplectic fit.

Another Christian virtue, but one that is more contemned than praised, is zeal. The reason is that like hope there is a false zeal, that is, a zeal for the wrong object. False zeal, and often true zeal, in the eyes of the public is considerably worse than false hope. Examples of false zeal are Paul's zeal described in *Philippians* 3:6, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church." In *Romans* 10:2 he notes that the Jews have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge "...being ignorant of God's righteousness." The Judaizers in Galatia "zealously affect you, but not well" (*Galatians* 4:17). In the Old Testament too we find instances of false zeal. One of the most spectacular, though the

word itself does not occur in the passage, is the frenzy of the priests of Baal in cutting themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out. The Pharisees of Christ's time, and the Sadducees also, were zealous in plotting Christ's crucifixion.

But no matter how many examples of Satanic zeal may be found, it counts nothing against godly zeal. The difference lies not in the subjective emotion or volition, whichever it may be, but in the object. If our zeal is for the right object, we become imitators of God, for God himself is a jealous or zealous God (*Exodus* 20:5; *Deuteronomy* 4:24). See also *2 Kings* 19:31, "The zeal of the Lord shall do this." Also, "They shall know that I the Lord have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them" (*Ezekiel* 5:13). Again, when Jesus cleansed the temple, the disciples were reminded of the verse, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (*John*2:17). In *Galatians* 4:14-17, Paul refers to the zeal of the Judaizers and in contrast bears record that the true Christians would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him. Though the word *zeal* does not occur in verse 15, Paul concludes in verse 18, "It is good always to be zealously affected in a good thing." In *Titus* 2:14, Paul explains that Christ gave himself to "redeem us…and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Underlying the proper zeal for this or that immediate object is, as the quoted verses show, a zeal for God. The good works of *Titus*2:14 require a knowledge of God and his law. If we do not know what God has ordained as good, we can do it only by ignorant accident; and the odds are against the accident. True zeal for God must be a zeal for his truth. Hence one who does not study God'sWord should be careful not to be zealous for anything. But with the Word one must show zeal in the propagation of its message.

In this regard the visible church is sadly deficient. Most of the large denominations are apostate. The fundamentalists may not be apostate, but they are inexcusably inadequate. For example, an article entitled “Who Are the ‘Real’ Pseudo-Fundamentalists?” begins on page 10 of the June 1983 issue of the *Fundamentalist Journal*. It is an attempt to distinguish between real and pseudo-fundamentalists. The two authors make a brief mention of the dozen small books, *The Fundamentals*, which, published from 1909-1912, popularized the term. The article defines real fundamentalists as those who subscribe to five points: the infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement and the literal resurrection, and his literal second coming. Pseudo-fundamentalists are those who, though they may believe these five points, insist on adding other doctrines until there are seven, or ten, or twenty, or fifty fundamentals (page 1, column 2). “A pseudo-Fundamentalist is then one who subtracts from or adds to these fundamentals” (11:1). Those who add to these five points “do not represent the historical position of Fundamentalism” (11:2).

If this were so, the contributors to *The Fundamentals* could not have been fundamentalists because they added articles on the Lord’s Day, regeneration, Satan, the Holy Spirit, the true church, prayer, future retribution, and some other items.

The article in the June issue does not include in its fundamentals the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and only by a doubtful implication the doctrine of the Father. Hence the Trinity cannot be a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Also missing are the doctrines ofregeneration and sanctification. By their absence these doctrines are treated as additions. “Anyone who demands more than this [list of five] is denying the historical roots of the movement,” and is indulging in “denominational distinctives or personal biases” (11:1, 2).

Aside from eliminating the doctrines of the Trinity, regeneration, and sanctification, the article repudiates the Protestant Reformation. The two great points of the Reformation were *sola Scriptura* and *sola fide*. The five points of fundamentalism, as these two authors define it, include *sola Scriptura*, but they exclude justification by faith alone. This latter doctrine, however, is no unimportant excrescence. The Judaizers in Galatia believed all the five points of the article. They had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Messiah, they insisted on the infallibility of Scripture, and they looked forward to Christ's return. But of all the apostolic denunciations ofheretics and false teachers Paul castigates the Judaizers more violently than any others. Why? Because they did not accept justification by faith alone. Justification by the Father, regeneration by the Spirit, plus the following sanctification are fundamental to Biblicalreligion, and without them there is no Christianity at all. Fortunately most fundamentalists indulge in some "denominational distinctives or personal biases."

In addition to zeal and hope, one could discuss, mainly by examples, Peter's list of virtues; but is it not obvious that the list has no logical arrangement and that the colloquial terms overlap? One of his items is "virtue," but is not virtue all-inclusive? And is notgodliness also all-inclusive? Interesting anecdotes could be multiplied on each of these virtues, but their value for guidance is much overrated.

If one wish for a more logical and instructive formulation, the desire is fulfilled by the Ten Commandments. It is a mistake to restrict their authority to the so-called Mosaic dispensation. That God gave these commands to Adam and Eve long before he gave the tables of stone to Moses is clear from the fact that Cain was afraid his brothers would execute him for having murdered Abel. Neither murder nor secular disregard of God

became evil for the first time after the Israelite slaves escaped from Egypt. In fact, the Egyptians themselves, pagan as they were, recognized murder and would have executed Moses, had they caught him. Obviously too, blood sacrifice, in anticipation of the Messiah, seems to have been instituted in *Genesis* 3:21, and was indubitably practiced by Noah (*Genesis* 8:20) and Abraham. These practices were procedures and progress in sanctification, but this is not the place to spend more time on ancient rites.

As the Ten Commandments were in effect before the time of Moses, so too they remain in effect after the resurrection of Christ. Here is the supreme document on sanctification. One of the excellencies of Calvinism is that Calvin emphasized them more than any theologian before him. Even though the Lutherans very commendably made a definite point of the three functions or uses of the Law, only the two *Westminster Catechisms*, of all the creedal formulations, give it such a detailed explanation. Since so many professed Christians know hardly anything about all this, I do not apologize for quoting the introductory section from the *Larger Catechism*. I am confident that the poorly instructed seminary graduate, if sincere, will, after reading it, be inspired to preach some sermons on the Law of God.

In addition to quoting four questions and answers, I have included, as samples, a few, only a few, of the Scriptural references appended to them.

Q. 96. *What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?*

A. The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come,*b* and to drive them to Christ;*c* or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable,*d* and under the curse thereof.*e*

b 1 *Timothy* 1:9: Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, [10:] For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

c *Galatians* 3:24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

d *Romans* 1:20: For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Compare with *Romans* 2:15: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

e *Galatians* 3:10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Q. 97. *What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?*

A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to shew them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

Q. 98. *Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?*

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone; and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. The first four commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.

Q. 99. *What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?*

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof and unto entire obedience for ever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.*o*

2. That it is spiritual and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.*p*

3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects is required or forbidden in several commandments.*q*

4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden;*r* and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where apromise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof and provocations thereunto.

7. That in what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.

8. That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

o *Psalm* 19:7: The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. *James* 2:10: For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. *Matthew* 5:21: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: [22:] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

p *Romans* 7:14: For we know that the law is spiritual but I am carnal, sold under sin. *Deuteronomy* 6:5: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Compare with *Matthew* 22:37: Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. [38:] This is the first and great commandment. [39:] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. *Matthew* 5:21, 22: [See letter *o*.][27:] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: [28:] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. [33:] Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: [34:] But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne. [37:] But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. [38:] Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: [39:] But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.[43:] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: [44:] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

q *Colossians* 3:5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection; evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. *Amos* 8:5: Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? *Proverbs* 1:19: So are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof. *1 Timothy* 6:10: For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

r Isaiah 58:13: If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.

8. Conclusion

After these introductory paragraphs there comes a long series of explanations, implications, and detailed applications of eachcommandment, on to Answer 151. Both the *Catechism* and the *Westminster Confession* emphasize that the moral law is useful as a guide to the Christian life and as the standard of Christian behavior, but righteousness does not come by the law. Our obedience to thelaw is the result, not the cause, of our growing sanctification. Let me conclude this treatise on sanctification by quoting first the apostle Paul, then the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and finally Christ.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. (*Galatians* 2:20, 21)

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made…. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. (*Galatians* 3:19, 21)

Chapter XIII of the *Westminster Confession* emphasizes the fact that we are sanctified by God, not by our own efforts; our imperfect obedience to the moral law is a result of that sanctification, not the cause of it. Sanctification begins with regeneration.

They who were effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life: there abide still some remnants of corruption in every part: whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome: and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

"Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth" (*John* 17:17).

Chapter 9 – Eschatology

I. The Definition

Etymologically this term refers to the events that happen last, at the end of the world. Traditionally these events have been identified as the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven and hell. In recent years, however, some liberals have extended the term eschatological beyond the limits of its previous meaning. They label the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ as eschatological events. Even the Flood, the Exodus, and the Babylonian captivity qualify for inclusion. Orthodox theology, on the other hand, and Merriam Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, remain true to the temporal etymology of the word - the dictionary specifying death, resurrection, immortality, the second advent of Christ, judgment, and the future state.

To include the death and resurrection of Christ, or any other divine intervention in the past, obscures the predictions of Christ's return. There is indeed a worth-while point in the liberal discussions, and it even bears on eschatology properly so-called. It is not, however, a recent liberal discovery. The point is that Christianity is an historical religion. This does not mean that Christianity, like Buddhism or Hinduism, has a history. It means that the theological contents of Christianity include assertions of historical events. The doctrines of the Atonement is not an historical events; but the crucifixion of Christ, which is an historical event, is an essential part of that doctrine. So too is the Exodus and the giving of the Law of Moses; and so on. If the enemies of Christianity could disprove the actual occurrence of these events, Christianity would have been refuted. Christianity is historical. Islam could perhaps get along without Mohammed; Hinduism and especially Buddhism do not stand or fall with any event of history. More obviously the systems of the great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel, do not contain historical data, but Christianity does.

This means that the world, and in particular mankind, is governed by teleological laws. History is not positivistic but providential; and as such, like a Divine Comedy, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Though the beginning, the creation, and the middle, the Flood, the Babylonian captivity, and especially the incarnation, require supernatural intervention, the end events, resurrection and judgment, are alone properly designated as eschatological.

2. The Intermediate State.

Unfortunately this strict definition leads to an embarrassment. With the emphasis on the end of history in the future, it seems improper to classify as eschatological events that have been repeated innumerable times in the past. But the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, a past and present reality for our ancestors, continues until the end. Where else then, other than in eschatology, can this Biblical teaching be located?

Chapter One of this volume mentioned the behavioristic theory of language in connection with the intermediate state of the soul. Behaviorism virtually dominates psychology today. Not only did Logical Positivism - school now in considerable disarray - propagate it; but influential philosophers also, for example, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, were its advocates. Innumerable psychologists teach it.

B.F. Skinner, undoubtedly the best known of contemporary behaviorists, has all human action determined by the strictly mechanical laws of physics and chemistry. Since behaviorists best

understand the laws in the biological realm, it is they who should control the conduct of all people. Politicians and ordinary citizens should be made to conform to the behaviorists' plans for society.

Now, if we grant that behaviorists understand this science better than anyone else, it still follows that their thoughts and plans, which are of course only their bodily motions, are as much as the result of mechanical causes as the motions of other human bodies. But if all plans and ideals are equally mechanical, it is hard to show in what way the behaviorists' plans are better than those of corrupt politicians. They are all generated by the same method.

Now, it may eventuate through this causation that such psychologists will be able to seize political power. But if physics does not so favor them, and another group comes to power, the behaviorists cannot complain, for there is no rational basis for preferring their ideals above other ideals. Hence Skinner cannot rationally justify his view that since human behavior is determined in any case, it ought to be determined by scientific behaviorism. Where does Skinner found an ought in mechanism? Or even a better?

So much for the obvious enemies of Christ. There is also a lesson here for Christian apologetes. It is this: Since a person himself, Paul, Calvin, you and I, or better, since the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, "while" their bodies ... rest in their graves till the resurrection," it follows that the man himself, far from being an instance of organic chemistry, is not even a combination of soul and body, but is strictly the soul. Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle too closely in the definition of the soul as "the form as an organic body." Aquinas tried to avoid the denial of immortality inherent in Aristotle's definition, but avoidance is difficult. Some other theologians or apologetes, even if they are not Thomists, argue that man is a unity, and that there is no duality of soul and body. Well, if man is the soul, he is a unity. But if we follow Augustine a man is no more a unity of soul and body than a carpenter is a unity of hand and hammer. For Augustine and what other theory so well accommodates the Biblical data on the intermediate state? - the soul is the person and the body is its instrument. So also Charles Hodge: "The soul is the self, the Ego, of which the body is the organ" [instrument] (Vol III, p 725). Also, "the body [is] not a necessary condition of [the soul's] consciousness or activity." (p. 726). To which Hodge adds

Rev. 14:13 Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea; saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follows them.

This is not the the only verse in the Bible that teaches the existence of such a soul (psychel mind (nous), or spirit truach pneumat. This was documented in the discussion on the creation and nature of man. To this the New Testament adds:

Matt. 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

II Cor. 5;8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The first of these three occurs in Jesus discussion with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection, however, requires the continuous existence of the person from the time of death on. Hence the phrase, "the God of Abraham" asserts that Abraham is living now, even more pointedly than it asserts the resurrection. And lest it be thought that Jesus did not quite meet the

Sadducees' denial of the resurrection, be it remembered that they denied the resurrection because they denied all life after death (Josephus, Wars II, 8, 14).

The Sadducees' denial invites comparison with an extremely opposite, though equally non-christian, assertion of the "immortality" of the soul. The word immortality is put in quotation marks here because it is not the right term. The Pythagoreans and especially Plato - it s not true of Democritus, Epicurus, nor presumably of Aristotle either - thought not only that the soul survives death, and is in this sense immortal, but also that it will be reincarnated. It will not only survive all future deaths but has already survived all past death. The soul is eternal or more accurately everlasting. Such is the argument of Plato's Phaedo: though the Timaeus seems to speak of the construction of the World Soul out of preexisting elements, and if the World Soul, then a fortiori human souls. At any rate the Bible, denying that souls are eternal, asserts that by God's providence they are immortal.

With respect to some more modern religious groups, the most important of the three verses just quoted is the one in Luke. To this, however, one may add the account of the Transfiguration. As with the thief on the cross who entered paradise with Christ late Friday afternoon, so with Moses and Elijah. On the mount they appeared and discussed the doctrine of the atonement with Jesus. The bodily appearance was doubtless a theophany - Peter would never have recognized them by sight anyhow - but the important point is that they discussed theology. Their minds were active, and no doubt acute.

If, now, thinking were a function of the brain, of of the muscles as Dewey holds, Moses and Elijah could have taken no interest in the atonement. Although this consideration does nothing to convince secular psychologists, as was explained in chapter one, it ought to warn Christian psychologists to avoid contamination from their professional colleagues.

From time to time in the history of theology a view surfaces which, though it does not deny the existence of the soul, nevertheless denies that the soul immediately upon death enters upon a state of conscious bliss. Those who hold such a view divide into two groups. The one asserts a sleep of the soul; the other asserts a period of punishment in purgatory.

Eusebius reports that there was a sect of Christians in Arabia who held that the soul remained unconscious from death to the resurrection. Calvin wrote a refutation against a similar group in his day. Since the view is not unknown today, some space can well be allotted to its present exponents.

The Seventh Day Adventist church is the best known contemporary exponent of the view that the soul does not remain conscious after death. To support their position they assemble a large number of Scripture references, iQuestions on Doctrine. 1957, pp. 522 ff.)

Some of these are:

Psa. 6:5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Psa. 30:9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?

Psa. 115:17 The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.

Isa. 38:18-19 For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. (19) The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

Strange to say, they include in this very list

I Cor. 15:17-18 And if Christ be not raise, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

This is strange because Paul's general argument here is a hypothetical destructive syllogism. The premise "Christ is not raised" implies the conclusion "They that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." But since the premise is not Paul's own - it is the premise of those he opposes - neither is the conclusion his. When the SDA includes this in its list, it give the impression of denying the resurrection of Christ. One would also like to know what they say about Christ's condition between Friday 3:00 P.M. and Sunday 5:00 A.M. They quote, "His soul was not left in hell (Greek, hades, "the grave")." IF then his soul was not in Hades, and certainly not in the grave, for souls are not bodies, nor in heaven conscious with the Father, where was it and what was it doing that Saturday?

At any rate they say about the dead, and therefore presumably about Christ, "The saints go to the grave ... while asleep in the tomb the child of God knows nothing. ... One who serves God closes his eyes in death, and whether one day or two thousand years elapse, the next instant in his consciousness will be when he opens his eyes and beholds his blessed Lord", (pp. 523-524). But this was not true of Moses and Elijah.

The SDA writer considers the cases of some who have been raised from the dead; the widow's son, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus, and four others. The argument is interesting: "It would surely be too bad to bring one back from heaven, where having once arrived, he would naturally expect to remain forever." This, however, is not strictly so; for presumably when a soul enters Paradise at death, he will know that he is not yet in the final state. But to continue the quotations, "to bring one back from the realms of bliss to this vale of tears would be to run the risk of his sinning again, and so of losing his eternal reward!

This argument may impress Arminians and any others who deny predestination. But it only causes Calvinists to smile. The present volume has tried to stress the point that Christianity is a logically concatenated system. Numerous examples have been given. But what student at the start suspected that the doctrine of the intermediate state presupposes the doctrine of predestions?

The SDA author picks up some verses on which orthodox Christians have placed more weight than they can bear. But not always. II Cor. 5:8 contains the phrase, "absent from the body and present with the Lord." The SDA argument is, "Nothing in this text [justifies] ... the conclusion that being present with the Lord will occur immediately upon 'being absent from the body.' The text does not indicate <u>when</u> these experiences take place. We simply recognize the interval of death between the two experiences. ... Making reference to the future state, Paul speaks of a 'building of God ... eternal in the heavens' and '... our house which is from heaven'. When the change takes places and we put on immortality, he remarks that it is in order that 'mortality might be swallowed up of life.' Then it is at the resurrection, it seems to us, that Paul expected to be 'present with the Lord,' for he says in I Cor. 15:53 that at the second coming of Christ, this mortal must put on immortality" (p. 529).

These conclusion are far from certain. First, the subject matter in I Cor. 15:33 is not the same as in II Cor. 5:8. The former says that our "<u>phtharton</u> must put on <u>aphtharsia</u>" i.e. the corruptible must put on incorruption. But this does not refer to the soul receiving a resurrection body, because the soul is already incorruptible. The soul we have now, the soul we now are, is immortal. The next phrase is, "this thing that is subject to death (thneton touto) must put on deathlessness." But this refers to the body, not to the soul. The verse says, "This mortal body must put on an immortal body." Such an

interpretation fits very well with the illustration of the grain of wheat in I Cor. 15:36, 37, 44. Hence the idea is not that the soul becomes deathless at the resurrection.

With this elimination of the former passage the exegesis of II Cor. 5:8 will not be burdened with a false comparison. The verse said, “absent from the body ... present with the Lord.” What or who is absent from the body? Paul of course. Then Paul is not his body. Paul is his soul. Note previously in inverse 6, Paul was at home in the body, and therefore absent from the Lord. Who or what was “at home”? Paul of course. Then his body is his home; it is Paul, that is, Paul himself, who resides there. At home in the body is absent from the Lord; and absent from the body is present with the Lord. Clearly the SDA is mistaken in referring this to the resurrection of body.

If anyone think that this is not sufficient to refute the opposing position, something more can be said II Cor. 5, not only to refute, but to explain more fully what the Bible says about the intermediate state.

In chapter four Paul had been speaking of his many afflictions. He could hardly have been unaware that he might be murdered or executed by his enemies. Nevertheless he knows that if the home in which he now lives be destroyed, he has an eternal home in heaven. He groans in his present home and desires to live in his heavenly home.

What is this heavenly house? The SDA says it is the resurrection body. There are two other interpretations. One is that the house or home is heaven itself. The other is that the soul at death enters an “intermediate body” suitably constructed to last until the resurrection. For this view there is neither support elsewhere in Scripture, nor hint in these verses. It has been based only upon non-revelational psychology: “As without body there is no soul, so without a corporeal organisation there can be no salvation; a corporeal organisation as the necessary condition of personality, is the end of God’s work. ... The continued existence of the soul as a pure spirit without a body is to the apostle an impossibility ... for self-consciousness in a created being necessarily supposes the limitation of a bodily organisation” (Olshausen, Commentary, in loc.)

This view is probably based on Aristotle’s definition of the soul as the form of an organic body, as opposed to Plato’s view of the soul as an independent reality. Eusebius (Church History. VI, 37) reports a view very similar to that of the SDA. Calvin in his day attacked a view of “soul-sleep”, called Psychopannychianism. But let us return to II Cor. 5.

Does then the passage in question refer to the resurrection body? In opposition to this view, one may note that heaven is described as a place of many mansions, a city with many houses, or a habitation (Jn. 14:2; Heb. 11:10, 14; 13:14; Rev. 21:10; Lk. 16:9, 22). Then too, the resurrection body is not eternal. It may in some way be derived from our present natural body; but this is not eternal. Hence the house must be heaven, not a new or renovated body. Furthermore, in consoling himself and others who may suffer death in the persecutions, Paul says, “we have ... “ The argument is: Do not be alarmed: if we die, we now have a heavenly home to which we shall go. It is rather obvious that the consolation depends on the fact that immediately at death, we enter a glorious home. The contention that it merely seems immediate because we are unconscious for a thousand years or so is a very strained interpretation. The conclusion therefore is justified that being absent from the body is coterminous with being present with the Lord.

However, the SDA quoted verses from the OT and these require a mention. They were in general similar to Psa. 115:17, “The dead praise not the Lord.”

Now, as a preliminary remark, one may mention the fact that the OT says so little about life after death that some liberals assert the OT denies it. The liberal position on this point can be met with Job 19:25-27 and with various passages describing the intimate covenantal relationship between God and his people. But if the OT has little to say about a future life and a resurrection, it is not surprising that it has still less to say about the intermediate state.

Since, however, the SDA is at this time a rather prominent religious group, it is well to consider their use of the OT. For this purpose a fairly long quotation will be made from a book in which the author analyses SDA theology in considerable detail. The student will do well to read the entire book.

"The appeal to verses referring to the condition of man in death. In the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and Ecclesiastes, there are more than a few verses which speak of the silence of the dead, the perishing of the dead man's thoughts, and so forth. These passages prove to the satisfaction of the Adventists that there is no continuation of consciousness or of any kind of activity after the occurrence of death. An examination of such texts in their setting, however, may very well lead to a conclusion different from that reached by Adventism, namely, that at the least they allow, and in some cases fairly well require, the construction that they refer to the dead not in an absolute sense but in their relationship to living persons or earthly activities."

"An examination of one of these, selected at random, evinces this fact. Psalm 146:4, cited on page 522 of *Questions on Doctrine*, reads: "His breath goeth forth, he retumeth to earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." This verse, however, is found in the course of an exhortation by the Psalmist that men should trust in God and not "in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help." Why is this counsel to be heeded? It is because all men are subject to death; even the mightiest of them expire and are buried out of the sight of their fellows; all their designs and plans, everything that has relevance to this present form of existence, are finished completely and finished forever. This is what the text intends to teach; there is no reflection one way or the other upon the state of the person after death. Indeed, if it should be insisted that this and similar verses must be applied to the destiny of the individual in a rigidly literal sense, and that the writers of such passages had in mind to say everything that is to be said concerning death, one who believed in no kind of immortality or resurrection at all would be perfectly justified in finding support for his view in these words. Understood as referring to anything more ultimate than the the phenomenal aspects of death, they fit a view of man of the type which B. B.

Warfield classifies as "Pure Mortalism" better than they do the doctrine of conditional immortality. Does not Ecclesiastes 9:5 say" ... the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten"? Where, by Seventh-day Adventist canons of interpretation, is there room for even a "conditional immortality" here?"

"The appeal to passages referring to "immortality" and "life". The Adventists argue that since "God alone hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:13-16), man does not have it innately; further, since "man is urged to seek for immortality (Rom. 2:7), he does not now possess it."

"The former of these verses, Paul's words to Timothy, are among the favorite texts by which Adventism proves that man is not immortal, and at first glance it would seem that this is all they need to make their case; the verse says in so many words that immortality cannot be predicated of anyone but God. The difficulty is, however, that if the "immortality" which is envisioned here is of a kind which can be partaken of by a creature at all, the movement has on its hands a text which proves far too much. How, if "God alone hath immortality," can man have "conditional immortality"? It should be obvious, therefore, that Paul is at this point using the word in a sense in which it cannot be applied to any creature. This "immortality" is an exclusively divine quality; no angel or glorified saint, not to

mention the demons or lost men, will ever possess it as God possesses it. Indeed, it is unlikely that any group in the history of Christianity, other than an occasional isolated and short-lived mystical sect, has ever taught that man does or shall have immortality in this sense, namely, as an original, eternal or necessary quality. Certainly when traditional Protestantism affirms that men are naturally immortal, it does not mean that they are so in the same way as God is immortal; it is using the term "immortality of the soul" with respect to men in general as the equivalent of "endless existence."”

“The latter of these passages, Romans 2:7, speaks of "immortality" in still another sense. That this is so is evident from the context, in which the words "glory," "honour," and "peace" (v. 10) are conjoined with the "immortality" for which men are urged to seek. All of these are in antithesis to "indignation and wrath and tribulation and anguish," the lot of the unrighteous. The force of "immortality" here, then, is not quantitative, in the sense of bare continuance of existence (in which sense all men are "immortal"), nor is it that of eternal and original immortality (in which sense only God is "immortal"); this "immortality" is of a qualitative kind, connoting incorruptibility, in which sense it is used of the redeemed people of God and of no others. The same principle may be applied to those passages which speak of "eternal life" as the "gift of God." This is not a "gift" of endless existence, but of perfect blessedness "in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”"

“The appeal to passages referring to "death". The situation here is parallel to that which was noted in the preceding section. "Death" is used in Scripture in more senses than one, and "cease to exist" is by no means its most frequent meaning. This is manifestly the case even on the Adventists' own principles; if there is to be any future punishment at all (as the Adventists say there will be), "annihilation" cannot exhaust the meaning of "death" as the "wages of sin." The term, as will be apparent when the question of annihilationism comes under discussion, is used in a fuller and far more sober sense.”

“77?e *appeal to the use of "sleep" to refer to death.* The point is emphasized by the Adventists that "the Greek words for 'sleep'. . . refer in many instances to the sleep of death." In this connection they cite the remark of W. E. Vine: This metaphorical use of the word sleep is appropriate because of the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body.

It is difficult to determine what the writers of Questions on Doctrine had in view in calling attention to this fact. Vine's observation is quite correct, and it is the interpretation placed upon this terminology by the great host of Christian writers. "Sleep" is indeed a natural euphemism for death, referring to the appearances of things, no reflection upon matters more ultimate being intended. As far as the non-material part of man is concerned, therefore, it is impossible to decide from this expression, taken by itself, whether or not there is consciousness after death. There is, in fact, but one place in Scripture where the term "fall asleep" is used in close conjunction with a reference to the departure of the non-material part of man, namely Acts 7:59-60. Here, in the account of the martyrdom of Stephen, the verses read: And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

“The point will probably not need to be elaborated that this connection gives scant support to the view that to "fall asleep," used of death, implies that Stephen did not enter consciously into the presence of his Saviour and Lord.”[1]

The section on Seventh Day Adventism began with a remark that two groups deny that the righteous soul upon death immediately experiences conscious bliss. The second of these groups is Romanism. Unlike the SDA Romanism affirms the consciousness but denies the bliss in its doctrine of purgatory. If the former section has been so long, two short considerations are enough to dispose of purgatory.

The first point is that the bible contains no mentions of purgatory. Sometimes I Cor. 3:15, and, even less appropriate, Jude 23 are used. Neither of these provide any basis for the doctrine.

Rev. 21:27 says that nothing defiled shall enter heaven; but this would imply purgatory only if the redeemed saints continued in their defilement. The apocryphal Maccabees 12:43 is a little better, but neither Jews nor Protestants accept the Apocrypha. The only valid argument that Romanists can use is: Many truths not written in the Bible were given to the Roman church and constitute its tradition; purgatory is one of these truths; therefore this doctrine must be accepted. This argument differs from those preceding. The former Scripture references are excellent premises, but the inference to purgatory is invalid. Here the logic is perfect, but the premises are false.

The second point can be connected with I Cor. 3:15 and Rev. 21:27. Nothing defiled enters heaven and all evil works are like hay and stubble to be burned up. This figure of burning up stubble may seem to hint at purgatory. Actually, however, there is a great difference. Purgatory is supposed to be a place where sinner suffer for their sins and thus complete their atonement. Christ's sufferings have expiated some sins, but not all. Since Christ's death was not sufficient riiowever necessary it might have been) to atone for all sin, the sinner himself must pay the penalty for the remainder. The present writer in another book quoted a well known gospel hymn:

Jesus paid it all,

All to him I owe.

Sin had left a crimson stain He washed it white as snow

The Romish counterpart is worth repeating here because it emphasizes the contrast.

Jesus paid in part:

Thanks to him I say.

Sin had left a bluish stain;

He washed it somewhat gray.

3. The Second Advent.

With the doctrine of the intermediate state placed here because there is no better place for it, the next discussion takes up what is more properly called eschatological. The first point, possibly too obvious to mention, but clearly essential, is the fact that the NT predicts the future.

Luke 21:6 fF. There shall not be left one stone upon another. ... Nation shall raise against nation ... ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

John 21:18 When thou shalt be old, another shall find thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

Rom. 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved.

Rev. 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

Of the events the NT predicted, some have already occurred, e.g. the destruction of Jerusalem. Others, such as the world-wide preaching of the gospel, are occurring. The remainder are yet to

come; and it is these, or, better, the temporal relations among these, that puzzle us as we read.

Though there are three distinctly different views concerning the order of the several events which constitute the age to come, the one event, of all the most important, and so acknowledged by all evangelicals, is the return of Christ.

Acts 1:11 This Jesus, he who has Oust] been taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in the Hay you have seen him depart into heaven.

There may be a hundred verses in the NT that predict or refer to the return of Christ. Most, if not all of the others, add some detail concerning concomitant circumstances. This one in Acts, unless one boggles at the simple phrase “in like manner," seems to be the only one that restricts itself to the bare event itself. Even so, it is unambiguous in predicting that Jesus himself Hill return from heaven to earth.

With the rise of modernism in the nineteenth century, many liberal who wished to avoid too great a rejection of Scripture tried to interpret the return of Christ as the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Jesus on his Second Coming, by W.Roy Goff, 1917), or as the death of the believer, or even as the experience of regeneration. Against these views the fundamentalists emphasized the personal and bodily return of the Lord. Of course, they were right. But this emphasis need not be so vociferous today as it was then because the liberals’ subterfuges are no longer possible. The subterfuges are no longer possible because (1) they were exegetically incompetent, and because (2) the liberals today do not need to fear outraging their unbelieving congregations by denying the Bible. Tn fact, though they often try to prove that Paul believed and has mistaken that Christ would return in his own lifetime, liberals can often please orthodox believers with their fairly accurate exegesis Such is what the Bible teaches, the fundamentalists understood the Bible correctly, but they believed it - how stupid!

What the unbelievers reject as stupid is the obvious supematuralism of Christ’s return. Scripture emphasizes this in its description of the event. Though evangelicals divide into three main groups on the question of the millennium, they all agree that Christ will return on the clouds of heaven, in flaming fire, with the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel, accompanied by angels and saints. The student may make his own list of verses to complete this description. Deny the supernatural, and no Christianity remains.

But beyond this unanimous agreement on the main point of Christ's personal and visible return, there are three divergent theories concerning the temporal relations among some concomitant events. The questions are basically: Will there be a millennium or not; and if so, does it come before or after Christ’s return.

(a) Postmillennialism is the view that the preaching of the gospel will eventually convert the world and that a thousand year period of all but universal righteousness will ensue. Then Christ will return. His return is postmillennial. By far the most thorough defense of this view is David Brown’s The Second Advent (on the cover of the book) or Christ’s Second Coming. Will it be Premillennial? (on the title page).

It is not possible here to reproduce the 489 pages of this carefully written volume; but some of the scripture adduced must be mentioned. Early in the volume Dr. Brown considers the parables.

First he refers to Matt.28:18-20 as indicating a long time and extensive changes between the two advents. Christ's return therefore could not have been imminent. To this agrees the parable of the tares. The field is the world — not the Church, as those who oppose ecclesiastical discipline try to

maintain - in which tares and wheat both growl until the harvest. This indicates a long time of slow but steady growth. The mustard seed and the leaven teach the same lesson. Something small becomes large through its inherent power.

But although the gospel is thus to permeate the world, there will be great reverses at times (I Timl. 4:1-3; II Tim.3:l-5; II Peter 3:3-4). These reverses do not annul the teaching of the parables on the eventual triumph of Christianity, but they do indeed show that it will be a long long time before Christ returns.

The wording of Acts 3:20-21 also, “whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things ... "tends to discourage an expectation of Christ’s return during the first century.

The parable of the ten pounds likewise teaches that the nobleman went into a far country for a long time. The details of the story - the antagonism of the citizens, the investment of the money, and the words of the nobleman upon his return - all teach that Christ’s return was not imminent.

Dr. Brown then quotes an earlier writer: "It is worthy of note that the only errors mentioned in the New Testament respecting the time of our Lord’s coming, all consist in dating it too early... The case of the servant represented as saying, ‘My Lord delay eth his coming.’ ... The servant had taken up a wrong impression of the date when his Master was to be looked for; and as his Master did not show himself according to that false date, the servant, instead of distrusting his own understanding, memory, or calculation ... acted on the assumption that his Master would not come ... and so acted to his ruin. And Dr. Brown goes on to show how Paul rebuked the Thessalonians for their belief in an imminent return. Than the apostle in the second epistle explains some events that must take place before Christ returns. The Scofield Bible tries to defend an imminent return, though two thousand years have now elapsed, by defining imminence as the absence of any known or prophesied event that must occur before the second advent (Note on Mt4: 17). But Paul made the prophecy.

Later in the volume (pp.335-358, et passim)Dr. Brown finds in Daniel the gospel's gradual conquest of all nations as the small stone grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

In addition to a great amount of similar scriptural argumentation, Dr. Brown is, let us say, vehement against the premillennialists' lukewarmness toward foreign missions. In particular he castigates the Messrs. Bonar, quoting A. Bonar who called missionary zeal “a visionary hope”

(p. 317), and referring to H. Bonar’s rebuke to the London Missionary Society (p. 319).

Unfortunately castigation has not been confined to one side of this debate. Time and time again the premillennialists have accused their opponents of substituting political socialism for the gospel. This is a completely false accusation. It is true that the modernists largely depend on and trust in left-wing politics “to bring in the Kingdom of God." But this is not postmillennialism.

The modernists along with their rejection of the Virgin Birth and the vicarious Atonement also reject the personal return of Christ. But the postmillennialists put their trust in the preaching of the gospel. The contrast between the two millennial views has to do with the question whether God has ordained a general conversion of all people under the preaching of the gospel, or "whether God has reserved his regenerating power, on this scale, until Christ returns and ushers in a millennium.

Reliance on the return of Christ for the conversion of the world Dr. Brown considers, not merely pessimistic, but as a denigration of the gospel. He holds that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Therefore to make the return of Christ the power of salvation, chiefly through his converting the Jews by his appearance, is to contradict Romans, even if

the Jews then preach the gospel to the Gentiles and usher in an age of righteousness. Not only do the premillenarians denigrate the power of the gospel, they also face a difficulty in the role they assign the Jews. For if Christ converts the Jews by his appearing, why should not the same event also convert the Gentiles without making use of Jewish preachers? On this supposition the gospel remains entirely useless.

Dr. Brown was no modernist or liberal; yet he lived in an age that was unbelievably optimistic. Herbert Spencer had just predicted that his millennium was just about to break forth. Nearly everyone, even good Christians, were influenced, by this general optimism. Great missionary endeavor would soon convert the Chinese. But today the work of the great China Inland Mission is in ruins. Since the Congo became Zaire, nearly all Africa has turned violently anti-christian. When Christ returns, will he find faith on the earth ?

Although the foregoing summary is quite inadequate to indicate the scope of Dr. Brown's constructive argument, exegeting hundreds of verses, a great deal of it is not so much constructive as it is an exploitation of the unavoidable difficulties, as well as some distressing stupidities, into which many premillenarians have fallen. The proliferation of imposing charts, predicting the order of future events in great detail, and with great imagination, could hardly avoid the absurdities of careless enthusiasm. Many of these chart makers had little or no theological training. Even those who did, sometimes made what we today can see are egregious blunders. In 1927 a well educated, popular preacher in Philadelphia explained that the national boundaries in Europe were then precisely those of ancient Rome. No further changes would occur; Mussolini was restoring the Roman Empire; he was the anti-christ; and the Lord would return very shortly. What about Hitler? Oh, no; Hitler is unimportant; Mussolini and Rome will dominate until Christ returns. That was 1927.

On the other hand and quite aside from the fundamentalism of post World War I, the exegetical problems are very real and very great. Then after exegesis the piecing together of the Scriptural prophecies is more difficult than any jig-saw puzzle. This is characteristic of predictive prophecy. Christ said, "and now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is to come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29). This statement may refer to the death and resurrection of Christ, to Pentecost, or even to the second advent. In any case the disciples could not have described, on the basis of John fourteen, what was going to happen the next day, fifty days afterward, or two thousand years later. Jesus upbraided his disciples for not understanding the Old Testament. But if we are honest with ourselves, we should hardly claim to have understood the prophecies better than they. So, today, those who construct detailed charts of the future must have a very good opinion of themselves.

An integral part of the postmillenarian argument is the inability of the human mind to decipher predictive prophecy. This includes particularly the premillennialisf s preference for a literal fulfilment rather than a spiritual one.

One item that Dr. Brown labors upon for some length is the assertion by many premillennialists that the Jewish temple will be literally rebuilt on the spot that now supports the Dome of the Rock. That the Israelis may yet drive out the Arabs and build a temple where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac cannot be adjudged impossible. But that such a rebuilding is a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy and that God and the Messiah would accept the sacrifices of lambs again is quite another matter.

For one thing, not all prophecies were intended literally, though a good number of premillennialists so assert. For proof one need not read beyond Genesis 3:15. But there is also Numbers 24:17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel ..."

This might be a prophecy of the second coming rather than the first; but Jesus is not a planet or a sun. Nor is he a literal cornerstone, as Isaiah says.

Cannot then the temple prophecy of Ezekiel also be figurative? Aside from the fact that the man in Ezekiel 40-43 was not a literal man, the rest of the chapter sounds very literal. However, a doubt arises when we read that holy waters flow from under the sanctuary into the Dead Sea and purify it so that the Israelites will have fish to eat. The assignment of territories to the tribes is also suspicious. Ezekiel's scheme requires parallel strips of land, each extending from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. The symmetry is perfect, but the geography is puzzling.

(b) Amillennialism.

The exceptional difficulties that eschatology presents have led some theologians to escape them by a complete denial of a millennium. If there is no millennium, then it is foolish to ask whether Christ's return precedes it or follows it. The only place where the Bible explicitly mentions the thousand years is in the extremely puzzling and apocalyptic book of Revelation (20:4-7). These visions from chapter four on, with the exception of the eventual victory of God over Satan, are almost completely unintelligible.

Commentators cannot agree. Those who take chapters two and three literally, i.e. letters to existing churches in Asia minor divide on the remainder. One group dates the book at A.D. 64 and explains chapters 4-12 as a description of Jewish persecutions of Christians; then to the end of chapter 18 is a prediction of the Roman persecutions. Finally chapters 19 and 20 describe the worldwide conquest of the gospel.

Others who also take the letters literally, but who date the book at A.D.96, explain chapters four on as a series of visions all with the same meaning and all covering the same time. The meaning is God's victory over Satan, and the time in every case is from John's day to the return of Christ.

But there are some unfortunate souls who, though they acknowledge that these letters were sent to seven actual churches in Asia Minor, hold that these seven churches prefigure seven ages in history from John’s day to the second advent.

To support this view Scofield's note on Rev. 1:20 states, " It is incredible that in a prophecy covering the church period there should be no such foreview." Now, assuming that the Apocalypse must cover the “church period”, one may ask why chapters 4-19 cannot be such a foreview. Clearly there is nothing in the seven letters to suggest that they predict the course of history. Nor is Scofield’s division of history at his particular junctures required by anything in Scripture. Nor by anything in history either. True enough, he selects some important points, such as Emperor Constantine in A.D. 316. gut why not specify the fall of Rome in A.D.410 and the ensuing four hundred years of the Dark Ages? Why not put a division about A.D. 1274, when Aristotelianism conquered Augustinianism? But the worst aspect of Scofield's division is his view of the Protestant Reformation. No doubt its "works were not fulfilled", for Romanism lives on; but shall we say the Reformation has It a “name that livest, and art dead ... I have not found thy works perfect before God... Repent... Thou has [only] a few names ... which have not defiled their garments ...” Does this describe the activities of Luther, Calvin, and Knox?

Then, next, Scofield places the second advent the end of chapter three. The text itself gives no hint of this, for which reason Scofield describes it as a "secret" rapture, quite different from the very noisy and visible rapture of I Thess.5:16-17 and Rev. 1:7. Then chapters four to twenty are supposed to describe a great tribulation on earth, after which Christ comes the third time.

In view of all these perplexities it is not surprising that some expositors simply denied the millennium and thought thereby to escape the difficulties.

If the outright denial of a millennium is not attractive, for Rev.20:4-7 must mean something, amillennialism can be equated with one form of postmillennialism. Of course David Brown expected a millennium of righteousness in the future. But St. Augustine, comparing the restricted knowledge of God during OT times with the worldwide preaching of the gospel since the apostles, taught that the millennium extends from Christ's resurrection to his return. Most Christians, however, at the end of this twentieth century, have a more pleasant picture of the millennium and are less enthusiastic about contemporary civilization.

Amillennialism can more easily accommodate contemporary savagery. Though some amillennialists expect great revivals, or at least vigorously assert that no one can deny their possibility, the system does not need any further extension of the gospel, If the Russian communists regularly employ torture, if Mao has massacred twenty or thirty million Chinese (and so alleviated hunger in China), not to mention his extermination of the Tibetans, and if savages have brought back cannibalism to the Congo and terror to all southern Africa, the amillennialist can accommodate it all under the parable of the tares and the wheat. He may not be so adamant as the premillennialist in asserting the inevitability of things getting worse and worse, but he can still ask, with the premillennialist, will Christ find faith on the earth when he returns?

Nevertheless, arguments against a future millennium are not too convincing. When carried out consistently they become improbable. Sometimes extremely so. Two examples are those of William Milligan, The Book of Revelation, and B.B. Warfield, The Millennium and the Apocalypse, in his Biblical Doctrines.

Milligan's exposition of Rev. 20 begins plausibly enough, "the overthrow of Satan and not the reign of a thousand years is the main theme of the first ten verses" (p. 336). "The thousand years mentioned express no period of time." This seems strange. But "They are not a figure for the whole Christian era [as with Augustine]... Nor do they denote a certain space of time ... at the close of the present dispensation. ... They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or perfection" (p. 337). To show that the terms year and month do not always denote periods of time, Milligan refers to Ezek. 39:9, 12. He acknowledges that a "difficulty connected with this view is that in the third verse of the chapter Satan is said to have been shut into the abyss until the thousand years should be finished, and in the seventh verse we read, 'And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed'" (p.)39). Milligan immediately adds, "but the difficulty is more specious than real." What is more specious than real, however, seems to be Milligan's defense of his claim by a further reference to Ezekiel. More of this in a moment, after a consideration of B.B. Warfield's argument.

One of the most capable defenders of Amillennialism was B .B. Warfield, who published an article The Millennium and the Apocalypse in the Princeton Theological Review (Vol 2, 1904 nw included in Biblical Doctrines, Oxford Univ. Press. 1929 pp.643 ff.). His thesis is not simply that the scriptures are silent as to a millennium, but that they "definitely exclude the whole conception" (p.644). To sustain this position Warfield assumes that each of the seven sections of Revelation begins with the first advent and pictures history on to the second advent. He calls this " the principle of recapitulation." This is, of course, an assumption. It is the assumption of some very estimable theologians, from Augustine to Hengstenberg. But others would say that any assumption begs the question.

Warfield also stresses the fact of symbolism. John saw visions, not history. Many of the details of these visions belong to the visions only. Their purpose is to make the picture vivid - no more; and hence they do not indicate events additional to the main one that the total picture symbolizes.

Less acceptable is Warfield's next assumption: “Here as in all prophecy: it is the spiritual and ethical impression that rules the presentation and not an annalistic or chronological intent” (p.646).

Well, of course, some ethical or moral instruction can be found in these visions; but in contrast with the parable of the unjust steward (Mt. 18:23) or the famous Samaritan neighbor or the parable of the sower, where the ethical element is predominant, and where the historical if present at all is subordinate, - in contrast with these the material in Revelation is strongly chronological. No doubt exegetes differ; but the interpretation that finds first a Jewish persecution and then a Roman persecution is not so absurd as to be disposed of by a mere assumption that the material is ethical and not historical.

There is one point that should be noted before discussing chapter twenty. David Brown mentioned it, and Warfield mentions it twice. The reference is to the conquering sword of Christ, which proceeds from his mouth. Warfield belabors the fact that Christ's victory is not achieved through literal warfare - bullets and atom bombs. He holds that the sword in Christ's mouth signifies the worldwide preaching of the gospel. But this latter view cannot be deduced simply from a denial of military might. The sword in Christ’s mouth could be a personal declaration of Christ himself to the Jews that he is Messiah, or, more in accord with the context, a judgment of doom.

What is really troublesome with Warfield's view is that the person on the white horse, the person called Faithful and True, whose eyes were as fire, with many crowns on his head, who had a name no man knew but himself, is taken as a symbol of a thousand missionaries, none of whom, nor all together, merit this glorious description. Is it not clear that the vision symbolizes Christ himself? At his first advent he spoke in person and miracles occurred. Why not again?

Now comes the main question: Does Rev. 20 teach that there is a future millennium or does it not?

Warfield's first argument (p.649) against a millennium depends on the word souls in Rev. 20:4. The millennium supposedly takes place on earth and those who enjoy it are people in the flesh. But Rev.20:4 is in heaven, and the souls have no bodies.

Here Warfield has forgotten what he so vigorously urged against the premillennialists, that these are visions or pictures symbolizing realities on earth. If Warfield wishes to take souls literally, as distinct from bodies, he should explain how souls can sit on thrones. Can he hold that thrones and sat are figurative, while souls in the very next phrase is literal? Then too, if we must be literal, the souls were the souls of them who had been beheaded. Hence saints who had died a natural death are excluded. Yet Warfield wants the thousand years to be a description of the intermediate state of all believers.

And for good measure, when John said, "I saw the souls of them "who had been beheaded,” and four lines later says, “they lived and reigned with Christ," must the they -which is merely the third plural form of the verb - must the they mean souls? Could it not possibly be those who had been beheaded”? This may not seem so convincing as the previous objections to Warfield; nevertheless the following words are, " the rest of the dead ..." Hence in both cases the subject of the verb could be simply “those who had lived " without any necessary inference that John is talking about souls in sharp distinction from bodies.

The idea that the thousand years is the intermediate state of redeemed souls in heaven leads Warfield to strange conclusions. The student may consult the full text, but this abbreviation cannot much misrepresent it. “The picture is ... the picture of the intermediate state - of the saints of God gathered in heaven away from the confused noise and garments bathed in blood ... The thousand years, thus, is the whole of the present dispensation ... This period between the advents is, on earth, a broken time - three and a half years, a “little time” (Ver.3)... To the saints in bliss it is, on the contrary, a long and blessed period ... “a thousand years" ... The “binding of Satan” is therefore in reality not for a season, but with reference to a sphere; and his “loosing” again is not after a period but in another sphere. ... There is indeed no literal “binding of Satan” ... what happens, happens not to Satan but to the saints, and is only represented as happening to Satan for the purpose of the symbolical picture” (pp.649-651).

Surely such an attempt at exegesis is a device of desperation. Augustine's view that current earthly history is the millennium may sound strange to those who expected peace and blessedness on earth instead of World Wars, communism, and terror; but it is not utterly absurd. The gospel has indeed been preached to all kindreds, tribes, and nations. This is history, chronology, on earth. Warfield- well, chronology can profit by another mention.

Warfield had ruled out “chronological intent,” not only from chapter 20, but from Revelation as a whole. Let us look at the chronology of chapter 20.

First there is the binding of Satan for a thousand years. It is just nit-picking to debate whether the thousand years are precisely 365 x 24 x 60 x 1000 minutes. This precise number of minutes or years may indeed be symbolical; but it must be symbolical of a long period of time. During this time Satan can deceive the nations no more. The text does not say that Satan cannot deceive the souls in heaven any more. No doubt he cannot. But the text says he cannot deceive the Russians, Chinese, and Americans any more, until the thousand years is completed. Here is another point of chronology: Satan deceived the nations for centuries; then for a long time he will be unable to do so; then he will again deceive the nations for a little season.

If this does not refer to history and chronology on earth, Warfield would have to say that although the disembodied souls of the saints are now free from Satan's power, they will again be deceived for a little while before they are reunited with their bodies.

Another chronological note comes in verse five: the rest of the dead do not live [again] until Satan is released from his bonds. The verse is difficult. Who the rest of the dead are is not explained. And it does not seem proper to attach to them the immediately following phrase, "This is the first resurrection,” Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that chronology is involved. We must conclude that Warfield is greatly mistaken in ruling out all temporal sequence from this passage.

Read carefully what Warfield says. The quotation is abbreviated, but the sense is clear; and anyone can easily find the original and study is slowly.

"Any hesitancy ... to adopt this [amillennial] view appears to arise chiefly from the difficulty we naturally experience in reading this apparently historical narrative as a descriptive picture of a state - in translating, so to speak, the dynamic language of narrative into the static language of description. Does not the very term "thousand years" suggest a lapse of time? ... Natural as this feeling is, we are persuaded it is grounded only on a certain not unnatural incapacity to enter fully into the seer's method and to give ourselves entirely to his guidance. ... The number 1000 represents in Bible symbolism absolute perfection ... When the seer says seven or four or three or ten, he ... expresses by each a specific [non-numerical] notion. The sacred number seven in combination with the equally

sacred number three forms the number of holy perfection ten [of course, not twenty-one] and when this ten is cubed into a thousand the seer has said all he could say to convey to our minds the idea of completeness." Thus Warfield tries to rid Revelation of its chronology. How he knows that the seer by using the number 1000 has said all he could say about the complete bliss of the saints, remains unexplained. It would seem that nearly any ordinary Christian could say considerably more.

(c) Premillennialism

The present volume advocates premillennialism, though in a manner that many premillenarians will not like. For it is to be feared that premillenarians are their own worst enemies. Why, may become somewhat clear as the end approaches. At any rate, the argument of the present volume is not so much that the Bible teaches it unmistakably, as that postmilennialism and amillennialism can in no way be fitted into the Biblical data, and hence only premillenarianism is left.

Since the dispensationalists have been so vociferous and so dogmatically detailed with their charts only an architect could draw, the exegesis of a few more passages is needed to point up how much we do not know about the subject.

True, dispensationalists are not the only ones strongly attached to their formulations. Geerhardus Vos wrote The Pauline Eschatology, a tremendously scholarly work and a tremendously difficult one. In it he tries to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that I Cor. 15 definitely makes premillennialism impossible. After one had studies his argument for hours and analyzed it for more hours, one should conclude that Vos failed to prove his point. At the same time also it seems that premillennialists who want to find their view ineradicably embedded in that chapter are equally unsuccessful.

There was a short discussion of Rev. 20 a few paragraphs back. In order now not to be one-sidedly critical of some premillenarians, an amillennial objection can be disposed of. Some of them argue that in Rev. 20:4 the thrones are in heaven, that the souls of the martyrs are in view and not their bodies; and therefore John is not predicting a millennium on earth. There are two answers to this. First, chapters 4-20 are all visions in heaven, but clearly the visions are symbolic of what happens on earth. Of the beast with seven heads (Rev. 17:9), John said, "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth ... and the woman ... is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18). What is seen in heaven symbolizes Rome. It may be imperial Rome, as many early Christians thought; or it may be the Papacy as the Reformers thought; but it must be something on earth. Second, the reference to soul s reads, "the souls of them that were beheaded ...” Then it says, "They lived and reigned." The pronoun they can refer to souls —though even so the souls symbolize something — or it can as well refer to "them that were beheaded." There is no intent to contrast souls in heaven with bodies on earth.

But the premillennialists, especially the dispensationalists, face embarrassments too. The passage now under consideration, in verse 5 says, “This is the first resurrection." Are there two resurrections? Well, in his Gospel John (5:29) asserts a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. But in Rev. 20:5,6 the contrast is not between a first and a second resurrection, but between a first resurrection and the second death. What is envisaged is one resurrection and two deaths. Further, there may be a third resurrection besides the two in John 5:29. To grasp the whole picture, or, better, to recognize some more elements of the intricate puzzle, one must note that not only in the symbolic book of Revelation, but in the prosaic epistles, the word resurrection and its equivalents do not always, do not usually, mean a bodily resurrection from the grave. Ephesians 2:1-6 identify resurrection and regeneration. Indeed, the New Testament designates the initial act of the Holy Spirit in saving a sinner as a resurrection, and uses this term more frequently than terms expressing a new birth.

Warfield, however, does not interpret the resurrection of Rev. 20:5 as the new birth. He identifies both the binding of Satan and this first resurrection with the intermediate state of the saints.

Though Warfield's interpretation is bizarre, it cannot be denied that the verses pose difficult problems. One is the identification of "the rest of the dead [who] did not live [again should be omitted] until the thousand years were finished." A second, closely related to it, is the meaning, of the word live. Could the rest of the dead be the unregenerate? There is no hint of this in the verse. Similarly, if they did not live until the thousand years were finished, one would suppose that they did live afterward. Since, now, the word live in verse four can hardly be restricted to mere physical life such as the lost may have, but includes a reigning with Christ —nor is any resurrection yet mentioned — the idea of spiritual life cannot be immediately ruled out in verse five. It almost seems required. Must we then conclude that verse four refers only to Christians who were martyrs, while those who were indeed Christians but not martyrs have to wait a thousand years for something similar to verse four?

Next comes the puzzling phrase, “This is the first resurrection." It has already been noted that the term resurrection often means regeneration. John himself in his Gospel (5:25) uses the idea if not the word resurrection to describe spiritual life. And of course there is Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. This interpretation of Rev. 20:5 has at least one thing in its favor: it removes all the awkwardness of attaching the last phrase of the verse to the people inverse four, with another group between who do not belong there. The rest of the dead also had been raised from with the result that they too would not suffer the second death.

Another indefensible aberration of the dispensationalists is their insertion, between Rev. 3:22 and Rev. 4:1, of a rapture so secret that there is no reference to it in the whole Bible. Incompetent novelists have described the bewilderment of the non-christian population when they discover that a fair number of people have vanished. The novelists try to achieve a dramatic effect by having engineers on trains suddenly caught up in the air with Christ while the train ploughs on to destruction. The idea could be used in the age of air travel as it was in an earlier year, but perhaps dispensationalism has receded somewhat since the demise of the Broadway Limited.

However, the appeal must be to Scripture. In support of a "secret rapture" J Rene Pache (Le Retour de Jesus Christ, pp. 120, 121) argues that no one saw Enoch as he was taken away. Nor did anyone see Elijah ascend in the fiery, fiery chariots (except Elisha). Only the disciples saw Jesus ascend. Further only the Wise Men, not the general public, saw the star of Bethlehem. And Paul's companions on the road to Damascus, though they saw the light, did not hear Christ's words to Paul. Then continues M. Pache, "Similarly it could, be that the voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet... will be heard only by believers. It Of course, M. Pache cannot show any necessity that these several incidents prefigure the second advent. It is all unfounded supposition. What is more disconcerting, he does not explain -as he should have if he wished to anticipate objections—

Rev. 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.

Although I Thess. 4:7 does not say in so many words that the unregenerate will see Christ descending with clouds, angels, and saints, the text surely describes a noisy spectacular affair. More explicit is

Mt. 24:27 ff. As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west... the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light... then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now, someone may say there are two future advents, one secret, one public and Matt. 24:27 refers to the second, while I Thess. 4, whose saints are not seen and whose trumpet is not heard, refers to the first. But this device begs the question. If exegesis shows that there are two future advents, one might possibly be secret. But there would be no Scriptural reason to suppose so, unless exegesis supported the idea of secrecy. Unsupported suppositions beg the question.

There are indeed good exegetical indications of more that one advent; but they do not establish the dispensational view, for the passages assert more than two advents, comings, parousia.

Mt. 10:23 Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.

Mt. 16:28 There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Both of these verses speak of a coming within the first century. One interpretation of the second verse identifies the coming in glory with the Transfiguration that immediately follows. Some support of this view comes from I Peter 1:16, where Peter himself calls the Transfiguration the parousia. Thus the technical term, which most people reserve for an event still future, is assigned to an event that took place before Christ was crucified.

However, while the Transfiguration is a parousia, on Peter's authority, a relative secret parousia, seen only by three disciples, it can hardly be the correct interpretation of Matt. 16:28. The reason is that in the verse that precedes it Jesus had connected this coming with a judgment upon all men. Obviously this does not fit the Transfiguration. Therefore it seems best to take both 10:23 and 16:28 as references to an event that was far from secret, invisible, or -inaudible, viz., the destruction of Jerusalem. Both verses predict something that was to happen in the first century. Occasionally someone tries to understand such prophecies as referring to Pentecost.

But though this occurred in the first century, the Holy Ghost is not the Son of Man, and Pentecost is not a judgment or condemnation of men because of their evil works.

There is another matter that ought not to be passed over in silence. Standard dispensationalism predicts a time called "The Great Tribulation."

Rev. 1:13,14 What are these that are arrayed in white robes? ... These are they which came out of great tribulation [KJ omits the double article: the tribulation the great] and have washed their robes ...

The dispensational construction is that Christ returned secretly between 3:22 and 4:1. It is so secret that the text does not mention it. At this return Christ raptured all true believers, taking them up into the clouds with himself. Then for a period of seven years the great tribulation falls on the unbelievers left on earth. Somehow or other, during this period a number of people are converted, to whom alone 7:13-14 refer.

In recent years some dispensationalists have had doubts about the pre-tribulation rapture. Two views have emerged. One allows the church to go half-way through the tribulation to a mid-tribulation rapture. The other is that of a post-tribulation rapture.

Now, there are two main objections to both these views. First, Matt. 24:21 and Luke 21:16-24 describe the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These verses do not refer to the second advent, as Matt. 24:24 makes clear. Further Matthew says

Mt. 24:21 Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Not even Hitler's treatment of the Jews was worse than that of the Roman armies. And if no future tribulation can be so terrible, nothing can now occur to deserve the name of The Great Tribulation.

What then can Rev. 7:13,14 mean? The answer, which is the second objection to the dispensational scheme, is not one that appeals to Christians in the United States of America, for we, by God's grace, have lived a calm, protected, and quiet life. But beginning with the persecutions in the Roman Empire, Christians in other nations have not been so blest. Even we face at least... Bunyan's Holy War. The great tribulation therefore is simply the present life.

Matt. 13:21 ... when tribulation or persecution ariseth ...

John 16:33 In the world ye shall have tribulation.

Acts 14:22 We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. I Thess. 3:4 We told you before that we should suffer tribulation.

Then, finally, if this is a third point in opposition to dispensationalism, the people mentioned in Rev. 7:13,14 do not seem to be restricted to a small number who were somehow converted during a seven year period. To begin with, there as a symbolic 144,000 Jews. In addition to these there was another great multitude which no man could number, of all the nations and kindred, and people, and tongues. These are they that came out of the tribulation the great and have washed their robes . .. in the blood of the lamb.

Let this much be sufficient for the great tribulation.

Since the return of Christ is a very important event and is also a very interesting subject, the student will no doubt read about it in many articles and books. A small volume of systematic theology is not supposed to be interminably exegetical. Therefore this subsection will conclude with a very brief defense of premillennialism.

First, Rev. 20 mentions a millennium. The verse must mean something. It clearly means a period of time. Vision though the chapter may be, it refers to events on earth. This much refutes amillennialism. Furthermore, if Rev. 19 depicts the return of Christ, premillennialism is the only possible view. Two considerations support the contention that the chapter indeed predicts Christ's return. First, the description of the rider on the white horse fits Christ and no one else, as previously argued. Second, in an' apocalyptic book such as Revelation, whether the successive visions are each a summary of all history or whether they are consecutive, one expects to find Christ's return somewhere. Other events and details we might be interested in can well have been omitted, such as the Protestant Reformation, but not the I return of Christ. It is irresponsible to find it, unmentioned, between chapters three and four. Chapter nineteen is the only possibility. This disposes of postmillennialism.

Then next, many postmillennial and amillennial objections are based on the idea that the second coming is an instantaneous event; for example, there is an hour of not more than sixty minutes when all who are in their graves shall come forth to a resurrection including both saved and lost. Hence a thousand years cannot intervene. Other events which premillennialists separate in time must likewise be simultaneous. But the parousia is not an instantaneous coming. It is a presence. In classical Greek Sophocles and Aristotle both use the word to denote a being present, especially a royal visit. In the New Testament parousia very definitely means a presence; (cf. I Cor. 16:17, II Cor. 10:10, Phil. 2:12,

and particularly II Peter 1:16). Since a royal visit, a tour of inspection in one of the king's provinces, can last several months, why cannot the visit of the King of kings last a thousand years? Therefore the meaning of the term parousia disposes of several objections to premillennialism.

A final point in this discussion is not so much an argument for or defense of the premillennial return of Christ, as it is a bit of advice to all three groups of proponents. It was said earlier that the Jews, not merely the Pharisees, but all the Jews from Adam (or Abraham) on failed to understand the divine predictions. Though Christ rebuked the Pharisees, we cannot see the future, even with our additional information, much better than the Jews did. Yes, we have additional information in the New Testament. Without doubt the New Testament implies more than we can see. That is just the point. We do not see too clearly. Implications definitely contained in the Bible escape our deductive activity. But also it is clear that not all future history has been revealed. No one should try to prevent someone else from deducing as many implications as possible. Rather we should thank God that he has given some men superior minds. But in the actual situation, and on this subject as contrasted with the doctrine of the Atonement for example, the wise course is that of cautious humility.

4. Judgment and Hell

(a) Judgment

The first point, obviously, under this heading, is the fact that God, the moral Governor of the universe, will pronounce judgment upon all people. More explicitly the judge will be Jesus Christ himself.

John 5:22,27 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.

Acts 17:31 Because he a hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

Rom. 2;6, 16 Who will render to every man according to his deeds. ... In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ...

Rev. 20:12-15 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ... and the dead were judged ... according to their works. ... They were judged every man according to their works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

As a preliminary observation one notes that premillenarians generally assert two temporally separated judgments: Christ judges the saints at his coming, and God judges the reprobate after the millennium. Without prolonged exegesis it may be further noted that there is no good reason for a judgment at the beginning of the millennium. The saints at their death are made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory. If therefore no formal judgment is necessary for a saint at death in order to be received into heaven, none is necessary in order to be raised and participate in the millennium. So also the wicked at their death begin their punishment, though their judgment may be delayed several thousand years.

Perhaps some, for the purpose of having a judgment before the millennium, will quote

II Tim. 4:1 ... the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, (cf. Mt. 25:31-32).

The difficulty with this interpretation is first, that the phrase "the quick and the dead" rather suggests a judgment of all people, and not saints only. Then, second, if the term parousia does not mean a

momentary instantaneous event, but a lengthy visit; epiphameia (appearing! can also refer to a lengthy appearance. Similarly, and even more clearly, the term kingdom is not synonymous with the millennium, and surely cannot be restricted to the latter's initial moment.

If there were a judgment day for saints only at the beginning of the millennium and another for the wicked at the end it would be difficult to exegete

Matt. 25:32-33 When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him ... he shall at set the sheep on the his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Thus the judgment is depicted as separating the sheep from the goats; and if so, both must appear before the judgment bar together. Various verses speak of or indicate all human beings, not just half the population:

Heb. 9:27 As it is appointed, unto [all] men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Heb. 12:23 God, the judge of all.

I Peter 4:5 ... the quick and the dead.

Jude 14-15 Behold, the Lord came with his holy ten thousands to execute judgment on all,...

Consider these verses. The first quoted suggests that the judgment is for all the dead.

True, men do not die all at the same time; but if this were pressed to support judgments at different times, it would imply a separate day for each man (or for all men who died on one single day), not two for two classes, the days being separated by a thousand years. The second verse speaks of all. This does not of itself preclude several days of judgment, tnt neither does it favor such a division. Peter speaks generally of all the dead. Jude strengthens this inference. The Lord is descending with his holy myriads, presumably angels, possibly saints also; at this descent he executes judgment on all. To be sure, the emphasis falls on the unrighteous; tnt the "all" includes the saints too. Verse six includes the wicked angels as well.

That the saints also must stand in judgment is clear from I Cor. 4:4,5 He that judgest me is the Lord ... who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.

Here Paul may first have in mind the adverse judgments of some Corinthians against him in contrast with the Lord's contemporary approval. But beyond the troubled situation in the Corinthian church, there is a future public judgment indicated. At that time what is hidden now will be made manifest to all. It may seem strange that "every man shall have praise from God," when there was so much evil in Corinth. This seeming universalism is, however, ruled out by two considerations. The first concerns the translation. One can read the phrase as "then the praise due to each one shall come from God." Stressing the article "the praise due" allows some to receive a zero amount. More on the surface is the idea that the faithful servants of the Lord who are misjudged by their contemporaries will at the end receive God's approbation. Thus saints as well as reprobates are judged.

If now it be admitted that there is one future it great day of judgment, the next and much more important topic is the nature of such a judgment. This ties in too with the nature of God, discussed in previous chapters.

When God first revealed himself to Adam, he did not particularly speak of his mercy. No doubt he exhibited his love by placing Adam in a beautiful garden and by giving him a lovely wife. But the emphasis is on the blessings of obedience and the penalty for disobedience. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man sinned, the punishment fell, and mercy was then revealed. But the mercy was not an ignoring of the penalty; it consisted in providing a substitute to bear the penalty. Abel made use of the substitute; and Moses instituted a complicated sacrificial system. The details are somewhat multitudinous; but nothing obscures the need of shedding blood.

Christian Science and those of the general populace who believe in a future life emphasize a God of love. In this they make two mistakes at once. They misunderstand love and they deny that God is just. Punishment is not punishment, in their view; it it is rehabilitation.

Civil society in America generally accepts this theory of penology. The murderer is not sinful; he is sick and must be cured. Capital punishment is immoral because it prevents rehabilitation. But this is not the Christian view of man, crime and punishment, nor of God. Christ died to satisfy the justice of his Father. No doubt the cross is also an expression of God's love for his elect. But this sort of love is entirely different from the Christian Science kind.

I John 3:16 In this have we known love, namely, that this one laid down his soul for us.

I John 4:9,10 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only Son ... to be the the propitiation for our sins.

The Bible teaches throughout that sin deserves punishment. Otherwise there was no need of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. One of the strongest assertions of God's justice and the necessity for punishment is

Rom. 2:5-11 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.

It is hard to restate in other words, certainly in any clearer words, the principles of this section. It says that there will be a day of wrath and righteous judgment. The popular god of love has neither wrath nor indignation, nor righteousness, either. The God of the Bible is righteous because he renders to every man according to his deeds. To those who continue patient in well-doing and who seek glory, immortality, and honor, God will give eternal life. That is, if there are any such persons. But on the disobedient -and all have sinned — God will impose indignation, wrath, and tribulation. This is divine justice, impartial because it applies to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. "For there is no 'puli' with God." Note then that God's rewards and punishments do not aim at the reformation of the sinner. On a smaller scale the flood and the doom of Sodom did not have that aim. Nor can eternal punishment have that aim. The point is that God is a God of justice.

In this discussion of the final judgment it has been impossible to avoid saying something about subsequent punishment. But before going on, we may summarize the main teachings on the judgment itself. Admittedly much of the Scriptural teaching has been omitted, particularly Jesus' parables. However, some of this must be included in the next subsection.

As for the judgment: there is indeed such a future event. Christ will be the Judge and pronounce the verdict. This judgment takes place at, or insignificantly later than, the resurrection. Those judged are all human beings and wicked angels. Is there a verse that includes the righteous angels also? The subject matter of the judgment will be the actions (external actions and internal thoughts) of those judged. And apart from a substitute to pay the penalty, all will be declared guilty.

(b) Hell

The Westminster Shorter catechism asks, "What doth every sin deserve?" The answer is, "Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." Eternal punishment in hell is an uninspiring topic. Even an evangelical, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., in his Systematic Theology (Vol. II,~. 302), can restrict himself to one third of a page in a thousand page work. His section on eschatology covers 243 pages, but there are less than twenty lines on hell. This hardly does justice to the New Testament emphasis. To minimize the doctrine because of its unpleasantness is somewhat natural, for if the doctrine had not been divinely revealed, it is unlikely that any made-made religion would have invented it. True, the Homeric religion seems to have punished Tantalus and Sisyphus with unending torment; but with the other exception of a few heroes who became demigods, all men meet a dismal future. Dismal, but not punishment for sin. So too in Buddhism: Nirvana is tantamount to personal extinction; what punishment there is in Buddhism is temporary. Other religions uninfluenced by Judaism or Christianity hold ambiguous, ill-defined views. Religious liberals, with their doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, hope to sit down with Holy Hitler and Saint Stalin in the heavenly kingdom. The secularists deny a future life altogether. But the Bible says,

Matthew: Fear not them which kill the body but are not not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (10:28). His angels shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (13:42, 50). Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ... .And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (25:41, 46).

These are not the only verses in the Gospels, or even in Matthew, that speak of everlasting punishment. If they were all assembled, one might see that the person who most forcefully and most often taught the doctrine of hell was not Peter or Paul, but Jesus himself. Paul of course stresses the wrath and justice of God; Peter, Jude, and John', particularly John, make some statements; but Jesus himself is the main source for the doctrine of hell. Were it not so, even more theologians than at present would at least keep silent about it.

Early in this volume the proof text method was defended, not merely as permissible but as indispensable. Like any method it too may be abused by careless thinkers. But there is no other way to find out what the Bible teaches except by reading the text. Here then are a few samples -samples only, not exhaustive lists — selected from Peter, Jude, and John's Apocalypse.

Revelation: If any man shall worship the beast... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day nor night (14:9-11). And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

Revelation is an apocalyptic book, and amillennialists never tire of saying how unintelligible it is. Assuredly there are many passages whose meaning we can hardly guess at; but some passages are exceedingly clear.

II Peter 2:4-9 If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell · · · to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world ... turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes ... the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

Jude 4-6 There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men ... denying our only Despot and Lord, Jesus Christ, ... and the angels which kept not their first estate ... he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

In addition to the idea of a terrible punishment, these verses in Jude assert the doctrine of reprobation. God's sovereignty, his doing whatever he pleases, his governance of all his creatures and all their actions, the doctrine of predestination, have all been discussed in earlier chapters. Here we have an explicit statement, similar to Rom. 9:16-22, that God has ordained certain men to destruction. This ordination did not occur after the men had infiltrated some is first century congregations: the ordination occurred before, of old. From eternity they were ordained to this condemnation, as Judas had been.

Some people accept the Bible as the Word of God. It is the explicit, propositional revelation of his truth; and he himself is truth. Other people pick and choose as much or as little as they like, just as they might from Thus Spake Zarathustra. using their own preferences as the criterion of truth. But anyone who tries to say that the Bible does not teach what these verses express entangles himself in exegetical impossibilities. The verses themselves are unmistakably clear, and the present exposition has refused to soften them. The popular glib dismissal of the doctrine of hell has of course no logical force; nor does it evince wisdom, for In that sleep of death what dreams may come Must give us pause.

Or if Berdyaev is more contemporary than Shakespeare: "It is remarkable how little people think about hell or trouble about it. This is the most striking evidence of human frivolity."

Since it was Jesus Christ himself who spoke more often about hell than anyone else did, (in addition to the verses quoted, see also Matt. 7:22,23; 11:23; Mark 9:43-48; Lake 9:25; 12:9, 10, 46; 16:22,23; John 5:28,29; 8:21) a Christian must not be silent but must continue to preach the message.

The Christian must preach the message accurately, not only because the secular world hates it, but also because various religious writers dishonestly misrepresent it. Nels F. Ferre (The Sun and the Umbrella p. 33) says that the doctrine of Christ's second coming "shuts out the living God embracing and reconciling all men with his eternal time and power," and substitutes the concept that "all mankind would be extinguished or tormented forever except the few who would escape punishment through faith in the merits of Jesus. ... It seems doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine."

In view of the many passages in which Jesus speaks of fire, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and so on, it follows that if the New Testament is so unreliable as to make it "doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine," then the New Testament is also so I unreliable that Ferre has no ground for his principle of Agape. More of this in a moment. The immediate point is Ferre's mi srepresentations. [2]

The charge that the doctrine of hell means that nearly everybody will be tormented forever and only a few will enjoy eternal felicity is sometimes answered by the statement that all who die in infancy will be saved, and since there is such a high infant mortality rate in pagan lands, it follows that the redeemed will be "a great multitude which no man could number." But the question of proportion is irrelevant both to the Christian and anti-christian alike. Ferre need not have presupposed what the

exact proportion of saved to lost may be; more perspicacious than either the liberal, or the or the orthodox who uses infant mortality in his reply, William James said bluntly that one could not believe in an omnipotent God if even one cockroach suffered from an unrequited love. This is honest opposition.

Dr. Ferre's rejection of Jesus' teaching on hell is set in a context which includes the denial of the Virgin Birth. His basic principle is Agape or "indiscriminate kindness to all" (p. 57). Thisof course means universal salvation (pp. 246-247),[3] if there is such a thing as sin to be saved from.

It is worthwhile here to point out some of the inconsistencies in Dr. Ferre's position, inconsistencies which in one form or another plague other liberals a swell.

First, if Agape is sufficiently defined as indiscriminate kindness, based (?) on the verse that God sends the sun and rain upon all people, it is still impossible to deduce from this basic principle the Christology Dr. Ferre wants, or any other Christology, either. Second, Dr. Ferre cannot appeal to the verse on sun and rain because he cannot depend on "any fanciful ipsissima verba" (p. 57); and because Jesus himself was inconsistent (p.60); nor did the disciples understand him. For example, Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees is not an "authentic report in detail" and remains "a problem within the major conclusive context of Jesus' living and teaching Agape" (p. 83). Further, "we cannot know the historical Jesus" (p. 58). If, now, the Scriptures are so untrustworthy as Dr. Ferre says, no one can appeal to them for anything. Dr. Ferre's religion therefore is not Christianity, but a personal subjective invention. "The use of the Bible as the final authority for Christian truth is idolatry. Actually it has become a very thick and formidable Umbrella to hide the Sun."[4] But it is the Bible in its entirety, and the Bible alone, that defines Christianity.

Other liberals professing a somewhat greater respect for Scripture have tried to avoid the doctrine of hell by expedients so puerile that a Systematic Theology is likely to think it a waste of time to mention them. But an example or two may be given. One attempt was to assert that the word eternal in "eternal destruction" merely meant "age-long." This would terminate hell in a finite time. But it would also set a terminus for heaven as well, for it is the very same word that is used for "eternal life." Nor can it be maintained, a really foolish idea, that eternal does not denote length of time, but quality of state. Obviously the quality is denoted by the words life and death: both are everlasting. J. A. T. Robinson tried to reduce the idea of eternal punishment to the phrase, "the eternal seriousness of the choice before man." But so to reduce hell is also to reduce heaven; and it becomes questionable whether the author believes in any future life at all.

The answer to all such evasions lies in the New Testament usage of the words. There the meaning is clear. To be specific, the word aionios. eternal or age-long, describes the future happiness of the saints some fifty times, and seven times the punishment of the wicked. Dr. Kuehner was completely justified in quoting W. R. Inge, "No sound Greek scholar can pretend that aionios means anything less than eternal" (p. 238).

There is another confusion that can easily be avoided. In addition to Gehenna, the Old Testament mentions sheol and the New Testament mentions hades. There is also "Abraham's bosom." Quite commonly these have been regarded as places, positions in space, geographical localities. Since both the righteous and the wicked equally descend there at death , some people divide the place into two compartments. One is purgatory, where the righteous add to the merits

of Christ by suffering enough to make up for what Christ's sacrifice did not cover; and the other is a place of torment which is eventually cast in toto into the lake of fire.

It should be obvious that sheol and hades are not places. The two words simply refer to the fact that the persons in question are dead. That this does not involve space is clear from the fact that the resurrection has not yet occurred, and the bodies of the dead are in their graves. The man is his mind or soul; this is spirit and like God does not occupy space.

I Peter 3:18-22 is a passage which ingenious imaginations, under the illusion that sheol is a space, have used for their fanciful views of a part of the intermediate state and time.

Verses 19 and 20 have puzzled a great many people, and they have tried various devices to explain how Christ preached to the spirits in prison. In general there are two types of explanation. First, the verses are taken to mean that Christ used Noah to preach to the wicked that were about to be drowned in the flood. Second, the verses are interpreted to mean that Christ in person preached to spirits in the realm of the dead. This second interpretation is divided on the identity of the dead: the dead to whom Christ preached might be the righteous dead, or they might be the wicked dead. Let us examine this second interpretation first.

This is an old and widely accepted interpretation. Irenaeus, Tertullian, both the Greek and Roman churches, and also Zwingli and Calvin hold that Christ announced salvation to the Old Testament believers and brought them from the realms of death into heaven. In accordance with this idea John 3 :13, "No one has ascended into heaven but he that came down from heaven," is said to mean that no Old Testament saint could precede Christ into heaven. They had to wait for Christ's ascension. The prison is the abode of the dead, and the preaching is the proclamation of Christ's victory.

As further support of this view Acts 2 :27, 31 are taken to mean that Christ's soul went to hell or at least to the abode of the dead, though of course God would not permit his soul to be held there. Some have also appealed to Philippians 2 :10 by taking the things under the earth that bow at the name of Jesus to be either the righteous or wicked dead. More plausible is the use of Ephesians 4 :8, 9. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive ... Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" These lower parts of the earth are supposed to be the realm of the dead, and the idea is repudiated that this descent is the Incarnation or Christ's descent to earth.

Before adopting this ancient view certain problems must be faced and solved. In the first place Peter's text does not mention anything about preaching to the saints. The spirits to whom Christ preached are explicitly called disobedient. This fact must be taken as a fixed point of interpretation. There is no reference to Old Testament saints. So, if Christ preached in person to anyone between the time of his death and resurrection, it would have to be the wicked dead, and whatever captivity Christ led captive, it could not be the Old Testament saints considered as held in prison.

In the next place the only disobedient people that Peter mentions are those who lived in the days of Noah. This time-reference is another reason for refusing to think that Christ preached to Abraham, David, and the prophets. Not only is it wrong to call these men disobedient, but further they did not live at the time Peter mentions.

This time-reference also militates against the view that Christ preached to all the wicked dead. From what Peter actually says, we could only conclude that Christ preached to those who were disobedient in the time of Noah. But without pressing this point too far at the moment, let us consider other aspects of the idea that Christ preached personally to the wicked in hell, and that the preaching, of necessity, is the announcement of their condemnation.

As for the notion that Christ announced the damnation of the wicked in hell, it is hard to see how it ties in with the context. The main idea that Peter wants to enforce is that Christians should be willing to suffer for Christ's sake and to suffer unjustly. Preaching to the wicked in hell does not advance Peter's main purpose. Or, if attention be centered on the nearer idea of Christ's being raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, it still is not clear how this announcement of damnation adds to the theme. And it win hardly do to say that Peter just had to fill space to make his epistle long enough, and so was driven to insert something true but irrelevant.

But the decisive objection to understanding these words to refer to the announcement of damnation is that the verb, to preach, ordinarily means to preach the gospel. It does not mean a judicial sentence, nor in the New Testament does it refer to sundry announcements. The regular meaning is the announcement of the gospel.

Because this is so obvious, some interpreters have tried to hold to the general view while modifying it to make Christ's work the preaching of the gospel instead of the announcement of damnation. While this maneuver escapes these immediate objections, it must face others.

Since the Bible does not teach that there is a second chance to be saved, a chance in the next life, but teaches that man's destiny is irrevocably fixed in this life, there would remain no reasonable purpose for preaching the gospel to the wicked in hell. And, to return to a previous point, all these attempts fail to explain the mention of the antediluvian unbelievers. Any preaching in hell should be directed to all, and not to just a few. But the text specifically mentions those who lived in the days of Noah.

This view therefore, though adopted by many and held for so long a time, must be set aside. Perhaps the other view, held by Augustine and Beza, will prove better. According to this interpretation Peter is thought to say that Noah spoke by the Holy Spirit to his disobedient contemporaries and that the flood which destroyed them is a type of baptism.

This interpretation must also face objections. For one thing, it is pointed out that Peter makes the subject of the verb Christ. Christ went and preached, and hence Noah cannot be the preacher. However, this objection is not so serious as it might seem at first. Peter actually says, Christ was made alive by the Spirit, by whom also he preached. This preaching therefore was done by Christ through the Spirit. What this might mean can be seen in chapter one verse eleven. In the first chapter Peter speaks of the Old Testament prophets. These prophets had received a message from God, and they studied the message to see what God meant. The words are, "searching what... the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand ... " Now, obviously, if the Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets, then too Christ through the Spirit could very well preach in the person of Noah. To suppose that the Spirit of Christ is not the Holy Spirit and could not therefore inspire Noah is a supposition contrary to Peter's thought and contrary to other New Testament passages. For example, Paul in Ephesians 2:17 virtually says that it was Christ, through his missionaries, that preached the gospel in Ephesus. So far as this point goes therefore, this interpretation stands up under scrutiny.

If the preaching was Noah's testimony to his contemporaries, then one, must ask the question, What is the prison? The other interpretation assumed that the prison must be hell or hades. But could it be hell, if Noah was preaching to living people? There are two answers to this question. First, one might assume that the prison is the prison house of sin. It is as reasonable to speak of the bonds of sin as it is, to speak of the bonds of hell. The mention of a prison therefore does not rule out the idea that Noah was the preacher. But there is a second and a better answer to the question. The prison may still be hell and Noah still the preacher. For the verse can be interpreted to mean "the spirits (now) in hell." That is, the men to whom Noah preached are now in Peter's day suffering their just

recompense. This is not just a guess, but is based on Peter's manner of speech. In 4:6 we shall see that the gospel was preached to certain people who are now dead. The preaching had been done previously; when Peter wrote, they were dead. Further, that Noah was the preacher is supported by II Peter 2:5.

Another argument is that the participles, *died, Made alive*, *went*, and the verb *preached*, indicate a temporal succession, and hence the preaching must have occurred after the death of Christ, and not in the time or Noah. But in the first place, if this were so, the preaching would have had to occur after Christ's resurrection, and not between his death and resurrection, as is usually supposed. Furthermore, the mention of the preaching is not so clearly connected with any alleged temporal succession as it is with the reference to the Spirit. Of course the resurrection had to follow the crucifixion; but the thought of the passage is not on the time element, but on the significance of these events in bringing sinners to God.

Thus the several objections that are raised against the personal preaching of Noah do not make this interpretation impossible.

Now, positively, this interpretation is the only one that can explain the mention of the wicked at the time of Noah, and the mention of Noah is motivated by Peter's desire to show that the flood is a type of baptism. In the larger connection Peter is explaining the work of Christ, the turning away from sin, the salvation of believers out of an ungodly world, and their tribulations during their lifetime. Peter thinks he can make his ideas clear by an Old Testament example, and Noah is more suitable than any other. For this reason Peter can confine his thought to one group of men. Had he been thinking of a personal preaching by Christ in hell, he could not have restricted his attention to this one group.

The reference to the time of Noah is of course explicit and obvious; and the statement that eight souls were saved in the ark is a plain matter of fact.

Some further historical information could prove useful. In earlier centuries several theologians have held non-scriptural views about hell. Origen (185-254) of Alexandria and John Scotus Eriugena (810-877) both make statements that sound like universalism. But also they seem to speak of the fixed reprobation of the wicked. Often by very conservative writers they are castigated for having corrupted Christianity through the intervention of Neoplatonic philosophy. There is some truth in this, particularly in the case of Eriugena, who labored under the misapprehension that 'Dionysius the Areopagite' was actually Paul's convert, when factually he lived in the fifth century. Origen, of course, could not make this mistake. One must note that he lived before Athanasius, that he opposed Gnosticism, that he came at least close to the doctrine of the Deity of Christ by using the Old Testament concept of Wisdom, that thus and in other ways anticipated the full Athanasian doctrine, even using the " terms consubstantiality and coeternity. But it is hard for us, who live under the influence of sixteen centuries of Trinitarianism, and almost five centuries of Reformed theology, to evaluate justly the confusion of those early minds.

The Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation were clearly universalists than was Origen. The great Lutheran creed, the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (chapter 17) says, "They [the Lutheran churches] condemn the Anabaptists who think that to condemned men and devils shall be an end of torments."

At the present time, in addition to the "mainline' liberal churches, such smaller groups as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists deny the Scriptural doctrine of hell. One of their number (and therefore not necessarily an official opinion) explained to the present writer that the fires of hell consume the wicked, but after they are completely burned up, the fires naturally go out. Strange: had he never heard of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched?

Objections to the Scriptural doctrine of hell are easily answered exegetically, if the objector acknowledges the written words of God. Of course the large majority of contemporary objectors do not believe the Bible; and it is quite useless to base a Christian answer on their private non-christian criteria. Yet a little attention to their views may disclose, sometimes, either self-contradictions or misrepresentations of the Biblical position. For example, some may say it is unreasonable and unjust to punish a man eternally for an offense that took only a few minutes to commit. The more thorough procedure would be to require the objector to deduce his theory of justice from his empirical basis; and this cannot be done because normative principles never follow from factual observation. But more superficially, though at the same time more embarrassingly, At can be pointed out that the seriousness of a crime is not proportional to the time it takes. A murder may take a second; an embezzlement a long time; but most people would admit that murder is worse than theft. Further too, the seriousness of a crime depends on the position of the party offended. To lie to your neighbor is a sin; but to lie in court under oath is a greater sin. To sin against God merits eternal punishment because God is the eternal God.

To give such answers is to obey the divine command of

I Peter 3:15 Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts always and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

In summation then, the Bible teaches that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come; and that this punishment lasts forever. It would be hard to state the doctrine in clearer language that the words of the Bible itself.

5. Heaven

If Dr. Buswell gave so few lines to the unpleasant subject of hell, one might think that theologians would wax expansive on heaven. H. B. Smith has one page in 621. H. C. Thiessen has about a page and a half in 281. W. G. T. Shedd gives heaven just about two pages out of some 1350, and concludes with 137 pages on hell. Hodge does not do much better. If the present writer is any improvement in proportion, it may be because he has padded the section with Scriptural quotations.

That the righteous dead, after the resurrection, will enjoy an everlasting felicity has already been indicated in those verses which contrast it with the everlasting punishment of the wicked. Several verses from Matthew (chapters 10, 13, and 25) were quoted, And there is no need to repeat them here. There was also a slight reference to II Peter 2:4-9, something a little fuller than Romans 2, and some reference by chapter and verse only. To these must now be added, in a condensed form, the longest of all Biblical accounts of heaven.

Rev. 21:1 - 22:5 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... the new Jerusalem ... prepared as a bride ... And I heard a great voice ... Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men ... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ... the holy Jerusalem . .. having the glory of God . .. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it... And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it.. his servants ... shall see his face ... For the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.

In addition to the absence of tears, sorrow, crying, and death, this, passage excludes also the cause of such evils, namely sin. As it is said in

Matt. 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.

Since the tares have been gathered and burned, and all things that offend and them that do iniquity have been cast into the furnace, and Satan has been cast into the lake of fire, the redeemed will find themselves to be the spirits of just men made perfect. Further references will substantiate this point in one way or another.

To show the systematic or interrelated nature of theological truth, the mention of the indefectible righteousness of those in heaven reminds us of the earlier denial of free will. As Augustine long ago pointed out, in heaven man non posse peccare. cannot sin. He has no free choice whether to steal, commit adultery, curse God, or not. If there were such a thing as free will, it would be a curse, rather than a blessing as the Arminians hold.

Before continuing with New Testament references, let us note that many liberal theologians deny to the Old Testament any notion of heaven and a future life. Such a view, however, seems utterly inconsistent with the theme of the Covenant. When God said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward," though the context mostly concerns earthly affairs, one must reflect that if there be a God -and it is hard to understand how those who deny God can have any hope of a future life whatever - and if God makes such a covenant with his chosen people, an everlasting life with him who is eternal is most probable. But in addition to sections on the Covenant which predict earthly blessings, there are other and clearer Old Testament teachings. We admit that the Old Testament says much less than the New Testament. However, there are definite statements and fairly clear implications. The case of Enoch and Elijah come immediately to mind. These two translations absolutely require a life after death. Otherwise the accounts would be meaningless. Another passage, short but more explicit, is

Job 19:26 After my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

Then, too, though an orthodox Jewish rabbi would be hesitant to admit that the New Testament correctly interprets the Old, for us

Heb. 11:17-19 By faith Abraham ... offered up Isaac ... his only begotten son, ... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ...

is at least a hint that Abraham believed in the possibility of life after death. True, the verse might mean only that Abraham expected God to raise Isaac to this life again. But even this minimum meaning would suggest further ideas. One should not automatically opt for the literal minimum.

Similarly the resurrection in I Kings 17:21 ff. and II Kings 4:34 ff. require some sort of intermediate state and an incorporeal soul. In conjunction with the covenants and promises, these two implications would cause a meditative mind to think of heaven. Psalm 86:12-13 is somewhat of a support; and Psalm 16:10-11 speaks explicitly of everlasting felicity at God's right hand.

Although this should be sufficient to show that the Old Testament does not limit human life to three score years and ten, which means that there is no further obligation to defend the presence in the Old Testament of the ideas of heaven, reference may be made to

Provo 14:32 The righteous hath hope in his death. And if anyone object to this translation.

Prov. 15:24 The way of life is above the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath, cannot be altered by a better translation. See also Prov. 23:14

It is indubitable therefore that Scripture contains a clear promise of heaven. But does the Bible give any detailed information about the character and activities of that future life? This is a question which not only interests believers, but which also stimulates unbelievers to their objections.

Corliss Lamont, in a remarkable chapter, This Life is All and Enough (Humanism as a Philosophy, second edition, pp. 100-144; and The Philosophy of Humanism, i.e. the fifth edition of the preceding, pp. 81-115) in addition to his arguments for evolutionary behaviorism, where memory consists of "neuronic pathways of the cortex," which means that "Human bodies think" (ital. his), attacks the idea of a life after death on the ground of its boring triviality. If there were a future life, not only "good old Rover" should be immortal, but poison ivy as well. Now, while many people would love to pet good old Rover in heaven, the idea of poison ivy is not so appealing. Since heavenly flees and lice are, in Lamont's view, foolishness, "This Life is All and Enough." Communistic equality can make this present life so lovely that no one would want immortality. Medicine will increase the life span —though if 100 years is better than 70, why is not a thousand, or an eternity, still better? However, death is inevitable and we might as well like it. This view also removes the fear of hell. Anyhow, there is plenty of enjoyment here. Man is clearly a success because the population is steadily increasing and at an ever higher rate" (p. 137). We may soon produce the Superman — and how that will rejoice the neuronic pathways of our cortex as it decays in the grave! Also in the longer run, we need net anticipate an end to progress because we need not accept the' tr second law of thermodynamics: which is of course true, but irrelevant.[5]

But then and incredibly, This Life, if it is All, really is not Enough; for "Even I, disbeliever that I am, would frankly be more than glad to awaken some day to a worth-while eternal life" (p. 124). Lamont clearly thinks that the Biblical picture of the future life is not worth-while. But how pitiful is his humanistic lament!

If any Christian in the pew is disturbed by Lamont's refutations of arguments in favor of immortality, one word will stabilize him. Well meaning, but not always too intelligent theologians have tried to defend the doctrine of immortality and heaven by, for example, "the light of nature and reason." Even Bishop Butler, whose scholarship was considerable, opened his Analogy of Religion with a chapter on the Future Life, based on empirical observations, and did not get to Revealed Religion until page 185 (Works, ed. by Gladstone, 1896). Even John Gill tried this, and added a paragraph on the natural desire in mankind for happiness, plus another on the unequal distribution of goods and evils. We may grant that all such arguments are logical fallacies, as Duns Scotus, who was not a dunce by any means, long ago showed. Lamont's arguments therefore do not disturb the Christian because he bases his hope on revealed information rather than on sensory observation.

Accepting now the truth of a future life in heaven, we look to revelation for some information on the nature of its activities.[6]

With sin and all its deleterious effects gone , are we restored to Adam's position in Eden, or do we enjoy a higher and happier type of life? What does the Bible say?

Point one, though expressed in figurative language, is the Biblical assertion of a direct vision of God. In addition to the verse in Job, previously quoted, there are

Matt. 5:8 They shall see God.

I Cor. 13:12 For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.

I John 3:2 We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Rev. 22:4 They shall see his face.

The Old Testament had already said that we shall be like him:

Psalm 17:15 I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.

Since God is spiritual and not corporeal, this 'vision' will be quite different from our present eye-sight. Let us not inattentively quote "Eye hath not seen ... neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him." Here Paul speaks of what "God hath [already] revealed unto us by his Spirit." We must not minimize the riches of God's present revelation. Nevertheless the heavenly revelation will be greater. When Paul was caught up into the third heaven, God revealed truths to him that he was forbidden to repeat to us. Doubtless God will give us those truths and others too when we see him 'face to face.' By way of" contrast, Peter, on the lake of Galilee, at the 'great draft of fishes, said to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." At times therefore Jesus so revealed his deity that men wanted to escape from his presence. But in heaven, with sin eradicated, we can see God as he is.

But do we just stand and look? Hardly: at least 'vision' is figurative. An entirely literal meaning can be had from the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is not that Moses and Elijah literally saw Christ through their eye-balls, for Moses' body, if not Elijah's, lay buried beyond Jordan. What they 'saw , was the doctrine of the Atonement, as they discussed it with Christ. The verb see often means understand. When a student in High School puzzles over the instructor's explanation of a theorem in geometry, he finally (we hope) exclaims as the truth 'dawns' on him "I see it." From common language therefore, and from the Transfiguration, we may well surmise that much of our activity in heaven will be theological study. But before going on with the idea that God is truth and thus rational, and that therefore the surmise is correct, here on earth we are interested in some other matters.

Some things that have interested us in this life, such as theology, will interest us in heaven also; but not all of our present activities will be reproduced. This is to be expected, for "We shall be like him." In what respects we shall be like and in what we shall remain unlike him must be determined by various references. One present interest is marriage. Yet even on earth the marriage bond is dissolved by death and the surviving spouse is free to marry again. We now all remember the question about the woman with seven husbands. It came as an objection to the concept of the resurrection; and Jesus replied

Mark 12:25 When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.

Other bodily functions also cease. Consider roast beef and lobster tails.

I Cor. 6:13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.

This verse gives us some difficulties. In Luke 24:43 the resurrected Christ ate a little fish. So far as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" is concerned, and Christ's not drinking wine again until he drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29), we may regard the language as figurative. Certainly there are no flocks and herds in heaven, of if there are, there is no beef and no ovens. But Christ's eating fish before his disciples eyes can only be literal. Now, it must be acknowledged that Christ's body after the resurrection was surprisingly different from the one he had before. First, it was not always recognizable, as Luke 24:16 indicates. If this verse means only that God altered the vision

of the two disciples, and thus has no bearing on the recognizability of Christ's body as such, the last verse of the account (at 24:31) relates something that never happened before the resurrection. Verse 36 also is startling; and verse 51 records the ascension. Similar to Luke 24:36 is John 20:26. So, then, his eating fish, it seems reasonable to suppose, may have been an anomalous miracle, uncharacteristic of resurrection life. Otherwise I Cor. 6:13 would be hard to understand.

But there is something further. Paul in I Cor. 15:3-22 most strenuously asserts the bodily resurrection of Christ, not only as an historical event but as an historical event that is absolutely indispensable to Christianity. Karl Barth therefore cannot be called a Christian, as his famous or infamous interview with Carl F. H. Henry proved. Nevertheless Paul makes some puzzling statements about the resurrection body.

I Cor. 15·: 35-50 With what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be ... But God giveth it a body ... It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption ... a spiritual body ... [so] we shall also bear the image of the heavenly ... Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

These verses come in answer to objections raised by some persons in the Corinthian church. They thought that a resurrection was impossible because of the nature of the body. Paul sharply begins his answer by calling them "Stupid!" He goes on to stress the great difference between our present body and the resurrection body. Instead of referring to the changed nature of Christ's resurrection body (perhaps because he had already spoken at length about Christ's resurrection), he draws an analogy of a grain of wheat and the plant that grows from it. But analogies do not give much specific information. The student may wish to consult a few commentaries.

However, and however great the differences may be, at least one thing remains the same. Man is still a temporal being in heaven. The Greek Orthodox often say, 'God became man so that man could become God.' But it is a little late for man to become eternal and omniscient. Eternity is without beginning; man began. Omniscience does not merely mean 'knowing everything;' it also means not having learned. But men learn. In conjunction with this, Augustine made memory the principle of personal identity. Mr. Jones in heaven is the same person as Mr. Jones was on earth, because of his intellectual continuity. But memory requires a prior time. Man, a created being, remains forever a created being and therefore remains temporal.

Parenthetically let the student be advised to compare Hume's humanistic account of personal identity with that of the great bishop of Hippo.

But though temporal, man was created in the image of God. The image is rationality because God is spirit and truth. Therefore life in heaven will be chiefly or perhaps entirely intellectual activity, for we shall be like him. If memory serve the writer, it was C. S. Lewis who said that whatever in heaven is not silence is music. If by "silence" he meant the absence of communication, the Bible adjudges him to be wrong. We shall discuss the Atonement with Moses and Elijah, and with Christ too, and with the Father also. In heaven we shall know and know more.

I Cor. 13:12 Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known.

Some theologians, the great exegete H. A. W. Meyer, for example, want this verse to say, 'I shall know as God knew or chose me at the moment of my conversion.' This interpretation depends on restricting the aorist tense to a single point of time —which is often the case. But the chapter does not concern itself with a contrast between our partial choice at the moment of conversion and our fuller

and perfect choice of God later in heaven. Meyer takes his view in order to avoid the superficial understanding of the verse that makes our future knowledge entirely on a level with God's omniscience. Yet even so he does not succeed, for he says, "Then will my knowledge of God be so wholly different from a merely partial one, as it is now, that, on the contrary, it will correspond to the divine knowledge, so far as it once at my conversion made me its object, namely (opposite of ek merous) by complete knowledge of the divine counsel." But in complete knowledge one item is integral with all others. Complete knowledge of one event involves knowledge of every other event. Thus with "complete knowledge of the divine counsel" Meyer ascribes too much to human beings in heaven.

Nevertheless we must insist that the heavenly life is one of knowledge. This introduces a slight difficulty with one verse, for I Cor. 13:8 says that knowledge shall vanish away. This could mean that God's activity in revealing new information to the apostles will cease with their death. The canon then will be closed. Or one may seek the explanation in the next verse, introduced by the conjunction gar to indicate a reason for what precedes: "for we know in part." Thus a fuller knowledge will abolish the partial characteristic of former times. At any rate, verse 12 asserts the continuance and multiplication of knowledge in heaven. Naturally love or obedience also remains because, as previously shown, sin or disobedience has ended.

Some people on the basis of verse 2, deprecate knowledge. They should remember, however, that without knowledge there could be neither love nor obedience. Paul excuses, or at least extenuates, his youthful persecution of the Christians because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Responsibility depends on knowledge.

In any case, when Paul most emphatically asserts, "But we have the mind of Christ," and "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus," and when John records Jesus' words, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free, I, we must not assume that their full force, and application is exhausted in this earthly life.

On the contrary, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," as Job said previously. While this does not guarantee that the poor pupil who has been deprived of a solid education by the fad of the new math and other atrocities of the National Education Association will instantly become expert in in calculus; nevertheless each saint will become fully rational, as God is, since the noetic effects of sin will have disappeared, so that no longer will anyone make mistakes in simple addition.

Nor shall we any longer be deceived by disturbing emotions, for God is without parts and passions; and no one will base his conclusions on empirical inductions. Rather,

Psalm 36:9 In thy light shall we see light.

I John 1:5 God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If in this life

I John 5:20 The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,... This is the true God and eternal life,

if in this life we have the glorious yet incomplete light of the gospel, and if "now are ye light in the Lord [and] walk as children of light," how much more shall we live in truth and understanding when we no longer are confined to a mirror and a dark enigma!

I John 5:6 The Spirit is truth.

Rev. 21:24 The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light [of God's glory and of the Lamb],

Rev. 22:5 For the Lord God giveth them light.

Rom. 11:33,36 O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God ... For of him and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Notes

1

Herbert S. Bird, Theology of Seventh Day Adventism pp. 50-53, Eerdmans 1961.

2

This quotation was given by the late Fred Carl Kuehner, Heaven and Hell, in Fundamentals of the Faith, ed. by Carl F.H.Henry (p. 236). Dr. Kuehner received a spate of hate mail because of his chapter; yet he said no more than what the New Testament says, and less than the present chapter here.

3

Christ and the Christian

4

The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 39.

5

As to inevitable progress, cf. A Christian View of Men and Things, pp. 42 ff.; and on thermodynamics, cf. The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God (both by the present writer).

6

Mystically minded liberals and neo-orthodox often deny that revelation is a matter of information. God is not suppose to communicate any truth to us, any information, but he gives us himself. And what is true about such a god?

Appendices

Appendix 1

Forewards by John Robbins

Foreword to *The Trinity*

Christianity has always had its opponents, including many who profess to be Christians. Some of these enemies of the faith disparage doctrine and praise practice, urging Christians to greater and greater activity rather than useless learning, speculation about, and divisive controversy concerning doctrine. Still others disparage doctrine and insist that holiness consists in listening to God as he speaks to us through the church, through friends, and through our own hearts.

For those people, and for the Christians who have been led astray by them, an entire book about the Trinity must be a puzzle. Why would anyone read such a book, let alone write it? Are not feeding the hungry and housing the homeless more important than understanding the difference between *homoousios* and *homoiousios*? Who cares an iota about Sabellianism and Arianism anyway? Is not searching one's own heart more important than searching a treatise on the Trinity?

Unfortunately for these people, they are mistaken, and such mistakes may cost them their souls. Christianity is neither action nor introspection: It is truth. Christianity is doctrine, teaching, theory, truth; it is not practice, action, or agitation. To be sure, a certain sort of behavior is the result of Christianity, but the behavior is not the Christianity. To confuse the two is to make an error as serious as that of confusing justification and sanctification, faith and works. Anyone confused on those points is in danger of hell. Yet it is very popular today in some allegedly Christian circles to emphasize action and ignore doctrine, as though the action were the important thing. That viewpoint is foreign to the Scriptures, which teach justification through belief alone and sanctification through the truth. The Apostle Peter, to cite only one example, tells us that all things that pertain to life and godliness come through the knowledge of theology. All things. But Christ's, Paul's, John's, and Peter's – that is, God's – emphasis on knowledge is entirely missing in the professing Christian church. Feeling and doing, not knowing, have first place in the lives of most churches and most Christians.

Sometimes non-Christians, even anti-Christians, understand Christianity better than Christians, or at least better than those who profess to be Christians but are not. One of these anti-Christians who understood quite

well the importance of the doctrine of God lived one hundred years ago. He wrote:

> When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident: This point has to be exhibited again and again, despite the English flatheads. Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: Nothing necessary remains in one's hands.

The author of those words is Friedrich Nietzsche, who hated Christ and all he stood for. But at least Nietzsche understood what Christ stood for. It is impossible to say that about many Christians today. We hope that this book will be used by God to preserve and protect his truth against its enemies and professed friends.

John Robbins

December 10, 1984

Foreword to *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*

In twentieth century America there are many views of man. One of the most popular is the naturalist view. The naturalist view is that man is the result of an accidental collocation of atoms: Man's "number came up in the Monte Carlo games" is the way one humanist, Jacques Monod, put it.

This is in stark contrast to the Biblical view, expressed by David in the eighth Psalm:

What is man that you are mindful of him,

And the son of man that you visit him?

For you have made him a little lower than the angels,

And you have crowned him with glory and honor.

You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands;

You have put all things under his feet.

This view of man, once very influential in America and throughout the world, has been subject to the prolonged attack of militant secularists. According to the naturalist view of man, God is not mindful of man, for there is no God. Even were God to exist, he would not, or could not, be conscious of man. Nor has God intervened in human history at any time. And far from being a little lower than the angels (the Hebrew actually has *Elohim,* God) man is, perhaps, a little greater than the amino acids from which he effervesced. Certainly such a position is not one of glory and honor, and man has no right to lord it over the rest of the earth; rather, he must preserve the earth. Nothing ought to be under man's feet; that is the worst form of speciesism.

The naturalist view denies every proposition that David wrote. That view has found its most eloquent expression in the words of the British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell:

That man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his

beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave, that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. . . .

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark.

Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.. . . proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

It is no accident that both Monod and Russell began by denying God and end by advocating the creation of a totalitarian world government. Monod called for "some form of world authority" to manage a "stable-state society." Russell advocated "the creation of a single world-wide authority, possessing a monopoly of all the more serious weapons. . . . the vital point is the placing of irresistible force in the hands of the central authority. . . . The central Government may be democratic or totalitarian; it may owe its origin to consent or to conquest. . . .

I do not believe that the human race has sufficient statesmanship or capacity for mutual forbearance to establish a world Government on a basis of consent alone. That is why I think that an element of force will be needed in its establishment and in its preservation through the early years of its existence. . . . Modern man is master of his fate."

Those who attack God attack his image, man. They have no scruples about herding and slaughtering men like animals. Despite what Russell said, modern man is not the master of his fate. What Russell's phrase actually means is that some men are masters of the fates of other men. The totalitarianism of the humanists is a logical and inexorable consequence of their humanism.

The Biblical Doctrine of Man is a most necessary book, least of all for political reasons. There are spiritual as well as political totalitarians at work in the world, and the doctrines they teach, if believed, will lead one to hell, not merely to a concentration camp. Many of their opinions have the appearance of piety, just as the Devil himself sometimes appears as an angel of light.

The spiritual totalitarians teach that man's mind is incapable of knowing God: Barth and Kierkegaard maintain that man must understand and believe contradictions about God, for God is totally different from man. Still others teach that human language is incapable of expressing divine truth. And all would have us believe that the Bible itself contains irreconcilable contradictions. These views, which implicitly deny that man is the likeness of God, subvert all Christianity, for Christianity asserts that man can know God, that the Bible is both man's words and God's words, and that it contains no error. The truth, as Christ said, shall make us free. We sometimes forget that he first said, You shall know the truth.

The proper view of man is second in importance only to the proper view of God. If either is misunderstood or rejected, the consequences for this life are death and tyranny; the consequences for the next life are infinitely worse: never-ending hell.

John Robbins December 1991

Foreword to *The Atonement*

In these days of health care for all, education for all, rights for all, and opportunity for all, it seems almost inevitable that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be obscured by the popular religious teaching of salvation for all. The democratic ideals of equality and equal opportunity have invaded theology as well as politics.

Most churches in the United States that call themselves Christian reject the Gospel. They teach, if they are liberal, that Jesus was a good man-even a martyr-but he died in no one's place; or, if they are conservative, that Jesus died in everyone's place, desires all men to be saved, and offers salvation to all. But it really makes little difference whether a church is large, respectable, liberal, and teaches that Jesus died for no one; or enthusiastic, growing, conservative, and teaches that Jesus died for everyone. The result is the same: Jesus Christ actually saves no one-no one at all. Both liberals and conservatives agree that people save themselves by an exercise of their wills. The conservative "Christ" makes salvation possible, if people will only let him into their hearts; the liberal "Christ" points the way to salvation, if people will but follow his example. Neither "Christ" saves.

The liberals are perhaps more forthright in denying the Gospel; they say that Jesus was just a good example or a good teacher. They don't pretend to present a Saviour. The conservatives disguise the fact that they have no Gospel-no good news-by saying that God loves everyone and offers salvation to all. But the meaning of both the liberal message

and the conservative message is the same: Neither a good moral teacher nor a mere offer of salvation actually saves. Neither the liberals nor the conservatives, the humanists nor the Arminians, have a Saviour. The liberal "Christ," at best, is a brave soul who endures injustice rather than renounce his belief in humankind; the conservative "Christ" is a wimp who begs people to let him into their hearts.

What neither liberals nor conservatives, Protestants nor Roman Catholics, charismatics nor fundamentalists will teach is the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement: God the Father, possessing all power and all knowledge, from eternity chose the specific individuals he would save; God the Son, possessing all power and all knowledge, became flesh in order to propitiate the wrath of the Father by dying in the place of those whom the Father had chosen; and God the Holy Spirit, possessing all power and all knowledge, irresistibly and in due time gives the persons elected by the Father and ransomed by the Son the faith and salvation that Christ earned for them. This Biblical doctrine of the Atonement is the Gospel , the good news, about what God has done for his people. It is the good news about Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Salvation is a gift of God to his people from beginning to end.

Biblical theology, particularly the doctrine of the Atonement , is undemocratic; it clashes with the modern ideals of equality and equal opportunity. But God is not an equal opportunity Saviour. Christ died for and prays for only those whom the Father sent him to save. It is to them alone that the gift of faith will be given. It is them alone that Christ actually saves. Their salvation illustrates the mercy of God, for they have no claim on their Creator, and they are as sinful as those damned. The damnation of the reprobate illus- trates God's justice. Both the elect and the damned illustrate his sovereignty.

Many of those whom God has predestined to Hell have been very religious people. Two thousand years ago, they were the religious leaders of Israel, the Scribes and the Pharisees. Not much seems to

have changed in the past two thousand years, for today many unbelievers attend, support, and lead large churches and religious organizations in the United States; they are described in Matthew 7:

> Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in Heaven.
>
> Many will say to me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?”
>
> And then I will declare to them, **“I** never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!”

The doctrine of the Atonement is the heart of the Biblical message. It is this Christian doctrine, together with the doc- trine of the inerrancy of Scripture, on which the world in its diabolical wisdom has concentrated its attacks. In this book Dr. Clark brings an unmatched clarity of thought and expression to a critical Christian doctrine, and his systematic explanation of the Atonement will richly reward the believing reader. But to those who are perishing, as Paul says, the message of this book will be the smell of death. We pray that the Eternal and Almighty God, who works all things according to his own will among the hosts of Heaven and Earth, will cause those who read ***The Atonement*** to believe the truth about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

John W. Robbins

Foreword to *Sanctification*

Many people in relatively orthodox churches are confused about sanctification. On the one hand, there are those whose views are summarized by the phrase, “Let go and let God.” They tend to be generally Charismatic or Pentecostal. On the other hand, there are those who believe that justification is by grace, but sanctification is by works. They tend to be Reformed. These errors are common to human attempts at achieving salvation. Human religions divide into two groups, the mystics and the workers. Each group has chosen a wrong method of salvation and so fails to find it.

The Bible teaches that salvation, from start to finish, from election to glorification, from eternity to eternity, is all of grace. The great hymn writer, Augustus Toplady, expressed the Christian view of salvation when he wrote the words: “But not for works which we have done / Or shall hereafter do / Hath God decreed on sinful man / Salvation to bestow.” Our works, both before and after regeneration, are not the basis or cause of our salvation. We are justified–declared legally righteous by God and pardoned from all sin–by grace alone through faith alone, apart from works. Furthermore, our justification is wholly *outside* of us; it is a work that God has done *for* us by imputing Christ’s perfect righteousness to our account. It is not a work done *in* us by God.

Sanctification, however, is not done outside of us. It is a subjective moral change in our character that begins with regeneration and ends with our

glorification in heaven. The thirteenth chapter of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Of Santification," summarizes the Bible's teaching in these words:

> They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.
>
> This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.
>
> In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Both justification and sanctification are the work of God, not of ourselves; one work, justification, takes places wholly *outside* of us; the second, sanctification, is God's work in cleansing us from all sin. The *Larger Catechism* says that sanctification is "the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness."

In short, men do not make themselves holy; neither their regeneration nor their growth in grace is due to their own diligence or obedience, but to God

alone. The fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – are just that, the fruit of the Spirit, not of ourselves, for it is Christ who lives in us, and it is Christ who works in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. We are commanded to "work out" what God has already "worked in" us. We cannot work out unless God works in us, for without Christ we can do nothing. We are Christ's workmanship, not our own.

But *how* does God sanctify us? Is it simply, "let go and let God?" The Christian answer to this question, already expressed in the quotation from the *Westminster Confession*, may surprise some in this emotional and anti-intellectual age: God works through knowledge. Christ prayed, "Sanctify them by your *truth*; your word is truth." Peter prayed that "grace and peace be multiplied to you in the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord." The reason for his prayer is obvious: "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the *knowledge* of him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature…."

It is common in some religious circles to decry the futility of education in changing men's lives. Education, we are told, is the paganGreek method, not the Christian method, of changing men. But such an attitude is far removed from the Bible. It is precisely education, education in the truth, that is the means of our sanctification. James tells us, "Of his own will he

[God] brought us forth by the word of truth," for the "implanted word is able to save your souls." Christ is our Teacher, and we are sanctified by his knowledge.

That is why this book on sanctification so emphasizes Bible study. God sanctifies his people through his Word. Unless we know that Word, we cannot be sanctified. Our imperfect and sin-stained obedience to God's moral law, which is holy, just, and good, is not the cause of our sanctification, but the result. Unless we were already sanctified, we would find it in us neither to will nor to do God's will. Sanctification is not by works, lest any man should boast. Nor, on the other hand, do we "let go and let God" and in somemystical way become sanctified. It is our hope that this book will eliminate some of the confusion surrounding the doctrine of sanctification in the church today.

John W. Robbins

Appendix 2: Part II of Sanctification

Appendix A. Sanctification

"He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good."

In this third stanza of "There is a Green Hill Far Away," the doctrines of justification and sanctification are conjoined. Naturally, the limitations of hymnology do not permit an explanation of the conjunction: It would seem that forgiveness and being made good are two results, otherwise unrelated, to Christ's death. But the [*Westminster*] *Confession of Faith*, Chapter 13, and still more explicitly,Paul in *Romans* 6 and elsewhere, make sanctification the purpose or aim of the preceding stages of salvation. It is true, but not sufficient to say, we are justified *and* we are also being sanctified; it is downright false to say, we are justified by faith alone *but* of course we must now do some good works; to express the relation with a minimum of adequacy we must drop the *and* and the *but* and use the conjunction *therefore*: We have been acquitted and pardoned of sin apart from any human merit, *therefore* we must do goodworks. Or to quote *Romans* 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you [sanctification], *for* ye are not under the law but undergrace" [justification]. "He died to make us good."

Such is the Scriptural answer to the objection that justification by faith alone is an immoral doctrine. It is sanctification that unmasks the caricature quoted in a previous article, "Free from the law, O blessed condition; I can sin as I please and still have remission." Paul's argument is clear: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Not at all, how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?… Our old man is crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, in order

that henceforth we should not serve sin…. Sin shall not have dominion over you" (*Romans* 6:1-2, 6, 14).

Because Paul said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," and because of other expressions, certain groups of people who were not privileged to be guided by the *Westminster Confession* in their study of the Scriptures have concluded that it is possible to achieve sinless perfection during our earthly life. I know one man who boasted that he had not sinned for twenty-six years. And the fact of the matter is that compared with other Christians he was a very good man. Compared with God's law, however, he was, I am sure, imperfect. It is only through a feeble appreciation of God's righteousness and holiness coupled with an ignorance of the definition of sin that one can imagine that one is sinless. Job was able to hold his own against his irritating friends. He was sure he had not committed any particular sin of which his plagues were the punishment. But when his friends left him and God appeared to him, Job said, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. To define sin as selfishness or to restrict sin to known sins is inadequate. Sin is defined in terms of the law of God. And no mere man since the fall is able perfectly in this life to keep God's commandments – even for a day. Only Christ was sinless.

The Southern Presbyterian Journal, December 15, 1954, reprinted in *Essays on Ethics and Politics,* 1992.

Appendix B. The Christian and the Law

Not only do denominations differ over their interpretations of various Biblical doctrines, but also within each denomination individual members have their personal peculiarities. Therefore when ministers assemble for a sedate colloquium or college

students get together for a friendly bull session, and a question on Biblical doctrine arises, the discussion is bound to be interesting.

Within the past year two such meetings took place – one almost exclusively of ministers and professors, the other almost exclusively of students. It may not be so surprising that the subject of divine guidance and right conduct was taken up at both meetings, but it is worthy of note that in the first meeting a minister from a liturgical and rather formal denomination and in the second meeting some students from much more informal groups, expressed similar sentiments on the Christian's relation to the law of God. It may also be worthy to note that few of the ministers agreed with the minister, while most of the students agreed with the students.

The sentiments referred to emphasized salvation by grace and God's nearness to the individual soul; but this emphasis went to the length of denying that God's commands, which of course are law, had any relevance to the Christian life. We are not under law, but under grace, they said; and having begun in the Spirit, are we now perfected in the flesh? The law is not of faith. When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death; but now we have been delivered from the law, so that we serve in the newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

The converse of this repudiation of the law is that our daily decisions are to be directed immediately by the Spirit. The new birth has given us a new nature, and in this new nature the Spirit instructs us what to do. The Lord will guide us with his eye, and neither the law in the Old Testament nor the commands in the New Testament lay any obligation upon us. They are neither prerequisites for salvation nor guidance for life. This

substantially, and without exaggeration, was the position maintained.

On more than one occasion and on more than one subject, devout men have expressed opinions from which others have later drawn distressing conclusions. I knew one man who took such a serious view of divine guidance that one evening he stood for an hour in his chicken yard waiting for the Spirit to tell him whether or not to feed the chickens. And I have heard rumors of people who pray for guidance as to whether or not they should disobey some Biblical command. In previous ages of church history (*e.g.*, the earlyGnostics) a repudiation of the law has led to gross sin. Someone has characterized this antinomianism by a parody on a Gospel hymn: “Free from the law, O blessed condition; I can sin as I please and still have remission.”

Such a conclusion was not the intention of the minister and the students above referred to; but though it was far from their intention, each one of us must determine whether or not this view of law and divine guidance leads logically to what is absurd or sinful. Each of us must also determine what significance there is for us in the Ten Commandments and the various commands and directions in the New Testament.

Perhaps a point of general agreement from which we may start is the Biblical teaching that Christ saves us not only from the penalty of sin, but from sin itself. “He died that we might be forgiven; he died to make us good.” Or, in Scriptural language, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.” “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”

If this be agreed upon, if we all admit that we must no longer be the servants of sin but must present our members as instruments ofrighteousness unto God, the next questions logically are: What

is sin, What are good works, What is righteousness? We want to do good works, we want to avoid evil works; but how can we distinguish between them?

There need be no vague guessing as to the answer to these questions. The Scripture speaks very definitely. The Scripture says precisely what sin is. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (*1 John* 3:4). “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (*Romans* 4:15). “Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin” (*Romans* 3:20). It should be clear then that sin is always defined by the law. Unless one knows the law of God, he cannot know what is wrong, evil, or sinful.

Is it wrong to worship Mary and bow before angels? Is it wrong to swipe gadgets off a dime store counter? Is it wrong to work on theLord’s Day? We do not need to stand in a chicken yard waiting for an answer to these questions. Divine guidance is a wonderful thing, but more wonderful is the fact that God has already given us His guidance in easily understood sentences.

The converse also follows. If sin is what the law forbids, good works are those that the law commands. No guessing is necessary. TheScriptures say precisely what good works are. Good works are only such as God has commanded in His Holy Word, and not such as without the warrant of Scripture are devised by men out of blind zeal or upon any pretense of good intention. Those who vainlyworship God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, may have a certain zeal, but not according to knowledge. “He hath shown thee, O man, what is good.” It should be evident therefore that good and evil are defined only by the law of God.

This conclusion is reinforced by the strictness with which God enjoins obedience. “This is the way, walk ye in it. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left.” “Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right

hand or to the left." It should not be thought that these Old Testament principles do not apply to us, nor should anyone suppose that all this is inconsistent with grace. Salvation is the Old Testament doctrine: Paul took it from Habakkuk. Regeneration, which Nicodemus should have known about, is explained in *Ezekiel* 36. If therefore grace and law are not incompatible in the Old Testament, there is no *a priori* reason why they should be so in the New Testament.

However, to make doubly sure and not to rely wholly on the Old Testament, some New Testament passages maybe adduced. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And further, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him…. He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him…. By this we know that we are the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Such specific statements should be accepted as decisive.

There is one final point to be made. Someone may now admit that we are under obligation to obey God's commands, but he may argue that in addition to the Bible we need further guidance. The Bible is all right so far as it goes, but the Christian life is wider than the Bible; we meet situations that Biblical commands do not cover, and so we must look to God for additional information on what to do. After all, is there any harm in adding to the Bible, provided only that we do not subtract from it?

This type of argument, however, contradicts the express statement of Scripture, and is therefore dishonoring to God. We are all familiar, no doubt, with the phrase, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," but have we carefully read what follows? Of course, Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness; but for what purpose? Note the next verse:

“that the man of God maybe perfect [or, perfected], thoroughly furnished [completely furnished, or equipped] unto all good works [unto every good work].” The statement is comprehensive: it includes every good work. There is no good work for which the Scripture does not prepare us perfectly. It is the law of God stated in the Scriptures that defines sin and good works.

God has given us all the guidance we need. We do not need Roman Catholic tradition; we do not need mystic visions; we do not need additional revelations. But we do need, and need sorely, a great deal of Bible study. In the Bible, and in the Bible alone, we find the rule of life.

P.S. If you have chickens, a horse, or a pet dog, study *Exodus* 20:10; 23:5, 12; *Deuteronomy* 25:4; *Proverbs* 12:1 0; *Matthew* 12:11; and feed them.

HIS, October 1957. *The Trinity Review,* March 1979, reprinted in *Essays on Ethics and Politics,* 1992, and in *Against the World: The Trinity Review,* 1979-1988, 1996.

Foreword to the First Edition

One of the sins for which Christ condemned the scribes and Pharisees – the religious leaders of his day – was their dynamicevangelistic program.

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Synagogue growth – church growth – making converts – is not enough. The important question is: To what are the listeners

beingconverted? What is the message that is being taught and believed?

The central issue in today's – and yesterday's – evangelism is not the method, but the message, although the message will shape the method. The evangelistic program of the scribes and Pharisees was apparently large, dynamic, and effective – yet it was making sons ofHell. At the end of the twentieth century religious organizations, both church and parachurch, some of them highly respected, operate similarly extensive and successful evangelistic programs, and the result is the same. They are making millions children of Hell.

The message, the teaching, the doctrine of the evangelist is what separates genuine Christian evangelism from counterfeit evangelism. It is not only the recognized cults that have perverted the Gospel, but most of the historically Christian churches as well. If a cult be defined as a religious group that finds its authority in something besides the Bible – whether it be the *Book of Mormon, Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures*, the *Koran*, the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Bishop of Rome, or the leadings of the"Spirit," then virtually all American religious organizations are cults. All of these cults are concerned about growth, just as the scribes and Pharisees were. But the concern and the focus of the Christian evangelist is not growth, but truth, and if that truth is preached clearly, "the Lord [will] add to the church daily those who [are] being saved," and they will "[continue] steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine…." Growth, as a goal, is the ideology of the cancer cell. True evangelism has a different goal: the propagation of God's truth. If the Gospel is preached to every creature, God will convert all his people, all he has chosen for Heaven.

John W. Robbins

1. Introduction

When a congregation and its pastor decide to pay special attention to evangelism, they may invite a recommended speaker, set aside two weeks for meetings, and scatter advertisements around the neighborhood. But there is a great deal more to evangelism than this. One must ask, What kind of man is the recommended evangelist? What kind of music will he introduce? What kind of sermon does he preach? What will be the tone of the meetings? There are also other questions. What preparations should the church make before the evangelist comes? What sort of follow-up should be scheduled for the week after the evangelist leaves? And this last question points out the fact that evangelism is not limited to special meetings with special speakers. If a pastor and congregation wish to pay attention to evangelism, they may conclude that evangelism is a year-round affair, and possibly they may finally decide that an outside speaker is not so important after all. The pastor himself may be more important. And the ordinary members of the congregation may be the most important of all. These are points that the following pages will consider.

Evangelism is an indispensable part of a church's program because evangelism is an indispensable part of the Church's program. If the Church does not continually win people to Christ, the Church will die. And it looks as if the Church were dying. Many denominations are not keeping up with the growth of the population in the West. The growth of the population in the East gives a still more pessimistic picture. In the times of the Apostles, the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved. This occurred daily. How many local congregations can say that they add new members daily? There may be some,

but I do not happen to know where they are. Most churches do not have large increases. And in many cases, increases do not mean that people are coming to accept Christ. It may merely mean that many people are moving to the suburbs, so that the suburban churches grow, while the downtown churches die. It may also mean that the particular congregation is an efficient country club, or political action group, having nothing to do with apostolic Christianity. Growth is not necessarily evangelism.

What is the cause of the present evil days? Is it personal sin on the part of the church members that hinders growth? Maybe it is. Is it the pressure of secular society in this post-Christian age that blocks out the message from people's minds? Maybe it is. Is it because the message is not preached? Well, that is often the case too. Or again, is it because God had planned a great apostasy at the end of the age, and now that that time has arrived God is blinding the minds of the people so that hearing they do not hear? This could be so too.

Nevertheless, God's command still rests on us to preach the Gospel to every creature. The Church always has been and always will be a minority group in this world; its numbers may be decreasing at the present time; but the Church must not die, it will not die. The present members will all die in a few years, if the Lord does not soon return, and new members must be sought. They will be sought. They will be found. God will not permit his Church to be extinguished. Now, our question is, How may we preserve the Church? God will preserve the Church, but only through the efforts of his servants. It is we who must do the work. Evangelism is indispensable. Somehow the Church must gather in new people.

Somehow; but how? There are many methods in actual use. Surely some are better than others. Since the problem is serious and important, careful thought should be given to how

evangelization should be conducted. Some methods may be good in one situation and bad in another. Some may do more harm than good. Bingo is one of these. No, if a church wants to pay attention to evangelism, it should not thoughtlessly plunge ahead. It must face the questions that different methods pose, carefully consider the probable effects, and then choose deliberately what the situation requires. Too often inertia produces an automatic acceptance of customary procedures. Evangelistic services have become stereotyped. They all follow the same form. Happy singing, impassioned address, altar call with pleading, shaking hands, signing cards, love offering, and good-bye till the next campaign. Well, once in a while the form should be scrutinized. If it is a good method, it will survive scrutiny. If it has weak spots, it can be improved. And if it is not Biblical, it should be scrapped. Since these are dark days for the Church, it is all the more important to examine the whole procedure now. It is all the more reprehensible to react automatically and go through some familiar motions. Evangelism requires very serious consideration.

There are all too many points at which this study could begin. The one chosen here has to do with the tone of the evangelistic service. We shall examine the place of emotion in evangelism. This matter is really more important than it may at first seem. It brings to light elements of great significance in the life of the church that holds these services. As the discussion continues, some readers may think that we are getting bogged down in trivialities. We shall indeed examine many details, but they have a real bearing on our efforts to bring people to Christ. Since the subject is so important, and the need in this age so great, it pays to take time to examine a good many details.

Furthermore, the place of emotion in evangelism is suitable for beginning this study because it covers all phases of the work. It is a matter of disagreement, since, as all can see, the various

churches differ in the degrees of emotion and excitement, or the lack of them, the style of the music, and the type of prayer that characterize their conduct. Surely among all these differences, some are better than others. Which? Let me give an initial example of a funeral service. Funerals are not generally considered evangelistic occasions. But some groups definitely turn a funeral into an evangelistic appeal. Others think that this is the depth of poor taste. The Church may indeed be under God's order to evangelize. But it is also under God's order to comfort those who mourn. This latter should not be neglected, even in favor of the former. At any rate, let me tell you about a funeral.

When I was a graduate student, a highly respected professor suddenly died of ptomaine poisoning. A number of students attended the funeral in a nearby Episcopal church. I had never been to an Episcopal funeral before. The funerals I had attended included some remarks about the decedent. The eulogy might be too fulsome. It might be more restrained. But some memories of the person's life and activity were mentioned. Most of the funerals I had attended were in very good taste; sickening sweet, not to say deceptive eulogies, were avoided. But at this Episcopal service the minister read from the prayer book and said nothing whatever about our beloved professor. I thought the service cold and forbidding. But later the widow, whom most of us knew fairly well because the professor held his classes in his home, served coffee and remarked how comforting and beautiful the service was. Naturally, I did not want to hurt her by telling her my own feelings; but I could not help being struck by the difference in the effect that funeral had on me and its effect on her. Obviously a given type of service does not have the same effect on all people. And this is true of evangelistic services as well.

Now, let me tell you about an evangelistic service. The evangelist had his wife and children on the stage with him.

Stage? Well, it was quite a show. Each child played some instrument – a saw, a queer stringed instrument, a bass wash tub, and the wife played the piano. Everybody was whooping it up. When everyone was in a good mood, the pastor announced the offering. Not enough money was collected the first time, and after the pastor explained how costly it was to educate several children, who stood grinning on the stage, the plates were passed again. I forget whether they were passed a third time, for it was already nine-thirty, and I thought I had better leave.

In some of these Pentecostal meetings the people speak in tongues. They yell and rant and rave. They fall on the floor. One friend of mine remarked that in the Bible people sometimes fell on their faces, but in these meetings the women fell on their backs, face up. Well, this is hardly an Episcopal funeral.

Now, for another example. During our summer vacations, when we travel widely in the West, it is a problem to know where to attend church on the Lord's Day. The larger denominations are sunk in various degrees of apostasy, and we think it useless even to hope for a really Christian service. The smaller denominations and independent churches may actually profess to believe the Bible, but their interpretation of it can be somewhat bizarre, and their "tone" is unpredictable. We have found that the Missouri Synod LutheranChurches are the best choice in these unfamiliar localities. They uniformly have good sermons. No one throws a fit; and if the Germanmusic is sometimes too high to sing in comfort, at least it is good music and the themes are Biblical. I remember an excellent service inYosemite National Park, another in Reno, and one nearer home on Route 30 just east of Warsaw, Indiana. Here the pastor spent a few minutes referring to America's contemporary orgy of sex. With restrained force, which made it all the more forceful, he earnestly declared that sex is perfectly all right in its place, and its place is in marriage, and nowhere else.

But this was not an evangelistic service. Or was it? As a Christian I was impressed by the sermon. Had I not been a Christian, I think I still would have been impressed. If people are to be turned from their sins to seek Christ, must they not be convinced of their sins? Then must not preaching the Ten Commandments be a part of the evangelistic endeavor? Because that Lutheran service was dignified, even formal, was it therefore not evangelistic? Maybe it was the very best kind of evangelism. Before we judge, we shall have to decide what evangelism really is. That is another point that must be discussed.

We do agree, do we not, that evangelism has something to do with preaching the Gospel? If so, then some of the Quaker services, in which everybody sits silent and no one says a word, cannot be evangelistic services. Here the “tone” of the service precludes evangelism. This is one extreme. The tones mentioned have ranged from the absolute silence, through an Episcopal funeral service, all the way to screaming in unknown tongues and falling on the floor unconscious. Obviously, before a pastor and a congregation engage in two weeks of actual services, they must have some notion of what sort of tone they intend to develop.

This matter of the range of tone can be summarized as a question of the degree of emotion produced or aimed at in these services. Not only is the degree of emotion to be considered, but also the quality of the emotion. There are various emotions. Should the evangelist try to stimulate and play on all emotions? Should he try for one or two only? And if so, which ones? Let us also keep in mind that these questions are pertinent, not only for the planning of evangelistic services, but also for regular, ordinary worship services as well. More than that, those questions apply to our individual activities, our personal devotions, and our mode of life. Above it was hinted that

evangelism may not be solely the province of an itinerant evangelist. The pastor must evangelize. And has not God laid the obligation to evangelize on every Christian? In that case each of us must consider the tone of his life as it affects his witness to Christ. No doubt there is also much else to be considered. This is only the first point, for we have to begin the discussion somewhere. The last point – well, we shall never get to the last point. There are too many for this small book.

The best way to conclude this introductory chapter is to indicate the method by which all these questions can be answered. Observation of many evangelistic campaigns and an evaluation of their results is not, not, I say, the method of deciding what to do and how to do it. If one had lived long enough, one could have attended Moody's meetings, Billy Sunday's, and Billy Graham's. In them one could observe the music. Billy Sunday, actually Rodeheaver, used a klaxon horn with that grand old hymn of the Church, *TheBrewer's Big Bosses Can't Run Over Me*. He also used sawdust. In fact, Billy Sunday had a remarkable grasp of acoustics, and, with the exception of that piece of scalloped wood that hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, he could hardly be improved upon in those days before public address systems. Now, attention to acoustics is not to be despised; but this is not the way to evaluate the evangelistic results.

One popular way of evaluating evangelistic campaigns is to count the number of people who attended. The counting is not always correct. Evangelists as a group have made a bad name for themselves by their overestimates of the attendance. Just this past week I read a religious paper which said "400 were present – evangelistically speaking 600." But aside from the question as to whether the number is correctly counted or not, the number is no indication of success. Sports regularly outdraw church services. Does not theWorld Series attract some fifty thousand

each game? What matters is not how many people are present, but what is done. An evangelistic endeavor that reaches only one person may be a more successful endeavor than one where a thousand people are present.Statistics cannot measure Christian value.

Of course there is one difference between the World Series and an evangelistic campaign. In the former no one comes forward. They all go home after the game. In the evangelistic service one can count the number who come forward at the invitation; and some people think that this is the way to measure the evangelist's success. But of the twenty signed cards transmitted to our church at the end of aGraham campaign, nineteen addresses had no such person living there, and the one boy we found had not the slightest idea of what the card was supposed to mean. Maybe the evangelist had done these people some good, but our church was unable to find what good had been done.

At the end of the Billy Sunday campaign in 1915 our church received into its membership over a hundred persons. I myself was one of them. Another was a streetcar conductor who wanted to take over the Sabbath morning worship service to describe his enthusiasticemotional experiences. Two others were a man and wife who put away their whiskey and remained sober, faithful members for the rest of their lives. Now, I do not mean to be antagonistic to Billy Sunday. I believe he really did some good. But I know that had he not come to town, I would have nonetheless professed faith in Christ and become a church member. Maybe the couple who put away theirliquor were actually converted by means of Sunday's sermons. Whether the conductor was converted, I do not know. He did not last long. But all the observable results are of no use in weighing the success of an evangelist, unless one has certain normative, evaluative principles that do not proceed from observation. One

can see that a couple stops drinking, or that a couple begins to drink. But a judgment depends, not on this observation, but on whether drinking, or church membership, or anything else, is good or bad. Even church membership may not always be good; and coming forward in an evangelistic campaign may be bad. Mere observation of what happens cannot tell us.

Now, there is one source and only one source from which we may learn how to judge our observations. That source is the Bible.

For one thing, the Scriptures describe several evangelistic endeavors. Unless the methods are definitely condemned, we may infer that these Biblically described methods are permissible, at least under similar conditions. In the second place, and this is more important, the Bible defines what evangelism is. Not every display on the religious page of the Saturday newspaper advertises an evangelistic service that conforms to New Testament standards. Then, in the third place, closely related to point two, the New Testament gives themessage that must be preached. And this is the most important point. In the Bible and in the Bible alone can we find what is and what is not Christian evangelism. Several questions have already been asked. Other questions will come on later pages. The answers, all the answers, will be found in Holy Scripture; and if the Scripture does not answer a question, that question has no answer.

2. Emotions in the Bible

In view of what has already been said, including the contrast between the formal Lutheran services and all the hot and bother of hillbilly fundamentalism, including therefore the widely held idea that evangelism is at least ninety-nine percent emotion, it

will not seem strange to devote some space to a study of emotion. Not only has this question been raised in the previous chapter, not only is its pertinence obvious, but also it will exemplify the method of using the Bible to find answers to the questions we must ask when considering an evangelistic effort for our congregation.

First of all, a short list will be made of happy emotions described in the Bible. In the *Psalms* there are many instances of God's commanding us to rejoice. *Psalm* 106:1 says, "Praise ye the Lord." *Psalms* 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150 open with exactly the same words. No doubt several dozen other verses could be listed. They all show that "Praise is comely for the upright" (*Psalm* 33:1). There can be no doubt that this applies to evangelistic services as well as to other occasions. There are certain verses in the Bible aboutmourning, but no one can forbid praise and rejoicing. *Philippians* 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." I wonder if this applies to anEpiscopal funeral? Should we rejoice always? Furthermore, if we were always rejoicing, would rejoicing be an emotion? Emotions are ordinarily thought to be short-lived. An emotional person is one who changes from day to day, maybe rapidly and unexpectedly. If a man is always happy, is this an emotion? But before we ask what an emotion is, let us collect more Scripture passages that at least seem to be emotional.

In *2 Samuel* 6:12-16, David brought the ark of the Lord from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem with gladness. David danced before the Lord with all his might. All the house of Israel shouted, accompanied with the sound of the trumpet. But Michal, Saul's daughter, David's wife, saw King David leaping and dancing and despised him in her heart. Well, maybe the Pentecostalists are right. Shout and dance and make a great noise! Note in particular that if this was not strictly an evangelistic service, it was a revival service.

Of course, we must read *1 Corinthians* 14:15, 16 also. Paul says, “If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else…how shall…the unlearned say ‘Amen’…seeing he understandeth not?”

No doubt David understood what he was doing and saying. It was a very special occasion. The ark had been neglected for about forty years. Now it was being returned to the Tabernacle. Maybe this is not a good example to follow in an evangelistic service. Speaking intongues also may have been something unusual and exceptional. During the lifetimes of Christ and the Apostles God wrought manymiracles. Possibly the last previous miracle had been in the time of Daniel. Before that, in the time of Elijah and Elisha. Miracles occur at times of crisis. They do not happen every day. They never did. So too with tongues. These may have been divine signs to accredit the Apostles and the first preachers of the Gospel. After the establishment of the Church, these signs ceased. I wonder if the use of the understanding also was intended to cease with the death of the Apostles? Maybe some other verse will answer this question; but at the moment it is the list of emotions that must be completed.

Not all the emotions in the Bible are so happy. When the Magi rejoiced with exceeding great joy, Herod was wroth; and soon after inRamah there was a voice heard of lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. But I guess this does not apply to evangelism.

Back in *1 Samuel* 1:7*ff* Hannah wept and did not eat; she was in bitterness of soul and wept sore. Still earlier, obedient Abraham must have been sad when he was told to sacrifice Isaac;

and Jacob “refused to be comforted” when his evil sons told him that Joseph had been killed.

There are many examples of sadness and sorrow in the Bible. In *Matthew* 26:38 Jesus said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” If someone should ask, Was Jesus’ sorrow an emotion? many people would answer, Yes. But if someone should ask, WasJesus’ sorrow emotional? many people would say, No; and others would be confused. The one person in all the Bible who seems to be the least emotional is Jesus himself. He walks with a calm dignity, and even a detachment, among both friends and enemies. He did not commit himself, even to those who believed on his name, because he knew all men and he knew what was in man. Jesus preached; but he never staged a rip-snorting evangelistic service.

The Beatitudes say, “Blessed are they that mourn.” On the day of Pentecost those who heard Peter preach were “pricked in their hearts.” It seems that they were agitated about their sins. Peter then told them to repent. Repentance has something to do with a godly sorrow for sin. Should not an evangelist therefore try to produce sorrow and mourning? Should he not try to make his audience uncomfortable? When an evangelist cracks some jokes, and gets the people to sing jingles, jollies them, and makes them laugh, is he doing what the Scripture requires? Is such a service an evangelistic service? Or is it just a floor show that makes light of Christian themes?

I remember an evangelist who came to our church once. He told a joke that depended on a pun made of *veneered* and *very near*Christians. The pun was not particularly good. No one laughed. So he tried to explain his joke: veneer, very near, don’t you see? No one laughed. So, I suppose our congregation was catalogued in his mind as a cold, unspiritual group of people. Let the question be put pointedly: Should not an evangelist try to

make the people cry instead of laugh? But first, maybe we should ask just what repentance is. Is repentance an emotion? Can one repent without crying? What does it mean to be pricked in the heart? An old Puritan wrote a book, *Alarm to the Unconverted*. Is a fire alarm emotional? If someone cried “Fire!” near you in a crowded building, would you have some emotion? Maybe if you experienced strong emotions, you would lose your head and might fail to escape. Emotion means losing one’s head, doesn’t it? If not, what is an emotion?

Some examples have now been given of joyous emotions. These are presumably good. Not necessarily, however; for clearly some people rejoice over the wrong things. They may through envy rejoice at the misfortunes of their neighbors. Whether joy and praise are good or evil depends therefore on the intellectual content, *i.e.*, the known object about which one rejoices.

In the second place, examples have been given of sad emotions. These are presumably bad, or at least less than good; but they are understandably appropriate in certain circumstances. Mourning over one’s own sins is not only appropriate, but positively good. If not in excess. If not paralyzing and inhibitive of improvement. If not suicidal. Once again, the moral quality of the emotion depends on the object, the situation, the ideas or opinions one has at the time. One cannot say that joy is always good and sadness is always bad. It is like eating fried eggs. In some cases a fried egg sandwich is good, good for you; but not always before going to bed.

Now, in the third place, to continue the list of Biblical emotions, examples must be given of those which most people would deny are good, or even appropriate; but which most people would say are positively evil and bad.

The first is Cain's anger and jealousy that led him to murder Abel. Murder is evil. Let us admit that much. But are anger and jealousy necessarily evil? Consider: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (*Exodus* 20:5). Consider also: "The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (*Exodus* 34:14; compare *Deuteronomy* 4:24); and *Isaiah* 42:8, "I am the Lord… and my glory will I not give to another." Consider again: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (*Matthew* 23:33). Is then anger always evil and is jealousy without exception bad?

Since God has no emotions and is not a man that he should repent, maybe jealousy, wrath, and anger are not emotions. What is anemotion, anyhow? Well, doubtless Cain's anger was emotional, and certainly his murder was a sin.

Is this discussion veering away from the subject of evangelism? No, really it is not. For Cain, after the murder of Abel, had another emotion. It was fear. It might even have been regret. Judas regretted that he had betrayed Christ. Now, if in the evangelist's audience, and all the more in personal individual evangelism, there is a Cain or a Judas – and there often is – the evangelist and the personal worker ought to know something about these emotions. The Bible gives us to believe that neither Cain nor Judas repented. I remember one year when I preached quite a number of sermons in a rescue mission. Nearly always there was a certain man with a red face seated about two-thirds of the way to the back of the room. He always, I think always, cried at the preaching of the Gospel. But I have no reason to think that my evangelistic preaching was successful in the sense of bringing him to Christ. I also remember an example of personal work. In this case the person shed no tears, nor experienced any emotion so far as I could detect. Nor did I

make any impassioned appeal. The conversations, over a period of time, would not qualify as “evangelistic” in the hillbilly, stomping, shouting sense. But the observable conduct of the convert over a period of fifteen years now, so far as any man can judge another, testifies to a genuine conversion. This conduct includes faithful attendance at a Bible-believing church, teaching Sunday School classes, attempting to win family and friends, and witnessing in hostile environments. All with as little emotion and as much effectiveness as can be reasonably expected.

With these considerations now in mind, let us add to the list of “bad” emotions a few more Biblical examples.

Probably most people would agree that the emotions of Joseph’s brothers just as they were selling him into slavery were bad. They had been thinking about killing him. Instead they sold him for a profit and lied to their father. Clearly emotions are not always good. Sometimes they are sinful. Now, what about David’s anger when Nabal would not give food to his men? He and his men had been protecting Nabal’s flocks from the attacks of marauding enemies. True, no contract had been signed. But the time of sheep-shearing was a festive occasion and often gifts were distributed. Nabal was a churl, a very nasty man; he would give David nothing; he called him a deserter from his master, Saul. Well, David was angry, very angry. Did he not have a right to be? He determined to kill every man in Nabal’s employ. Surely this was going too far. He might have been justified in being angry. He might have been justified in seizing some food. But as for killing the men, he was deterred only by Abigail’s intercession.

Laughter can also be a bad emotion, if laughter is an emotion. When Sarah laughed at God’s promise of a son in *Genesis* 18:12, it was bad, of course. Abraham himself also had laughed at

God's promise in *Genesis* 17:17. I am not sure I would have laughed. I might have cried. But neither laughing nor crying could be called good in this situation.

When it is suggested here that some things are good at times and bad at other times, that something is wrong in one case and right in another, do not think that these remarks are a preparation for a defense of situational ethics. Far from it. But there are external actions, and inward thoughts, that are right and good at one time, and evil at another. No one denies that buying a house or going on a picnic is good sometimes and bad other times. So also there is a time to laugh and a time to mourn. This is not situational ethics. The Bible categorically commands, Thou shalt not commit adultery. Adultery is a sin in every situation. There are no exceptions. But the Bible does not command us not to be angry. In fact, the Apostle commands (no doubt for appropriate situations) "Be ye angry, and sin not." But I do not remember any itinerant evangelist telling his audience to be angry. Rather it is, "Everybody happy?" Is this the Biblical method of evangelism? I think not. But the situation is complicated. It is not yet clear what an emotion is. We are not sure whether each item in the Biblical list was an emotion or not. If anyone wants to encourage emotions in evangelism, he ought to know what makes a given state of consciousness an emotion rather than something else. And, equally important, or even more so, it is necessary to know what evangelism is. These questions will now be taken up in order.

3. What is Emotion?

Since the Bible does not define emotion (it does not even use the word), since also one must have some idea of what emotions are, even to make a mere list, not to mention evaluating them, where

can one better look than in the writings of modern psychologists?Psychology is held in great repute, especially among the unlearned, and to these people it may come as a surprise that psychologists know very little. But, since no one seems to know any more, and most people know much less, where else shall we look? It is at least worth the try.

In 1962 Robert Plutchik published a small volume titled *The Emotions*. In its third paragraph he begins to quote from four books, all published since 1925, all of which state that "The confusion and contradiction found today within affective psychology are notorious." Then follow about twenty pages listing a large number of factors that a theory of emotion should unify. The third chapter begins, "The history of psychology is so marked with differences as to the meaning of emotion that some psychologists have suggested that the term be eliminated from psychological writings." One reason the author rejects the James-Lange definition of emotion is that there are emotions no one feels. I would suppose that the majority of evangelists would say that if a person did not feel an emotion, he had no emotion. Obviously, therefore, psychologists are not talking about the same thing evangelists talk about. The word "emotion" means very different things to different people. The author says, "This theory obviously distinguishes between feelings and emotions, a dichotomy characterized by persisting disagreements and ambiguities" (28). Another theory, the motivational theory, so broadens the category of emotion that it includes all psychological processes, with the result that the word "emotion" no longer has any specific significance. The psycho-analytic theory of emotions Dr. Plutchik condemns for "its vagueness and metaphorical character."

The author himself formulates a theory of emotions by following the lead of Descartes, a seventeenth-century philosopher, who classified admiration, love, hate, desire, joy,

and sadness as the six primitive “passions”; and all others are combinations of these. Dr. Plutchik also has primitive emotions, or, more accurately, eight prototypic dimensions of emotion: eating, excreting, destroying, protecting, reproducing, depriving, orienting or evaluating, and exploring. These primary emotions are supposed to account for all others. The account can hardly be called satisfactory.[1]

Like other psychologists, D. O. Hebb (*A Textbook of Psychology,* 156) acknowledges that emotion is difficult to define, hard to comprehend, and useless as a scientific term; but in a commonsense way emotion means that something exceptional is going on inside the subject. In this, Hebb no doubt speaks the truth. An emotion is something unusual, sudden, exceptional. If a certain state of consciousness continues over a fairly long period of time, we do not call it an emotion. An emotion is some kind of upheaval within the person. These sudden upheavals evidently occur during evangelistic services. The fact is indisputable. Whether they are helpful or otherwise, whether the evangelist should try to produce them or not try, or even try to prevent them, what their relationship to conversion is – these are questions that are not settled by simply observing that emotions occur.

In addition to the characteristic of suddenly disturbing one’s normal mental state, an emotion must be recognized as involuntary. A person does not calmly decide to get angry, or to lapse into depression. Indeed emotions are not only involuntary, in the sense that we do not deliberately choose them, they also occur when we deliberately try to suppress them. At other times we may want to have a certain emotion and yet find that we cannot produce it. Emotion, therefore, is doubly involuntary.

A third characteristic of emotion is the absence of intellectual content. To be sure, we can hardly be angry without being angry

at someone or some thing; and this person or thing is known. But the knowledge and the emotion are different, for we can know the person or thing without being angry. The emotion of depression may have no intelligible object at all. Furthermore, the occurrence of the emotion often, perhaps always, makes no change in our knowledge. Emotion therefore has no intellectual content.

Nor should emotion be confused with volition. Among the Protestant Reformers emotion was hardly mentioned at all, while volition was somewhat stressed. In fact the great interest in emotion is rather a modern phenomenon that has so eclipsed the will that this latter now receives scant attention. Thus a most important element of the Christian position has been disparaged. At any rate, we can see that volition is not emotion by the fact that both joy and depression occur without any tendency to act. At most, joy may be accompanied by a tendency to jump, dance, or shout – in some undirected, spontaneous manner while depression is more a tendency not to act. That a volition or an intellectual act may accompany some emotions cannot be denied; but a dog who accompanies his master on a walk is not for that reason to be identified with the master. If emotion can accompany a volition, then clearly emotion is not volition. Therefore the statement frequently made by modern psychologists, that emotion is (among other things) a tendency to act, is false.

Some further advance may be made, not merely in listing the emotions referred to in the Biblical narrative, but also in evaluating them, by considering the character of God. Does the Bible indicate that God is subject to sudden, involuntary, non-intellectual upheavals in his usually calm state of mind? Well, hardly. The *Westminster Confession*, the best summary of the contents of the Bible, says that God is without parts or passions. *Parts* refers to bodily organs. Bodies have parts, minds

do not. But God is also withoutpassions. The word *passion*, in more modern terminology *affection*, is wider than the term emotion but includes the latter. A passion or affection is the result of being affected by some external force. A dog is affected by a whipping; a student is affected, sometimes, by the possibility of a good grade. There are modern psychology books written about "the affective consciousness." But God is not affected by anything. Or, in another translation of the Greek term, God does not "suffer" anything.

On the contrary, not only the *Westminster Confession*, but all or nearly all the historic creeds say that God is immutable. He does not change. Emotion, however, is a sudden, involuntary change. To have emotions would be inconsistent with God's eternal state of blessedness.

Now, someone may say that God loves and that love is an emotion. But with respect to love, two points must be made. First, God'slove is eternal, therefore not a sudden change, therefore not an emotion. Second, God commands us to love him. A command requires voluntary obedience. Therefore the love God commands is volitional, not emotional. Doubtless God commands the impossible. He commands us to keep his law perfectly. This we cannot do because of sin. The impossibility arises from us; it does not arise from anyirrationality in the command. God commands the impossible, but he does not command the absurd. If God commanded us to "emote," it would be the same as commanding a voluntary involuntary act. Here the impossibility resides in the irrationality of the command, not in our physical or moral inability. God cannot command us to draw a plane triangle with just two straight lines – not because of any limitation on his omnipotence, but because the idea of a two-sided triangle is an irrational, self-contradictory idea, and God is not irrational or self-contradictory. But the command, "Emote," is irrational because it would require us to

perform voluntarily what is involuntary. Therefore neither God's love nor the human love God commands is emotional: They are volitional. Some other human states of mind, also called love, may of course be emotions, very bad ones.

There is another reason for holding emotions in low esteem. *Genesis* teaches that man was created in the image of God. Obviously this is something desirable. It distinguishes men from animals. But what is the image of God? *Genesis* does not make it very plain. However, there are hints in *Ephesians* and *Colossians*. These two epistles refer to man's present sinful condition and to his state ofinnocence before the fall. Regeneration is a kind of re-creation, and a restoration, a partial restoration, of innocence. In *Ephesians*4:24, after commending Christian maturity in wisdom and knowledge (1:17-18; 4:13-14), Paul says, "Put on the new man that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Here is a reference to creation and the image of God. With the context one may conclude that the image is at least partly a matter of truth, knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The reference to the image of God is more explicit in *Colossians* 3:9-10, "Ye have put off the old man with his doings and have put on the new man, that is renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." Here the emphasis falls on knowledge. In all this there is nomention of emotions. Now, the purpose of evangelism is to produce mature Christians, in whom the image of God is renewed. For this purpose knowledge is essential; emotions are not mentioned at all. As was said before, the word *emotion* does not occur even once in the entire Bible.

It should not be necessary to justify these quotations from the Apostle Paul. One book on evangelism, on its very first page, says Paul never dreamed that people in later ages would be reading his letters. But Paul himself said, "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine." He also

said that he received his message by revelation. It is just possible that copies of the*Ephesian* letter were sent to other churches. And in any case, how could Paul not have expected his letters to be read in all the churches and handed down to their posterity? A book on evangelism that begins by belittling Paul's consciousness of his apostolicauthority (and note how Paul defends his authority in *Galatians*) can hardly be a very good book on evangelism. We judge evangelistic attempts by the Scripture.

In spite of the widespread notion that emotions are desirable, and even essential for conversion, responsible pastors know what trouble emotional people can cause in a church. There was one woman who thought herself very spiritual. She would get wrought up over the least thing and believe it was the working of the Spirit. In some ways she was a good woman. She was very generous. In her own way she was devout. But sometimes she would neglect her housework and her family to spend all night in prayer with some otherPentecostalists downtown. She once burned a closet full of her good clothes because she thought them too good for a Christian. She even thought it sinful to give them to the poor who needed clothes. So she burned them. She was always excitable. She could never talk about any subject, including the Bible, without getting off the track at least twice in every sentence. After changing churches every few months, she stayed with us for two or three years, but finally left because we paid too much attention to the Bible and not enough to the leadings of the Spirit. Going to a church of decidedly different theological complexion, she reported that they believed the same things as we did. A few months later she had changed churches again. This woman did not cause trouble in the sense of disrupting the congregation; she made our work difficult by requiring, or at least needing, a good deal of constant care; and

this added burdens and diminished the energy available for other work.

Another case was a man, who, unlike the woman just mentioned, was not mentally unbalanced, but who was also highly excitable. He would imagine that someone in the church slighted him. Then he would air his grievance through the congregation and stir up friction. Ninety-nine percent of the time there was no slight at all. Once he treated one of our elders pretty shabbily, in fact, intolerably. Now, as the elders are supposed to rule the church, and as his conduct had been clearly reprehensible, the elder remonstrated with him somewhat. This threw him into a terrific temper tantrum. The session discussed the whole matter, agreed that the elder in question had been most moderate in the face of provocation, but asked him if he could somehow apologize a little and try to calm things down. The meek and devout elder did so. Finally the man left the church to the relief of the whole congregation.

Very likely emotion is not technically defined as an unusual, sudden, involuntary, irrational upheaval in one's normal consciousness. This statement may cover emotions and some other mental events besides. For example, a sneeze fits this description, and a sneeze is not an emotion, is it? Well, why couldn't a sneeze be an emotion? We have not satisfactorily defined emotion so as to include all emotions and to exclude all that is not emotion. But perhaps and hopefully our ideas are now a little clearer; we have seen some of the importance of the subject, and with the genus of emotion well enough defined we are prepared to go further into the relationship between emotion and theology.

1. For other admissions of failure and examples of the unsatisfactory treatment of emotions by psychologists, see *Physiological Psychology* by Wenger, Jones, and Jones,

chapter 21 (Henry Holt and Co., 1956), and *Introduction to Psychology* by Ernest R. Hilgard, chapter 6 (Harcourt, Brace & World, 3rd edition, 1962).

4. Emotion and Theology

The previous chapter should give pause to all those unthinking enthusiasts who take it for granted that emotion is the essential quality of evangelistic meetings. For those who think and do not act so heedlessly there is a more profound and more serious objection to emphasis on emotion. The objection is that reliance on emotion and personal experience is destructive of the Gospel. In fact, reliance on emotion and feeling was the source of modernism. The apostasy of the large denominations today resulted from a deliberate emphasis on feeling and personal experience.

There are some technical complications here. The father of modernism did not so much use the words *emotion* and *feeling*. Whether feeling and emotion are synonyms cannot clearly be decided. It is quite possible that the early modernists did not quite know what they meant by feeling, though it seems that their feelings were less intense than some violent emotions are. One thing, however, is completely clear and indubitable: Feeling is not intellection or cognition. Knowledge is completely excluded. As modernism progressed the feeling on which modernists based their religion was sometimes made analogous to the aesthetic feeling or "aesthetic response." Later it was more neutrally named simply religious experience. How emphasis on feeling or non-cognitive experience produced modernism must now be explained.

Of course, evangelism and Christianity cannot be divorced from experience in one sense of the word. Human life cannot be divorced from experience, for life is experience, if you wish to use the term that way. A child of six experiences learning that two and two are four. All study from first grade through seminary or graduate school is experience. The seminary student experiences the irregularGreek verbs as he memorizes their principal parts. He also experiences bacon and eggs at breakfast. One can avoid experience only by committing suicide; and even then he will have other experiences in the future life. It is personal experience too, vital personal experience, to understand and assent to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in comparison with which feelings and emotions are trivial. Everything then is experience; but this meaning of the word is so broad that it is useless in discussion. Nor is it what they mean who base religion on experience.

The people who emphasize feelings very stupidly speak as if intellectual experience is not experience. That is to say, they have a narrower view of experience. For them experience is non-intellectual. It is feeling and emotions, while intellectual activity is pictured as superficial and trivial.

Just as it is impossible to conduct or to attend evangelistic services without having experience in the broad sense, so too it is impossible for some people to attend without having emotional experiences. Emotions are involuntary. We may try to suppress them as we try to suppress a sneeze, but often we cannot. The account of Christ's physical sufferings can be so vividly described that few people will be able to remain undisturbed. Whether this is of any spiritual profit is quite another question. People are not ordinarily disturbed when Christ's "descent into hell" is explained as his spiritual separation from his Father. His cry, "I thirst," evoked a little pity even from the throng who watched the crucifixion; but "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," is not a sure fire ringer in an hysterical camp meeting.

Now, camp meetings, evangelistic extravaganzas, strong insistence on personal experience have largely been recommended as the proper reaction to "dead orthodoxy." There is so little orthodoxy today that I wonder whether perhaps even dead orthodoxy might not be preferred to living heresy. At any rate living heresy in the twentieth century has resulted from reliance on feeling or emotion.

The Pietists of the eighteenth century – an age in which the Lutheran church is said to have been dead – emphasized personal devotion. The intellectual content of Christianity was denounced by philosophers like Kant; the Pietists, though they may not have explicitly denied Christian doctrine, relegated this content to a secondary place. Then since Kant and some others acknowledged some value in a non-intellectual "faith," the Pietistic influence combined with secular philosophy in Friedrich Schleiermacher to produce what we now call modernism.

Schleiermacher, writing in the early nineteenth century, wanted to build religion on such a firm foundation that neither science nor philosophy could attack it. Therefore he based everything on feeling. Whether feeling is the same as emotion hardly makes any difference: Religion, Christianity, were matters of immediate experience. The particular experience he chose was the feeling of absolutedependence. This feeling of dependence gives us the idea of God. That is, he argued, by analyzing the feeling the concept of God is constructed.

Of course, according to Schleiermacher, we have no knowledge of *God*. At most we know, or better, feel his *relation* to us; and this relation is this feeling. Other doctrines, supposedly Christian doctrines, can likewise be obtained by analyzing

experience. By rather specious analyses Schleiermacher thought he was able to deduce the doctrine of the Trinity, the Atonement, and even the Lord's Supper. Theology is really psychology.

There are three points that especially need to be noted in this attempt to base Christianity on experience. The first is that the derivation of the doctrines is suspect. It is worse than suspect. It is ludicrous. There is just no possible logical way of analyzing an emotion or a feeling and proving the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is found only in the Biblical revelation. No one would ever have thought of it, no one ever did think of it, apart from the Bible. True, some philosophers had three-fold sets of principles. Plato had the world of Ideas, the Demiurge, and chaotic Space. But this is not a tri-personal divine being. Plotinus had something similar. He spoke of the One, the Ideas, and the Soul. But he also had a Logos and a lower world. The whole was continuous. There is, no tri-personal supreme being. Plotinus's One does not think and cannot know. Neo-Platonism is not at all similar to trinitarian Christianity. Schleiermacher therefore did not get the Trinity from Christian experience. One may doubt that his experience was Christian, anyway.

But there is also a second point to notice. Schleiermacher expressed a basic desire to make Christianity immune from scientific objections. Miracles are impossible. Therefore one must reject much of the Bible, if he wishes to make Christianity palatable to the modern mind. This is permissible because the Bible couches its beneficial message in the limited thought forms of a by-gone age. The precious kernel is wrapped around with worthless husks. Discard the husks and preserve the essential ideas.

But what is essential? Shortly after the death of Schleiermacher and under the influence of Hegel, the modernists concluded that

the personality of God was not essential to Christianity. In fact, Schleiermacher himself was a pantheist. In philosophical writings it is quite clear that he had no sympathy for the theory of a personal God. But in his religious writings he tried to accommodate himself to the prejudice of common Christian opinion. His language therefore at times sounds semi-orthodox. But by 1850 there was quite a volume of theological writing that denied the personality of God.

Naturally also the atonement was considered unessential. After all, experience does not justify such a doctrine. It is repulsive to man's moral sensibilities. It conflicts with moral experience. And of all things, the moral principles of the Sermon on the Mount are the essential kernel of Christianity. As Renan and others who wrote on the historical Jesus said, the real Jesus who stands behind thelegends of the Gospels was a mild ethical teacher who had no theology at all.

There is a third point. It is one on which Hegel indulged in some ridicule. The point has to do with the particular emotion, the feeling of dependence, that Schleiermacher thought to be the key to religion. Said Hegel, "If feelings are to constitute the basic condition of the essence of man, then he would be on the same level as animals, for it is inherent in animals to have their condition in and to live according to feelings. If religion in a human being is founded only on feeling, the latter has no other function than to be the feeling of his dependency, and thus a dog would be the best Christian, for it possesses this feeling most intensely and lives mainly in it. A dog even has feelings of 'salvation' when its hunger is satisfied by a bone."

There is a serious implication in this jibe. Later modernistic theologians rejected the feeling of dependence in favor of something more appropriate. One suggested the "sense of the holy." Others posited a religious experience *sui generis*,

just as the aestheticexperience is *sui generis*. Still others widened the meaning of religious experience to take in all feelings of value. They also rejected Schleiermacher's (quasi) Protestant interpretation and aimed to find a universal religion. Two results followed. On this empirical ground religion excludes all knowledge of God. Even Schleiermacher understood this. At best the analysis of experience gives us only so much knowledge of our feelings. There is not the remotest possibility of arriving at the doctrine of justification or anything else specifically Christian. The second result is that with the exclusion of Christian themes, modernism developed into humanism andatheism. Or, at most, the "god" of the humanists is no better than the "no-god" of the atheists, and is definitely worse than the "all-god" of the pantheists.

The result of excluding from religion everything except what could be analyzed out of experience can be seen, in one case, in the work of Professor H. N. Wieman. He defined God as "that character of events to which man must adjust himself in order to attain the greatest goods and avoid the greatest ills." God is not a person. God is not transcendent. He is not even the whole world, as inpantheism. For Wieman God is not even a series of events. He, or better, it is simply some characteristics of events; for this is the only sort of god that can be deduced from or made conformable to experience.

By the time of Wieman in the twentieth century, or very soon after him, even the morality of the Sermon on the Mount goes the way of the Atonement and the Resurrection. Now we have situation ethics; and Joseph Fletcher asserts that every one of the Ten Commandments should be broken. Experiences, the situations in which we find ourselves, determine what we should do. And if in a particular situation we see value in committing adultery, by all means commit adultery. Fletcher's wording is about as near to commending suburban clubs for wife

swapping as language can come without being absolutely explicit.

Some of our anti-theological, pietistic friends will hold up their hands in horror and exclaim that such things do not agree with theirexperience. In this, however, they are mistaken for two reasons. First, even if it were true that their experience somehow condemns situational ethics, who are they to exalt their experience above the experience of others? If religion is to be based on experience, it is to be based on the experience of each person. One person's experience is as normative as another's. No doubt some people do not find wife swapping valuable. But some do. The appeal is to experience. But my experience is not a norm for you, or vice versa. I like oysters, you may not. The Spanish Catholics like to torture bulls in their bull fights. The Puritans do not like this. But I cannot force you to like oysters; nor do you have any right to deny them to me. Hence my religion is based on my experience and you can base yours on yours.

If religion is not to be thus entirely individual and personal, but if it is to preserve some universality, then one must deduce this universal religion only from those experiences which all men find valuable. Individual objections to bull fights and adultery do not count. All that counts is that on which all men agree. But this is very little. And advanced humanism, as exemplified in Edwin A.Burtt, restricts religious prescriptions to the search for health, wealth, beauty, truth, and friendship. But such prescriptions are useless in determining which course of action one should take in a given situation. Should I attend church? Should I take my vacation in Arizona or Florida? Should I love my neighbor's wife? Humanism has no answer to such specific questions. No universal answer, that is; there can be no universal prescription against theft or profanity. Each person does as he pleases. And as

humanism cannot rule this life, so also it has no hope of Heaven in the next.

The Pietists, and all others who think Christianity is based on experience, are mistaken. It is not true that their experience condemnssituational ethics. Of course each Pietist condemns this. But there is nothing in his experience that logically compels him to do so. My distaste for oysters does not justify laws condemning oysters and sauerkraut. If beyond this we try to justify any line of conduct, or condemn any, by an appeal to the common characteristics of all human experience, the result will be equally negative. There may be no universal characteristic at all. And if there is, it would be something like pain and pleasure, which are so general that no particular conclusion can come from them. Universal experience does not commend even truth and beauty. One could not even conclude that one ought to avoid pain and seek pleasure. The fact that all men dislike pain does not prove that it should be avoided. Maybe it is a means to a more valuable end. Whether it is or not cannot be determined by analyzing pain and pleasure. Experience teaches us nothing!

The Bible does. If we base our religion on divine revelation instead of experience, we will have the Trinity, the Atonement, theResurrection, a great deal of intellectual theology, and the morality of the Sermon on the Mount as well. But unless God tells us these things, we could not know them. Buddhism may be based on experience, on someone’s experience; but Christianity is based on the Bible, on divine revelation, not on emotion.

5. What is Evangelism?

If the heedless evangelist gives no thought to the place or desirability of emotion and experience in his services, if now it is clear that he should, then all the more should he stop a moment to ask what evangelism is. At first he might simply snort at such a question. Doesn't he know good and well what evangelism is? Isn't he a professional evangelist? Evangelism then is what he does, and his doing it makes it evangelism.

If, on the other hand, the activity is to be Christian and not mere entertainment, one might acknowledge that Christ and the Apostles had some idea of evangelism, and just perhaps our practices should be judged by theirs. Even the usage of the word in the New Testament should be informative.

To evangelize is to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is the evangel. In Greek the word is *evangelion*. The verb too, translated *preach* or*proclaim*, has the same root. It is *evangelidzomai*. The noun occurs about 75 times in the New Testament: four times in *Matthew*, and five times in *Mark*. The opening words of the second *Gospel* are, "The beginning of the Gospel…" and the account, the Gospel itself, follows. The Gospel is what Mark wrote down; or at least what Mark wrote down is the beginning of the Gospel.

Mark 1:15 commands us to "believe in the Gospel." 1 Some people make a distinction between believing a written account andbelieving in a person. This verse undermines such a distinction. Really, when one believes in a person, he believes the words the person speaks – he believes his promises and his asserted ability to perform. This is what is meant by saying that we trust a person.

The other references in *Mark* (8:35, 10:29, 13:10, 14:9, and 16:15) all indicate that the Gospel is a message that must be published, proclaimed, or preached. That the Gospel is a message is emphasized in *Acts* 15:7. "Peter rose up" in

the Jerusalem Council, “and said…God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.” The words came from Peter’s mouth, and these words are what these Gentiles believed.

In addition to *Romans* 1:9 and 10:16, chapter 2:16 says that “God shall judge…according to my Gospel.” Paul had been preaching certain standards of justice; he had been condemning sin; he was in the process of exposing the wickedness of the Jews. In this verse he says that God’s judgment will be based on the principles of justice that he has been expounding. To be sure, chapter two does not expound all the Gospel; but the Gospel contains these principles by which God judges. If we today are to preach the Gospel, rather than some other message, the ideas of this chapter, *Romans* 2, must be included. Some recent books on evangelism say they should not.

It would be tedious to quote all 75 verses that use the word *Gospel*; but *1 Corinthians* 15:1 contains a part of the message not mentioned in *Romans* 2. In brief it says, “The Gospel which I preached unto you [explains]…how that Christ died for our sins…and that he rose again the third day….” This is the Gospel “by which also ye are saved.” The Gospel therefore is a message, not an emotion. And as a message it is received by the intellect, not the emotions. In *Philippians* 1:27, Paul tells us to let our conversation orconduct accord with the Gospel, which we can do by being of one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Note that Paul tells us to be of one mind. He does not tell us to be of one emotion. Now, since as *Colossians* 1:5 says, the Gospel is the word oftruth, its reception has to be an intellectual act. Truth cannot be received by the emotions. A message is something intelligible. It is something to be understood. If the facts of Christ’s death and resurrection were not to be understood, then music and painting couldreplace preaching and words; for the arts can

stimulate emotion, but they cannot convey the Gospel. See also *Colossians* 1:23.

The verb *evangelize* occurs over fifty times in the New Testament. It is most often translated *preach*. There is no point in multiplying quotations. The Gospel is clearly a message to be proclaimed, understood, and in order for a person to be saved, believed. John Brown of Edinburgh in *An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, chapter three, verse twenty-three, said, "But before faith came…. Some interpreters understand by 'faith' Jesus Christ, whom they represent as the object of faith…. In a strict propriety of language it is not Jesus Christ personally considered, but the truth about Jesus Christ, which is the object of faith…" (170).

The point is particularly appropriate for the present days of apostasy. The liberals use the name Jesus Christ, and some other historic terms, as symbols to evoke pious emotions. The phrases often sound good. But after a little study we discover that their Jesus was not born of a virgin, never raised Lazarus from the dead, and never himself came out of the tomb. Their Jesus is an empty name without intellectual content, a mere emotional idol. Real Christians believe the truth about Jesus: that he actually was virgin-born, that he actually said, "The Son of Man came…to give his life a ransom for many," and that this is precisely what he did on the cross. It is theintellectual content, the message, that counts.

There is more to be said about the Gospel message. In particular an explanation is needed of the way an evangelist's evaluation ofemotion causes him to alter the message, either by the inclusion of certain topics or by the exclusion of others. However, before showing how an evangelist selects his message, the aim of the evangelist should be considered.

The unthinking evangelist has a ready made answer with respect to his aim. Obviously his aim is to win souls. Why does this need thought? Is it not obvious? No, it is not quite obvious. In fact, this simple, unthinking answer is too simple and too unthinking. If this is the limit of the evangelist's aim, his conduct of the evangelistic campaign will most likely be somewhat unscriptural.

That there be no misunderstanding, let it be made quite clear that this answer is not exactly wrong. Of course the preaching of theGospel aims at the salvation of souls. It was said at the outset that the Church must gather in those that are being saved, unless it is to die in this generation. And the zeal of some thoughtless evangelists is highly commendable in itself, even if it is not according to knowledge. It would be most gratifying if all who had knowledge had the same degree of zeal as some of our enthusiastic brethren. Nevertheless the answer is too simple.

It is too simple because it is too short, too ambiguous, and too easily misunderstood. Yet, if properly defined, it is entirely Scriptural.*Jude* 23 says, "Others [you are to] save, snatching them out of the fire." *James* 5:20 says, "He that converteth a sinner…shall save a soul from death." *First Timothy* 4:16 reads, "Take heed, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." In *1 Corinthians* 9:22, the Apostle claims that "I am made all things to all men that I might save some." Compare *Romans* 11:14. Peter in*Acts* 2:40 tells his audience, "Save yourselves."

But is it true that a man can save himself? Did Paul save anybody? Can one man convert another? What about grace? Is not salvation of the Lord? James, who in the verse quoted said that one man should convert another, also says "There is one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy." And he also says, "The engrafted word…is able to save your souls." The

angel told Joseph to call his name Jesus,“for he shall save his people from their sins.” And the children of Israel, in times of repentance, called on the Lord to save them. Then of course there is that very familiar verse, “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (*Ephesians* 2:8).

In salvation, or more particularly, in regeneration, in the production of faith, how much is to be attributed to the evangelist? How much is to be attributed to the sinner? How much is to be attributed to God? There are not many, I suppose that there are not any American fundamentalist evangelists who accept the views of Pelagius. This monk of the fifth century took the idea of saving yourself very seriously. Each man really saved himself. The messenger could repeat to him the commandments of God, and God had been gracious in giving the law, but all else was to be accomplished by the person himself. He was able to keep God’s commandments; sin had no great hold on him; and by becoming law-abiding, he would save himself. But I have never heard any evangelist talk like this. There are, however, some people I would not call evangelists who talk very much like this. These are the liberals who want us to get “involved” in all sorts of street demonstrations, who want us to engineer boycotts of firms that manufacture munitions for our nation, who want us to disrupt the orderly procedures of democratic government, and thus we shall save ourselves – from what and to what I cannot tell.

Nearly all the popular evangelists split up the credit a bit more equitably. Some credit goes to the evangelist, some to the person converted, and of course a fair percentage to God. The evangelist preaches the message, and as James said, the word preached saves the man. (Is this just what James said?) Then of course, God and only God can regenerate. But God regenerates only those who by their own will have manufactured their faith in

Jesus Christ. Faith is not a gift; it is something we ourselves do. And until we do it, God will not help.

Then there are other preachers; they are not what anybody would call popular evangelists; and these men say something immensely different. To be sure, they grant that the evangelist does something. The aim of evangelism, that is, the aim of preaching the Gospel, is to present to the sinner the message to be believed. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The Christian witness certainly has a part in the process of salvation. But it is not the decisive part. Then the sinner has a part too. He must listen to themessage. We can say more. He must understand the message. If a missionary went to the Chinese or the Zambians and preached in English, they could not understand him, and they would not believe the Gospel because they would not have heard the message.Understanding is essential. But it is not decisive, for many people hear the message and understand it very well, but they do not believe it. For example, Saul as a young man heard the message. He understood it better than most of the Christians did. It was because he understood it so well that he became a persecutor. Jesus is God; he said to himself: This is blasphemy; these people must be exterminated. So he harried them, beat them, and imprisoned them. He understood the Gospel, but he did not believe it. Note also that when he believed, it was the same Gospel he had earlier heard. Later on, when he had retired to Arabia for meditation and forrevelation, he learned more. God told him additional truths. These he learned directly from God, for he did not confer with those who were apostles before him. He conferred with God. But at the moment of conversion, he understood no more than he had already heard.

This brings the discussion to the matter of faith or belief. Now, who does this? To whom is the credit? Not the evangelist of

course, unless you wish to credit him with extreme powers of persuasion. It is to the credit either of the sinner or of God. One thing is clear. It is the sinner who believes. God is not the believer. It is we who must have faith. If God can be said to have faith in any sense, it is entirely irrelevant to the problem of evangelism. The sinner has the faith. No one else.

But is the credit his? The familiar verse quoted before is “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (*Ephesians* 2:8).2 Here the apostle tells us by revelation that faith is the gift of God. The credit then belongs to God. Aman in the exercise of his natural powers given him by creation may understand the Gospel; but no sinner by the exercise of his natural powers believes that Jesus is Lord. This belief is the gift of God. Of course, it is the sinner who believes; no one else can believe for him, not even God. Believing is a mental act, and it is individual and personal. But it is God and God alone who causes a man to believe. The man simply does the act because God made him do it. It is to God’s credit – or in more Scriptural language, it is to the praise of the glory of his grace, and of his mere good pleasure.

There is more to it than this. God has a method by which he causes a sinner to believe. Saul was a sinner, unregenerate, dead in trespasses, and sins. So at one time were the Ephesians. So were we. “But God who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, has raised us from the dead with Christ, for by grace are ye saved, not of works, lest any man should boast.” Evangelist John calls this action of God regeneration. He says that those who believe have been born, not of the will of the flesh, but they have been born of God. The other three evangelists usually refer to this as God’s giving us life. Now faith is the exercise of the powers of spiritual life. A dead man cannot exercise the functions of life. A spiritually dead man cannot believe. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, “How can ye

believe?” The dead cannot believe. Therefore God must give the dead sinner life, and the first function of that new life is to believe theGospel. The glory therefore is God’s.

This is why there is a third aim for the evangelist. And this third aim is the most important and most profound. The ultimate aim is not to convert sinners. Nor is it to preach the Gospel. It is to glorify God. After speaking about the unsearchable riches of Christ, Paul says that God created the universe in order that his manifold wisdom should be revealed (by means of the Church which is built up by evangelism) to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realm. The glory then belongs to God, in or by means of the Church and Jesus Christ, to all generations of the age of ages. Amen.

To glorify God it is necessary to preach the Gospel. If the aim were to save souls, maybe some persuasive hocus pocus could produce results as spectacular as those seen in mammoth meetings. But it is God with whom we have to do, God, before whose eyes all things are open and manifest. Hocus pocus may impress men, but it cannot fool God. To glorify God, his message must be preached. Alterations, dilutions, additions, falsifications are prohibited. Now, just what this message is, what parts of it should be preached, what parts should not be preached, and whether musical saws and klaxon horns should be used – all these things are decided upon by the evangelist largely on the ground of his notion of the role of emotion in evangelism. How this is so can be seen by a study of a small booklet entitled *Fundamentalism and Evangelism*, by John R. W. Stott. I wish to show how he distorts the Biblical Gospel because of his views on the aim of evangelism and his evaluation of emotion and intellect.

In chapter one Mr. Stott makes some admirable statements about the Bible. He notes that if Christ was sinless, he must have

told the truth. He was inerrant (17). Although he seems to avoid the words *inerrant* and *infallible* with respect to the apostles, Mr. Stott remarks on their claim to divine authority. “They teach with dogmatic emphasis.” And “Paul boldly links together God’s teaching and his own apostolic charge.” In addition there are several other excellent statements on the nature of Scripture. All this should be taken as Mr. Stott’s acceptance of the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration and his adherence to the complete truth, the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture in its entirety.

Unfortunately, in the United States at least, some so-called Evangelicals are claiming to accept the “authority” of Scripture, even while asserting that it contains errors. I know one queer duck who says he believes in infallibility but not in inerrancy. Or is it the other way around? Liberals are often dishonest. Since by and large they commit perjury when they take their ordination vows – accepting the *Westminster Confession* in the vow, but not believing many of the doctrines it enumerates – it is not wise to trust their use of words. The best words I know for the present situation are: verbal and plenary inspiration, and inerrant and infallible.

Now, I am far from accusing Mr. Stott of dishonesty. Fifty years ago his words would have been taken as synonymous with or equivalent to the Reformation doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration. The trouble is that liberal laxness with language, and the deliberate attempt to confuse people in order to gain political power in the churches, makes it difficult to know what an honest man wants to say.

If Mr. Stott did not accept the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, I would not take the trouble, in a book on evangelism, to object to his view of the emotions and the content of the Gospel. These are matters that can be discussed only on the basis of Scripture. If one of us believes the Bible and the other does

not, no progress could be made in discussion. One might show that the Bible teaches this or that, while the other could reply, Of course it does, but I do not accept it. This latter person uses an external criterion to judge what parts of the Bible are true and what parts are false. His external criterion is probably some form of empirical philosophy. But the Bible-believer cannot base his arguments on such a platform, but on revelation only. Assuming now that Mr. Stott does in fact believe the Bible, one can profitably discuss with him whether the Scripture teaches such and such, and whether one of us is introducing something foreign and secular into our view of the Scriptural message. This is the nature of my criticism. I wish to show that his view of emotion, of mind, of the Biblical word *heart* is not Scriptural and that because of mistaken views on these terms, he alters the contents of the Gospel.

Chapter two of his booklet (it has only two chapters for a total of forty-one pages) is headed *Evangelism*, and it begins with an account of the mind or understanding. After a very few admissions that man is not like a mule that has no understanding and that we should love the Lord with all our mind, Mr. Stott puts some pages of emphasis on the fact that the mind of man is sinful. One of his conclusions is that “we will need to be cautious in relying too greatly on the mind when making an evangelistic appeal.”

He immediately makes some concessions. The evangelist will seek to give a reasoned and reasonable exposition of God’s plan ofsalvation. We must remember that “the New Testament represents conversion in terms of our response not to a Person but to thetruth.” He also notes that the Apostles “reason and argue” with their hearers. These concessions are admirable. But why should not these Scriptural themes have received the emphasis; why should not the concession have been simply to be a little cautious?

In these days particularly, so it seems to me, a strong emphasis on the intellect is necessary. The temper of the times is nihilistic. The authors are irrationalistic. Nothing is true. One must act on hunches. One must decide blindly. Logic is deceptive. Argument is decadent. Thus we have dialectical theologians, existentialists, hippies, and violent street demonstrations. In view of all this, it is good to repeat what the Scripture says. It says a great deal. One could go through *1 John*, the *Proverbs*, passages in *1 Corinthians*, and many individual verses; but here for an example two chapters of *Ephesians* will be used.

In *Ephesians* 1:8, Paul tells us that God has abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence. He does not mean that God acted wisely and prudently. He means that God makes us act wisely and prudently. He does this by making known to us the secret of his will. In verse 13 we hear the word of truth. In the seventeenth verse Paul prays that God grant us a spirit of wisdom in knowing him; which comes about by the eyes of our heart being enlightened. In a moment or two it will be shown that *heart* is a Scriptural expression formind. It does not mean emotions. Here the heart is enlightened so that knowledge results. And Paul continues to pray that we should know a great deal (verse eighteen).

The second chapter of *Ephesians* does not use the word *knowledge*, but it is full of knowledge that we should learn. Then in chapter three the emphasis on knowledge resumes. God made known something to Paul, and as we read him we can understand his understanding about the secret that God has now more fully revealed. In verse eight Paul brings to light, *i.e.*, makes known, the administration of God's plan – God who created the world so that principalities and powers should know the wisdom of God. In 3:18, Paul prays that we may grasp or understand the breadth and length of God's love; and then he

makes a very paradoxical statement. This love exceeds knowledge but we are to have knowledge of this love that exceeds knowledge. He almost says we should know the unknowable. What is more, we are to know what exceeds knowledge in order to be filled to all the fulness of God. The whole is an amazing paragraph. Its emphasis on knowledge is most important today.

Contrasted with this passage of Scripture, Mr. Stott's denigration of the mind is all the more distressing, for when he comes to speak of emotion, he does not say that the emotions are sinful. Everything he says in sub-section (ii) is in commendation of the emotions.

This perverse evaluation is certainly not Scriptural. Mr. Stott tries to make it seem so by saying, "Jesus told us to love the Lord our God with all our *heart* as well as with all our mind." But Mr. Stott seems to have little idea of what the *heart* means in Scripture. His context shows that he thinks the Bible is talking about the emotions when it uses the word *heart*. But if anyone would take a few moments and look up every instance of this word in the Old Testament, he would find that about seventy-five percent of the time it means the mind. The remaining one fourth of the instances are divided between the will and the emotions. Strictly the word *heart*, it seems to me, means "the whole personality." And the proportion shows that the mind is the most important factor in the whole personality. At any rate, the word is not the equivalent of the emotions.

Now, before going on and showing how this unscriptural view causes Mr. Stott to alter the contents of the Gospel, I think it essential to stress the fact that man is sinful. And if man is sinful, so is his mind. So are his emotions.

The Scripture pictures an unregenerate farmer doing his spring plowing, and it says that even the plowing of the wicked is sin.

No matter what an unregenerate man does, it is a sin. This Biblical theme is well summarized by the *Westminster Confession* in chapter 16, paragraph 7: “Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands…yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith…they are therefore sinful…. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.”

Let strong emphasis therefore be placed on the sinfulness of man. Man is dead in sins and is totally unable to do any spiritual good. For this reason an evangelist may well be cautious in relying too greatly on the mind. He should be cautious in relying too greatly on the man. The evangelist should rely wholly on the Holy Ghost to regenerate his auditors.

But though we should not rely “too greatly” on the mind for something it cannot at all do, still the mind, sinful though it is, can exercise its natural functions. Mr. Stott says, “the human mind is both finite and fallen, and will neither understand nor believe without the gracious work of the Holy Spirit” (23). Most emphatically, the unregenerate man cannot believe or have faith without the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit. But he can understand the Gospel with the mind as it is. If he could not understand the message, why preach it? Why in particular should a missionary spend years in hard labor learning a foreign language, if his hearers cannot understand the message? Why should he not preach to them in English? In the providence of God, faith, though it be the gift of God, is given through hearing. And it is not through hearing an unknown tongue, but through understanding an intelligible message.

With this distortion of the Scriptural position, it is not surprising that Mr. Stott fails to insist on the preaching of the Gospel as theGospel is found in the Bible. There are probably other factors besides his view of the emotions that

contribute to this result. He seems to be influenced by some phases of the current dialectical theology. Yet this influence is not very far removed from the matter of emotions, for the dialectical theologians do not hold the intellect in esteem as did the Reformers. Some of them explicitly repudiatelogic and intelligibility. If they do not explicitly arouse the emotions, they may nonetheless be thought of as mystics.

In contradiction to the Bible and to Paul's example, Mr. Stott says that "Our objective is not to unfold to him [the unsaved person] 'the whole counsel of God' but to proclaim the essential core of the Christian gospel." In this connection, note very carefully that Paul claimed that he was innocent of the blood of all men because he had declared all the counsel of God. There is no hint that anevangelist should be silent and omit certain sections of God's revelation. Admittedly a preacher must begin at the point where hishearers find themselves. When Peter preached to the Jews, he did not have to repeat all the Old Testament. Much of it he could take for granted. But when Paul preached on Mars Hill, he could not assume that the Athenians had a knowledge of the Old Testament, or even of its basic theism. So that was where he began. But there is no hint that that is where he wanted to end. His hearers walked out on him; but had they stayed, he would have continued.

Mr. Stott says, "It is commonly accepted today that within the New Testament itself a distinction is made between the kerugma (the proclamation of the gospel) and the didaché (the instruction of converts)." True, this idea is commonly accepted today. It is one of the most important parts of the anti-Scriptural theories of the dialectical theologians. And it should be resisted by those who believe the Bible.

For one thing, the idea of finding a kernel, or a few important themes, and discarding the rest as unessential, raises the question

as to how one should distinguish what is important from what is unimportant. In the history of modernism from Schleiermacher to contemporary times, this kernel has contracted to zero. Modern modernism no longer has even God. God is dead. The kernel is anexistential experience or a march on a picket line or the disrupting of democratic procedures in favor of mob violence.

No doubt Mr. Stott would object most strongly to such irresponsible actions; but when a person begins to pare off parts of the Gospel as unessential, there is no stopping point.

That the paring off and omissions have no stopping point can be seen by reflecting on another of Mr. Stott's statements. He says, "The evangelist cannot be expected to usurp the task of the pastor or the teacher. Nor can he, especially in an interdenominationalmission, trespass into disputed and controversial fields."

These two sentences are full of misunderstanding and confusion. Note that the word *usurp* is a loaded word. Its use is to picture the evangelist as doing something that it is not his business to do. But if the evangelist's duty is to preach the Gospel, he must preach what the pastor preaches, and he does so without usurpation. An itinerant evangelist should be looked upon as a person who in some way can make a more forceful appeal than the pastor. The pastor is without honor in his own pulpit. The stranger is a bit exceptional. He attracts a little extra attention. But the message must be the same, the same Biblical message, without turning aside to the right or the left, without addition or subtraction.

In the next place, Mr. Stott's second sentence is impossible of attainment. I have never known an evangelist to avoid all controversial topics. Dr. Billy Graham, when in Indianapolis, spent ten minutes attacking Presbyterian doctrine. He told his

audience that it was useless to pray for the people who had come forward in response to his invitation. Not even God could help them. They could rely only on their own will. He also said many other controversial things. So too did this evangelist whose preaching I described on the first page of *Biblical Predestination*,3 from whose use of words I chose the title of that work. In fact, I must say that I strongly detest the hypocrisy of evangelists who object to others preaching on controversial themes and themselves do the same. Does it not occur to them that if our preaching is controversial because it conflicts with theirs, theirs is just as controversial because it conflicts with ours? They make such an accusation against us so as to deflect attention from their own methods. Now, I do not condemn controversy. The whole of the Bible is controversial. What I detest is hypocrisy.

Now, for all of Mr. Stott's complaint against controversial topics, he himself is engaging in controversy by recommending his type of evangelism. It is controversial to pare off parts of the Gospel. Any paring is controversial. Even after he has pared, controversy remains. It is clear that Mr. Stott stops paring before the Atonement is discarded. But the Atonement is a very controversial doctrine. And I wish to controvert what Mr. Stott says about the Atonement.

The Bible teaches that Christ's death was a propitiatory sacrifice. The modernist *Revised Standard Version* mistranslates the Greek text in an effort to omit propitiation. Now, Mr. Stott says, "We emphatically do not believe that He did this to placate and buy off the anger of God." On the contrary, we emphatically do believe it. Only it is not the same "we." Mr. Stott is engaging ininterdenominational controversy. Some groups do not believe that Christ gave his life as a ransom, a payment to the Father, to buy off sinners from the Father's wrath. Some do so believe. So do the Scriptures. *Romans* 1:18 is a verse that speaks of God's

wrath and anger. Christ's denunciations of the Pharisees stress the wrath of God. Hell is the punishment inflicted on the unsaved, and is referred to as the wrath to come. Christ interposed himself in a propitiatory sacrifice to save his own from this wrath. He is called the Lamb of God, and the whole Mosaic sacrificial system anticipates this final sacrifice. Even the covenant with Noah, which thedispensationalists try to reduce to politics, and in which they see no reference to the Atonement, speaks of placating an angry God. This idea is obscured in the *King James Version*, and the *American Version* as well. These translations say that God smelled a sweet odor. But the Koehler-Baumgartner lexicon (the latest lexicon at this writing) gives just one meaning to the Hebrew word transliterated*niychoach: appeasement* (*Beschwichtigung*). The "smell of appeasement" then means the placating odor. See also the verbal usage in*Ezekiel* 5:13, "I will appease my anger." Hence the correct translation of *Genesis* 8:20-21 is, "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord…and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled the placating odor." Thus anticipations of Christ's sacrifice in the Old Testament and explanations of his sacrifice in the New agree that he was the propitiation for our sins. He turned aside God's wrath and anger, which we deserved.

To deny this, as Mr. Stott does, is at the very least to initiate a controversy at the very center of the Gospel. In my opinion, it is something much worse: It is a rejection of the Gospel. Do away with Christ's propitiation and his satisfaction of the Father's justice, and you do away with Christianity. I pray that Mr. Stott does not mean what his words say.

But his words are clear, and they must be rejected if one is to be true to the Bible. Speaking of the "fact" of the cross, Mr. Stott says, "Our desire is that men should believe that fact, not accept our explanations. 'Christ died for our sins' is enough without

any further elucidation. Moreover, our appeal is never that men should accept a theory about the Cross but that they should receive a Person who died for them" (35).

These statements are one hundred percent wrong. They should be denied with all vehemence. They are completely anti-Scriptural and totally destructive of Biblical Christianity.

In the first place, Mr. Stott's antithesis here between receiving a Person and believing a theory is inconsistent with the Scripture references he himself previously quoted to the effect that the New Testament represents conversion in terms of our response not to a Person but to the truth. In addition, John Brown of Edinburgh was quoted on this point just a page or two ago. For further emphasis note also this passage from Klaas Runia, in his *Reformation Today*: "One of the most popular slogans in contemporary theology is thattruth in the New Testament does not mean doctrinal truth about Christ but a personal knowledge of Christ. We believe that such a contrast between propositional conceptual truth (truth about) and personal truth (knowledge 'of') is utterly foreign to the New Testament" (56).

In the second place, Mr. Stott's antithesis between a fact and a theory contradicts the whole New Testament. The "fact" of the Cross is that the Romans executed a man by nailing him to a post. It is also a fact that there were two other men crucified that day. From the standpoint of "fact" all three fit the description. But if there is any difference between the significance of Christ's death and the death of the thieves, it is a matter of "explanation" and not of "fact." Death may be a fact; but propitiation is an explanation or theory. And it is the theory that counts.

In the third place, when Mr. Stott says, "'Christ died for our sins' is enough without any further elucidation," he contradicts his previous words and contradicts Scripture as well. He

contradicts his previous words because the phrase “for our sins” itself goes beyond “fact” and is a theory. He contradicts Scripture because *1 Corinthians* 15:3 says, “Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*.” The Scriptures give a great deal of further elucidation. The theory that “Christ died for our sins…without…further elucidation” is a poor theory and an anti-Scriptural one.

Some people think that Christ died for our sins as an example to us of courage or martyrdom. His death exerts a moral influence on us. In this sense Christ died for our sins. But preaching the death of Christ in this sense never saved anyone. Those who study thehistory of theology know that there was a Patristic theory explaining that Christ paid his ransom to the devil. Hugo Grotius expounded a governmental theory. The evangelist does not preach the Gospel unless he expounds the Scriptural theory.

No evangelist can preach the Atonement without relying on a theory. The word *Atonement* itself is the name of and the result of a theory. The word *Satisfaction*, used earlier, and unfortunately replaced by the word *Atonement*, is also the name of and the result of a theory. It is the name of the Scriptural theory. And unless this theory is preached, the Atonement, the Satisfaction, the Gospel is not preached. Therefore, we may say that Mr. Stott espouses a theory, that his theory is not Scriptural, and that it is controversial. May few evangelists follow his advice.

More recently Mr. Stott has published a much less offensive book, *Our Guilty Silence* (Eerdmans, 1967). In the interval it seems that the author has read and profited by the publications of Dr. J. I. Packer (90, 102).4 Since this more recent book aims mainly at encouraging evangelistic effort, large sections are beyond reproach. Evangelism needs to be encouraged. Even

doctrinally it contains several excellent statements. For example, “We are not to preach a vague Christ, but a precise and particular Christ, namely the Christ of the New Testament” (31); and “If we now ask what Christ did to secure salvation for sinners, the chief answer is: He died” (33); and “He gave himself as a ransom once” (34). Mr. Stott even refers to the sentiment “impart a minimum of truth…without doctrinal formulation” – a sentiment he seems to have shared in his earlier book – but adds here “With this viewpoint the apostles would certainly have disagreed.” On the next page he reinforces this excellent remark with the assertion, “To preach the gospel means preaching Christian dogma” (50, 51).

One must unfortunately note, however, that the *chief* point about Christ’s ministry, namely his death, is not an adequate account of the Gospel; not even the better reference to his death as a ransom is sufficiently precise and particular. Neither the phrase “preachingChristian dogma” nor the most commendable observation that the Apostles did not approve of a mere minimum of truth without doctrinal formulation defines the extent of the message to be preached.

In spite of these improvements this more recent book repeats rather than retracts some of the most objectionable features of the earlier one. Perhaps the approval of Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World* where Christ is portrayed as unable to enter the heart of man, may be passed off as the artistic taste and theological ignorance of an old pensioner (82). But one cannot so shrug off Mr. Stott’s plain statement that “the order of events to which the apostles commonly bear witness is that faith is antecedent to life. It is by believing that we live” (104). That this assertion does not mean merely that the daily life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God is very clear from the context. The question was, Does regeneration precede conversion? Calvinists argue that

since man is dead in sin, he cannot repent and believe until he is born from above. This is what Mr. Stott quotes and denies. He conditions regeneration on a faith somehow produced before the sinner is raised from the dead.

To support his contention he says, “It is dangerous to argue from analogy and say ‘dead men cannot….’” Mr. Stott ignores the fact that it was not the Calvinists who originated this analogy. The analogy is Scriptural. But if anyone wants plain univocal speech, let him remember the words, “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (*Romans* 8:7). This is not an analogy.

In addition to belittling Scriptural analogy Mr. Stott’s quotation refers to *John* 3:15, 16; 5:25; and 20:31. The first two verses hardly support the Arminian view. Nor does the last. *John* 20:31 reads, “But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” If the last clause means that believing produces regeneration, then the first clause would have to mean that John’s authorship produces faith. Both clauses are purpose clauses; they would have to be explained similarly. The verse can easily be translated, “These things are written…that believers may have life.” The participial substantive points out the group of people who live. There is no way an Arminian can show by this verse that faith causes regeneration or that regeneration and faith are not simultaneous. The difficulty arises only because regeneration, like birth, is momentary, but faith continues throughout life.

The verse on which Mr. Stott puts most emphasis is *John* 5:25; at least he quotes it and not the others: “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those that hear will live” (104). On the basis of these words the author asserts that faith antecedes regeneration and that it is dangerous to trust the Scriptural analogy between death and sin. A reply to this

argument is very easy to make. In my little book, *Biblical Predestination*,[5] I have quoted nearly five hundred verses that form a background into which Mr. Stott's interpretation will not fit. *Romans* 3:11, 12, 18 say that "There is none that seeketh after God…. There is none that doeth good…. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now faith is a seeking after God, at least it is something good, and it involves a pious fear ofGod. It must therefore follow regeneration, for Paul denies that these things are true of the unregenerate. These are only three of the five hundred verses. One other is particularly appropriate because it occurs in the immediate context, in fact it is the preceding verse,*John* 5:24, which says, "The one who hears my words…has passed from death to life." Hearing in the present tense is the evidence that the one who was dead became alive in the perfect tense and so remains alive forever.

This quotation is not a mere analogy, even a Scriptural analogy, but a literal statement that life precedes hearing. An analogy might beLazarus who heard Christ say, "Lazarus, come forth!" Lazarus had to have been resurrected a moment before he heard – unless one say his soul in paradise heard and came back. One sure thing – his decayed corpse did not hear. Or, if one wish an example of similar linguistic usage in a modern setting, one may suppose that a physician, speaking of babies, says, Those that breathe will live. Does this mean that breath produces life, that breath antecedes life, or simply that the baby to continue living must breathe?

It is instructive to note also the dilemma in which Mr. Stott gets tangled by his attempt to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit while maintaining his Arminian interpretations. On pages 108-109 he writes, "'No one can come to me unless the Father draw him.' We need to hear much more in the Church of this 'no one can,' this natural inability of men to believe in Christ…. [To which I say, Amen.] Jesus also said, 'You are not willing to

come….' The human mind finds it impossible neatly to resolve the tension between this 'cannot' and this 'will not.'" My comment is that Mr. Stott's inability to resolve this tension does not prove that some other mind cannot. Those who accept the clear Calvinistic sense of the Scriptural texts find that the tension is imaginary.

In contrast with Mr. Stott's non-evangelical views I would like to commend to all readers the excellent statement of the Gospel made by J. I. Packer, pages 57-73 in his *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. The title of the sub-section is "What is the Evangelistic Message?" Mr. Packer is very clear that it is not "Christ died for our sins…without…further elucidation." This is why he takes thirteen pages to summarize it. He apologizes for shortening it, as unfortunately it must be in a small book. The summary is divided into four parts. The first part is the thesis that the evangelistic message is a message about God. "It tells us who he is, what his character is, what his standards are, and what he requires of us, his creatures." Even in this opening sentence, we breathe a fresh, new atmosphere, full of sound theology, with the hope of reasonable elucidation. His second point is that the Gospel is a message about sin. After three pages on sin, Mr. Packer adds three sub-heads under sin: "(i) Conviction of sin is essentially an awareness of a wrong relationship with God;…(ii) Conviction of sin always involves conviction of sins…(iii) Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sinfulness…." His third point is "The Gospel is a message about Christ," under which he has the two sub-points, "(i) We must not present the person ofChrist apart from his saving work…. (ii) We must not present the saving work of Christ apart from his person…." Finally, the fourth point is, "The Gospel is a summons to faith and repentance." Here is a man who obviously knows a great deal about the Gospel. He wants the message proclaimed.

He has the right ideas about evangelism; and it would do every Christian good to read his book.

There are nonetheless certain points on which I believe Mr. Packer to be woefully wrong. He is not wrong about the Gospel. But I believe he is wrong in evaluating the people who hear the Gospel and perhaps accept it, or seem to accept it. In defending the sovereignty of God, he appeals to Christian or apparently Christian experience and says that all Christians believe in prayer, and that a person who prays acknowledges God's sovereignty. He also says, "You have never for one moment supposed that the decisivecontribution to your salvation was yours and not God's." He also says, "You pray for the conversion of others."

Now, it is clear that any Christian who prays for the conversion of others and who never for a moment thinks that his action was decisive admits, at least tacitly, the sovereignty of God. But there are so many in professedly Christian evangelistic services who do no such things. In Indianapolis, as I said a moment ago, I heard Billy Graham tell his audience not to pray for the conversion of those who had come forward, because not even God himself could help them. The decisive thing was their own choice. Mr. Packer knows the message, but I fear he does not realize the extent of the opposition.

There is another point at which I would like to suggest a correction of what Mr. Packer says. It seems to me that he goes astray because he imports into the religious argument an analogy from science, an analogy that science does not itself justify. Mr. Packer distinguishes between a *paradox*, which can be solved and explained by a little ingenuity, and an *antimony*, which he says is insoluble. His scientific example is the two theories of light, the wave theory and the corpuscular theory, both of which scientists use, but which are mutually incompatible. Then Mr.

Packer says that there are antinomies in the Bible. The antinomy between divinesovereignty and human responsibility is one such.

It seems to me that a misunderstanding of science at this point has led the author into a misunderstanding of the Bible. If the Biblecontradicts itself, as clearly as the wave theory contradicts the corpuscular theory, we will be forced to abandon the Bible. No one in his right mind can believe contradictions. In fact, if the antinomy is as he says it is, God himself is faced with an insoluble puzzle. And if something is insoluble for God, then God cannot be trusted. Packer tells us that God has given us this antinomy and if he has given it to us, is that not enough? Cannot we trust God? The answer is that we cannot trust contradictions and insoluble antinomies, no matter who gives them to us. If someone told me to believe that the number two was both even and odd, I would conclude that this someone was not God. God, anyone I could think of as God, does not talk nonsense, and insoluble antinomies are nonsense. They are just as much nonsense as it would be to say that the path of a point equidistant from a given point has three right angles along it.

But if we see what modern science can do with its two theories of light, and if we pay just a little attention to sovereignty and responsibility, these unfortunate consequences never arise. The laws of science should not be considered as intended descriptions of natural motions. They should be considered as directions for operating in a physics laboratory. They are methods for producing desired results. This in brief is the theory of Operationalism, which I have defended in *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*. It is always possible to use either of two mutually exclusive methods for producing the same desired result. To cure milk fever in cows, one may use the antiseptic lugol, or one may use compressed air. Both work satisfactorily. Hence, in manipulating light, a physicist may use either one; or if for a particular purpose the two are not equally satisfactory, for

lugol cannot do everything compressed air can do and vice versa, the physicist can use one for one purpose and the other for another.

As for sovereignty and responsibility, it is relatively easy to see that they are not antinomies. Sovereignty and free will would be an antinomy and contradiction; for sovereignty means that God controls all things, including our wills, and free will means that our wills are not controlled by God. This is a clear contradiction. Only an insane person could believe both of these. But responsibility does not mean free will. Responsibility means that God can demand of us a response. God can hold us to account. Far from conflicting with sovereignty, this is an exercise of sovereignty. If there were no sovereignty, if there were no superior to hold us accountable, there would be no responsibility. For further elucidations, see my small book on *Biblical Predestination*.[6]

Another but smaller booklet than J. I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* is Iain Murray's *The Invitation System*,published by The Banner of Truth Trust. Evangelism would flourish today if a thousand American ministers would read these two small books. Mr. Murray stresses preaching the Gospel. His opening words are, "An invariable characteristic of true preaching has been the assurance that the proclamation of the Gospel is the divinely ordained means for the conviction and conversion of sinners."

The booklet, however, deals chiefly with the deplorable practices in evangelistic services, which practices hinder the progress of or obscure the clarity of the Gospel. The particular practice singled out for examination is that of inviting members of the audience to come forward at the end of the sermon. Connected with this coming forward are an after-meeting,

signing cards, and perhaps visiting the people in their homes after the campaign.

The method seems to have been invented by Charles Finney in the middle of the nineteenth century. Mr. Murray notes that it was unknown in Britain until recently. Now, anything Finney did or said is suspect, or worse. He was a disaster. Years and decades after his evangelistic campaigns he was still preventing men from believing the Gospel. Still, one cannot argue that because Finney stood on a platform, no evangelist should stand on a platform. Possibly even inviting the audience to walk down to the front could be a good thing.

It could of course be bad. It could be bad in itself – unlike standing on a platform; or it could be bad merely in some accidental aspects that happen to be widely used at present. Mr. Murray picks out several such. For example, the evangelist often leaves it unclear why a person should come forward. I have heard evangelists give such a wide invitation that virtually the whole audience could come forward. Those who wished to accept Christ, those who wanted a new experience, those who had doubts and perplexities, those who wanted the evangelist to pray for them – all come to the front! Then the next day's newspaper could give the number that responded.

Even if the invitation is more restricted, there are difficulties. Remarks Mr. Murray, "Is the walk forward an outward declaration of an inner saving decision already made by the hearer in his seat, just as an 'act of witness'? Why then are they told to 'come forward and*receive* Christ'?" The author describes in some detail the confusion observed in evangelistic services between receiving Christ and a public profession of having received him. There is Scriptural warrant for the latter; but none for receiving Christ by coming forward. Coming forward ought not to be explained as coming to receive Christ. To do so is like

interpreting *John* 8:38 to mean that “continuing in the word” is the *method* by which one *becomes* a Christian, instead of the act of one who already is a Christian. Similarly *John* 15:8 does not say that fruit bearing is the *process* by which we *become* Christians. Coming forward in a service therefore may be a public profession of having become a Christian, but it cannot be understood as coming to Christ.

In a following section Mr. Murray examines certain psychological arguments. Evangelists use them to defend their methods. Non-Christians use them to reduce evangelism to the naturalistic power of mass appeal. He quotes Billy Graham’s calling the attention of the audience to the hundreds coming forward, and claiming that “tens of thousands will have come to know Christ” in this manner.

The theology that underlies this use of an invitation is given by Harold J. Ockenga. He says, “Some reformed theologians teach thatregeneration by the Holy Spirit precedes conversion. The evangelical position is that regeneration is conditioned upon repentance,confession, and faith.” This is remarkable ignorance on Ockenga’s part. It is not true that “some” Reformed theologians teach that regeneration precedes conversion. *All* Reformed theologians do. Second, Ockenga tries to exclude these Reformed theologians from the evangelical fold. He contrasts the Reformation theology with the “evangelical view.” According to Ockenga therefore none of thePuritans was evangelical. To support his bad theology Ockenga relies on his ignorance of Greek grammar in his exegesis of *Ephesians*2:8. He wants faith to be the result of human ability, an ability found in every man before regeneration; he does not want faith to be a gift from God.

When such unscriptural ideas are held, it is no wonder that the invitation to come forward is either confused or completely bad.

It does seem to me, however, that Mr. Murray has restricted his attention to one aspect or one form of “coming forward.” His warnings against adulterating the Gospel with bad Greek and worse theology are well taken. Nevertheless, good theology and great clarity can make use of inviting people to come forward. The present writer insists that evangelism is preaching the Gospel; that a few sermons are inadequate; that as much elucidation as possible must be given. If this be so, then an evangelist, after having explained how Christ satisfied the justice of his Father because of man’s disobedience to and depravity before God, and after having declared theResurrection and its implications, can very well invite those who are interested to come forward and enter counseling sessions for the purpose of a clearer and a more extensive understanding. This is much more necessary now than it was in Britain before the time ofFinney.

In those days many people heard the Gospel weekly. Some were catechized in their homes. Very few in Britain were as ignorant as today’s American populace. If the people of that happier age needed instruction, the need is ten-fold greater now. Why cannot the method of coming forward be used to set up classes for Bible study? Cards could be signed: they could be signed as class cards in college, for admission to classes projected ahead of time and ready to receive the people. Thus when properly used the method of coming forward is just as good as the method of standing on a platform while preaching. The essential thing is the message preached.

The same principle applies to hillbilly singing. If it detracts from the message, it is bad. If it were used with a moderately well educated audience, with people who have some taste in

music, it would so detract, by repelling them. On the other hand, I cannot agree with a friend of mine who says that good Reformed theology requires that only Bach should be used. Oh dear, no Mozart and not even Handel's *Messiah*! Personally I prefer good music, just as I prefer good grammar; but the Scripture does not specify what style of music must be used. As the *Westminster Confession* says, "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christianprudence."

In conclusion, the Gospel is a message, a message that Mr. Packer and Mr. Murray understand very well and that some others do not.Evangelism is a matter of proclaiming that message. If the message is not proclaimed, all the hillbilly music in Kentucky and Tennessee will not make the service evangelistic. If the message is proclaimed, the accidents can be as they may; the effort is *ipso facto*evangelism.

1. In Greek the object of the verb *believe* can be a simple noun in the dative case, or a noun preceded by the prepositions *en*, *eis*, or *epi*, and sometimes *peri*. There seems to be no obvious distinction in meaning among these forms. In Hebrew also two prepositions are possible.

2. Those who say that the word *faith* in Greek is feminine and the word *that* is neuter, and that therefore the demonstrative pronoun cannot refer to faith, know very little Greek. Many evangelists know very little Greek. They should learn that feminine abstract nouns frequently take neuter pronouns, and that even feminine concrete nouns sometimes take neuter pronouns.

3. Now published as *Predestination. – Editor*.

4. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God,* Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970. – *Editor*.

5. See note 3 above. – *Editor*.

6. See note 3 above. Also see *God and Evil: The Problem Solved*, chapter five of *Religion, Reason and Revelation.* – *Editor*.

It is clear now that spiritual life does not depend on emotion. The Bible recognizes instances of emotion as they occasionally occur, but the connotation of the word *heart* in seventy-five per cent of the instances is intellect. It has also been made clear that the Gospel is a message, and as such is either true or false. The unregenerate man believes that the message, even if it contains some true statements, is basically false; the evangelist presents it as true. The latter asks the former to believe the message and pray that God will make him do so. Emotions have no essential part in any of this.

What then is faith? An old Protestant tradition analyzes faith into three parts whose Latin names are *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*.These words mean knowledge, assent, and trust. I would not deny that faith includes these three. Yet as an analysis the three-fold division of faith may be technically inadequate.

First, knowledge or understanding is at least ordinarily regarded as a part of faith. The Lutherans may deny that it is always so. Their argument is that God’s decision of justification is connected with an individual person by means of faith alone. Since, now, we have good reason to believe that some or even all who die in infancy are saved, and quite likely idiots, freaks, and mentally deformed persons, both of which groups are incapable

of understanding any message at all, it follows, say the Lutherans, that they must have a faith devoid of knowledge. Faith is essential; knowledge is not. Therefore infants can exercise faith.

The Reformed theologians reply that the *Epistle to the Romans* and the preaching of the Gospel are addressed to normal individuals. These persons who are not naturally incapacitated in their mental functions are to be justified by faith. But since the Gospel presumably cannot penetrate the mind of an infant or the no-mind of an idiot, God in mercy treats them as exceptions to the normal rule and saves them, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice indeed, but without faith. As the *Westminster Confession* puts it, "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word" (10:3).

The Reformed position therefore makes understanding an essential part of faith, even at the cost of denying that infants can believe. Aside from infants the preaching of a message would make no sense unless the auditors were supposed to know what was being said. This is why missionaries must work hard to learn a foreign language and try to speak it without an American accent. This is why theApostles on the day of Pentecost spoke in tongues. The Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia heard the message in their own language. If the message were not supposed to be understood, there would be no need to learn Arabic or Chinese. One could simply speak American slang or quote the Bible in the *King James Version*.

Understanding, therefore, is a prerequisite to faith. It is impossible to believe what one does not understand. The

evangelist or missionary must spare no pains to help his prospective convert to understand the message.

Just how much has to be understood is difficult to measure. Obviously a child of ten cannot understand as much as a highly educated adult; yet God regenerates some children. Does it follow that God will regenerate a highly educated adult if he understands no more than a child? Some individuals and some churches have tried to set down minimum requirements. They have tried to separate the few sentences in the Bible that are essential from all the rest that is unessential. One can see how these people become interested in such an attempt, but one cannot see any Biblical recommendation of such an attempt. Christ commanded us to teach all the things he taught; Paul was guiltless of his auditors' blood because he had declared all the counsel of God; and many other passages condemn ignorance and recommend knowledge. In Scripture there is no minimum.

Some theologians try to explain this situation by insisting that truth is organic. Minimum statements are not inert building blocks which when combined with other building blocks can be arranged into a building. Rather, a truth or proposition is like a seed, and when ingested it grows into a full plant in the mind. Hence, say these theologians, any Biblical statement, or at least some Biblical statements contain the complete Gospel as a seed contains the complete plant. Unfortunately for these theologians, their analogy, though it be a beautiful illustration, is intellectually vacuous. Illustrations are usually if not always deceptive; and to say that a proposition is like a seed that grows means nothing and throws no light on the nature of faith.

Since the position this present writer defends places such great emphasis on propositions – on an intelligible message composed of sentences – it would seem that he above all writers should

indicate which propositions are essential and which are not. No one can understand all the propositions in the Bible, or at least no one actually understands all that the Bible implies. What then are the facts essential to salvation?

The thief on the cross very obviously understood only a little. Is not this little, if we can discover it, sufficient for an evangelist's sermons? Well, the thief called Jesus Lord. And *Romans* 10:9 says that those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord shall be saved. Here if anywhere is the essential proposition. Nothing else – except belief in the Resurrection – is necessary. Maybe the Resurrection is not necessary, for the thief did not know that. Furthermore, as other references in this book mention, the devils believe there is one God, they even believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but by some twist of demonic mentality, they do not confess him as Lord. Have not we therefore found the irreducible minimum?

The answer is, No. The reason for this negative answer lies in the necessity of understanding the proposition. It is a matter of intellectual apprehension. There are many who in that day will say to Christ, Lord, Lord. And he will profess, I never knew you. Thus, clearly, a verbal profession of Lord is not saving faith. One must understand what the term Lord means. Further, as has already been pointed out, the name Jesus must be correctly apprehended. Confess that the Jesus of Strauss, Renan, or Schweitzer is Lord, and you will go to Hell. "Jesus is Lord" therefore is not a minimum that means nothing else.

The thief on the cross knew or at least said that Jesus was Lord. Did he know anything else? How did he learn anything? Of all people, meeting Jesus for the first time on the cross, he had little opportunity to learn. And a cross is neither the best pulpit for preaching nor the best pew for listening. But perhaps the thief knew more than most people give him credit for.

In the first place one must not assume that this was the first time he had seen and heard Jesus. An enterprising criminal gets around. He knows where crowds gather. This thief may have heard one of Jesus' sermons. Of course, we cannot be sure he did. Yet we cannot be sure he did not. Since the *Gospels* do not say, one can neither assume his ignorance nor his knowledge; though I would think it more probable that he knew something.

But not to rely on guesses, let us consider the few painful hours on the cross. The thief knew the charge on which the Romans hadcrucified Jesus. He could read it above the cross: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Couldn't he read? Then he heard the horrible crowds screaming it. He also knew that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. The rulers were deriding him: "He saved others, let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God…. If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself." The other thief knew this: "One of the malefactors …railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." The thief had also heard Jesus say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

So he turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The thief was not a systematic theologian. There were many propositions he did not know. But he knew he was being punished justly for his sins; he knew Jesus was innocent. He was impressed and convinced by Jesus' demeanor. So he said, not merely said, but confessed Jesus as Lord. He may not have known much, but he knew more than some evangelists give him credit for.

For such reasons as these the idea of a minimum faith must be dropped as un-Biblical. The evangelist is un-Biblical who decides to preach only a little bit of God's revelation. Granted that no preacher can cover the entire Bible in one sermon,

nevertheless he should not decide on principle to omit certain themes. He should in many sermons try to explain all he can. “All he can” no doubt should be limited by what the audience or the prospect can understand. One of the worst principles imaginable was expressed by a very popular but very stupid evangelist in Canada who said, No one has the right to hear the Gospel twice until everybody has heard it once. Another man of similar sentiments boasted that he had preached on five continents. But more than likely the poor natives in the Andes or the Himalayas understood nothing at all when the preacher gave them one sermon and then ran off to another continent.

The Gospel is a message to be understood. Knowledge is the first and an essential part of faith.

But though it is essential, knowledge or understanding alone is not faith. A man may know and understand the Gospel message and yet not believe it. A professor of philosophy knows and understands many systems of philosophy, but obviously he cannot believe them all. He may accept one, but the others he knows without accepting. Therefore a second essential part of faith is acceptance orassent.

The explicit notion of assent seems to have entered philosophic discussions through the Stoics. Their theory of knowledge Zeno “illustrated with a piece of action. When he stretched out his fingers and showed the palm of his hand, ‘perception,’ said he, ‘is a thing like this.’ Then when he had a little closed his fingers, ‘Assent is like this.’ Afterwards when he had completely closed his hand and held forth his fist, that he said was comprehension…. But when he brought his left hand against his right and with it took a firm and tight hold of his fist, he said that knowledge was of that character and that was what none but a wise man possessed” (Cicero,*Academics*, II, XI, vii).

Of course illustrations explain nothing. Terms should be defined rather than illustrated. Now, in the illustration Zeno, since he and the Stoics were materialists, was thinking of perceiving a physical object. He was not thinking of believing a proposition. Therefore his notion of assent is not too useful in Christian theology. Furthermore, in the latter, “comprehension,” when it is said that God is incomprehensible, means something much further up the scale from Zeno’s comprehension. Once more, if Zeno had been talking about propositions, our “knowledge” or “understanding” would be far down the scale from his.

After the Stoics, the Christian philosopher Augustine made use of assent. Augustine was not much interested in physical objects; his theory, on one reputable interpretation, does not even speak of concepts; he clearly puts great emphasis on truth, and assent is the voluntary decision to believe an understood proposition.

This Augustinian view continued in Christian philosophy or theology. The word *notitia*, used by Christians in discussing faith, means simply an idea, a notion, a concept, or, as above, the understanding of what a proposition means. *Assent* means the voluntary act ofbelieving the proposition to be true. I understand or know what Spinoza means by saying God is nature; but I do not assent to it. I also know or understand the meaning of the proposition, “Christ died.” That is not hard to understand and everybody assents to it. Further, I understand the proposition “Christ died for our sins.” So do many other people; but they do not all assent to it; they do not all believe it. I do.

This matter of assent, however, can be seriously misunderstood. In one discussion an otherwise competent theologian took assent to refer to a verbal and public profession of faith. He then noted that such a profession can be and sometimes is hypocritical.

Therefore, he concluded, assent itself, or with understanding, is not faith.

This argument depends on a misunderstanding of assent. Assent can never be hypocritical, for it is the voluntary act of according belief to a given proposition. There need be no verbal and public manifestation. Assent is an inner act of will.

Whether I can know that another person has assented to something, or not, is a difficult problem. The safest thing is to say that one can never know about another person. This is one reason why Presbyterians and Baptists disagree. Baptists, or many of them, hold that the church should receive as members only those who have been regenerated. This presupposes that the present church members can know the applicant to have been regenerated. Presbyterians, on the contrary, hold that God alone can discern the hearts of men. Therefore the elders receive an applicant into membership on the basis of a credible profession, including a life free from gross, observable sin. The Presbyterians are often mistaken and receive people who later show no signs of being Christian. But I suppose the Baptists too make mistakes and sometimes accept a hypocrite, a modernist, or some other unbeliever.

A most interesting, informative, and unfortunate example came to my attention some years ago. There was a very lively, energetic fundamentalist minister in the neighborhood who had increased his church membership from about forty to four or five hundred within ten years. I was discussing with him the nature of faith. I spoke of assent to propositions, and quoted the well known verse, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Oh, no, he replied. You cannot be saved that way at all. At any rate, no one knows what the Bible means, but God has given us (the ministers or the people?) the ability to

discern the hearts of men, and we know whether they are regenerated, and so we receive them.

A few years after this conversation, ugly rumors began to trouble his church. The officers at first discounted them, as they should. But the rumors got worse and the evidence began to grow. Half the church walked out and formed a new congregation because the officers were too slow in administering discipline. The rumors and evidence were true. The fundamentalist minister who could see the hearts of men deserted his wife and children and went to live openly with another woman in the same city.

Was he, is he regenerate? Did he ever assent to the proposition, Jesus is Lord? I do not know, but at the moment it does not seem so. It may be so. Christians "may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein; whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit…" but nonetheless "can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" (*Westminster Confession*, 17:3, 4). But whether the particular case, the man in question, was ever a Christian or not, I do not know.

Protestants usually assert that Romanists make faith and salvation a matter of assent; the most frequent expression is that the Romanists make faith a matter of "bare" assent. It is common to declaim against "mere" intellectual faith. *Bare* and *mere* are of course pejorative adjectives, *i.e.*, weasel words. It is unfortunate that many or most Protestant discussions on this subject, either in textbooks or encyclopedias, do not define their terms and explain what is meant. Assent, as has been seen, can be taken in several ways. Orthodox Protestants have always said that faith

must produce good works. Faith, or what passes for faith, or what some people call faith, is dead without works. If this is what is meant by speaking of “mere” or “bare” assent, of course it is quite true. But I suspect that this is not what is meant.

At any rate, Protestantism has insisted that in addition to understanding the message, and in addition to believing the message, there must be *fiducia*, trust. Well, of course, there must be trust. I am not sure that even the Romanists deny this. But the fact that there must be trust does not guarantee the analysis of faith into understanding, assent, and trust.

Suppose I were a budding botanist and wished to classify plants. I might say that plants are divided into the rose family (including apple trees), the lily family, and asparagus. If I made this classification, the budding botanist would die in the bud. Of course, asparagus is part of the plant kingdom; but asparagus is a subdivision of the lily family. Therefore the threefold analysis is faulty. The second heading already includes asparagus.

Plausibility is gained for the division of faith into knowledge, belief, and trust by an illustration. I read the financial report of a bank. This is *notitia*. I believe that the information is true. This is *assent*. But I do not have faith in the bank, until I deposit some money in it. This is *trust*.

Now, illustrations are always useless and usually deceptive. In the first place, there are many banks I trust, even though I have no checking accounts in them. These other banks are just as sound as the one I use; only I do not have enough money to support two checking accounts. I would not hesitate to open a checking account in anyone of them, were it convenient. It is not that I do not trust them – I just cannot conveniently use two banks.

Furthermore, the deception in the illustration lies in the fact that it tries to make faith a matter of some physical action. You read the financial report; you decide that the bank is sound; you then deposit money in it. But this latter physical action has no counterpart in a purely mental, internal, non-physical situation. We hear the Gospel message. We believe it. What else is there to do? If we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are saved. Of course, good works are to follow: but those who insist on *fiducia* as something in addition to assent do not locate faith in these external good works. Faith is completely mental. It is not physical. Why then is not trust one kind of assent? If it is not asparagus, maybe it is bellwort. Naturally saving faith is not assent to the proposition that two and two make four. There are many acts of assent that are not faith in Christ. But this indubitable fact does not imply that faith in Christ is not assent.

Here a little more history of the subject should be inserted, for the topic was an important one to the early Reformers and the somewhat later Puritans. These latter, like Calvin, considered faith to be an activity of the "whole man." But their dependence on the faculty psychology of their day betrayed them. This is one example among many of the confusions a Christian can fall into by taking for Gospel truth a contemporary scientific theory that the scientists will inevitably repudiate a century or even a decade later. The faculty psychology talked as if man "had" a will and "had" an intellect. These were looked upon somewhat as entities, even independent entities in a certain sense. It was they which acted, rather than the "whole man." The Puritans therefore alternately stressed intellect and will.

A theologian whom Jonathan Edwards studied, Shepard by name, stressed intellect. William Ames said, "Saving knowledge…follows the act of will and depends upon it." Solomon Stoddard, Edwards' grandfather, noted that

the understanding and the will “are not two things, but one and the same soul [with] two several ways of working.” John Locke, not one of the best theologians, but one whom Edwards studied carefully, also repudiated faculty psychology.

Edwards made use of Locke’s “simple ideas” to explain faith as the sense of taste. No man can teach another what the taste of a peanut is. To get this knowledge, and for both Locke and Edwards this is knowledge, one must taste the peanut for himself. PerryMiller, excellent scholar though he is, is mistaken in understanding this tasting experience as a “feeling” divorced from knowledge. And another author is wildly wrong in asserting that Edwards was anti-intellectual.

In trying to explain how God acts in producing faith, Stoddard had taught that God operates directly on the understanding, but mediately on the will. Jonathan Edwards tries to avoid a temporal sequence of acts in faith (of the human acts in the first instance but by implication of the divine acts also) and asserts that they penetrate each other.

Much of this is hard to understand or even devoid of sense. Although great emphasis is laid on faith’s being an act of the “whole man,” this very true idea is completely useless in distinguishing the act of faith from other acts. In the faculty psychology – though even here with some inconsistency perhaps – it was possible to identify one act as the act of the will, a second as the act of the intellect, and a third as an act of the whole man. But if we insist, as we do, on the unity of the person, every act, even tasting a peanut, is an act of the whole man. There is no other agent. Therefore this characteristic of every human act is useless for distinguishing faith from anything else.

Likewise, when Edwards says that several human acts, all relating to faith, interpenetrate, he does not advance the explanation of faith. Nor does it seem to me at all advantageous

to deny a temporal sequence of a sort. At least an act of understanding precedes and continues in actual faith.

Recently considerable secular attention has been directed to Jonathan Edwards. Philosophers have discovered that he was a man of great intellectual ability, of wide philosophical interests, and was a landmark in American thought. What has always been commonplace knowledge for the spiritual heirs of the Puritans and the Covenanters now appears as scholarly research in academic publications. It is interesting how a secular author like Conrad Cherry in *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* can with learned profundity state some simple evangelical principles and at the same time stumble into gross misrepresentations of his sources. On page 47 he quotes Francis Turretin on the work of God's Spirit in producing faith. Turretin naturally refers to the Holy Spirit as "he," a person; but in spite of the actual quotation on the page, Cherry refers to the Spirit as "it." The same author misinterprets Edwards' view of Scripture by trying to cast it in terms of contemporary dialectical theology, thus vitiating his exposition. This lack of spiritual perceptiveness, in fact this lack of intellectual acuity, vitiates many so-called scholarly books written by secular authors.

The Puritans themselves are not altogether blameless, either. One great difficulty in the writers on this subject is a tendency toward literary flourish, figures of speech, inexact terminology, and a paucity of definitions. One example is Thomas Manton, whom JonathanEdwards explicitly opposed.

Thomas Manton, one of the Puritan writers, in his commentary on *James*, chapter two, verse nineteen, says that faith is not bareassent. Beyond bare assent, there must be "consent." And presumably there must be "consent" because faith is not merely a work of the understanding, but also a work of the heart. This is not at all satisfactory. If Manton wishes to add an extra element

to the analysis, and to assent add consent, he should state the meaning of this new word. Ordinarily we should assume that he uses the term assent in its historical sense. He does not inform us that he is changing the meaning of assent. Then, if he wishes to point out something else, he should say explicitly what it is. But he does not; he merely uses another word. Really it is only a play on words. He reminds me of a certain professor of philosophy who dislikes deduction. To solve his problems he recommends adduction. This is a play on words. Anyone who has had a course in logic knows what deduction is. He can work out implications according to the rules. And if a person has not had a course in logic, he can still instinctively work out his problems by the same method. He may make a few false steps. He will not be so efficient and methodical. But he will finally use the same method. Adduction, however, is not a method at all. It has no rules. To appeal to it in solving problems, or in talking about solving problems, is to substitute a word for methodical thought. So too, consent is simply a word that happens to rhyme with assent. It means nothing.

In the same passage Manton also distinguishes between understanding and the “heart.” It has already been seen that the term *heart* as used in the Bible is three-quarters of the time the intellect. The other instances are divided about two to one between will andemotion. Faith certainly involves an act of will. It is the decision to believe what one understands. Whether this is saving faith or only faith in the bank downtown, depends on what statement or statements are believed.

It would seem therefore that the analysis of faith into understanding, belief, and trust is a faulty analysis. It resembles the division of plants into the rose family, the lily family, and asparagus. The reason is that trust is a case of belief or assent. Therefore it is the duty of the evangelist to present the message, the object of belief; to present it so clearly that it can

be understood. And then he must pray that God would make the hearer willing to believe, or more simply and accurately, make him believe. It is God alone who can take away their heart or mind of stone, and give them a mind of flesh, renew their wills, and by his almighty power determine them to that which is good, effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ, so that they come willingly, being made willing by his grace (paraphrased from the*Westminster Confession*, 10:1).

This clear statement is far superior to some of the involved Puritan explanations of how the Holy Spirit can work faith, *i.e.*, produce faith in a man's mind. Some of the Puritans, wrongly no doubt, have been interpreted to mean that the Spirit so unites himself to a man that the man is almost deified. How God gives a man faith is very easily explained. God gives a dead sinner faith just the wayJesus made dead Lazarus come out of the tomb. Just as God said, Let there be light, and there was light. That is all the *how* there is. It is an act of omnipotence: the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

Since the nature of faith is such an important subject, and since some theologians may think that I have departed from historicProtestantism in making faith a "mere" intellectual exercise, I shall add a section on Charles Hodge's view of faith. The aim is not to set forth Charles Hodge fully and accurately. Not that I intend to misrepresent him, either. My procedure is to show that a considerable amount of his material confirms the analysis above and offers no support for his different conclusion. Those who are interested in a fuller view of Hodge can easily find his *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, and read the lengthy section on pages 41-113, if they want it all.

Hodge opens his discussion by saying, “The first conscious exercise of the renewed soul is faith.” This remark is to be most firmly accepted against all Arminian misrepresentations of man and the Bible. The difficulty in discussing faith, says Hodge, arises partly from the nature of the subject and partly from the variety of definitions given to it.

The first question therefore is, What is faith? “What is the psychological nature of the act or state of mind which we designate faith or belief?” This matter of definition is most important. It was necessary in an earlier chapter to define emotion, at least as best we could. Here the question is, What is faith? It was in answer to this question concerning the psychology of faith that the traditional answer was given: *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. To proceed now, one may note that Hodge asks, what is faith or belief? This implied identity between faith and belief is one of several points in Hodge that support my conclusion about assent. It offers no support to, and may even prove inconsistent with Hodge’s different conclusion. Even more, Hodge not only says “faith or belief,” he adds, “Faith in the widest sense of the word is assent to the truth, or the persuasion of the mind that a thing is true.” If this is the widest sense, then it seems necessary that any narrower sense should still be assent. It would be a certain type of assent, a species within a genus, but it would still be assent to the truth.

The next sentence is, “In ordinary popular language we are said to believe whatever we regard as true.” This sentence again confirms my point, but Hodge begins to diverge. He says, “The primary element of faith is trust.” Here apparently an undefined *fiducia*, the asparagus perhaps, enters the picture. Yet he is able to continue, “*Credo mihi*; trust me, rely on my word.” Does this not suggest that trust in a person is assent to what he says?

In a few lines there comes the sub-head, “The Primary Idea of Faith is Trust.” Still, commendably, Hodge connects trust with truth. “The primary idea of truth is that which is trustworthy.” I am not so sure that the *primary* idea of truth is trust; but surely a truth can be trusted. Could not one conclude then that to trust a truth means to assent to it?

Hodge quotes Augustine: “*Credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assension cogitare*.” Wonderful! To believe is nothing other than to think with assent. This Augustinian position I shall uphold, though Hodge veers away from it.

An indication of withdrawal from the path of truth, assent, and belief is the sub-head, “Faith, Not a Voluntary Conviction.” Above Hodge had said that “faith in the widest sense of the word is assent.” Here he denies it: Faith is not a voluntary conviction. His argument is extremely confused. If, he says, the wide sense of voluntary is used, then it “includes every operation of the mind not purely intellectual.” This seems to place sensation, emotion, and even pain within the volitional. But if volition is so widened, is there any reason to exclude intellectual action? Does not one study, read, think voluntarily? More voluntarily than he senses or emotes. One cannot follow Hodge in this paragraph.

If, however, we do not use the wide sense of *voluntary* – though Hodge never said precisely what that wide sense is – and if we use the narrower sense that he calls “self-determination,” then, concludes Hodge, when we believe a truth, it is because we choose to; and if we reject the proposition, it is because we will to disbelieve it. Hodge seems to think that this is a *reductio ad absurdum*. He seems unable to credit the notion that one can choose to believe or not to believe.

But why is this absurd? Suppose the proposition is “David was King of Israel.” Or, “Napoleon reached Moscow.” Each of these

has some evidence in its favor. But often evidence, witnesses, and historical documents are mistaken. Shall I believe them in this case? Theevidence does not compel belief; but I may choose to believe, or I may choose not to believe. Contrary to Hodge's opinion, this seems to me to be precisely what happens.

The great theologian's argument is further vitiated by a strange merging of volition and feeling or emotion. Under this heading, "Faith, Not a Voluntary Conviction," he concedes "it is true not only that faith in many cases is inseparable from feeling, but also that feeling has much influence in determining our faith." This is beside the point. Whether faith is assent and voluntary conviction cannot be settled by references to feelings or emotions. Yet apparently Hodge thinks so. After giving examples of instances of faith connected with feeling, he strives to make his point by saying, "But it is not true of all kinds of even religious faith." Then follow a few examples. After these Hodge continues, "If we turn to other than religious truths it is still more apparent that faith is not necessarily a voluntary assent of the mind. A man may hear of something repugnant to his feelings…but the testimony may…force conviction." The whole argument is that belief can sometimes occur without *feeling* therefore belief is not *assent*. This argument is the wildest of non sequiturs.

Along the road Hodge seems to intimate (and everyone may read him to see if this is so) that sometimes evidence for historical statements is so compelling that no voluntary assent is necessary. "A man can hardly be found who does not believe that the Israelites dwelt in Egypt, escaped from bondage, and took possession of the land of Canaan." Well, I once met a Jewish rabbi who denied the existence of Moses; and many scholars in Hodge's own day denied the existence of the Hittites. But perhaps the evidence of the Exodus is compelling. Yet this evidence did not compel Wellhausen. He did not believe that

anything in the Pentateuch was true. Twentieth century historiography is much clearer than nineteenth century historiography that evidence is never compelling. Even if it were, belief would still be voluntary, the volition being caused by the evidence. In actual cases the volition is caused by something other than the evidence.

Coming closer to saving faith, instead of faith in general, Hodge constructs an ingenious but completely fallacious argument. A man dead in sin, Hodge notes, cannot believe the Gospel. “This inability to believe arises from the state of his mind. But this state of mind lies below the will. It cannot be determined or changed by the exercise of any voluntary power.” Now, although lying below the will is a meaningless phrase, and although the man dead in sin sins voluntarily, the rest of the statement is true. The man dead in sin cannot exercise voluntary faith. This is good Calvinism. He cannot, by an act of his will, change his position before God. The trouble is that Hodge draws from it the wrong conclusion. “On these grounds,” he says, “the definition of faith, whether as generic or religious, as a voluntary assent to truth, must be considered unsatisfactory.” The argument is a glaring fallacy. Hodge says that belief is not assent because here is a man who cannot believe. Of course, he cannot believe. Neither can he assent. How can an instance of non-belief prove that belief, when it does occur, is not voluntary? What is needed for saving faith is God’s gracious act of giving him the power to will. When God gives him this power, he will assent, believe, and exercise faith. Faith indubitably is the gift of God. It is the gift of voluntary assent. That an unregenerate man cannot believe does not contradict any of this. Hodge’s argument therefore, with its insistence that man is dead in sin and cannot will to believe, fails to prove the sub-head that faith is not a voluntary conviction.

It is not useful to reproduce every paragraph in Hodge. Many of them do not discuss assent. One or two more do. A few pages later Hodge quotes a number of men who say that faith is a conviction of truth founded on testimony. Several of these men use the word assent. Hodge ignores the assent and stresses the testimony. But the two concepts are not antithetical. Testimony is presented to someone. An account of an event is given to him, or the message of the Gospel. To this testimony he assents. Hodge thinks that testimony excludes voluntary assent; but why he thinks so is too difficult to guess. Hodge is really insisting on the necessity ofrevelation for saving faith. Most assuredly revelation is necessary. Believing or assenting to it is equally necessary.

After a good many pages, on which interesting aspects of faith are discussed, Hodge again has a sub-head, “Religious Faith More than Simple Assent” (89), under which he opposes the idea that faith is purely an intellectual exercise. Now, let it be made clear again that the thesis defended in this small book insists that understanding the meaning of the Atonement is not saving faith, or any kind of faith. Assent to the proposition, belief of the proposition, is essential. Bellarmine, whom Hodge quotes, distinguishes between Romishdoctrines and what he calls heresy by accusing the heretics of insisting on the will: *Siquidem illi fidem collcant in voluntate* (*seu in corde*) *dum fiduciam esse definiunt*. Latin makes the argument much more profound. The present author does not agree with Bellarmine. Volition is essential. It may also be true and somewhat confusing that there is a difference between *understanding* as here used and *intellect* as Bellarmine and probably Hodge use it. Hodge rightly complains that the Catholic interpretation of *intellect*implies that faith is not necessarily connected with salvation. A man may have true faith and yet perish. But though we hold that true faith is necessarily connected with salvation, we as Protestants must agree with the

Romanists that faith as they define it, apart fromassent, is not necessarily connected with salvation. On the soteriology Hodge is correct, but his argument has no effect on the status of assent.

The further one goes into the history of the theories of faith, the more complicated the subject becomes. Yet the matter is not only interesting, it is important also. Hodge, shortly after the last quoted passage, says, “Protestants with one voice maintain that the faith which is connected with salvation is not a mere intellectual exercise.” Here is a complication. Hodge rejects the Romish view that located faith in the intellect. For reasons analyzed above he also refuses to locate faith in the will, as Bellarmine said Protestants do. Then where does Hodge locate faith? In the emotions? Logically that is the only place left. But no doubt this is not what Hodge intended. He actually continues by quoting Calvin, who in the *Institutes* III, ii, 8 says that the Romanists “maintain faith to be mereassent.” Here is another complication. Bellarmine says that Catholics place faith in the intellect, not in the will; Calvin says Catholics make faith purely volitional. Then Calvin continues by insisting that faith is not the product of man’s unaided powers. This, true as it is, has no bearing on assent. Yet Calvin in just another line seems to require assent, for he says, “The assent which we give to the Divine word…is from the heart rather than the head, and from the affections rather than from the understanding. For which reason it is called ‘the obedience of faith,’… It is an absurdity to say that faith is formed by the addition of a pious affection to an assent of the mind; whereas even this assent consists in a pious affection.... Faith consists in a knowledge of Christ.”

In this quotation from Calvin, note the emphasis on assent. Very good; and both against the late Arminians and with Calvin against the Romanists, this assent and faith are not products of

our unaided efforts. The Spirit must make us willing. But the willing is assent.

I regret that Calvin, a giant among pygmies, said that assent comes from the heart and not from the head. This distinction is unscriptural; the Bible nowhere opposes heart to head, for it does not mention this “head.” Naturally assent comes from the heart because all psychological actions of a person come from the heart. There is nothing else for them to come from.

Aside from this unfortunate slip, Calvin proceeds to say that assent is the obedience of faith. Clearly obedience is a matter of volition. Assent then is an act of will. No pious additions are necessary, for the assent itself is already pious.

It is amazing that so many writers who profess to be devout, and who are reputed so to be, fulminate against the assent of the mind, especially against the mind, and continue to insist that faith is not an intellectual exercise. Once again let it be said that understanding or intellect apart from belief and assent is not faith. But this is not what these anti-intellectuals mean. They wish to exclude faith from both the intellect and the will. It will then be an emotion. As such, faith is divorced from belief in the Gospel message.

That their objections to the intellect are unscriptural can be seen, in many passages to be sure, but for example in *2 Corinthians* 4:2-6. Here the wicked are described as “handling the Word of God deceitfully;” or, better, as adulterating or changing the message. They alter its intellectual content. Contrary to these are the saints, who manifest the truth. They make the truth clear and evident. They commend themselves to men by their attachment to the truth. Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelievers; he has blinded thethoughts of those who do not have faith. These men do not have the light of the Gospel message. Its truth and perhaps even itsmeaning do

not dawn on them. To the elect, however, God has sent the light of day, the clear vision, the accurate knowledge of his glory. This knowledge is our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

To be noted in these verses is the function of the mind, the intellect, the truth, the cognitive content of the message.

Charles Hodge himself (3:91) indicates where the source of some of the trouble lies. After quoting the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Faith "is not merely a certain knowledge" *etc.*, he remarks that "the Scriptures do not make the sharp distinction between the understanding, the feelings, and the will, which is common in our day. A large class of our inward acts and states are so complex as to be acts of the whole soul, and not exclusively of anyone of its faculties."

Here one may suspect that the so-called faculty psychology of an earlier day has confused the theologians, who should have learned the unity of personality from the Biblical material. Hodge too, in the last sentence of the quotation, seems to posit separate faculties, of which at least some simple acts are the products. One should hold, rather, that every act is an act of the whole soul; *i.e.*, every act is the act of the person. But the acts differ. The present discussion, although it has dismissed feeling and emotion as irrelevant, distinguishes between understanding the meaning of a proposition and assent to its truth. But both these different acts are acts of the same unitary person. Hodge is quite right in saying that the situation as a whole is more complicated than supposed. Even the intellectual work of coming to understand a sentence requires assent and volition. It does not require assent to the truth of the sentence in question; but it requires a voluntary act of attention, and assent to the truth of other propositions by which its meaning is uncovered. One of the important points to keep in mind is the object of assent in different contexts. The person who does not assent to the Gospel,

the persecutor Saul for example, must assent to propositions regarding the Hebrew or Greek usage of the word *Lord,* if he is to understand "Jesus is Lord," and react with a persecutor's zeal. This point is immediately useful in Hodge.

Hodge continues, "There is a distinction to be made between faith in general and saving faith. If we take that element of faith which is common to every act of believing; if we understand by it the apprehension of a thing as true and worthy of confidence, whether a fact of history or of science, then it may be said that faith in its essential nature is intellectual or intelligent assent."

With this of course the present writer agrees completely; and it is a major concession by Hodge to the position here defended.

Hodge, however, continues, "But if the question be, What is the act or state of mind which is required in the Gospel, when we are commanded to believe, the answer is very different."

How can it be *very* different? If faith generically is intelligent assent, every species of faith must be also. After all, asparagus is a lily. It has differentia, to be sure. Asparagus is not bellwort; but it is a lily.

Contrary to this relationship between genus and species, or between concept and instance, Hodge says, "To believe that Christ is 'God manifest in the flesh,' is not the mere intellectual conviction that no one, not truly divine, could be and do what Christ was and did; for this conviction the demoniacs avowed; but it is to receive him as our God."

Note the fallacy that Hodge falls into. His argument is: Faith is not assent because the demoniacs assented to the proposition thatJesus is the Son of God. This argument does not prove that faith is not assent; it only proves that assent to the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God is not saving faith. When one says

that faith is assent, one does not mean that assent to just any proposition is saving faith. In *James* 2:19 it says that the devils believe that there is one God. Assent to the proposition that there is one God is not saving faith. Still, for all of this, saving faith can be assent to another proposition. Obviously assent to propositions regarding a bank's sound financial structure is not saving faith. Nor is assent to the proposition that David was King of Israel. It may seem strange at first sight that belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not saving faith; but the reference to the demoniacs makes this clear. Hodge has confused the psychology of belief with the object of belief. The distinguishing feature between faith in general and saving faith is a distinction in their objects, not in the psychology. The distinguishing feature cannot possibly be a denial to the species of its generic character. Faith in Christ and faith in a bank are equally faith, with whatever characteristic mental actions are necessary. The difference does not lie in the action of assent, but in the object assented to. The difference is the difference between Christ and a bank. It is a difference that concerns *what* is believed, not *how* belief takes place.

There is another fallacy in Hodge, or if not a fallacy, at least a misdirected analysis. Recall that he said, "The primary idea of truth is that which is trustworthy." It is thus that Hodge tries to shift from belief, which is too closely allied with assent, to a *fiducia* that is notassent. Perhaps Hodge is not so radical as some later popular writers who erect an antithesis between assent to a proposition and trust in a person; but some paragraphs tend in that direction; and the method he uses is to define truth as trustworthy.

Great philosophic courage is required to say what the primary idea of truth is. Hodge treats the matter too easily. Plato and other ancients tried to define truth as "what is," thus connecting truth with being. No doubt we can trust what is to be. But the

primary idea is being. In modern language one might say that truth is “what is so”; or, truth is what is the case. Possibly these definitions are tautological. Maybe truth is indefinable. But in any case it is a misdirected analysis to shift from truth to trust in order to avoid assent.

Not only is the direction wrong, in that it diverges from truth, but the result is frustrating too; for when one drops truth and assent, one must not merely use the word trust one must say what it means. Why should one define truth by trust instead of trust by truth? Why cannot one reverse Hodge’s analysis and say that the “primary idea” of trust is assent to the truth? But if a person does not want to admit this, he should define trust. Hodge does not.

Now, strange to say, Hodge concludes the section on page 91 by saying, “What therefore the Scripture means by faith, in this connection, the faith which is required for salvation, is an act of the whole soul, of the understanding, of the heart, and of the will.” Precisely! It is an act of the unitary person, in Scripture called the “heart,” or the “soul,” of whom the activity of understanding and ofwill are essential, while the feelings and emotions, which Hodge has conveniently omitted here, are irrelevant.

If an evangelist holds to this position he will preach the Gospel. If he has other ideas of faith, he will almost necessarily adulterate theGospel, alter the message, and handle the Word of God deceitfully.

7. Assurance

Assurance of salvation has some connection with evangelism. Several popular evangelists try to give such assurance to those

who come forward. They think a convert should have assurance from the very first moment. In any case the Scripture has a few things to say about assurance, and so the subject is a proper appendix to the previous chapter.

One writer on evangelism proposes a method for developing assurance. Stanley C. Brown in *Evangelism in the Early Church,*previously quoted in chapter three to the effect that Paul never dreamed that people in later ages would be reading his sporadic letters, says that assurance is gained by signing a card, shaking a hand, or some sort of "landmark," accompanied by strong emotion. Then too I listened to an evangelist who came to speak to a group of Christian students on the subject of evangelism. He made quite a point of remembering where you were converted. Fix the picture of the building, the aisle, or the pulpit in mind. Recall how you stood at the front. With such vivid imagery, he told us, you will conquer your doubts. You will have assurance.

This is hardly what the Bible says. No verse directs the convert to sign a card, shake a hand; and certainly no verse promises assurance by means of a vivid visual image of the place at which the conversion took place. The Bible does indeed have something to say about assurance; and if a Christian wants to preach the Gospel and wants to give some human help in developing assurance in his converts, he should proceed according to the Scripture and not according to the unscriptural imaginations of these false prophets.

There are four points that need to be mentioned with respect to assurance. The first point is that assurance is possible. At first sight, this does not seem to contradict the popular evangelists. Assurance is something they emphasize. Yet as the Biblical study continues, it may eventually appear that these evangelists do not really believe in assurance at all. Or, to

put it in other words, what they mean byassurance is not what the Bible means. But first, let it be made clear that the Bible teaches assurance.

The Romanists deny assurance. They consider it presumption to claim assurance. The Council of Trent decided that “No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination, as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; as if it were true that he that is justified, either cannot sin any more, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto himself” (Sixth session, Chapter XII).

In our church for many years there was a woman of remarkable gifts. She was no intellectual. She had never gone beyond third grade of grammar school. She married a happy, lovable, somewhat irresponsible carpenter. To increase the small income of those days, she baked bread and collected a small clientele. It was good bread; I know! She was superintendent of our primary department for a long time. No one was more faithful in all the affairs of the church than she. But she had been raised a Roman Catholic, and never entirely got over it. Images and indulgences she left behind. But she always thought that it was presumption to claim assurance of salvation. From all external appearances (and that is all the rest of us could judge by) she was the one who had greatest reason to be assured. But she was not.

Unlike this woman, most people get a sense of assurance much too easily. Everyone who has a smattering of religion, and the smattering may be quite minimal, believes he is going to Heaven. A Lutheran girl told me (and surely no Lutheran should have told me this) that she was not perfect but that she

was really pretty good, and so she had no reason to think otherwise than that she would get to Heaven. Maybe this was not a great degree of assurance, but it was an assurance of sorts.

The people mentioned in *Matthew* 7:22*ff* had assurance. “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? But Jesus replied, ‘Depart from me, I never knew you.’” As the profoundly theological Negro spiritual says, “Everybody talkin’ ‘bout Heaven ain’t goin’ there.” *Micah* 3:11 says, “The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us.’”

It is clear therefore that there is a feeling of assurance that is not real assurance. Just because a person believes that he is saved is an insufficient reason for thinking that he is saved. It may be suggested for sober consideration whether or not those who are most easily assured of salvation are least likely to be saved.

Nevertheless, in spite of all hypocrisy and self-deception, it is possible to have assurance. The well-known verse *1 John* 5:13 says, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” *Romans*5:2*ff* says, “We…rejoice in hope of the glory of God…and hope maketh not ashamed.” That is to say, our hope shall not be disappointed. We hope to arrive in Heaven; and this hope will be satisfied.

This is an assurance that many popular evangelists do not have themselves and cannot promise to their hearers. Yes, they insist onassurance, but it is not the assurance that the Bible teaches. These evangelists, the ones I have in mind, are Arminians. They do not believe in the perseverance of the saints, or, as they call it, eternal security. They claim to be very sure that they are saved now; but they are not sure that they will be saved tomorrow or

next week. If they die tonight, they will be in Heaven immediately. But if they should live a while longer, they might fall into sin, fall from grace, and then they would be eternally lost. But they are very sure just now. Their mentality is hard to understand. How can anyone be very happy if he thinks he has an eternal life that is so little eternal that it might end next week? How can such a person look to the future with equanimity and confidence if he is so unsure of Heaven? Such an evangelist might as well be a Romanist. They talk about being born again, about regeneration; but the kind of regeneration they preach is something that a man must experience as many times as he falls from grace. To be really saved, *i.e.*, to get to Heaven, one must be born again over and over again. Their hope therefore is one that can easily disappoint. These preachers often talk quite a lot about the Holy Spirit; but they deny to the Spirit the power to give a man eternal life. By eternal I mean eternal; not a life that ends in the near future. Thus they do not have assurance; nor do they preach the Gospel, for the Gospel promises at least the possibility of assurance. It promises, not the mere possibility of eternal life; it promises eternal life.

This leads to the second point that needs to be mentioned in this chapter. The Gospel promises the possibility of assurance. It does not quite promise every Christian actual assurance. It is strange that some preachers, some evangelists, even those and especially those already described, talk as if one cannot have faith without having assurance. They give the impression that you must know you are saved, if you are saved. But this is not what the Bible says. The verse from *1 John*, quoted just above, said that John wrote the epistle in order that those who read it might be assured. But if regeneration *ipso facto* guaranteed assurance, it would not be necessary to write an epistle encouraging assurance and giving direction on how assurance can be obtained.

Since the epistle was written for this purpose, it is one of the best places in the Bible to find directions. *First John* 2:3 says, “Hereby we do know that we know him – if we keep his commandments.” Recall the lament, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” But these people were condemned because they had not acted righteously. They may have walked down the aisle, shaken someone’s hand, and signed a card; but they were workers of iniquity. Remembering some emotional experience would do them no good. We know that we know the Lord by keeping his commandments. Another test by which we may come to assurance is given in3:14, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” Later in the same chapter it says, “Let us love…in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” Again, “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

Second Peter 1:5 does not explicitly mention assurance, but the section has to do with God’s “exceeding great and preciouspromises” with which he “called us to glory and virtue,” so that the remainder of the section describes how we may be assured of profiting by those promises. Verse five then says, “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance…for if these things be in you, and abound, they shall make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Without minimizing the other items in this list, it is well to emphasize knowledge. If one wishes assurance, he will try to increase his knowledge. Knowledge is mentioned twice in the section. Therefore, if one wishes assurance that he is regenerated, let him ask himself, Do I study the Scripture? How much of it do I know? Some people know so very little;

some people believe so very little; some evangelists must have so very little assurance.

A final note on this point returns us to the Romanists. The Council of Trent said that it would require supernatural revelation toknow whether one was predestinated to eternal life. These directions in the Bible on how to attain assurance show that withoutextraordinary revelation, simply by the right use of the ordinary means, we may attain to the assurance of faith.

A third point concerning assurance is one that is logically implied by what has already been said. Yet it deserves an explicit mention. The *Westminster Confession* puts the matter very strongly. “This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidences of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption” (17:2).

Though the wording is very clear, it may be necessary in this age to point out two places where a misunderstanding may arise. First, the infallibility mentioned is not ours, as if we are infallible. The infallibility belongs to the promises of God. There is no hint here that we rise to the level of the inspired authors of the Bible. This would be a reversal to the Romish position that a supernatural revelation is necessary. All that is necessary is the Scripture. The second point at which a misunderstanding may occur is the reference to theSpirit witnessing with our spirits. Here too, the same idea is involved. The Spirit witnesses *with* our spirits as we study the Bible. He does not

witness *to* our spirits, as if giving an additional revelation. Aside from these two matters, the *Westminster Confession* is clear.

The fourth and last point with reference to assurance is that, although salvation can never be lost, assurance can. That this is so, and that in addition assurance can be restored, is all seen in a very fine passage in *Micah* 7:7-9: “Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.” When David was thus bearing the indignation of the Lord, he prayed, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation…. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O Lord, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.”

Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan has a chapter on the loss of assurance. Christian and his new companion Hopeful have recently escaped from the persecutions in Vanity Fair. They recuperate beside still waters and in pleasant pastures. Then it is time to push forward. But the road up from the river is stony, and their feet hurt. So they climb over a stile and proceed along a path that seems to run parallel with the Way. Overtaken by a storm they can neither go forward nor find their way back. Exhausted, they sleep under some rough shelter. In the morning, Giant Despair, on whose grounds they have been trespassing, finds them, drags them to Doubting Castle, and throws them into his dungeon. He beats them severely, tries to persuade them to commit suicide, and starves them. Finally Christian remembers that he has a key in his pocket that can unlock the doors of the dungeon in the castle. It is the key of promise. With it the two men escape as the Giant falls into one of his occasional fits.

Everybody should have read *Pilgrim's Progress* when a child – at least a child's version of the story. But also everyone should read it again for the theology. For its theology is not that of Arminian evangelists; it is thorough-going Calvinism.

8. Paradigms of Evangelism

This book opened with some remarks on hillbilly music in an evangelistic campaign, but it has since paid no attention to external methods of evangelism. So far as popular services are concerned (a one-week, two-week, or three-week series of meetings), the only rule that can be given to the evangelist is to prepare a dozen or more sermons that cover a good section of the Biblical message. The apostolic sermons in *Acts* suggest necessary subjects and indicate a good way of getting started. One must preach the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ to satisfy the justice of his Father. One must preach the Resurrection. These matters entail the doctrine of sin, the federal headship of Adam, justification by faith, and no doubt something on sanctification should be added. Note well that the ApostlePaul did not act on the Canadian evangelist's foolish principle that no one should hear the Gospel twice until everybody has heard it once. Paul stayed months and years in Ephesus and Corinth.

If the so-called Gospel songs, which contain so very little of the Gospel in comparison with *Rock of Ages* and other outstandinghymns, and the silly choruses, and the repulsive dance band music, are all the people can take. I suppose there is no Biblical prohibition against singing just a little of the Gospel if the people refuse to sing more. Furthermore, God will not judge them on their lack of aesthetic sensibility. These higher levels of Christian worship must be left in the hands of the

regular pastor who helps his people grow in grace over a period of years. Just be sure that the silly choruses have nothing in them contrary to the Gospel. Some have.

Sermons, evangelistic campaigns, mass meetings – if anyone is able to draw a crowd – make a very easy but relatively ineffective method of evangelization. No, there is nothing wrong in holding large popular meetings. Paul preached in the streets. So have I. But this sort of thing depends for its completion on the audience hearing more of the Gospel at a later date. So Paul taught daily in thesynagogue.

If one will read the sermons of Moody, one will be surprised at how little of the Gospel he preached. Billy Sunday is said to have preached an even more restricted message – though I am not sure this was the case. But an evangelist can never preach enough, even a reasonable amount, unless he can continue for six weeks or so.

If there were genuine conversions in the Moody and Sunday meetings, it was because faithful pastors had already explained theGospel: The evangelists only pressed for a decision. Today so few pastors preach the Gospel, so few people know anything about the Bible, that I doubt the genuineness of the conversion of most of those who come forward to shake the evangelist's hand. Instructionalafter-meetings are good, but not the fifteen-minute variety. The extent of various individuals' understanding differs, of course, but most people today understand almost nothing and require lengthy explanations.

That this is so can better be seen by turning our attention from public services to personal evangelism. In a public service the minister does not know what is in the minds of his auditors. He does not know their objections, their confusions, their ignorance. Those seated in the pews cannot interrupt and ask questions. They can lose the thread of the discourse at the second stitch.

But in the conversation of personal work questions and answers reveal something of the auditor's troubles. Even so it is not all smooth sailing.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer in his *The God Who is There*, pages 126-128, gives an excellent example. Those seriously interested should get the book and read it.

Here I shall give a discouraging example of my own. On one occasion I had a half dozen college students coming to our home once a week for six weeks to study *Romans*. Academically they were good students. One of them was a Roman Catholic. I was very anxious to get this young man to understand justification by faith, by faith alone. Unless he understood what Paul was saying, he could notbelieve it. Understanding was the first step.

Now I was aware that the Romish idea of justification differs from that of Luther and Calvin. Faith also is differently defined. Gracedoes not mean the same thing. Merely using these words would have simply confused and misled the student. So I tried very carefully to show that by justification Paul meant a judicial act of acquittal (with acceptance or reconciliation). I went over the text in detail for an hour and a half each night. The students all asked questions.

By the fourth or fifth night I thought the Roman Catholic had come to understand a little bit. But on the sixth evening when I asked him a few simple questions, I was dismayed to see that he had understood virtually nothing at all. So inbred with Catholic ideas was he that he had grasped nothing. I could say my dog had as good an understanding of justification as he had. In fact better, for my dog is not a Romanist.

When some zealous evangelists say how simple the Gospel is, I concur that the Gospel is simple in the sense that a great chess move is simple. It is the most effective move in the situation. It

combines maximum defense with maximum attack and leads to mate in the fewest possible moves. But a poor chess player does not find it simple or easy. It is like the simplicity of Kepler's three laws ofplanetary motion over Ptolemy's. Kepler's laws are simpler, but much more difficult to explain. This is not what the popular evangelist means by simple. He thinks the Gospel is easy to understand. Therefore he gives little explanation, little elucidation, little Gospel. Note, however, that Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, did not easily understand. The early Gentile Christians could hardly understand. Even the Church Fathers were seriously deficient. For three hundred years or more they could not understand the Person of Christ; they learned the Trinity a little faster; but their soteriology, the significance of Christ's death, escaped them for centuries. Justin Martyr, for example, was of course a martyr; he probably was a Christian; but with his view of the Atonement I would not have voted to receive him as a communicant member of our congregation. Recall too that the Apostle Paul anathematized the Judaizers in Galatia, who accepted Christ as Messiah, as their Lord, and who most probably, because of their acquaintance with the Old Testamentsacrifices, understood the Atonement far better than Justin did.

Who then can be saved? Fortunately, with God all things are possible, but with us evangelization is usually very difficult. For example, in a certain public school a Christian teacher talked to a Romanist teacher. One of their shorter conversations had to do with a news item in *Time* Magazine. "Well, what do you know about *that*!" said the Roman Catholic teacher. The other queried, "About what?" So the conversation was launched. It seems that modern Roman Catholic theologians have declared that Mary's virginity at the birth of Christ need be only symbolical, not biological, and to the Roman Catholic teacher, that explained everything; why hadn't theChurch thought of this before? Wryly,

the Christian commented that she hated to see the Roman Catholic Church taking the same road as liberal Protestants had some years ago, and her colleague, not understanding her woeful tone, asked what she meant. Hard put to reducing a century of theological history into one sentence, the Christian replied simply, “Denying the truth of Scripture.” The Roman Catholic teacher objected, for the theologians, according to *Time*, had not denied Scripture; they simply said Mary was not really a virgin! When it was pointed out that since Scripture said Mary *was* a virgin, and the theologians said she *wasn’t*, they were in fact denying Scripture. Oh, well, maybe so; but, the Romanist wondered, what difference did it make anyway? As long as we understand the symbolism…. The difference – and the teacher-evangelist tried to state it as simply as possible – is whether Jesus is the son of Mary and Joseph, and therefore man, or whether he is the son of Mary and the Holy Spirit, and therefore the son of man *and* ofGod, able to offer the supreme sacrifice to atone for the sins of his people. It is a question of his human and divine natures, and the theologians are emphasizing his humanity to the exclusion of his divinity. A little puzzled, the Roman Catholic looked back at the magazine and then said slowly, “This says they are emphasizing his humanity over his divinity – well! That’s just what *you* said! I*never* would have thought of that! How did you figure it out?”

Some examples of evangelism do not commend themselves to a sober mind. In a certain town where I lived for a while a woman met her neighbor on the street. The woman felt compelled to witness, testify, evangelize, or whatever the conversation should be called. She addressed her neighbor somewhat abruptly and said, You are a bad mother to be sending your little girl (age 7) to Hell. Just about as abruptly as that. The woman speaking would not send her child to a Christian school, but insisted that her child, also aged 7, should remain in public school. The

reason was that if the youngster were in a Christian school, there would be no opportunity to evangelize. The children in the public school needed witnessing and evangelization. Now perhaps the mother thought that her darling did not need the Christian training a Christian school could give, and that her child would not be harmed by the secularism of the public school system; nevertheless the greater number of unbelievers in a school is hardly a good reason for choosing education in one school rather than another.

In contrast with this blunt and brusque form of evangelization, the following is a very different example. Probably it was just as unsuccessful, but at least it was different. The story will be given as a conversation, and many of the sentences will be verbatim. Onespeaker will be a minister, designated M, a minister who needed to accept the Gospel. The other speaker will be E, the evangelist.

M's first speech here will be a little long and is composed of statements that he made on several different occasions. This seems necessary in order to bring M's state of mind clearly before the reader.

M. I try not to be either Conservative or Liberal. I tell myself that I simply let the Bible speak; I try to read both conservative and liberal publications. I get rather discouraged at times, for both kinds of books waste so much time erecting and destroying to their own satisfaction certain stereotypes, which, however true they may be of unscholarly folk, do not correspond to the liberal and conservative scholars whom I have known.

I do not believe literary analysis of the Pentateuch is the last word in interpretation. However, it does come to my aid when I meet certain problems. Item: The three episodes in *Genesis* about a man going into a strange land and asking his

wife to confess to be his sister, so that his life will not be endangered.

I suppose my main complaint is that I cannot, with the best will in the world – and I have tried! – use the Bible as an external and completely objective proof for God. I don't believe the Sermon on the Mount to have been proved by the miracles of Jesus.

Faith does not come easily to me. The fulcrum of my experience is World War II. It made God a necessity. But, He is not the closed-system God I seem to find among some conservatives, nor the "dear God" of the liberals. The bit I saw of concentration camps made me search at what I believe is a deeper level: and I believe that I have been found there by the God of Jesus, who is not categorized asomnipotent, *etc.*, but who is in His inmost being Love. This basic fact does not require my Bible to be plenarily inspired. And I suppose the reason I react against both conservatives and liberals is that one appears to present a mechanical God tied by His ownpresuppositions, and the other a mere blob of inchoate good intentions.

I am certain that a part of my problem so far as the so-called Conservative approach to the Bible is concerned is that I (1) do not understand what they are trying to say; (2) do not understand why they think it must be said as they say it.

Let me first state why I am not able to accept the plenary theory of Biblical inspiration. What does plenary inspiration mean? At face value it must mean that the Scriptures as they stand are as they are because God intended them to be that way. When the writers of Scripture wrote, they were immediately in some manner aware of the sentence structure and vocabulary which God intended for HisWord to assume. In the Old Testament, they used a Hithpa'el form of the verb, in the New Testament an Aorist Passive, because this is the way God wanted it.

Now, this (if I am at all correct) sounds very much like a "religious" mechanism approach to reality which is at least as suspect as any kind of mechanistic understanding of the nature of things. More than that, I fail to see exactly what, even should it be so, this kind of inspiration means in the face of present evidence. Even if God should have so dictated His Word in the beginning, this is not the way we now possess it. There are differences; and if there are, then I don't quite see the insistence on a perfect original. Am I to assume that God was so very careful with the first copy, and so very careless with the second and third, *etc.*?

Let me try to state in a sentence what I mean thus far: The doctrine of plenary inspiration seems to me both an *unwarranted*mechanistic theorizing regarding Holy Scripture, and fails to account for the variety in which we now possess that Scripture.

E. At least three times you complain that you are unable to understand what the conservatives, *i.e.*, the historic Protestant position, is trying to say. You also wonder why they are trying to say it. Of course, they are trying to say it because they believe it to be true and important. Why else?

Plenary is an adjective of extent. It refers to the Bible as a whole. Plenary inspiration means that the whole Bible, without exception, is inspired – the genealogies as much as *John* 17.

You said that this was "unwarranted theorizing." The warrant is a long list of verses. For example, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God…." This admits of no exception. Christ said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." He did not choose *Psalm* 82because it was more inspired than any other part, but simply because (aside from relevance to the discussion) it was a part of Scripture, and Scripture cannot be broken.

You say that plenary inspiration does not answer the question it proposes to answer. The question is, I suppose, does all Scripture, some only, or none, come from God? It would seem to me that the answer is unambiguous.

There is another facet of inspiration which you mention in concrete without giving it the usual name. It is the verbal inspiration ofScripture. As plenary is an adjective of extent, verbal is an adjective of (shall we say) depth. It indicates the manner of inspiration. God "breathed out" the Scriptures in words. Dozens of times, yes, hundreds of times, you have phrases like – I have put my words in thy mouth, the word of the Lord came unto…, if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? Again, the force of these assertions can be appreciated only after a long list of these expressions has been drawn up.

Conclusion: Plenary and verbal inspiration is the Bible's own explanation of itself.

You seem to say that verbal inspiration is a mechanical affair, and apparently mechanical is a disparaging term. Well, if you mean that verbal inspiration suggests that God acts like a boss dictating a letter to a stenographer, I would reply (1) it is still not disparaging, but (2) this is not what the original Protestants meant. The picture of a stenographer is rather a liberal caricature. The trouble with the picture of a stenographer is not that God controls his writers less than a boss controls his secretary; but God's control is far more extensive. God controls the very thoughts of the writer and the choice of his words. God controls the inner psychology of the prophet, not just his pen.

M. If we truly insist the Bible, literally understood, to be authoritative, why don't we obey it? I'm not talking about the commands which are of such depth in demand. I have in

mind, Baptism. Is there any doubt at all that *baptizo* means immersion? Has there ever been any doubt in "historical Protestant scholarship"? Didn't Calvin himself admit immersion to be Scriptural? Well.... "This is my body," said Jesus. Why do we argue with the Romanists about this, since He said it? And I could go on with other citations. The point I am trying to make is that we deny with our actions what logical consistency causes us to confess with our formal thought.

E. You ask, If the Bible is authoritative, why not obey it? Well, I am all in favor of obeying it. But you say, or you word your sentence so as to cause the inference, that Presbyterians do not obey it because they do not use immersion in baptism. You ask, did not Calvin admit that immersion was Scriptural? I am not sure of this point. I would suppose that he admitted that immersion was satisfactory since the usual position among us is that the mode makes no difference. Then you ask another question: Is there any doubt at all that baptism *means* immersion? To this I would say that there is considerable doubt. I doubt that it strictly meant immersion (as contrasted with some other form of washing) either in classical Greek words or in New Testament Greek. In *Daniel* 4:33, *i.e.*, *LXX*4:30, one of the Greek words used to say that Nebuchadnezzar was wet with dew is *baptizo*. I can hardly think that this was immersion. *Mark* 7:4 says that couches were baptized. It seems to me that this means they were washed. In *Hebrews* 9:10, 13, 19, 21, the several baptisms (*King James*, washings) were done by sprinkling. In *1 Corinthians* 10:2 the Israelites were baptized, but theEgyptians were immersed. Similarly in *1 Peter* 3:21 Noah was baptized, but the wicked were immersed. It therefore seems rather clear to me that baptism does not mean immerse, and therefore I believe that I obey the Bible, when, as it happened this morning, I baptized the infant daughter of two of our

members.1 But if I should be mistaken, and if I have not obeyed the Bible, such a fact does not undermine the inspiration of the Bible. If it did, you would be requiring a theory that would guarantee me from ever misunderstanding any part of the Bible. You say in your letter that you think you can provide for such a theory, as a substitute for verbal inspiration. Maybe you can; but of one thing I am quite sure: It will not be, as you claim it will be, Biblical.

M. I still am not certain that I understand how you can hold verbal-plenary inspiration. To me, this insistence of yours is meaningless. You admit that this claim applies only to the original manuscripts, which you also say we do not possess. Now, I cannot but conclude from that, that the claim itself is meaningless. Am I incorrect in assuming that the main reason for claiming plenary inspiration (aside from the fact that you believe it to be Biblical, and true) is for its value in vesting the Bible with authority independent of human manipulation? That is what I understand by the insistence on the "objective authority" of the Bible. But, this is vitiated when we admit that we no longer possess this completely authoritative Bible. Whether the errors (possible errors in textual collation) total 44/100% or 99 and 44/100% makes no difference. It is we in our human calculations who decide which alternative reading is acceptable. It is we who decide whether or not this reading affects the whole. More than that, all this ado about original manuscripts appears to make God appear a rather muddled do-gooder, who took infinite care in getting His Word across in the beginning, only to leave its future care to the mercy of every sloppy and sleepy-headed scribe.

E. You say that plenary-verbal inspiration is meaningless. I suppose you really intend to say that it is useless. It can hardly be meaningless. I stated its meaning – simply that God breathed

out the words of Scripture, with the obvious result that what the prophets wrote was without error. Is not this meaning clear?

So, I take it you intended to say that this doctrine was useless. Your reason is that even if the scribal errors in the manuscripts are as little as 44/100%, we still have to decide which reading to accept and how it affects the whole. That is, you claim that unless we ourselves are infallible, there is no use in God's speaking the absolute truth. God might as well mix error into his words, for we are going to make mistakes anyway. Now, this does not sound reasonable to me at all. If I ask directions in driving around the country, I may misinterpret the directions; but I would not appreciate my guide's misinforming me, on the ground that I might misunderstand anyhow. A scribe might correctly copy Plato and Aristotle; but it would still be the mistaken views of those men. A scribe might make a few mistakes in copying the Word of God, but we would still have substantially the Word of God. The difference is between a correct copy of error and a slightly incorrect copy of truth. I cannot agree that the latter is useless.

M. I begin with a question, the basic question. Is there a God? If there is, can I know Him? My answer to this question, If there is aGod, I cannot know it unless He tells me about Himself. I can study His doing, Nature; but what shall my conclusion about God be? That He is kind and benevolent? Or that Nature is vicious and careless? I think it is obvious that whatever I see in Nature, and whichever I emphasize, will be for reasons of personal experience and inclination. This makes an incarnational religion imperative, and this is precisely what we have in Jesus Christ. You will ask, Which Jesus Christ? and I will answer, the One to whom the New Testament Scriptures witness.

My Bible does not have to be absolute. It must be sufficiently so that it compels me to face the Absolute, the One who speaks

through His Son, and points backward and forward from that crucial Son. This is precisely what I find in the Bible.

E. You raise first the question of God's existence. You give reasons that it could be only by revelation that a knowledge of God would be possible. I quite agree with this so far. And in particular I agree with what I take to be your inference that the cosmological argument is invalid.

However, your next sentence is: "This makes an incarnational religion imperative." How so? This is an inference that I can by no means follow.

The fact that if we are to know God at all it must be by a self-revelation no more implies one than another of the following statements: We do not know God at all; God reveals Himself to us in intuitions or in mystic trances and not in incarnation; God reveals Himself to us in intelligible and true propositions; and finally, it remains possible that there is no God at all. Now, I fail to see how you come to accept the position that there must be an incarnation. These other possibilities still remain. You have given no reason that rules them out.

Only after you have made this great leap do you speak of the New Testament as a witness to the incarnate Christ. But we cannot have the least idea of even the possibility of an incarnation until after we accept the Scripture. And second, if the New Testament is completely wrong when it claims that it consists of the words of God, why should we believe its supposed witness to Christ? All we know of Christ comes from the Scripture.

M. I take it you would agree with me that my view of the Bible is not self-sustaining, but it is a part of my total view of reality. That is, I don't come to the Bible as a *tabula rasa* mind. Neither

is it my total experience, but one among many. It forms a part (and informs a part) of my reality, but not all of it.

I do not believe something just because “It’s in the Bible.” Something is not true, just because “the Bible says.” It cannot contradict my total experience of reality, or else I would not accept it.

What I am leading up to is simply this: By a complicated combination of experience, trial and error, idea and accident, I come to a something that is signified by the word “reality.” If I am not reflective, it will be rather inchoate; if I am reflective, it should have somecoherence. The Bible is a part of this, and as I read it, listen to its claims, follow its implications, I do so in so far as it finds a harmony with my total view of reality. It tells me there is a God. Yes. Reality doesn’t seem to be complete in itself. It appears dependent. It tells me God revealed Himself. Yes, if there is a God, He would have to do this, if we are to know Him. It tells me of a Resurrection from the Dead. This is not so easily set into reality. Yet, how else am I to account for the obvious historical phenomena of a Church which apparently has always believed and taught this, which has suffered and died for this faith, which has evidenced the power of renewal which a living Lord would bring?

I read also of a Creation in seven (apparently) 24-hour days. This is of still another order. I can find no place for it in my total view; for I am committed (logically, emotionally, experientially) to another understanding, which speaks in terms of process, of millions of years, and which is an outgrowth of a still larger discipline of understanding in terms of procedure and experience. What am I to do? I cannot call the first account simply foolishness, for it is part and parcel of the total view. Well, I read it again. What is it claiming? That it presents an observed and verified account of what actually happened? It is

possible to understand it another way: It tells me that the cosmos is dependent, that whatever this great process is that I experience and study, it is not self-existent. Aha. This fits with all the rest again.

I keep on reading the Bible. Some of its parts I do not understand. Other parts I understand and do not accept. But, I do accept them in the Biblical sense, not in the literal sense. Some of the miracles attributed to Jesus are difficult to fit into my total view of reality in question; but I don't have enough information. For example, casting out the demons into the swine, and their running into the sea. I don't think we have enough information to decide if this is "exactly" what happened, and only what happened.

Now, what right have I to pick and choose? After all, the Bible claims that all of it is inspired, is authoritative, and so on. Who am I to set myself up as judge and jury? But, we cannot help doing this, and this is what we are always doing. We cannot help doing it, for it is "I" who decide, in any case.

This is the basis of my "selecting" as you call it. I do not need a verbally inspired Bible. I do need one that is accurate enough to fulfill its purpose: namely, the testimony to God who was in Christ. The Bible is certainly accurate enough for this, as millions of lives testify.

E. You begin with the theme that a theory of inspiration is a part of one's total world-view; one's use of the Bible is part of one's response to the totality of reality. With this I am in complete agreement, if we use the words in the same sense. No one more than I insists on the necessity of a single self consistent world-view. Therefore I would also agree with you that the Bible cannot contradict my total experience of reality. Your words are, "cannot contradict my total experience of reality." But while I am willing to make this assertion, I am not sure that you can

properly do so. It would seem from several things you say that there are a number of statements in the Bible that contradict your world-view. In fact, you immediately suggest that you would not accept this or that if it contradicted your total experience. Hence, in answer to my question in my last letter, How do you decide to accept some of the Bible's statements and reject others? you answer that you test the Bible by your experience; you do not accept something as true, just because the Bible says it. But you develop a criterion from experience and measure the Bible by that criterion.

In your total experience you are reading the Bible. You say, "It tells me there is a God…. It tells me God revealed himself…. It tells me of a Resurrection." But if you do not accept the truth of propositions on the basis of the Bible's assertion, you cannot accept these points without confirmation from experience. Now, I am willing to go to bat for hours against the view that experience can show us the existence of God. The alleged proofs are all fallacies. But there is nothing in experience to substantiate your statement, "if there is a God, he would have to reveal himself." Of course, he would have to reveal himself *if* we are to know him. But the existence of God does not imply that God wishes man to know him.

Now if one accepts a statement as true simply because the Bible says so, historical events like the crucifixion and the Resurrection are automatically accepted. But this is not the way you do things. However, I wish to make a further point. The acceptance of these historical events is not nearly enough to constitute Christianity. Several people have risen from the dead – at least the Bible says so. The peculiar importance of Christ's Resurrection depends on the interpretation given to the event. Similarly, many people have been crucified, but Christ's crucifixion is not in the same class with the others because of the explanation of the event. Christ died – for our

sins, and this latter phrase sums up the whole Scriptural doctrine: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and he rose again for our justification. Now, if you accept the events as you would the events of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, there remains the question, how does your world-view incline you to accept or reject the specific interpretations of these events that the Bible gives?

You say of a certain view, "Aha, this fits with all the rest." But you have not given me enough of all the rest to see how anything fits. After all I cannot guess why one hesitates at the devils being cast into the swine, if one accepts the Resurrection. You say you do not have enough information about the swine incident to make a decision. Have you enough information about the Resurrection? The only information about both is that the Bible says so.

Your insistence that a person must make a decision is beside the point. Of course it is you and I who decide. But the point at issue is, On what grounds do you and I decide? I want to know your reason for accepting a resurrection and rejecting the swine episode.

The conclusion that you draw is in my opinion quite untrue. You say, "all of us choose among the Scriptures, emphasizing some, darkening others." I suppose your literary fluency led you to say *darkening* instead of rejecting; but I suppose also that you mean rejecting, for that is the theme of the argument. But it is untrue that everybody accepts some and rejects other parts of the Bible. I do not; and, not to rile you, J. Y. does not. And I am trying to make the point that you must, if you wish to hold a consistent system, state the grounds, the reasons, for accepting part and rejecting part; and not merely say you and I must decide.

But if there is a revelation, there can be no criterion for it. God cannot swear by a greater; therefore he has sworn by himself. One cannot ask one's own experience to judge God and determine whether God tells the truth or not. Consider Abraham. How couldAbraham be sure that God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac? Maybe this suggestion was of the devil; maybe it was a queer auto-suggestion. There is no higher answer to this question than God himself. The final criterion is merely God's statement. It cannot be tested by any superior truth.

At this point the discussion will be broken off, though in real life it continued a long time further. Two remarks should be made. Theminister, who thought he was so conservative, consistently denied that Jesus was Lord. He did this by refusing to accept what Jesus said. He refused to accept Jesus' view of the Old Testament and he refused to accept some of Jesus' statements in the New. To acknowledge Jesus as Lord one must accept Jesus' teaching on whatever subject Jesus speaks. The second remark has to do with the evangelist's conduct of the discussion. Some who think themselves to be evangelistic assert that the evangelist must press the matter ofsin. Insist that the prospect is a sinner. Make him face his sin. Do not wander off on theological discussions. In reply to this objection one must first note that it is a sin to deny what Jesus said. If Jesus places his stamp of approval on the Old Testament and says that theScripture cannot be broken, then it is a sin to pick and choose. In the second place, the advice to avoid "wandering" off on theological discussions is also the sin of refusing to accept Jesus' Lordship. When Jesus met the woman at the well, it is true that he spoke to her about her sin of having had many husbands. But it would seem that he did this more to make her recognize that he was a "prophet" than to whack her over the head with her sin, sin, sin. In any case, she asked him a theological question: Does God want us to worship in Jerusalem or here in

this mountain? Far from telling the woman to forget her question and keep her mind on the man she now had who was not her husband, Jesus answered her question. He told her that the Jews were right and that the Samaritans were wrong. Jerusalem to that present time was the place of God's choice. But, Jesus continued, in a very short time the place will make no difference because God is about to initiate a new administration of the covenant of grace, and the important thing will be to worshipGod in spirit and in truth. Note too that this discourse on acceptable worship was not given to Nicodemus, but to the sinful woman at the well.

The woman at the well accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord. The minister above steadfastly refused.

Let it not be thought that we should not press home the fact of sin. The point is that other matters are also to be brought to light.

During the Billy Sunday campaigns one of his helpers, Fred Seibert, published a little booklet, *Rescue the Perishing* of 130 pages, three inches by not quite six, with the sub-title, *Personal Work Made Easy – Suggestions for Beginners*. Under a list of headings,Confession, Christ, Christian Science, Conversions, Doubter, Excuses, down to Unpardonable Sin, Worldly Amusements, and YoungConverts, the author had collected series of Scripture verses plus a few short paragraphs of advice. In some ways this little booklet was very helpful. It brought to one's attention a long list of verses and how to use them. Without such a list a "beginner" might have trouble remembering them – even if he knew them – and applying them with proper relevance. For example, under "Excuses" there is one page devoted to verses by which to answer the claim "I am not good enough to be a Christian." The next page is headed, "I am too great a sinner." Unfortunately I

have found few people who use this excuse. Many more are described under the two preceding pages, “I am good enough,” and “I am not very bad.” The verses given by Mr. Seibert are relevant enough; but what if the person replies, Of course that is what the Bible says, but I do not believe that the Bible is true?

This is the reason why it is unscriptural to press the question of sin and avoid so-called theological hairsplitting. Sin is a theological concept. It is not just wrong-doing in some ordinary sense. Many people, most people, possibly all people will admit that they have done some wrong. This does not entail their admission that they have sinned. Sin is transgression of the law of God. Or, more fully, sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. To be convicted of sin, one must believe in God, must believe that God has given a law, that God has given the laws in the Bible, and that breaking these laws is an offense against God, deserving ofGod’s wrath and curse. Without this theological foundation the evangelist cannot successfully show that a man is a sinner. When a man says that he does not believe in God, or that he does not believe the Bible is God’s Word, or that God did not give the laws in the Bible, or that these laws do not apply today, the evangelist has a large task ahead of him before the man can be shown that he stands in need of salvation from the wrath of God.

The following are the words, almost verbatim, of one person who more or less fits the above description.

“There are 356 different religious groups in this country. Each is sure it knows the will of God and each disagrees with every other, on important matters. Most of the groups, all of which claim to be monotheistic, are not. They profess to believe in Jehovah or theTrinity, but a surprising lot of them also believe in a second God, whom they call the devil. True, they do not

worship him, but a belief in his existence belies their alleged monotheism."

It is not my intention here to comment on the views of this person, or to correct his misunderstandings. The aim is simply to report his words and show the type of mind with which an evangelist has to deal.

"An enormous amount of good among men has been done in the name of Christ, but when I think of the pain and suffering which have been inflicted and the blood which has been shed in his name by those who were absolutely certain they knew God's will and were imposing it on others, I wonder whether or not the total good exceeds the total harm."

"Moses imposed capital punishment for serious crimes. Does this justify capital punishment today? What choice did Moses have? He was on the move for forty years and did not have an opportunity to build jails. Further, Do we revere liars and cheats if they are successful? Or do we punish them? Jacob got away with the theft of Esau's patrimony and is revered in the Old Testament. What aboutincest? Lot slept with his two daughters. True, it was more their fault than his, but the incest is not condemned. David…. Solomon…. If a married woman rather than a married man committed adultery, she was stoned to death. All this is sufficient for me to have a horror of any attempt to base our present laws on the Old Testament, and even more horror at the thought of some religious group putting its own construction of ambiguous parts of the Bible into present day law."

So much for this one person, who in addition had some other things to say. The state of mind is widespread. It is the result of the American public school system, at least to a large measure. For example, as a camouflage for the Supreme Court's attempt to suppress all Christian teaching in the schools, some people

have called for a study of the Bible as literature. This is supposed to get a little Christianity into the atheistic schools. In one high school the course in Bible was given to an accommodating teacher who had no strong ideas one way or the other. She wanted to teach the course from a strictly neutral point of view and avoid all controversy. She assigned a paper to be written. One pupil asked if he might write on *Isaiah*. She asked in return, Do you want to write on First Isaiah or Second Isaiah? The point is obvious. She thought that there was no controversy over the fact that the book of *Isaiah* was written by one man, Isaiah. She had never heard that there was only one Isaiah. She had been taught when she was a pupil that there are two Isaiahs. And so she "neutrally" taught this "non-controversial" view to her pupils.

Because of certain arrangements I happen to hear a professor teaching the Old Testament to a class. The class meets three times a week, and I have overheard what he is saying a dozen times or so. He constantly and calmly describes the uncivilized superstitions of the Old Testament. He shows all the contradictions between the E account of creation in *Genesis* 1 and the J account in *Genesis* 2.Moses (who did not write the Pentateuch) lived in a barbarous age. He enforced a system of sacrifices. Later on the Prophets invented a better religion and taught that God does not require sacrifice. And so on. This professor's students hear nothing from the Biblical viewpoint. The plainest statements are garbled and distorted. As one of his students confidently stated, "I cannot imagine that the writer of *Genesis* really thought that Adam was a particular individual." But what else could the student say, when he had heard nothing else? What then must an evangelist do when he speaks to such students? They do not believe the Bible. They do not think ofGod as the Bible presents him. They despise the Mosaic laws, the precepts of *Proverbs*, and all "rules" of

action. To obey divine laws is “legalism” and our only guide of conduct should be love. If we love our neighbor’s wife, it is right and good to commit adultery with her. Let us have no laws. Just love.

Should the evangelist tell them to accept Christ? Well, they already accept Christ. Wasn’t he the man who stressed love? Of course he was not virgin born. But he died a martyr to his convictions. Why, Christ is more to be honored than even Gandhi. Of course we believe in Christ. We have a personal attachment to him. He opposed the establishment. So too we must demonstrate against the government and tear it down. We are real Christians, relevant to our day…. I wonder what Moody could have done with these students.

He could have quoted Scripture verses. Now, it is not such a bad idea to quote Scripture verses. Of course a preacher, an evangelist, a personal worker is not supposed to do nothing but quote. He is also supposed to explain. And one of the most important tasks of theevangelist, an absolutely essential task, is to explain what Christianity is. American education almost guarantees that young people shall have no knowledge of the Bible. They are equally unfamiliar with the claims of Christ and the particulars of the Ten Commandments. Many of my own students have never seen the inside of a Bible. Quote them something and they will assign it toShakespeare, rather than to David for example. Since they have no idea of what sin is, they have no idea of what salvation is. If they have read Dante, they know that Judas was an associate of Brutus. From their Shakespeare class they have learned that Brutus was the noblest Roman of them all. So probably Judas was some ancient philanthropist who murdered a tyrant. But then again they may know less about Shakespeare and Dante than about the Bible, for everybody knows that the Bible is full of myths.

Now, the Bible makes it quite plain that God is omnipotent and that his grace is irresistible. It is a good thing too, for otherwise no one would repent. God can convert the most unlikely prospects. He converted Saul. So none of these students is beyond hope. Nevertheless, there is a verse about casting pearls before swine; and at times it may be wise not to be too optimistic about the probable results. Here is one final example.

After lunch a group of college students was sitting in the student lounge, waiting a few minutes before going into the chess room to play chess. There were eight or ten in the group. An elderly gentleman sat down with them. This happened in the twenties and the gentleman was a free thinker of the nineteenth century stamp. Not many of them remained, even at that date. He discoursed on the beauty of Democritus and the philosophy of mechanism. Christianity was all superstition. In fact the Bible says…and in trying to reproduce *Matthew* he made a few simple factual blunders. One of the students had a New Testament in his pocket and a rapid series of thoughts in his mind. Should he correct the old gentleman's account and then try to answer the objection that the man really meant? Then the student remembered the great wisdom of P. T. Barnum, "Never give a sucker an even break." So feigning ignorance and stupidity, which was easy enough for a college junior to do, he asked with a look of amazement, "Is that what the Bible says?" "It certainly does," replied the old man, and he continued by repeating *Matthew* with even worse mistakes. The student took out his Testament and, handing it to the man, said, Please show it to me. The gentleman picked up the Testament in some confusion, turned a half a dozen pages, slammed the little book down on the table, got up, and walked off.

The student had not preached the Gospel to the free thinker, but he may have made a slight impression on the other students.

These examples, perhaps wrongly labeled paradigms of evangelism, describe pretty well the minds of those to whom the Gospel must be preached today. These people will not be saved directly by lessons in archaeology or by having their Biblical criticism corrected or by refutations of existentialism. But unless the evangelist can talk intelligently on these subjects, he will quickly lose his audience. He may lose it anyway, as Paul did on Mars Hill, but at least he must begin at the point at which his auditors stand. They "know" that religious language is symbolic, that God, if there be a God, could not express his thought in fallible English or Greek. The "Easter Event," graciously left undefined, is a valuable symbol of optimism and courage; but one should not seek truth in value. Undoubtedly God speaks in history; only he does not say anything.

To such people Christianity must be preached. The evangelist must gain their attention. With a little criticism or existentialism as bait, he can try to insert into the conversation the definition of sin. It will be a new idea to these people. The concept of sin presupposes the concept of law. This must be made clear. Justification must be explained. It is a legal term. Should religion be based on legality? Well, should it be based on illegality? After this is chewed over a little, the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice must be elucidated. It will require a good bit of elucidation. Questions of penology will arise. Penology reminds one of capital punishment and Moses. Some attention must be paid to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Fortunately the Dead Sea Scrolls will help with "second" Isaiah. To ignore this, as some so-called evangelists do, will simply strengthen the paganism of the auditor and convince him all the more that Christians are stupid and that Christianity is superstition. If an evangelist is concerned for the soul of his auditor, he must do his best to prevent this result.

By keeping the conversation going, it will be possible to present some of the Christian message. Find some point the student is interested in and explain it carefully. The aim is to *teach.* Christ said, “Teaching them…all things.” Teach patiently, calmly, and in great detail. This will require the evangelist to diverge from the initial point of interest and explain how this point implies something else. The aim is to teach the *system of doctrine* that the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures are not a haphazard collection of bits of information and theory. They present an integrated, logical system. Justification (carefully explained) produces sanctification (carefully explained). The forgiveness of sin requires a propitiatory sacrifice. The Lordship of Christ implies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The Gospel cannot be true unless Christ rose from the dead.

It is impossible to teach the system of doctrine in five minutes, or to reduce it to five spiritual laws, recently discovered bypsychology. The Christian message is the whole Bible; it is the whole counsel of God. All of it must be taught, not just a small part, for it is *all* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. It is by taking heed thereto that a young man may cleanse his way.

Evangelism is the exposition of the Scripture. God will do the regenerating.

1. See above, 78-81, 83-85. – *Editor*

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