

I. Chapter One: Is Christianity A Religion

A. Unity and Multiformity (1)

1. The historical ubiquity of religion
2. The difficulty in defining the word “religion”

B. A Disconcerting Disjunction (4)

1. Comparing opinions on religion discloses a disjunction
 - a. Julian Huxley claims that the essential religious reality is not God but a sense of the irreducible sacred
 - b. The “Humanist Manifesto” defines religion as that which consists of humanly significant actions, purposes, and experiences
 - c. William James spoke of religion as the experiences of men in their solitude
2. The apparent failure in coming up with a satisfactory definition of religion

C. The Psychological Approach (6)

1. Emotion versus Intellect (6)

“There are many persons, both scholars and others, who believe that the essence of religion, the common factor in all religions, is some sort of emotional experience.” [6]

2. Preconceived Notions (7)

Everyone has presuppositions. The Christian need not be put on the defensive for having his.

3. Bunyan and Edwards (8)

James Bissett Pratt, in his *The Religious Consciousness*, compares the conversion experiences of Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan, who both experienced a crisis of conscience in the face of their sinfulness. Then they found peace. Concludes Pratt, “the whole drama was one of feeling, and all that was accomplished was the substitution of one feeling for another.” [8] Pratt’s same misguided interpretation is applied to Edwards as well. “It would seem therefore that these inaccuracies are the result of a poor method and of a prior decision to define religion in terms of emotion.” [10]

4. Does Description Explain? (11)

Is the description of a psychological event an adequate explanation of that event? Logical positivism holds that description is explanation. Logical positivists, however, violate their own dictum. Description is, in fact, not explanation.

5. Does Description Discover? (12)

Psychology, or description, cannot discover what religion is or is not. Emotions are concerned with surface phenomenon. Many emotions are found in non-religious experience. Clark summarizes: “There is nothing distinctively religious about emotions.” [13]

5. Description and Presupposition (13)

As for presuppositions, “Each other therefore decides what he thinks is important and significant, whether it be ritual, dogma, or emotion.” [14] Nothing can be described apart from presuppositions.

6. Integration of Personality (15)

Humanists generally locate religion at the individual felt-need of integrating one’s life—conflicting impulses, desires, and emotions. Awareness of sin is awareness of failure. Redemption is release from that failure. The main goods are pursuit of truth, beauty, love, and friendship. Clark sees two problems with this theory. First, how does one establish truth, beauty and friendship as good? Second, what is good or evil?

If one champions personal integration as the essence of religion, apart from empirical method, then how can it be denied that Hitler and Stalin both achieved the same integration in their philosophies and methodologies? Their integration, judged apart from empirical method, cannot be judged inferior to any other.

“The disadvantage of this [integrational] attempt to define religion should now be clear. The definition is so broad and vague that it covers an unimaginable variety of experience. The Hindu mystic, the apostle Paul, the dictator, and the miser are equally perfect examples of religion. . . . The psychological method therefore fails to discover, to define, and to explain religion; and at the same time it fails to justify its claim to scientific impartiality.” [17]

Further, the entire category of ethics is evaded when these various examples are placed on the same level.

D. The Comparative Method (18)

1. Is God Essential to Religion? (18)

Some have argued that humanism is not a religion because humanism has no god. Animists and secularists who hold to a form of deity are said to be without a religion. Are they? If religion is defined to encompass any and all affirmation to deity, or deities, the word religion has become a word without meaning.

"It is therefore unthinking to set Islam and Christianity side by side, as if in monotheism at least they have something in common. In reality, nothing separates them so radically as the different ways in which they appear to say the same thing—that there is only one God." [Karl Barth, cited on p. 27 fn.]

2. The Hunting of the Snark (20)

"The [comparative] method is unsatisfactory because it requires at the outset the knowledge it aims to obtain at the end. In order to discover the common element in all religions, it would first be necessary to distinguish religions from all non-religious phenomena. If there were an authoritative list of religions, a student could begin to examine them for a common element. But before the common element is known, how could an authoritative list be compiled?" If Lewis Carroll tells Alice to examine all Snarks and find the common nature of the Snark, Alice, at least in her waking moments, would not know whether all the objects before her were Snarks, or even whether any of them were. Now, we are not in a much better position than Alice would be. In our attempt to find the common nature of religion, we believe we are safe in assuming that Christianity and Mohammedanism are religions. But is Hinayana Buddhism a religion? If it is, then a belief in God is not essential to religion; but if a belief in God is essential, then this form of Buddhism is not a religion." [20]

3. Common Human Needs (21)

It will not suffice to claim that all religions satisfy certain human needs, therefore, common human needs are the definitive factor in the attempt to define religion. Religions cannot agree what it is that man needs.

4. Meaningful Words (21)

When the word God is made to encompass every principle under heaven, the word has become one without a meaning. It is not better than a word in a dictionary with one thousand different (and often unrelated) definitions.

E. Christianity (23)

1. Definition of Christianity (23)

Clark commends Calvinism generally or the WCF specifically as a definition of Christianity.

2. The Religions (24)

Defining what is or isn't a religion is difficult because of the variety of philosophical/religious viewpoints that ultimately find their source in, and departure from, God's revelation to Adam. Their departure is due to the fall. However, this fragmentation renders the word religion nearly meaningless.

3. Christian Conversion (25)

“Acknowledgment of the Westminster Confession of Faith as one’s presupposition provides a definition and a solution of the problem. Conversion is a sinner’s initial turning to the mercy of God in Christ upon an apprehension of sin as contrary to the righteous law of God.” [26]

4. Sin (26)

II. Chapter Two: Faith and Reason

“The present discussion will be condensed under four easily remembered sub-headings. First, the Roman Catholic view will come under the heading of *Reason and Faith*. Second, *Reason without Faith* will summarize modern philosophy from Descartes to Hegel. Third, the outbursts of irrationalism that followed Hegel, including mysticism, neo-orthodoxy, as well as Nietzsche and instrumentalism will be taken as examples of *Faith without Reason*. And fourth, the only remaining combination is *Faith and Reason*.” [28]

The terms “faith” and “reason” were used synonymously by Augustine. Not so for many other philosophers, such as Aquinas.

A. Reason and Faith (28)

1. Natural Theology (28)

It is false that true religion is founded (or proven) upon natural reason, as in the system of evidentialist apologetics. This medieval view is the official position of Roman Catholicism, derived from Aquinas.

“The Thomistic view distinguishes between the process of arriving at truth by man’s unaided natural reason and the voluntary acceptance of truth on the authority of divine revelation. The former is demonstrable philosophy; the latter, accepted without demonstration, is the sphere of faith. Faith and reason are, therefore, in one sense, incompatible.” [29]

a. Authority

A proposition demonstrated rationally cannot be believed on the basis of bare authority. “It is impossible to know and believe the same thing at the same time.” [30]

b. Compatibility

There is another sense in which faith and reason are complementary. God’s existence may be demonstrated, but the doctrine of the Trinity is believed on the basis of revelation. Faith and reason, truly understood, cannot contradict each other.

c. Thomism

Faith is supernatural impartation of revelation while reason is a process beginning with sensation. However, in the middle ages, reason and logic were synonymous.

d. Edwin Burt’s *Types of Religious Philosophy*

2. The Cosmological Argument (35)

“The cosmological argument for the existence of God, most fully developed by Thomas Aquinas, is a fallacy. It is not possible to begin with sensory experience and proceed by the formal laws of logic to God’s existence as a conclusion.” [35]

Some will distinguish between proof and logical demonstration. However, Aquinas intended, as per his natural theology, that God’s existence can be proven on formally valid, logical, terms. It is here that his argument fails.

The cosmological argument connection to Aristotle’s theory of motion (nothing can move itself). Thomas argued that the series of things moved cannot regress into infinity: there must be an unmoved mover (God). But Thomas may be begging the question here. Ultimately, the Triune God of the Bible cannot be demonstrated by the argument. Thomas also fails in that he uses the word “exist” in the same sense throughout his argument. Yet God does not exist in the same sense as the created order.

(Note that Vatican I contended that God can be known through creation by the unaided light of human reason.)

3. Hume and Hodge (39)

- a. Hume pointed out that a cause be not greater than the effect (finite god)
- b. Hodge attempts to prove the universe is an effect demanding a cause

B. Reason Without Faith (43)

The Reformation gave man the basis for modern civilization. It’s base was revelation. The Renaissance, on the other hand, gave itself entirely to reason.

1. Early Irreligion (44)

- a. The effect of reason on culture is many-faceted and covers several centuries
- b. The Christian faith was in eclipse during the middle ages—despite efforts by a remnant (Eg. Wycliffe; Huss; Waldensians)
- c. The printing press brought the people the N.T. and the Greek/Roman classics
- d. Italy

Italy was ripe for an intellectual revolution; the corruption of the papacy was most evident there. From there “society quickly shed its hypocritical Christianity and became openly pagan.” [44]

- e. While not all scholars became pagan, paganism was a feature of the Renaissance
- f. Michel de Montaigne

Montaigne was a skeptic who believed in relativism, rejecting any moral absolutes.

g. The French Enlightenment

The age of reason encompassed both the French Enlightenment and English Deism.

(1) Voltaire and the Encyclopedists

“The French people, with Protestantism virtually extinguished, were groaning under the autocratic power of the aristocracy and the clergy. Voltaire was their spokesman. From the beginning of his literary activity he made war on the Christian religion as he knew it.” [47]

Yet, Voltaire was not an atheist. He believed a finite god requisite for morality, rewards, and punishment. He drew much from the Deists.

(2) English Deism

“In the main, deistic writing attacks Christianity. The authenticity and authority of the Bible are denied, and its accounts of miracles are discredited. . . . [T]he Protestant clergy also are described as venal and greedy . . . and most deists were anti-semitic also.” [48]

(a) Matthew Tindal and his *Christianity as Old as Creation* as the most comprehensive expression of deism

God rules the world rationally, does not violate the laws of nature (no miracles), all men have sufficient means of knowing God and what He requires, the Bible is errant, the O.T. immoral, and Christ misguided for requiring of men specific beliefs.

2. Rationalism (50)

a. Descartes the father of doubt

An omnipotent demon could be deceiving us into thinking that reality is true. Even that $2+2=4$. But that omnipotent demon cannot deceive us apart from allowing us to think.

“It is necessary to note just how Descartes has defeated the omnipotent demon. Had he said, I walk therefore I exist, he would have failed. I can easily deny that I am walking without actually walking. It would be enough to sit in a chair and say, I am not walking. But it is absolutely impossible to deny I am thinking without thinking. Since doubting is a form of thought, I cannot doubt that I think without thinking the doubt. I think, therefore, is an indubitable truth.” [51]

The proof is that the *cogito* is based on logic. It is a proposition that, if denied, is proved true. Descartes and his followers are rationalists. This reason is not contrary to revelation.

b. Spinoza the rationalist who rejected revelation

“The important question is not whether or not the Bible is true, but whether or not all knowledge is deducible by reason, i.e., by logic alone.” [53]

c. Rationalism as defined in the 17th c. must be considered a failure as it postulated reason without revelation

3. Empiricism (54)

This empiricism is British in origin and equates reason and sensation (sees reason as sensation).

a. Locke

For empiricists knowledge begins with what Locke calls ideas, notions, or phantasms, or what Hume calls impressions.

All alleged knowledge of facts, beyond our present sensations and memories, depend on causation. Examining experience, however, shows that a knowledge of cause and effect is not to be had. The necessary connections are not reliable guides.

4. Immanuel Kant (58)

a. Proposed remedy and continued problems with Kant’s view

Sought to remedy the problem with empiricism, that should all knowledge be based on experience alone, then there can be no knowledge of necessary truth (what is as differentiated from what must be). Experience tells us that the sun has risen each morning, but not that it must continue to do so. Without necessity and universality there can be no math or science. There must be forms or ideas that are innate.

“Causality therefore is a category, an a priori concept, a form of knowledge which, instead of being learned from experience, must be known prior to experience so as to make experience possible.” [61]

Kant’s particular construction was impossible as he sought the pre-condition of experience while at the same time denying that the conditions are objects of experience. Knowledge requires the combination of a priori forms and posteriori experience. One without the other is not knowledge.

b. Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*

Kant failed to establish his premise. He also could not arrive at a theology. He failed to find a basis for physics or explain sensation. He was unable to give an account for the relationship between form and content.

5. Hegel and His Critics (63)

a. No one exalted the powers of reason more than Hegel

“Kant . . . compounded knowledge of form and content. The form is the contribution of the mind, while the content comes from an independent, external thing-in-itself. Yet, since the categories do not apply beyond sensation, the thing-in-itself remains unknowable; but if unknowable, its existence and necessity could not be asserted. Hegel makes quite a point of the absurdity of asserting an unknowable; then he tries to remove the opposition between consciousness and its object by showing that on a higher level they are both within consciousness itself. Nature, the given, the contribution of sense, are one with mind or spirit.” [63]

Every definite thought excludes other thoughts and opposite thoughts. Each thought has a necessary relationship to its opposite. If thought is essentially and exclusively an individual activity, it becomes difficult to avoid solipsism. Hegel concluded that there must exist an absolute mind in which all persons participate. To this mind Hegel worked out a system of categories—hundreds of them. The categories are concepts that apply to and make up everything else. The first and simplest is being. Every object has a being. He applied a dialectic process to the concept that everything has an opposite (being cannot be thought of apart from non-being). For example, being itself says nothing. It doesn’t include adjectives. By this dialectical process of thought, being becomes nothing and the category of becoming has emerged.

The consensus is that Hegelianism can no longer be defended: “As Plato never satisfactorily connected his Ideas with individual sense objects, so too, and even all the more so, Hegel could not rationally deduce an individual object from the Absolute.” [67]

6. Absolute Ignorance (67)

There is another criticism of Hegel. For him, truth depends on negation and an object’s relationships are logically internal to its meaning. The essence of a cat, for example, is that it is not a dog. The All-Inclusive is the Absolute. However,

“So long as you or I do not know the relationships which constitute the meaning of cat or self, we do not know the object in question. If we say that we know some of the relationships, e.g., a cat is not-a-dog, and admit that we do not know other relationships, e.g., a cat is not-an-(animal we have never heard of before), it follows that we cannot know how this unknown relationship may alter our view of the relationship we now say we know. . . . Therefore we cannot know even one relationship without knowing all. Obviously we do not know all. Therefore we know nothing.” [68]

C. Faith Without Reason (69)

1. Types of Mysticism (69)

a. There are various degrees of mysticism

The Neoplatonists employed reason in “ordinary philosophical and ecclesiastical problems. But they agree that the soul’s union with Absolute Reality is not intellectual.” [70] Other mystics hold to a faith devoid of reason.

- b. Fundamentalists and Neo-Orthodox
- c. Rejection of Hegelianism by Marx and Kierkegaard

Marx continued a materialistic, evolutionary behaviorism. The physical universe, by definition, is in flux. “The one point to be emphasized is Marx’s abandonment of intellectualism. Epistemology, mathematics, and ethics are cases in point.” [73] Marx was a relativist who pushed epistemological issues into an evolutionary past.

2. Soren Kierkegaard (73)

- a. Lived from 1813-1855
- b. Rejected Hegelian rationalism and Christianity

Contrary to Marx, Kierkegaard didn’t see the malady of society as being economic, but rather social and religious. Man has taken the place of God and the spirit of the age has replaced the Holy Spirit. For Kierkegaard, Hegel was not religious enough, and with Marx, disregarded the individual (especially the uniqueness of man created in God’s image).

Yet, Kierkegaard was not a friend of Christianity. He was a subjectivist who saw the individual’s experience with God as requisite for truth. The historicity of Christianity was not important. However, without objective truth there can be no discernment between that which is true or that which is false.

3. Nietzsche (78)

- a. Lived from 1844-1900
- b. Nietzsche denied the mind and saw evolution of the body as his axiom

“What Descartes and Kant mistook for an ego, instead of being a simple subject, is a multiplicity of conflicting desires or urges. Therefore, the notion that the world proceeds so that human reason must be true is downright simple-minded. Everything that reaches our consciousness is simplified, adjusted, and interpreted. We never find a fact in nature; we never grasp things as they are. The whole apparatus of knowing is a simplifying device, directed not at truth but at the appropriation and utilization of our world.” [79]

For Nietzsche the law of contradiction is a sign of inability: the inability to affirm and deny the same thing.

4. William James (80)

- a. Upheld pragmatism and denied absolutes (contra Hegel)
- b. With Nietzsche James serves as an example of the collapse of reason

5. Emil Brunner (84)

- a. Influenced by Kierkegaard and fits within the neo-orthodox system of thought

Brunner appears to blur the distinction between the knower and the thing known. Truth becomes subjective. Human reason fails.

Clark concludes:

“Therefore I wish to suggest that we neither abandon reason nor use it unaided, but on the pain of skepticism acknowledge a verbal, propositional revelation of fixed truth from God” [87]

D. Faith and Reason (87)

Faith and reason are not antithetical, but harmonious. Faith is given an intellectual content. This is not the same as Thomism which gave reason a sensory basis.

1. Popular Religion (88)

- a. The error of subjectivism in fundamentalism and popular evangelicalism

2. The Analysis of Personality (90)

- a. The term “heart”

The key term of biblical psychology is the word “heart” (used over 750 times in the O.T., often in the context of intellect). The word does not express a dichotomy between the intellect and emotion, as is often suggested. Rather, the word “heart” often denotes the intellect and may be expressed best by the English word “self.” See the examples Clark gives on pp. 92-93.

- b. Misguided thinking regarding emotion as over the intellect

Many in the church belittle the intellect and favor the emotions as it pertains to understanding the Bible and living the Christian life. This is unfortunate. Clark further argues against any dichotomy between head and heart: “Thus the common modern contrast between the head and the heart is evidently unscriptural.” [94]

3. Trust and Assent (94)

- a. Clark holds that belief is mere assent (intellectual assent)

4. Anti-intellectualism (100)

a. The rejection of creeds as “too intellectual”

- (1) The faith of Hebrews 11:6 requires a creed

Note Clark’s rather unusual interpretation of James’ vacuous faith and rejection of the common reformed understand of faith as encompassing knowledge, assent and trust (pp. 107 ff.).

5. The Reformed Faith (104)

a. Calvin

- (1) Rejected the tripartite division of the human self

b. Hodge

- (1) Speaking of man before the fall: his reason is subject to God and the will subject to reason

c. Machen

- (1) Defended the primacy of the intellect

Clark clarifies:

“The primacy of the intellect, then, cannot be a power automatically exercised over the volition regarded as a separate faculty. This would violate the unity of the person. Instead of the phrase ‘the primacy of the intellect,’ the essential idea might better be expressed as the primacy of truth.” [105]

d. Consideration of sin and total depravity

6. Definition of Reason (108)

“[R]eason may well be defined as logic. It should not be identified with experience. When a Christian theologian is deducing consequences from Scriptural premises, he is reasoning—he is using his reason. To require him to test Scripture by sensation in order to avoid the charge of irrationality is itself irrational prejudice.” [110]

III. Chapter Three: Inspiration and Language

Revelation is needed for a rational worldview. Attempts to establish truth apart from the Scripture have resulted in irrationalism. The Bible is the Word of God. Can it be maintained that the epistemic presupposition of divine revelation solves the problem of language?

A. The Biblical Claims (111)

1. Verbal Plenary Inspiration

B. The Dictation Objection (115)

C. Contemporary Theories (119)

1. Religious Language (120)

Religious language is not to be equated with metaphorical, mythical, or symbolic meaning, as some claim. Rather, the literal words of the Bible convey literal truth.

2. Linguistics (124)

- a. What is a word? How do sounds convey meaning?
- b. A common view is that words originate in sense experience

That is, all words originally had a physical reference. If this were true, then there would be no basis for non-spatial or metaphysical language.

- c. Evolutionary theory: human language traced to primitive sounds

- (1) A mind is needed
- (2) Literal and figurative
- (3) Issues

D. Theistic Linguistics (134)

Christian theism as the basis for language:

“We shall suppose that God Omnipotent has created rational beings, beings who are not merely physical but who are essentially spiritual and intellectual, beings therefore who have the innate ability to think and speak. What then will be the implications relative to the problems of linguistics that can be drawn from this theistic presupposition?” [134]

1. Thought (a mind) is behind language.
2. “Christ is the Logos that endows every man with intellectual light.”
3. Men are not born a tabula rasa. There are innate moral ideas.
4. The admitted many figures of speech used in the Bible convey literal truth.

1. Theology versus Language (137)

- a. It is false that religious language must always be analogical, not literal

“Unless religious language is meaningful, literally true, and thoroughly intelligible, it is meaningless and unintelligible, sound and fury signifying nothing.” [140]

2. Literal Language (142)

- a. There is no knowledge (much less of God) apart from the theistic theory of language
- b. The empirical theories of Aristotle, Aquinas and Locke are to be rejected
- c. Innate ideas does not mean that infants can understand things beyond the limits of their development

“To all appearances their minds are blank, but the blankness is similar to that of a paper with a message written in invisible ink. When the heat of experience is applied, the message becomes visible.” [143]

- d. The words of John the Baptist: Behold the Lamb of God

- (1) The word “lamb” is a symbol

“A symbol is a sign, but not all signs are symbols. The plus and minus signs of arithmetic, even though they may sometimes be called mathematical symbols, are just arbitrary conventional signs. Marks of other shapes could have served as well. . . . [A]nd in this example . . . an elephant as a symbol of Christ could not have served as well; and a fish was later used only because of an acrostic. John the Baptist’s choice of a lamb was not arbitrary; it was rooted in the Mosaic ritual. An arbitrary sign, whether a word or a mathematical figure, merely designates the concept. When we are studying mathematics or reading a newspaper, we do not normally think of the shape of the signs, but rather give exclusive attention to the thing signified. In the case of the symbol, however, some of our attention is fixed on the symbol. If the Baptist had said, Jesus is Lord, no one would have given thought to the sound as such; and there is nothing in the situation except the sound and the meaning. But when he said, ‘Behold the Lamb,’ the situation included not only Jesus and the sound of the words, but also the lambs that the word Lamb summarized. To understand the Baptist’s message about Christ therefore, it was necessary to think how literal lambs could symbolize Christ. . . . [John the Baptist] pictured the ritual of the ages. One word summarized an entire religious system.” [144-45]

e. Without the background of a literal meaning the symbol would be pointless

E. Logical Positivism (147)

1. Held that only statements that could be empirically verified are true

(1) Logical positivism itself can not be empirically verified!

2. Believed that religion and metaphysics is nonsense

3. Denies any *a priori* forms

4. John Dewey

a. Held that logical forms come from subject matter and when subject matter changes so do the logical forms

IV. Chapter Four: Revelation and Morality

A. Ethical Disagreement (151)

“But the problem naturalism must face is this: Can an empirical philosophy, a philosophy that repudiates revelation, and instrumentalist or descriptive philosophy—can such a philosophy provide a justification for any of the Ten Commandments? Are not those humanists who still oppose murder and theft living on the Christian capital inherited from their Puritan ancestors? Or, rather, the more important question is this: Can humanism, having rejected revelation, provide a logical ground for any moral laws whatever?” [152]

B. Utilitarianism (153)

Utilitarianism was popularized in the 19th c. and generally holds that choices should be calculated according to the total pleasures and pains each may produce.

1. The Greatest Good of the Greatest Number (153)

a. Clark’s example

“In 1940 the population of Germany was perhaps ninety million of whom six million were Jews. Hitler massacred five million of them. Let us say this caused five million units of pain. But as the Germans were largely anti-semitic, the massacre and the seizure of Jewish property gave each German a unit of pleasure. Suppose even that the quick death of the gas chamber caused each Jew two units of pain. This still results in a surplus of pleasure over pain. Must not Utilitarianism conclude therefore that the massacre of the Jews was right? At any rate this is approximately the theory by which the communists have justified their massacres of Ukrainians, Hungarians, and an estimated sixteen million Chinese. When one thinks of all the good that communism will do for all future generations, a few million murders is insignificant.” [154]

Originally, utilitarianism began from the base of psychological hedonism. Bentham took it as an established fact of science that all men are driven by either pleasure or pain. From psychological hedonism, utilitarianism progressed to ethical hedonism. However, it is not individual hedonism. This is the greatest good for the greatest number principle. What of the individual? Sidgwick assumed that the ultimate pleasures of all harmonize.

Some versions of utilitarianism emphasize the equality of pleasure over that of the greater good. All men are to be granted an equal degree of pleasure. By this utilitarians avoid the justification of unpleasant things like mass killings.

2. Calculation (158)

a. It would be impossible to make the calculations utilitarianism requires

3. The Good (159)

- a. It is not possible to know what the “good” really is (no objective standard)

4. Values in Experience (160)

- a. The usual method is to ground value in experience

“[Value is] whatever is actually liked, prized, esteemed, desired, approved, or enjoyed by anyone at any time. . . Good . . . is synonymous with value.” [Edgar Sheffield Brightman, cited on p. 160]

- (1) This cannot be demonstrated!
- (2) This is the chaos of subjectivism!

C. Dewey and Instrumentalism (162)

It is at the point of ethics that humanism is obligated to present a cogent argument. At this point, humanism fails.

“The effective condition of the integration of all divided purposes and conflicts of belief is the realization that intelligent action is the sole ultimate resource of mankind in every field whatsoever.” [Dewey, cited on p. 163]

Dewey held that all areas of life are to be integrated and “intelligent action” is man’s sole resource. God is a non-factor.

1. Changing Morality (163)

- a. Dewey held to a subjective situational ethic often based on custom (akin to language)

Clark asks:

“Now, if this be true, and if ethics is analogous to language, can there be any justification for imposing the customs of one society upon another society? Does not the condemnation of one set of customs require a norm that is more than the effect of another set of customs?” [165]

- b. Dewey referred to those who hold to objective standards (i.e. revelation) as being self deceived

2. Values in Experience (166)

- a. Can Dewey conclude that one action is good and another not?

- (1) Clark on the post-Christian west:

“Secular interests now dominate men’s minds; the sense of transcendental values has become enfeebled; the authority of the church has diminished; men may profess the old religion, but they act secularly.” [167]

(2) The ends justify the means dilemma

(3) Are there intrinsic qualities?

3. Security and Scientific Ethics (172)

a. Dewey’s contrast between security and certainty

(1) For Dewey certainty was the unfortunate pursuit of the absolutist

b. Scientific endeavor cannot determine right from wrong

4. Evil Ideals (176)

5. Murder (178)

Dewey assumes a universal moral agreement on things such as murder—but has no absolute base upon which to ground his assumption.

6. Is Life Worth Living? (180)

“Hence a first conclusion is inescapable. Those moralists who have proceeded as if all men agree on what is desirable must be judged to have failed. . . . Not only must they be forced to explain why, instead of brutality and totalitarianism, they prefer certain elements salvaged from Christian morality; but they must also be forced to justify life itself. This they have not done and therefore their systems are failures.” [181]

7. Concluding Criticism (181)

a. Scientific method cannot justify any ideal

D. Christian Ethics (183)

1. The Divine Legislator (183)

God is the divine legislator and all thought (and ethics) are to be determined by His preceptive revealed will.

2. Ethics and Theology (185)

a. Theology is basic to ethics (and all of life)

3. Divine Sovereignty (188)

- a. There is no law superior to God—He stand above every law He decrees
- b. Anything God does is right because He does it

4. A Contemporary Example (190)

- a. Clark’s disagreement with Edward John Carnell

5. Abraham, the Father of Us All (191)

Was God’s command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac immoral? According to Clark, if Carnell had judged God’s command by an “anticipation of God’s standards of rectitude” he would have disregarded the command as originating from Satan. Clark adds that “if God commands human sacrifice then it is obligatory and right.” [192]

V. Chapter Five: God and Evil (194)

A. Historical Exposition (194)

1. Problem: How can the existence of God be harmonized with the existence of evil?

a. Ancient expression:

“If God is good and wants to eliminate evil, but cannot, He is not all-powerful. If God is all-powerful, but cannot eliminate sin, He is not good. God can not be both omnipotent and good.”

2. Plato

In his “Republic” tried to accommodate for evil by assuming that God is not the cause of all things.

3. Aristotle

Aristotle held a near-Deistic belief in a rather disinterested god who exercises no control over history. He knows part of the past and nothing of the future.

4. Augustine

“Under Neoplatonic influence he taught that all existing things are good; evil therefore does not exist—it is metaphysically unreal. Being non-existent it can have no cause, and God therefore is not the cause of evil. When a man sins, it is a case of his choosing a lower good instead of a higher good. This choice too has no efficient cause, although Augustine assigns to it a deficient cause. In this way God was supposed to be absolved. Augustine, admittedly, was a great Christian and a great philosopher. . . . But here he was at his worst. Deficient causes, if there are such things, do not explain why a good God does not abolish sin and guarantee that men always choose the highest good.” [196]

B. Free Will (199)

1. The most popular historical explanation for the existence of evil

2. Distinction between *posse non peccare*; *non posse non peccare*; *non posse, non peccare*

3. Augustine and John Gill

Free will cannot be defined as doing good while at the same time possessing the ability to do evil (as Augustine once taught). If this “power of contrary choice” view were the basis for freedom, neither God nor the elect angels would possess free will.

“An Arminian reading *The Cause of God and Truth* might very well wonder what its author could possibly mean by liberty and freedom. Nor would his perplexity be entirely unjustified. The Puritan speaks of a will that is both free and determined; he refers to actions that are done freely, yet necessarily; and he concludes that the liberty of a man’s will is consistent with at least some kind of necessity and determination.” [203]

4. The “Power of Contrary Choice” as a definition of Arminian free will
5. Clark’s rejection of the concept of permissive will as applied to God (205-06)
 - a. Note that Clark’s quote of Calvin on page 206 seems to conflict with his own view

C. Reformation Theology (206)

1. The theory of determinism
2. History of pre-Reformed thought as to limited atonement and divine determinism
 - a. Augustus Toplady’s *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*
 - (1) Epistle of Barnabas
 - (2) Clement of Rome
 - (3) Ignatius
 - (4) Gottshalk
 - (5) Remigus, archbishop of Lyons
 - (6) Waldensians
 - (7) John Huss
 - (8) John of Wesalia
 - (9) Bede
 - (10) Thomas Bradwardine
 - (11) John Wycliffe
 - (12) William Tyndale
3. Reformation Era

a. Luther vs Erasmus (*Bondage of the Will*)

“For if we believe it be true that God foreknows and foreordains all things, that he can neither be deceived nor hindered in this prescience and predestination, and that nothing can take place but according to his will, . . . then there can be no free will in man, in angel, or in any creature.” [Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, as cited on p. 212)

b. Arminius as influenced by the Semi-Pelagianism of Melancthonian Lutheranism

c. The Synod of Dort in 1618

d. WCF: Chapter Three—of God’s Eternal Decree

D. Gill’s Exegesis (215)

E. Omniscience (217)

1. The error of Open-Theism

F. Responsibility and Free Will (219)

1. “Neither human responsibility nor divine holiness requires free will” (220)

G. The Will of God (220)

“I wish very frankly and pointedly to assert that if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it was the will of God that he should do so. The Scriptures leave no room for doubt, as was made plain before, that it was God’s will for Herod, Pilate, and the Jews to crucify Christ.” [221]

1. God’s preceptive will vs His decretive will (and the secret vs revealed will of God)

From the standpoint of God’s preceptive will, He decreed acts that may be termed “immoral” such as the crucifixion of Christ. As for Abraham’s intent to sacrifice his son, Isaac, God’s revealed will was that he be commanded to do so, while His secret will was that he not.

H. Puppets (222)

1. Accusation by Arminians

2. Clarification by Calvinists

a. Rejection of “compulsion”

Historic Calvinism condemns the idea that man is “necessarily impelled to choose to act as an unconscious machine.” [224]

“In opposing the materialistic philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, John Gill states that the question is whether all agents and events are predetermined extrinsically without their own concurrence in the determination. The dispute with Mr. Hobbes, he continues, is not about the power of the will to do this or that, but about the natural liberty of the will. This line of argument makes the natural liberty of the will to consist in its freedom from extrinsic or materialistic causes. Hobbes, if anyone does, makes man a puppet because man’s actions are completely determined by physico-chemical causes. This is of course one form of determinism, but it has never been Calvinistic determinism . . .” [225]

John Gill contended that the will of man is under a necessity of immutability and infallibility as it relates to the divine decrees. The decrees are by nature necessary and certain, yet they are consistent with the natural liberty of the will which consists of a freedom from physical necessity.

“Choice is not determined as the planetary motions are. Physical or mechanical determinism, expressible in differential equations is applicable only to inanimate objects; but there is a psychological determinism that is not mechanical or mathematical. The Calvinist repudiates the former but accepts the latter. Hence he may without inconsistency deny free will and yet speak of a natural liberty.” [226]

"John Gill was a Baptist. In order further to avoid dependence on Presbyterian sources and to show that these are the doctrines of Protestantism, a few lines will be taken from the enthusiastic Anglican, our previous friend, Augustus Toplady, now as a theologian rather than as an historian. The first reference comes at the end of section eight of his history. To the sentence, 'Calvinism disclaims all compulsion, properly so called,' he appends a footnote in which he defines compulsion as taking place 'when the beginning or continuing of any action is contrary to the preference of the mind . . . In the supernatural agency of grace on the heart, compulsion is quite excluded, be that agency ever so effectual; since the more effectually it is supposed to operate, the more certainly it must engage 'the preference of the mind.'"

“Let us, he says, by defining as we go, ascertain what free agency (in opposition to free will) is. All needless refinements apart, free agency, in plain English, is neither more nor less than voluntary agency. . . . I acquiesce, says Toplady, in the old distinction, adopted by Luther and by most of, not to say all, the sound reformed divines, between a necessity of compulsion and a necessity of infallible certainty. The necessity of compulsion is predicated of inanimate bodies, and even of reasonable beings when they are forced to do or suffer anything contrary to their will and choice. The necessity of infallible certainty, on the other hand, renders the event inevitably future, without any compulsory force on the will of the agent. Thus Judas was a necessary though voluntary actor in that tremendous business.”

“It would be well to read the entire treatise, but enough has been indicated to enable us to come closer to our conclusion. In the theological literature free agency or natural liberty means that the will is not determined by physical or physiological factors. But free agency is not free will. Free will means that there is no determining factor operating on the will, not even God. Free will means that either of two incompatible actions are equally possible. Free agency goes with the view that all choices are inevitable. The liberty that the Westminster

Confession ascribes to the will is a liberty from compulsion, coercion, or force of inanimate objects; it is not a liberty from the power of God.”

“Perhaps the matter can be made clearer by stating in other words precisely what the question is. The question is, Is the will free? The question is not, Is there a will? Calvinism most assuredly holds that Judas acted voluntarily. He chose to betray Christ. He did so willingly. No question is raised as to whether or not he had a will. What the Calvinist asks is whether that will was free. Are there factors or powers that determine a person's choice; or is the choice causeless? Could Judas have chosen otherwise? Not, could he have done otherwise, had he chosen; but, could he have chosen in opposition to God's foreordination? Acts 4:28 indicates that he could not. The Arminians frequently talk as if the will and free will were synonyms. Then when Calvinism denies free will, they charge that men are reduced to puppets. Puppets, of course, are inanimate dolls mechanically controlled by strings. If the opponents had only read the Puritans, if they only had known what Calvinism is, they could have spared themselves the onus of making this blunder.” [226-28]

I. Appeal to Ignorance (228)

J. Responsibility and Determinism (230)

1. Knowledge, not free will is the basis of responsibility

K. Distortions and Cautions (240)

1. Critique of Berkouwer's *Divine Election*
 - a. WCF and secondary causation
2. God the cause but not the author of sin

"One is permitted to ask, however, whether the phrase 'cause of sin' is the equivalent of the phrase 'author of sin.' Is the latter phrase used to deny God's universal causality? Obviously not, for the same people who affirm causality deny the authorship. They must have intended a difference. An illustration is close at hand. God is not the author of this book, as the Arminians would be the first to admit; but he is its ultimate cause as the Bible teaches. Yet I am the author. Authorship therefore is one kind of cause, but there are other kinds. The author of a book is its immediate cause; God is its ultimate cause.”

“This distinction between first and secondary causation, explicitly maintained in the Westminster Confession, has not always been appreciated, even by those who are in general agreement. John Gill, for example, who is so excellent on so much, failed to grasp the distinction between the immediate author and the ultimate cause. For this reason there are some faulty passages in his otherwise fine work. Such is the difficulty of the problem and so confused are the discussions from the time of the patristics to the present day, that some of the best Calvinists have not extricated themselves completely from scholastic errors. Not only

Berkouwer, but even Jonathan Edwards, in spite of Calvin, still spoke about God's permission of sin.”

“When accordingly the discussion comes to God's being the author of sin, one must understand the question to be, Is God the immediate cause of sin? Or, more clearly, Does God commit sin? This is a question concerning God's holiness. Now, it should be evident that God no more commits sin than he is writing these words. Although the betrayal of Christ was foreordained from eternity as a means of effecting the atonement, it was Judas, not God, who betrayed Christ. The secondary causes in history are not eliminated by divine causality, but rather they are made certain. And the acts of these secondary causes, whether they be righteous acts or sinful acts, are to be immediately referred to the agents; and it is these agents who are responsible.”

“God is neither responsible nor sinful, even though he is the only ultimate cause of everything. He is not sinful because in the first place whatever God does is just and right. It is just and right simply in virtue of the fact that he does it. Justice or righteousness is not a standard external to God to which God is obligated to submit. Righteousness is what God does. Since God caused Judas to betray Christ, this causal act is righteous and not sinful. By definition God cannot sin. At this point it must be particularly pointed out that God's causing a man to sin is not sin. There is no law, superior to God, which forbids him to decree sinful acts. Sin presupposes a law, for sin is lawlessness. Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. But God is 'Ex-lex'" [238-40]

L. Soli Deo Gloria (241)