

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

March, April 1992

Email: Jrob1517@aol.com

Copyright 2003 John W. Robbins Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692
Website: www.trinityfoundation.org

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

The Theologian's Besetting Sin

Gordon H. Clark

Introduction

For the great majority of ordinary Christians it is sufficient, in identifying sins and exhorting the congregation to avoid them, that a pastor make a few remarks about worshipping God alone, and avoiding profanity, Sabbath desecration, adultery, and theft. But there are some sins, even forms of those just mentioned, that are not so easily recognized. Most communicant members are not even equipped to commit these sins; and perhaps both members and pastors hardly think they are sins at all. But presumably everybody would agree that the actions are regrettable.

There is, however, a similarity between a scholar's besetting sin and the common sins of the majority. Malebranche, a philosopher of the seventeenth century, shows wisdom in pointing out the cause of the sins of individuals. In Volume III of his *Recherche de la Verite*, chapter one, he wrote: "Error is the cause of human misery; it is the pernicious principle that has produced the evil in the world; it is error that has begotten and preserves in our soul all the evils that afflict us, and we ought not to hope for true and solid happiness except in working seriously to avoid it."

Although adultery and theft are commonly regarded as overt actions, their origin is in our thinking. Sin is the result of intellectual error. Scriptures also teach this plainly. For example:

"It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" (*Psalm 95:10*).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (*Proverbs 4:23*).

"As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (*Proverbs 23:7*).

"The heart is deceitful above measure and desperately wicked" (*Jeremiah 17:9*).

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries..." (*Matthew 15:17*).

These verses of general import, supported by many concrete instances in the Old Testament, teach that sin is first of all mental and only afterward overt. Righteousness is also intellectual at first and only later seen in conduct. *2 Peter 1:2-8* is a passage many Christians seem never to have read. It begins with Peter's prayer that God bless us by means of knowledge, according as his divine power has given us everything, yes, everything, pertaining to godliness through knowledge; we even become partakers of the divine nature by means of God's promises (which we ought to know and understand); thus escaping the lust of the world we should diligently add knowledge to our faith, and with several virtues we shall not be barren in the knowledge of Christ.

Though it may not be so utterly unknown as these verses in *2 Peter*, yet *Hebrews 5:12-6:3* rarely receives serious attention. In these verses God

rebukes some of us, some of us who could become teachers but who refuse to prepare ourselves, for remaining in kindergarten, unskillfully playing with the word of righteousness like a baby. We should, the text continues, go beyond the elementary lessons, and if we cannot earn a Ph.D., we should at least go through college.

Now, the besetting sin of scholars, as such, is to make mistakes. Not surprisingly they misunderstand much when they are young. I remember as a boy I had read *Matthew* several times, and I interpreted 4:7 to mean that Satan had no right to tempt Jesus because Jesus was God. This interpretation would support the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, but it was a misinterpretation. Now, years later, I have no doubt made worse errors in my several commentaries. Usually the errors of believing scholars are not so heinous as the criminal sins that fill our newspapers. But sometimes, when the scholar is not so devoted to the inerrancy of Scripture, the intellectual errors are much worse than crime. Not to mention those who publicly denounce Christianity, such as Voltaire, Matthew Tyndal, and Friedrich Nietzsche, those who show some small degree of interest in the Bible, as in the cases of Pelagius, Socinus, Channing, and Fosdick, do immense damage. But Augustine and Calvin, Hodge and Berkhof, also made mistakes; and no mistake is praiseworthy.

In the following material it is not my aim, nor is it within my ability, to judge the degree of heinousness. In fact, nearly every case will be one unwittingly committed. The purpose is to warn young students how easy it is to go wrong, how necessary it is to go right, and how difficult the latter proves to be. Perhaps it will be possible to point out recurrent types of mistake, such as the assertion of the consequent or the false interchange of subject and predicate in universal affirmatives and particular negatives. So warned, a student can at least reduce the number of his mistakes.

To quote once more from Malebranche's *Search for Truth*: "If then it is true that error is the origin of human misery, it is very proper that men make an effort to escape it. Certainly their effort will not be useless and without recompense, although it do not

have all the effect they could wish. If men do not become infallible, they will deceive themselves much less; and if they do not entirely escape their faults, they will at least avoid some. In this life one must not expect total felicity, because no one should claim infallibility; but one should work unceasingly to avoid deception."

Historical Blunders

Since no one of us is omniscient, or even inerrant, it is not surprising that our volumes of theology contain blunders, mistakes, and stupidities. We are likely to be puzzled, however, when several theologians make the same historical error. Later we must examine logical blunders, but let us begin with matters of history. When several theologians make the same mistake in history, we wonder whether they have all copied a single erroneous source without checking. If all the mistaken authors had studied in the same seminary, the unfortunate result would be understandable; but if the authors are separated from each other by many miles and even by several centuries, it would seem that an entire line of writers was not too careful.

Sometimes very strange things happen. It seems – though I have not yet had time to check thoroughly – that recently I attributed a series of quotations to the wrong author. The reason was unusual. The title page of the book from which I quoted was in error. Somehow the publisher put title page A in book B, and conversely. This can be classed as an historical, rather than a logical, blunder both on my part and on the part of the publisher. But the blunders about to be mentioned are more properly called historical because they concern a more remote past and a less accidental mistake.

The aim of collecting the following mistakes is not only to warn Christian readers to do at least a minimum of checking, but also and mainly to alert future Christian writers and to help them reduce their inadequacies by several degrees. Since ridicule is not the motive, it might seem wise and courteous to conceal the names of those about to be mentioned. On the other hand, since I too make mistakes, the readers have a right to check whether the examples here analyzed are or are not the

present writer's invention. But not every name need be given.

The first of the two types of mistake, historical and logical, has to do with mistaken reporting of what someone long ago said or did. The material, of course, is not concerned with general history, such as a statement that Bismarck was President of France. We are here concerned strictly with the reporting of theological or philosophical views. The mistake will usually be a misinterpretation of an earlier author's meaning. Or, in a more complex form, it will consist of the attribution to six or a dozen authors of what may possibly be true of only one of them. Now, misinterpretation comes in degrees. Some cases are so plausible as to be relatively excusable; others are so absurd as to be not worth analysis; but the following examples are so concentrated upon one historical epoch and so widespread in their occurrence that they call for identification.

Greek Philosophy

The epoch is that of Greek philosophy. That this epoch should be chosen may puzzle the people in the pews; but the seminary students presumably know that liberals attack the doctrine of the Trinity as being an imposition of paganism on an original Christian unitarianism. Unfortunately few pastors preach on the Trinity and the congregations may regard the doctrine as rather ethereal. But who can deny that Paul's doctrine of redemption is of essential importance? Yet Reitzenstein argued that Paul or someone who used his name borrowed the doctrine from the tractate *Pomander* with other tractates of Hermes Trismegistus. Exceedingly competent scholars, in particular J. Gresham Machen, in his *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, made havoc of Reitzenstein. Very few liberals dare follow Reitzenstein now. But had not Machen done his work well, liberalism would have a greater influence today than it actually has. It still dominates the religious scene, and we need more men like Machen. Hence although other epochs and other subjects need attention, the propriety of discussing the discussions on ancient Greek philosophy is unquestionable.

Naturally the Greek philosophers from Thales to Plotinus were not Christians. Their systems are incompatible with our religion. The earlier Greeks of course knew nothing of Christianity or even of Judaism. Plotinus attacked the only form of Christianity he knew – Gnosticism; but he attacked it on about the only point at which it was in accord with the Bible. In either case Biblical doctrines can often be brought into better focus by contrasting them with opposing views. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus have had tremendous influence throughout history: Plotinus chiefly in the middle ages, Plato and Aristotle right down to the present. They must be considered. But though they often contradict our theology, this does not justify our misrepresenting their views. We should always state the position of an opponent with the greatest possible accuracy. Not only is this a matter of honesty, it is a matter of strategy as well. Plotinus indubitably and explicitly argued against the Christian doctrine of a temporal creation. His theory was that of an eternal emanation from the transcendent One. We should not accuse him of denying Paul's doctrine of the Atonement, about which he seemingly knew nothing. Possibly, probably, or even certainly, one might show that his tractates are incompatible with the Atonement. This is allowable. There is nothing wrong or scholarly incompetent in so doing. Many times an author implies conclusions of which he is completely unaware. If our analyses are sound, we have scored our point, and that is enough. From these and other rules of legitimate criticism the following blunders, wittingly or unwittingly, in one way or another, depart.

The Body

The first example comes from J. A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body* (Eerdmans, 1964, 171). He contends that a certain interpretation is wrong "because it might lead one to suppose that Paul expresses a Stoic contempt for the body." Schep's aim is to defend the Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the *flesh*. He is not even satisfied with the phrase, the resurrection of the *body*. He therefore rejects a certain exegesis because of the reason stated. But where did Schep discover any Stoic contempt for the body? The Stoics did indeed

express contempt for pain. But they were materialists. For them everything was body. God himself, even if some of the later Stoics called him Father, was a body, an intelligent fire, as Heraclitus has said. Our bodies are parts of this universal fire. They even conceived virtue as a very fine body permeating the human body. There was no Stoic contempt for body or matter. Hence if the interpretation which Schep gives is wrong, it is not because of the reason he gives. Contempt for pain is quite another thing. And on this point, if taken singly, Paul agrees. He speaks of the hard exercise needed to run a race. He beats his body into subjection. Calvin also refers to the body as the prison house of the soul. Neither Paul nor Calvin was a materialist, but their statements, particularly Paul's, were at least as hard on the body as anything the Stoics said.

By quoting R. H. Fuller, Schep misinterprets Plato also. "As regards the idea of a transcendent order beyond space and time," says Schep (214-215), "R. H. Fuller remarks rightly that this is 'a wholly non-biblical Platonic conception. ...'" Fuller's statement is not quoted as referring to the eternity of God. It has to do with the immortality of the soul. For Schep the human soul is now and ever shall be a temporal being. In this he is indubitably correct. He argues that to attribute an eternal, non-temporal existence to the soul in its future state is a non-biblical Platonic conception. In this he is not correct. On the contrary, this conception, while certainly non-biblical, is not Platonic either. Plato believed in reincarnation, every ten thousand years for philosophical souls and oftener for non-philosophical souls. It is hard to dismiss the theory of reincarnation as a myth which Plato did not really believe, though some details in *Republic* X probably are. At any rate, the very literal explanation in the *Timaeus* subjects the soul to time. Let us not defend the Bible by misinterpreting Plato.

The Trinity

Incidentally, to show that such discussions as these are not merely impractical academic exercises, but are matters that directly affect actual congregations at the present time, one may mention two anti-Trinitarian sects: Jehovah's Witnesses and The

Way. These two groups, both very evangelistic, especially the former, hold that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fourth century imposition of paganism on the preceding, pure, unitarian Christianity. There is nothing arcane, recondite, purely abstruse in the situation: These people vigorously attack the members of conservative congregations and try to win them away from the gospel of Christ. Within the last week two ladies, Jehovah's Witnesses, came to my door and tried to convince me that the doctrine of the Trinity is pagan. How many Christians, whom they visit, can answer them?

After Plato comes Aristotle, and in his case several blunders occur. The first of these is so widespread, and perhaps relates to a combination of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, and, besides, is more characteristic of the less orthodox than the more orthodox, that it will be discussed without mentioning names. The main idea is that the doctrine of the Trinity, as noted, is based on themes in Greek philosophy.

There is a tiny, a very tiny, grain of truth in this accusation. In the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), Athanasius sought for a phrase that would publicize Arius' heresy. He finally hit upon the phrase "of one substance with the Father." Now, the word *substance* (actually a mistranslation of the Greek word *ousia*) is an Aristotelian term. It is also a word in common use just as the English word *factor* can be used in very unphilosophical political campaigns as well as in technical mathematics. Its use therefore is far from proving that Athanasius introduced Aristotelian-Neoplatonism into Christianity.

The Athanasian (not Nicene Creed) was written more than three centuries after Athanasius had written the Nicene Creed. Neoplatonism had or was infiltrating the church, as in the writing of Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 450). Furthermore, the language of the Athanasian Creed is more precise and certainly more detailed than that of Nicaea. But the ideas are strictly Christian; indeed they reflect the Creed of Chalcedon, the great creed on the Person of Christ. One cannot maintain that Neoplatonism never influenced ecclesiastical theologians. It even influenced Thomas Aquinas.

But the creedal documents nowhere conform to those principles. The greatest evidence of this is found in Athanasius' own writings. His *Defense of the Decree* is full of Scripture, and he mentions Greek philosophy no more than twice, each time an offhand remark. It would be good if every church recited the Nicene Creed at every communion service, and if the minister would read the Athanasian Creed (minus the first sentence) to his congregation once or even twice a year. Too few communicant members in our day have even a moderate knowledge of God.

Creation

A concrete, individual, and therefore more normal example for the present study is that of Herman Dooyeweerd (A *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I, 180), who furnishes an example from Thomas Aquinas. The heading reads, "Creation as a natural truth in Thomas's *theologia naturalis*"; under which he writes, "Creation is proclaimed to be a natural truth, which can be seen and proven by theoretical thought independent of all divine revelation." This just does not happen to be true.

Etienne Gilson, a leading Thomistic scholar, in *La Philosophie au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1925, 184), contradicts Dooyeweerd's assertion and shows how Thomas differed from both Averroes and Bonaventura. Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre* (McGraw-Hill, 1966, 196) makes the same point. Then to quote Thomas himself (*Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 46, Art. 2): "That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone: it cannot be proved demonstratively."

Dooyeweerd's mistake was to confuse the existence of God with the act of creation. Thomas follows Aristotle in proving, empirically, to his own satisfaction, that there is a God, or Unmoved Mover. But the knowledge of a creation comes only through verbal revelation. If anyone wishes to dismiss such an error as trivial – for it is only a mistake in understanding Aquinas – let it be remembered that Romanists can sneer that "those Protestants just don't know what they are talking about when they attack Romanism."

Are American theologians better than the Hollanders? A. H. Strong (*Systematic Theology*, I, 55) makes these rapid-fire statements: "The positivist denies causality; the idealist denies substance; the pantheist denies personality; and the necessitarian denies freedom." Taking the terms in their ordinary senses, I submit that one of these assertions is true; a second is false; another is too ambiguous to determine; and the reader may guess about the other one.

These examples have been called historical blunders because they incorrectly report the history of philosophy. The following are also historical in that sense, but perhaps it is better to call them literary mistakes. In consequence, with the aim of using widespread blunders, the next one is not restricted to the author actually quoted.

Man

This frequent blunder, occurring in many authors, may be documented by a quotation from George Eldon Ladd, (A *Theology of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1974, 458). "The Hebrew view of man is very different from the Greek view. There is no trace of dualism." The contention seems to be that the Greeks were dualistic and the Old Testament is not. Yet on the same page Ladd talks about *nephesh* and *ruach* (soul and spirit), not to mention the body, without realizing that there is more than a "trace of dualism" in Genesis.

Aside from this inadvertence there are two main flaws in this widely held view: First, it assumes the existence of something called "the Greek view;" and, second, it misunderstands the Biblical view. [Compare the definitive study, *The Bible Doctrine of Man*, John Laidlaw, revised edition, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895. See also *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (The Trinity Foundation, 1984).]

"The Greek view" will be considered first. But whether it be pagan Greek or orthodox Christian, there is great confusion as to the terms *dualism* and its presumable opposite *monism*. Each with somewhat different meanings is used both in metaphysics or cosmology and in psychology or anthropology. Neither term is clearly applicable in

early Greek literature. Even in later Greek philosophy there are certain distinctions that should be kept in mind. All of which makes the discussion somewhat complicated.

If we wish to discuss "the Greek view," as Ladd and others call it, the first thing to be said is that there is no such thing. Several very different views were current in ancient Greece. The earlier, popular, unphilosophic, poetical view of Homer can easily be called dualistic in the sense that, while religious duty required a proper burial of the body at death, there is no resurrection of the body and only the soul lives on. But this view could also be called monistic for the same reason. The real person is the soul that lives on. Homer's view is not a happy one, for, with the exception of great heroes who become demi-gods, and with the other exception of great criminals who are tortured in Tartarus, everybody else descends to a cheerless Hades where wander the shadows of worn-out men.

This can plausibly be called the Greek view, at least down to 500 B.C. From that date on the dreary view provoked a reaction in the form of mystery religions which promised a happy future to their initiates, but which contributed nothing to a debate between monists and dualists.

But what is dualism? If man has both a soul and a body, is not Christianity as dualistic as Homer? The Bible not only distinguishes between soul and body in this life, but also by the resurrection makes the heavenly life dualistic also. Or can the existence of both soul and body be fitted into a basic, monistic doctrine? But let us continue with the Greeks a little longer.

In discussing "the Greek view" Christian theologians usually fix their attention on Greek philosophy rather than on the ancient popular Homeric poetry. Surely this is the better procedure, for ancient polytheism, hardly a contender in the Platonic era, is even less so today.

Perhaps it is too optimistic to say that these theologians "fix their attention" on Greek philosophy. If they had done so, they would have discovered, to say it again for emphasis, that there is no such thing as "the Greek view." The

philosophers differed. The Milesians and Heraclitus, as hylozoists, were monists, not dualists. All things – rocks, stars, plants, and animals – were basically one living corporeal substance. Dualism, more properly pluralism, came only later with Empedocles and Anaxagoras. Democritus was a numerical pluralist but substantially a monist.

What some present day theologians call the Greek view turns out to be the view of Plato and Aristotle alone. The other philosophers are frequently ignored. Of course Plato was a great philosopher, possibly the greatest of all, and indisputably worthy of careful study. But Aristotle is a close second, and in his details even first. Restricting one's view to Plato only ruins a book of theology. For Plato the human body is composed of "space," as are all other bodies. The soul is incorporeal and eternal. This can be called a dualistic view of man, but if Aristotle was a Greek, this is not "the Greek view."

Unless the term *dualism* is defined with extreme accuracy, it is difficult to say whether Aristotle was a dualist or not. He had a primary and a secondary substance; he had forms and matter; and the soul is the form of the organic body. The matter is so simple and the form so complex that theologians can be excused for neglecting Aristotle and fixing their attention on the far more literary Plato.

After Aristotle's death, Simplicius and Aquinas interpreted his view that the soul is the form of the organic body in a spiritualistic sense, while Alexander, Aphrodisias, and Averroes understood it as behaviorism. There is therefore no unanimity as to whether Aristotle's view of man is monistic or dualistic.

The Epicureans and the Stoics, whose schools endured for at least five centuries, were both monistic. From which historical summary one must conclude that theologians who make a simple contrast between the Biblical doctrine of man and "the Greek view" are deficient in their knowledge of Greek philosophy.

It must also be said that they are deficient in their view of the Biblical position. This deficiency shows itself on two levels, one more superficial, the other more profound.

Mind

It is convenient to use Ladd for another example. It ties in well with what has just been said. In the same volume, on a later page, there is an instance of confusion. Much more extreme cases could be found, if not in Ladd, certainly in others. This one is chosen precisely because there is so much commendable in the passage. The aim is to show how widespread certain inaccuracies are.

On page 476 Ladd has several paragraphs under the sub-head "Mind." "Paul often speaks of the mind (*nous*), by which he designates man as a knowing, thinking, judging creature." This statement, in my opinion, is absolutely and completely correct. But the very next sentence is, again in my opinion, completely mistaken. It reads, "*Nous* is not used of man engaged in speculative, reflective reason; the word can be used of practical judgment." The last phrase by itself is undeniable, although the term *phronesis* rather than *nous* is the usual term for practical judgment. The questionable aspect of the sentence is the suggested inference that *nous* can be only practical and never reflective. On the contrary, *nous* engages in reflective thinking as much as and more than it engages in practical decisions. In fact, a practical judgment requires a process of reflective thinking prior to the decision.

The main point now is whether *nous* can be or cannot be reflective. This question actually divides into two parts: First, does the New Testament ever use the word *nous* in a sense other than that of a decision to act morally (or immorally); and, second, is the activity of speculation or reflection, which English commonly refers to the "mind," assigned to some other Greek word synonymous with *nous*? The first of these is a linguistic problem solely; the second is also philosophical.

The linguistic problem can be solved only by examining verses in the New Testament. It is not necessary to examine every instance of the word *nous*. A single example of a speculative use of the word would refute Ladd's statement. Or at most two verses taken as two premises might imply the desired conclusion. However, eight or ten would be more convincing.

First, can we maintain that "the Hebrew view of man [has] no trace of dualism"? Some groups of professing Christians assert not merely a dualism, but a trichotomy. Trichotomy as such need not be discussed here, for the basic question is whether man is monistic or pluralistic. One may ask, however, could the theory of trichotomy ever have arisen unless there was "a trace" of pluralism in the Bible?

Genesis 2:7 supplies such a trace: "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." What the Old Testament calls soul (*nephesh*) is not precisely what the New Testament calls soul (*psuche*). Colloquial English translates both words as *soul*; but there is no reason why these two words must mean the same thing. At any rate, the Old Testament *nephesh* is a combination of two elements: dust and the breath of God. Superficially this looks like a trace of dualism. Whether the Biblical view is basically dualistic depends on how one defines dualism and how one defines man.

This treatise aims to illustrate mistakes, including ambiguities. It is not a systematic theology. Nevertheless, not to confuse the reader, may I acknowledge that my view of man, which I take to be the Scriptural view, is not dualistic. Yet the unity I maintain is probably not the unity Ladd and others have in mind. When Paul said that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, it seems that "he" is not the "body." He can exist entirely separated from his body. *2 Corinthians* 5 seems to say that the body is the clothes that a man wears. A man is not his clothes. Beyond this, everybody who dies exists entirely apart from a body in the so-called intermediate state. And again, Moses, the person, he himself, talked with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration centuries after his body had become mountain soil. Man is a unity because man is his mind or *nous*, His body belongs to him somewhat as tools belong to a carpenter.

So much for positive theology. It is pertinent too because it illustrates how words can mean different things to different people. One should therefore try to be as clear as possible.

Romans 11:34 reads, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" The "mind" of the Lord, not only by reason of general theology and the doctrine of omniscience, but by the immediate context, contains many non-practical pieces of information. In fact, it seems queer to attribute to the Lord any balancing of opinions in order to come to a practical decision. Since then God's mind consists, at least mainly, of so-called speculative truths, it would be most peculiar if those with the mind of Christ (*I Corinthians* 2:16) should have none. More of this in a moment. In the context of *Romans* 11:34 Paul exhorts his readers not to be ignorant of a future event in Jewish history. Surely this is not a precept for overt action. It is not a norm of morality or even a matter of expediency. If one divides thinking into speculative versus practical, *Romans* 9-11 are surely speculative. Probably not even Ladd would defend himself by calling our attention to his words, "*Nous* is not used of *man*," though it is so used of God. But if anyone should make such a lame reply, other verses must be considered.

Romans 14:5 reads, "One man esteemeth one day above another.... Let every man be fully persuaded in his own *mind*." Obviously this refers to human minds. But is not this matter practical rather than reflective? Again, two points should be noted. First, no claim is made here that *nous* cannot pay attention to practical problems, and the verse deals with a practical problem. But, second, the discussion between two men, one who insists on observing holy days, such as Christmas and Pentecost, and the one who insists on not observing them, such as the Puritans and the Covenanters, involves a considerable massing of Scriptural evidence and reflective exegesis of the same, not all of which, nor any of which, is easily recognized as practical. A thorough discussion of ethics always includes much that is other than a precept or command. One cannot cavalierly separate practical from speculative and so ensure its unadulterated purity. This then is one case of a man using his mind or *nous* on a universal problem and not on an individual decision.

If this reference be not sufficiently convincing, *I Corinthians* 1:10 reads, "I beseech you...that ye all speak the same thing...perfectly joined together in

the same *nous* and in the same judgment." In later chapters practical morality is the main problem, but here it is a matter of theological agreement on the doctrine of the Atonement. The so-called wisdom of the world is contrasted with the foolishness of God. The chapter is thoroughly theological. To have the same mind is to believe the same doctrines and speak the same things. Speaking may be "practical" in the sense that it is overt action; but if anything at all is speculative, intellectual, and reflective, believing is.

The next two instances, both in a single verse, confirm this. *I Corinthians* 2:16 reads, 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.'

Let it be immediately noted that this verse, like the two preceding, refers to the human *nous*, and not to the divine *nous* as *Romans* 11:34 seemed to do.

The context of the verse, from the beginning of the chapter, and even more so from verse 9 on, has little to do with practical morality. Verse 2 refers to Paul's sermons on the Atonement; this was the hidden wisdom of God, ordained before the world began. The blessings of God, which the heart of natural man never surmised, these deep things of God, the Spirit has revealed to us. This context describes both the mind of God and the mind of those who have the mind of Christ. However much the doctrine of the Atonement, with its rejection of overt action as the basis for justification, may be the basis for a sanctification that includes works, nonetheless the doctrine itself, with its facets of total depravity and immediate imputation, far from being "practical," is as speculative, theological, intellectual as any mental activity can be. I consider this as conclusive against Ladd's statement that the word *nous* is not used of man engaged in speculative, reflective reason. [Compare Clark, *First Corinthians, A Contemporary Commentary* (The Trinity Foundation, 1991 [1975]).]

Conclusive though this verse is, there is further supporting material. *Ephesians* 4:17, 23 seem in rapid reading to be entirely practical. "Walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of your mind" sounds 100 percent practical. Admittedly the

passage is practical, but not 100 percent. It was seen above that theory and practice merge: Practice is the practice of a theory. So here in *Ephesians* there is not only overt action, but also a previous "vanity of mind," a "darkened understanding," and "ignorance." These terms refer to the fallacious reflective processes that precede lasciviousness, uncleanness, and greed. And if "ignorance" is not a thought process, it is at least the absence of thinking. Verse 25 refers to speaking the truth. Speaking may be practical, but the truth spoken is theoretical.

The theoretical or noetic foundation of evil behavior is even more clearly seen in *Colossians* 2:18. Here the overt sin is not lasciviousness, but the worshipping of angels. Before a man kneels to, prays to, or praises angels, he must have concluded intellectually that they are worthy of worship. This theology governs his actions. He has done some thinking, incorrect thinking of course, with an unholy conceited mind. But still it is a theoretical, theological mind, and not itself overt conduct. In contrast with conceit, always inner, subjective, mental before showing itself in a haughty bearing, Paul exhorts the *Colossians* in 3:2 to have a humble mind. This too will have its result, in humble conduct, but it is the result of a prior evaluation.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 also uses the term *nous* as a thought process: "Be not shaken in mind...as that the day of Christ is at hand." According to reasonably reliable records, many people in A.D. 1000 ceased their daily labors and looked to Heaven to see Christ descend. This also happened in 1843 (or thereabouts). But before they gave away their Earthly possessions and put on their white robes, their minds had been shaken and they had intellectually concluded, perhaps by some mathematical argument, that Christ would then appear. Mathematics, be it noted, is intellectual, speculative, theoretical. That it is also used by strange cults as well as by competent engineers does not make it any the less a mental, reflective process.

Titus 1:15 is another composite of thinking and action; but *Revelation* 17:9 is thoroughly intellectual. John's vision identifies the evil city as Rome with its seven hills. This information is called

"the mind which hath wisdom." There is not the slightest moral exhortation to John or to anyone else. There is explanation and prediction on to the end of the chapter. Clearly Ladd was mistaken, badly mistaken, when he said, "*Nous* is not used of a man engaged in speculative reflective reason." Ladd may say many things good and true, but it is not true to say "That *nous* is not speculative reason, but moral judgment. This is clear from the fact that godless men have a 'base mind' (*Romans* 1:28)." Neither the angel nor John was making any "practical judgment" or plan of action. The noetic contents were pure information.

The motive here is not to disparage Dr. Ladd. His book is itself almost completely informational. He details the contents of the New Testament at great length, and this article concerns only two paragraphs. But these paragraphs are in line with a widely prevalent antagonism to doctrine, to truth, to thinking, to intellectual activity. Excitement – how often do ministers and other Christians say, "this excites me!" – experience and emotion have supplanted belief for large numbers of people. The New Testament urges belief, not excitement: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in thy heart [synonymous with mind] that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." We are not to "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits." On the contrary, we must "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words... and to doctrine, he is proud, knowing nothing." "Hold fast the form of sound words...but shun profane and vain babblings." Be able to repeat with Paul at the end of life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the *faith*."

Logical Blunders

As for logical fallacies, in contrast with historical misstatements, fifty years of teaching logic to college students convinces me that the same noetic effects of sin are "conveyed" (*Westminster Confession VI*, iii) and repeated from generation to generation. This gives scope to de Morgan's *Budget of Paradoxes* and to a delightful little book on *How*

the Mind Falls into Error by H. B. Smith (Harper & Brothers, 1923). A study of error can be instructive.

Theoretically it is easy to distinguish between an historical and a logical blunder. The first is a mere misstatement; the second is a violation of the rules of inference. Practically when dividing them into two groups as in this study, the distinction is hard to maintain because ordinarily the historical misstatement serves as a premise for an inference and this inference may itself be fallacious. The example therefore falls into both categories. In which list to put it depends only on the critic's judgment as to whether its historical or its logical flaw makes the better illustration. Since theological literature is so extensive, one may well expect many flaws. Some of them are gross, and all of them furnish edifying lessons.

Ladd himself furnished a good connecting link between the historical and the logical. Along with some commendable material, for Ladd's work is extremely detailed, he puzzles the reader with a bit of difficult logic. Difficult, indeed so. But why waste time on trivial points? Let us for once in our lives plunge into discussions the communicant member rarely thinks of. The matter is extremely complex. Yet, because the passage in Hebrews is so interesting and so important, every Christian who loves to study the Bible should be willing to examine the problem very carefully. This may for the moment distract attention from strictly logical fallacies; it may seem that we are engulfed in purely historical complications; but in the end both the logic and the theology will (I hope) stand out clearly.

Hebrews

On page 572 Ladd has a subtitle, "Dualism." One may note that here the term is used in a different sense from the previous usage. This is not a mistake or blunder: Words usually have several different meanings, and the reader must distinguish among them. At any rate the quotation is, "There is a two-fold dualism in [the epistle to the] Hebrews: a dualism of the above and below – the real Heavenly world and the transient Earthly world; and there is an eschatological dualism: the present age and the

age to come." Presumably no one doubts this statement; but Ladd continues by noting the argument of some critics "that the spatial dualism of two worlds – above and below – reflects platonic thought as mediated through Philo, while the eschatological dualism is a remnant of primitive Christian eschatology." Ladd quotes Narborough to the effect that "the spatial dualism of two worlds is the real center of the theology of Hebrews, and the eschatological dualism is an unassimilated leftover from tradition." He also quotes Hering: "Like Philo, our author accepts a kind of philosophical and cosmological framework which is more Platonic than biblical. Two successive aeons...are replaced by two co-existent superimposed planes – the suprasensible world and the phenomenal world. The former contains the eternal ideas, which the second attempts to embody materially. The former is 'Heaven' for Philo, as it is in our epistle (J. Hering, *Hebrews*, p. xii)." Other scholars reverse the priorities, but agree that Hebrews unsuccessfully combines incompatible elements.

To help the reader distinguish the views of Ladd from those of the authors whom he criticizes, and from the views of the present writer – and I have found that college students often are quite confused in such situations – it may be well for me to state here that I reject the allegation that "Hebrews unsuccessfully combines inconsistent elements." The mind of God, as a sort of World of Ideas, no more conflicts with an eschatological future for human beings than does Plato's World of Ideas with his theory of reincarnation. Very well, then; we are prepared to study the details.

The details, however, are distressingly complex. Two dualisms, one of the above and below, which Ladd calls "the spatial dualism," the other, an eschatological dualism, which Ladd refers to as "the present age and the age to come" – two dualisms allow three possible choices. Whether it be Philo, the author of Hebrews, the alleged primitive evangelist, Ladd, or any other, one must choose either (1) both dualisms; (2) the spatial but not the eschatological dualism; or (3) the eschatological but not the spatial. The fourth possibility, *i.e.* no dualism, is ruled out because the subject matter concerns dualisms.

Incidentally, *spatial* is a very poor term to use in this discussion, for neither Jehovah nor Plato's World of Ideas has any spatial characteristics. Indeed the only spatial reference must be found in the eschatological dualism because the resurrection of the body seems to necessitate space. Accurate terminology would be the *eternal* world versus the *spatio-temporal* world. The abused student must therefore realize that when these authors use the term *spatial*, they do not mean *spatial*.

The next difficulty has to do with the philosophical matrix of one or all of these three dualisms. Does Greek paganism require, permit, or preclude any one of these three dualisms? Does Judaism? Could any one of them be acceptable both to the Bible and to paganism? This decision is of inescapable importance for the Bible student. If two of these views are incompatible, and if *Hebrews* teaches both, the Bible cannot be the word of God. If *Hebrews* has one view, and if original Christianity had another, the same conclusion follows. It is necessary therefore to understand the various dualisms and also to exegete *Hebrews* correctly. This is elementary, my dear Watson, but some seminary Watsons need Sherlock to explain it.

A great knowledge of Plato and Philo is not theoretically necessary; but if one wishes to defend the Scriptures against the charge that the later Christianity of the epistles is a pagan importation, basically at variance from an original unitarian, ethical, or eschatological religion, one must know a bit about Greek philosophy in order to avoid blunders. In all this I am not interested in castigating Ladd, nor even Hering. I am trying to give young students a lesson in scholarship.

Ladd addresses himself to the problem. He first locates the allegedly Platonic sections: *Hebrews* 8:5; 9:23, 24; 10:1; and 11:1. "This indeed sounds like the Philonic dualism.... Philo has entirely displaced the Jewish hope for the future with the Greek hope of the flight of the soul after death to the invisible world of eternal reality" (*ibid.*, 573). This introduces a point in Philonic scholarship that I am sure most readers would be glad to skip. Hence a footnote.

Ladd is correct in saying that the view of *Hebrews* 8, 9, 10, and 11 sounds like Philonic dualism. It certainly does; but it is hardly "the Greek hope," for neither Democritus, Aristotle, the Epicureans, nor the Stoics accepted it. Whether or not Philo had "displaced the Jewish hope for the future," Ladd is unassailable in stating that "Hebrews has not, however, displaced eschatology." His references are 2:5; 2:8; 1:11; 10:13, 25; 9:28 and others. In fact he continues for a full page. There is no reason to displace one or the other. Though Philo was inconsistent in many matters, there is no inconsistency in a two-fold dualism of this sort.

However, in Ladd's attempt to defend eschatology – the distinction between *olam hazeh* and *olam haba* – his view of a present Heaven becomes clouded. It almost seems as if he denies that anything is eternal, or at least it is hard to believe that he allows for a World of Ideas after which this ephemeral world is patterned. True, amid his numerous references (574) he allows that "*Hebrews* conceives of an invisible Kingdom already existing in Heaven." But this admission is modified toward the bottom of the page by the paragraph beginning "Furthermore, it is not accurate to say that *Hebrews*, like Philo, contrasts the phenomenal world with the noumenal, regarding the former as unreal and ephemeral." If the sentence, with the words "like Philo," means only that some points in Philo are not found in *Hebrews*, we can grant it: Philo wrote many volumes; *Hebrews* is scarcely twenty-five pages long. But if Ladd means that "it is not accurate to say that *Hebrews* contrasts the phenomenal world with the noumenal, regarding the former as unreal and ephemeral," some questions must be asked. First, must the ephemeral be "unreal"? It is *really* ephemeral, is it not? *Ephemeral* means "lasting but for a day." If refers to something passing away; and such is this visible *olam hazeh*. In any case, Ladd's own references show that in *Hebrews* "This age will end with a cosmic catastrophe by which the present world order will be shaken (1:11-12; 12:26) and the true eternal kingdom of God, now invisible, will become visible." Is it not clear that there could be no temporal, eschatological dualism without a "Philonic," "Platonic," thoroughly Christian dualism between the eternal non-ephemeral God and the world that is passing away?

If the reader is getting bogged down in too much detail and wonders where the logical flaw is in all this, the answer or a part of the answer is that Ladd either has not defined his essential terms or has changed some of their meanings from page to page.

It makes no difference that "Hebrews applies the idea of two worlds primarily to the Old Testament cult" (574). The point is that the Old Testament teaches a "Platonic-Philonic" view of a supersensible world as well as an eschatological *olam haba*. Both the Old Testament and *Hebrews* indicate that the earthly tabernacle was the physical copy of a heavenly form. Note that the "true tabernacle" was pitched by the Lord and not by man (8:2). The earthly tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things, for God had said to Moses, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern in the mount" (8:6; compare 9:9). Keep in mind too that this Platonic or Philonic "spatial" dualism comes from Moses, not from pagan Greek philosophy. Indeed, if we accept the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Jacob's dream in *Genesis* 28 and his wrestling with the angel in 32:24ff. exhibit this dualism of the above and below. That *Hebrews* is "primarily" concerned with sacrifices and the tabernacle does not preclude an underlying and more inclusive dualism, even of a Philonic type. Logically, it is a case of "both-and," not "either-or."

A sentence only five lines below elicits the same comment; "There is nothing ephemeral or transitory about Jesus' life and work." There certainly is! His birth was ephemeral – it occurred on one particular day; his death on the cross was transitory – it was completed in six hours. That such events are transitory does not detract from their "eternal significance;" but if there were nothing ephemeral or transitory about Jesus' life, as Ladd indicates, Jesus could not have lived an earthly life at all. Strangely in this paragraph Ladd says, "What Jesus did, he did once for all," without realizing the meaning of his words. *Hapax* is an important word in Christian theology.

Along with the several very true and very important points Ladd makes, one may surmise that he has not sufficiently fixed the definition of some terms such

as *ephemeral*; also that he substitutes an either-or for a both-and; and third, that his shaky logic is the result of an inability to conceive of a non-spatial, non-visible reality as a pattern of something physical. A blueprint is the physical pattern of something to be constructed in three dimensions. A Tinkertoy, itself in three dimensions, can be a pattern of a larger physical body. But can a spiritual, intellectual, invisible, incorporeal Philonic Idea be a pattern of a three dimensional tabernacle? Can the things that are seen (phenomena) have been made of things which do not appear (noumenal)? Read 11:3.

Yes, *Hebrews* 11:3 is an interesting verse. First, it must be translated. The *King James*, the *New American Standard*, Rienecker in his *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, and a similar work by Hughes, all agree on essentially the same translation: "so that what is seen has not come into being from things which appear." The Roman Catholic *New American Bible* has the more positive rendering, "what is visible came into being through the invisible." The *Jerusalem Bible* has a looser insipid translation: "so that no apparent cause can account for the things we can see." Owen in his immense commentary remarks that "these words...have much of obscurity and difficulty in them." The *King James* and the *New American Standard* are grammatically correct. I might put it a little more crudely, 'What is seen is that which has not come from phenomena.' The *New American Bible* is not an accurate translation, but it seems to be an excellent interpretation. And the interpretation is not so difficult as Owen leads us to believe. Especially when compared with verses in the Pentateuch the words strongly suggest that the visible world came from a suprasensible, ideal world. The term *noumena* is not in the text; but what else could *to me ek phainomenon* mean? Phenomena come from noumena. Certainly the verse in *Hebrews* does not forbid this interpretation.

Now note the confusion of the true and the false on page 575. Referring to 9:24 Ladd acknowledges that the true sanctuary is in Heaven and that Christ did not enter into the earthly copy of the true one. He then immediately adds, "However, it is difficult to think that the author of *Hebrews* conceived of Jesus

after his ascension realistically entering a literal Holy Place in Heaven.... One commentator says, 'We cannot explain verse 23 in a satisfactory manner.' " Ladd's trouble seems to be that "realistically" means physical, so that spiritual things are not real. The Tinkertoy is real, but the suprasensible Ideas of God's mind, so he suggests, are not. As if to explain the inexplicable Ladd uses the neo-orthodox phrase, "Eternity at this point intersects time" (575). Since a point has no dimensions, no historical event can occur in it. Yet the last sentence of the paragraph is, "Here in history on Earth is no shadow, but the very reality itself." This type of neo-orthodoxy contradicts Scripture, contradicts *Hebrews* itself, for it implies that God and angels are unreal. Fortunately its defense is illogical.

Of course "The heavenly tabernacle in *Hebrews* is not the product of Platonic idealism" (576), as the liberal C. K. Barrett insists. Plato's "trinity" had one person who was not omnipotent, one person who did not fashion the visible world, and a third everlasting principle that was not a person; but this in no way eliminates the eternal ideas which are God's mind. *Hebrews* has both worlds, and their relationship is not inexplicable, as Hering suggested. Ladd attempts to solve the original problem by obscuring or even denying the noumenal world; but this is not a solution – it simply discards half of the Biblical material. He lamely concludes, "If *Hebrews* makes use of Philonic dualistic language [Does this imply that references to the Divine Mind are mere metaphors and symbolism?] it is thoroughly assimilated to a Christian worldview of redemptive history with an eschatological consummation." Emphatically true: but why did not Ladd show the assimilation instead of casting doubt on the reality of the suprasensible world of which the visible world of sense is an ephemeral, transient copy? My aim, here, as said before, is not to pillory Ladd, but to defend the supersensible. Perhaps I have been too harsh on Ladd by using him for two extended examples. He is free to publicize more than two of my own numerous mistakes. But let us now choose another victim, this time nameless. This will enable the champions of Ladd to complain that I do not identify my sources. *O tempora, O mori.*

Innate Knowledge

A certain theologian wished to use "first truths" or "rational intuitions" as his first reason for believing in God. First truths, he says, logically precede and condition all observation and reasoning. This is excellent, but then he explains, "A first truth is not Truth written prior to consciousness upon the substance of the soul – for such passive knowledge implies a materialistic view of the soul."

Let us analyze this latter statement. The analysis will be complicated because the argument itself is confused. A hidden issue is the concept of substance. In my book *The Trinity* I have tried to rid theology of that meaningless term. Recall that Athanasius himself did not like it. More immediately one may reduce the argument to its simplest form: "If there were a first Truth antedating consciousness, the soul would have to be a material body"; from which the gentleman wishes to conclude that since the soul is not material, there can be no first Truth antedating consciousness. This hypothetical destructive syllogism is perfect in its logic. But where did its premise come from? How could a first truth antedating consciousness imply materialism? More often truth, first or ninth, presupposes an immaterial mind. Anyone who thinks otherwise bears the burden of proof.

There is indeed a materialistic theory that has a first truth, in one sense of the word *first*, and also in one doubtful sense of the word *truth*. Cleanthes, an early Stoic, held that physical contact produces depressions in a wax-like soul as a signet puts its imprint on wax. But this imprint does not antedate consciousness and imply materialism thereby, nor is it an intuitive or rational principle for the organization of knowledge. Cleanthes' first is simply a first sensation and is therefore not a *truth* at all. Hence the case of Cleanthes is insufficient to justify the contested premise. Nor can I imagine, if temporal priority is meant, how else to justify it. Materialism may very well need a first sensation, but it is not clear how a first sensation, much less a first truth, requires materialism.

There is another meaning of the term *first*. In addition to temporal priority there is a logical

priority. The axioms of geometry are prior to the theorems. That is to say, the axioms imply the theorems. Temporally and historically Pythagoras developed his famous theorem long before Euclid catalogued the axioms. But logical priority can even less imply a materialistic soul.

This discussion and this subject needs a first Truth, such as the law of contradiction, in respect of which the term *passive* is entirely inappropriate. The law as such does not suffer distortions or modifications as the gentleman's term implies. The term *active* is also peculiar, for though the law organizes our thoughts, this is not an *action* in any ordinary sense of the word. It is better to identify the law of contradiction as the first Truth because it is the form of the mind itself, all of whose constituent thoughts, if true, must conform to it. But this can neither presuppose a material soul nor even be possible in any materialistic scheme.

When this theologian speaks of a truth "prior to consciousness," he seems to be confusing temporal priority with logical priority. Temporally, in a child's mind, the law of contradiction organizes, and correctly organizes, many of his thoughts, even though the child may have no explicit consciousness of the law he is using. Indeed this is usually true of adults also. Plato, indeed, asserted preconscious, or more accurately prenatal knowledge, but he could do so only because he posited an immortal, incorporeal soul. When analyzed therefore the theologian's sentence turns out to be nonsense. In fact, the gentleman uses Origen and Calvin as horrible examples, though neither of them held a materialistic view of the soul.

Inspiration

We now proceed to an easier example. The present writer has published several treatises defending the inspiration of Scripture; but this is not to say that he approves of every defense ever published. A. H. Strong (*Systematic Theology*, I, 216), maybe for himself, but certainly for the man he quotes, accuses the liberals of contradicting themselves. The accusation comes in the form of a rhetorical question: "Why the minute study of the words of Scripture, carried on by all expositors, their search

after the precise shade of verbal significance, their attention to the minutest details of language, and to all the delicate coloring of mood and tense and accent? Liberal scholars thus affirm the very doctrine they deny." Nonsense! The voluminous commentaries on Aristotle and the treatises on single themes are just as careful in their study of such details, and yet none of the authors accepts the plenary and verbal inerrancy of Aristotle. How can a Christian theologian commit such a blooper?

A supposedly conservative theologian asserts that "The theory of verbal inspiration is refuted by two facts: (1) that the N. T. quotations from the O. T. in 99 cases differ both from the Hebrew and from the LXX; (2) that Jesus' own words are reported with variations by the different evangelists." The logic here is riddled with fallacies. The premises in no way necessitate the conclusion. Several good scholars have discussed the individual factualities of the single cases. Here only the general logic is considered. First, since the evangelists and apostles wrote in Greek and not in Hebrew, their quotations could not be verbatim. This does not prevent the Holy Ghost from preserving them from error. The Greek language, and any language, can express precisely the thought of a Hebrew text. *Bereshith bara* and *en arche epoiesin* are identical in meaning. Second, when the apostles quote a few words from the LXX, the doctrine of verbal inspiration implies that the LXX is a correct translation at that point. It does not imply that the LXX is correct at some other point. Third, where the apostles alter the LXX in some way, it may be that the LXX is a poor translation; but alteration might occur even if it is not a poor translation. The apostles, since they were bilingual, were competent to do their own translating. In fact, if I may say so, in my commentaries I sometimes use the *King James*' wording for most of a verse and then change a word or two. The change may come from the *New American Standard*, the *New International Version*, or it may be my own invention. And likewise, fourth, an alleged quotation may not be a quotation at all. It may be a reference, rephrased to condense or to emphasize the prophet's point. Since the apostles did not use quotation marks, they cannot be convicted of misquotations. Reports of Jesus' words are similarly explicable, plus the fact that Jesus, as

he preached here and there, or even in one place, repeated his ideas in various ways and not always in identical language. One evangelist could repeat his words as used on this occasion, and another could use the similar but not identical words from another occasion. Then, too, different translations of Jesus' Aramaic can be equally correct. In addition to these general considerations, there are individual particularities in the text, with the result that an offhand reliance on 99 quotations is a mistake in logic.

God

This study will now end with the most frustrating and most complicated, but at least the final example. Some mistakes of a nineteenth-century theologian, if not logically excusable, are tolerably explicable by his ignorance of scholarly developments made subsequently to his publications. Ignorance of future discoveries is excusable; logical fallacies must be exposed.

Though hardly anyone, including the scientists themselves, can keep abreast of the tremendous advances of late twentieth century science, pre-World-War-I theologians should have shown more understanding. In those days it was elementary to define force as the product of mass and acceleration. One theologian, though he uses the word with some frequency, seems to have had no idea of its then common meaning. Though it may seem most peculiar that a mistake in physics can have consequences for the doctrine of the Trinity, nonetheless this defect vitiates his arguments concerning the substance and attributes of God. Here are some sentences, not all consecutive, but all within a few pages of the same section; and the reader is now invited to discover in them a contradiction or something equally bad.

"The attributes have an objective existence, objectively distinguishable from the divine essence and from each other. The nominalistic notion that in his nature there is no internal distinction of qualities or powers tends directly to pantheism; denies all reality to the divine perfections. To say that knowledge and power, eternity and holiness are

identical with the essence of God and with each other, is to deny that we know God at all."

The complexities of this argument, or, better, of these assertions, for there is really no argument at all, are so intricate that one of them, a very important one, must be omitted. The reason for its omission is not only its difficulties, but also more particularly the fact that it has afflicted nearly all theologians since the days of Athanasius. Athanasius himself, though he invented the term *homoousios*, acknowledged that it was unsatisfactory. Usage of the term *ousia*, mistranslated by the Latin as *substance*, is, for that reason, equally unsatisfactory. *Substance* is something that *stands under*. John Locke defined it as "Something I know not what." The quotation above and those that follow assert an unknowable substratum in which knowable qualities inhere. How knowable qualities can inhere in, or be supported by, or related to something completely unknowable is positively unknowable. Hence the term is no more than a disguise for ignorance.

The word *essence* derives from the Latin infinitive *esse*, which means *to be*. The essence of a thing is what the thing *is*. It is why the thing is what it is. What, for example, is the essence of a cactus? Why is not an ocotillo a cactus? The answer is that it is the essence of a cactus to have no true leaves, and since ocotillos have true leaves, they are not cacti. The essentials of a cactus are succulent, absence of true leaves, and three other essentials that I have forgotten. That is to say, *essence* means *definition*. But unless one knows the definition, he does not know what he is talking about. A cactus is what it is, and it *is* a succulent, etc. We shall see that the theologian under consideration, and with him nearly all others, makes both God and the atom unknowable. Now, it does not bother me whether the atom is unknowable or not, but to say that God is unknowable is thoroughly un-Biblical. The Bible more frequently than most people realize speaks about knowing God. It says nothing about an unknowable substratum. But since the idea of an unknowable substratum is such a common view, the following discussion will try to evade it. This will require certain concessions to the common terminology.

The emphasis in the preceding quotation falls on a repudiation of nominalism. This theory, whose best known promulgator was William of Ockham, begins with an Aristotelian empiricism so purified of non-empirical insertions as to destroy the Aristotelianism it started with, for the original position that reality is basically individual was buried under a load of secondary realities and abstract forms. Theologically this means, for one thing, that the cosmological argument for God's existence is invalid; and in our immediate concern it denies that God has any objectively differentiated attributes. For example, justice and mercy are identified in God, though they are separately attributable to God's actions in the world. Since the subject in its entirety is extremely complex, a bit of preliminary explanation should be of some help. Presumably anyone who relies on "common sense" without studying the subject will suppose that justice, mercy, love, and hate are separate and distinguishable in God's "essence." One should, however, consider situations similar to the Israelites' escaping from the Egyptians by crossing the Red Sea. Here in one and the same act we have God's love for the Israelites and his hatred of and vengeance upon the Egyptians. The act is one, possibly an act of wisdom or power, but the results are two. Does it not follow that vengeance and mercy are one in God's "essence," becoming two only in the double effect? If wisdom is an attribute of God, is it not also identical to the others, since all of God's acts are wise? This is one phase of the very complicated philosophy of nominalism.

This nominalism, so he maintains, "tends directly to pantheism." But since this theory sharply distinguishes God from the world, where "attributes" are so sharply distinguished from each other, one would expect it to exalt the divine transcendence rather than to identify God with nature. Nor does the unification of all attributes "deny that we know God at all." Even if we can say only that God is transcendent, that is at least a little bit of knowledge. In addition, to say that God is transcendent does not prevent us from knowing that God is the creator. Again in addition, this supposedly unknowable attribute, omnipotence no doubt, can be known to affect our lives in this way or that. Finally, one must wonder how the author's

view at this point comports with his later statement, "We know nothing of the atom apart from its force." This is an example he will use to support his own position. But it seems rather to support nominalism.

The author's reduction of nominalism to pantheism suffers from another confusion also. He explicitly refers to Quenstedt and Charnock, who, as he admits, held the nominalistic view, but who, as he does not explicitly admit, were not pantheists. He merely classifies them with John Scotus Eriugena (who was no nominalist at all), Schleiermacher, Spinoza, and Bushnell. Imagine! Classifying Quenstedt and Charnock with Spinoza and Bushnell!

The gentleman further writes: "The attributes inhere in the divine essence. [But] we need to avoid making them separate parts of a composite God. We cannot conceive of attributes except as belonging to an underlying essence. Realism endangers the living unity of the Godhead. Notice the analogous necessity of attributing the properties of matter to an underlying substance, else matter is reduced to mere force."

Now, Realism, in this connection, is the view that the attributes are different and distinct in God. It would seem that if the attributes are not one, they must be many; and if so, the gentleman ought to espouse realism. But here he says, "Realism endangers the living unity of the Godhead."

To quote: "The purely realistic explanation of the attributes tends to low and polytheistic conceptions of God," as nominalism "tends directly to pantheism." Further, "The essence is revealed only through the attributes. Apart from its attributes, *i.e.* in and of itself it is unknown and unknowable. Our aim must be to determine what powers of his otherwise unseen and unsearchable essence he has actually made known to us." And in support of this the author quotes with approval, "Matter must be per se Force. We know nothing of the atom apart from its force. There is but one indivisible and absolute Omnicience and Intelligence, and this thrills through and through every atom of the whole cosmos."

These quotations are one of the most acute examples of a disordered mind. The very first sentence of the series asserted an objective existence, objectively distinguished from the divine essence, as well as from each other. Now, in order to know that there is a distinction between the divine essence and the attributes, one must know what each of the two are. Suppose I ask, Is there an objective distinction between an owl and a hibou, between zythum and zorilla, or even between yellow and blue? It should be clear that one cannot state these distinctions, if any, unless one knows both items. But the theologian quoted asserts that the essence, in and of itself, is unknowable. If anyone wishes to defend the gentleman by appealing to his words that "The essence is revealed only through the attributes," he should also accept the medieval explanation of why opium puts one to sleep: namely, by its occult dormitive essence.

For support he appeals to physics: "Matter must be *per se* Force. We know nothing of the atom apart from its force." Earlier he had said, "Notice the analogous necessity of attributing properties of matter to an underlying substance, else matter is reduced to mere force." But now he says, "Matter must be *per se* Force." And if the following sentence, "We can know nothing of the atom apart from its force," is supposed to modify its predecessor, we are back to the occult qualities of medievalism.

The last sentence of the quotation says, "There is but one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence." Perhaps the gentleman merely wishes to identify omniscience and intelligence. They could be one single attribute. But if not, and if they are two, as all attributes are supposed to differ from each other, he has made the two one as nominalism does. It is simply not clear what the sentence means. Perhaps as a final conclusion we can say that all arguments should be logical and all assertions should be intelligible. Does not "this thrill through and through every atom of the whole cosmos?"