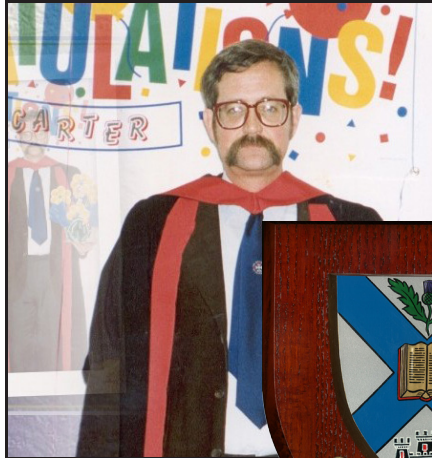




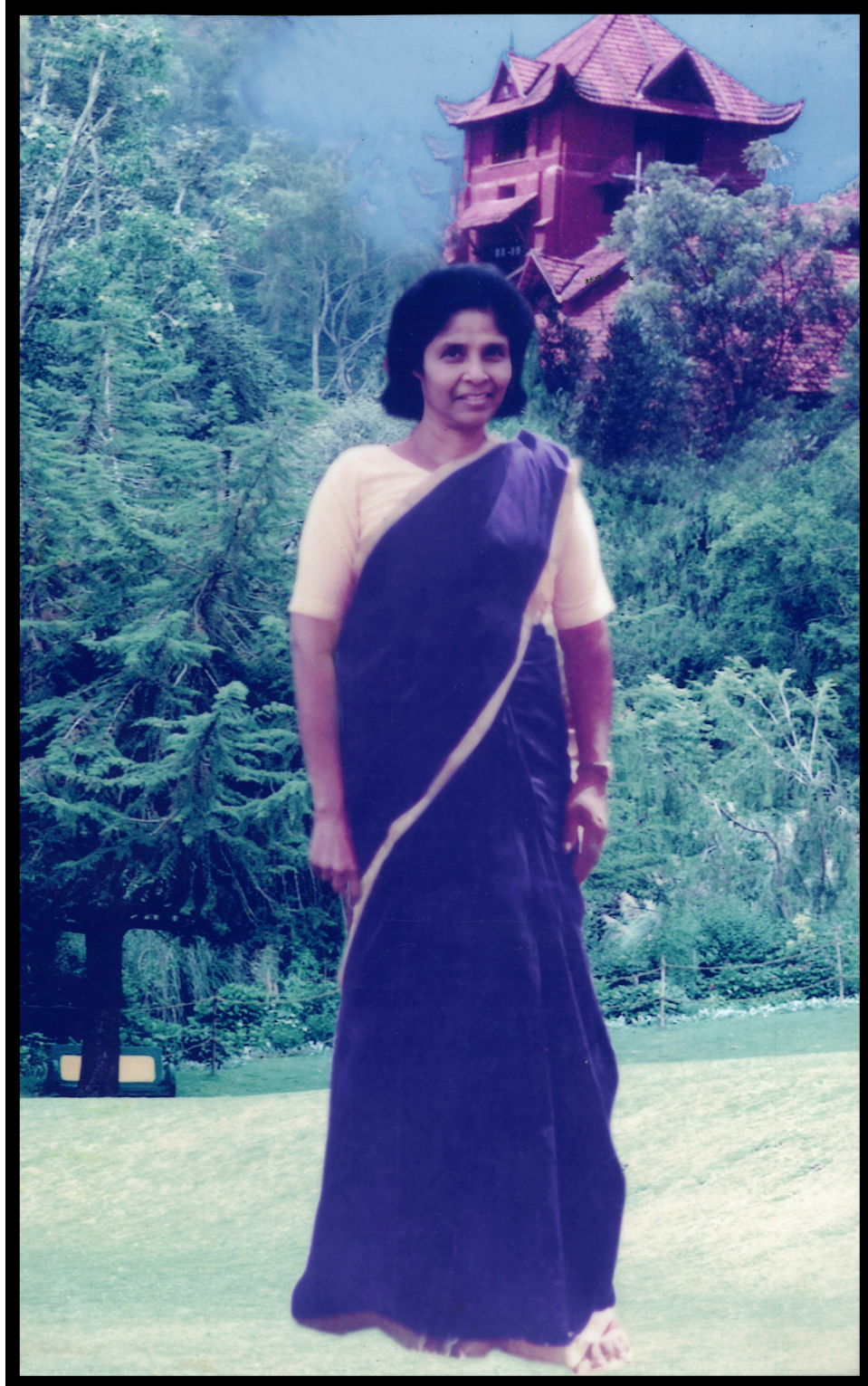
Essay Concerning the Trinitarian Conflict within Voluntist Theology: It Development in History



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Book cover compiled and edited by Salma Carunia Carter



In the Summer of 2017, Salma traveled to Italy and stayed in Rome, near the Vatican. She presented her scholarly husband's books and writings to the Vatican Library. In September of 2017 she received a thank you letter from Pope Francis expressing appreciation, acknowledging the gift of inscribed copies of Dr. Ben Michael Carter's writings with his personal photo with the Papal seal.





ESSAY CONCERNING THE TRINITARIAN CONFLICT WITHIN VOLUNTARIST THEOLOGY;
ITS DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORY



entia non multiplicanda sunt praeter necessitatem

- Occam's razor

He sliced the grapefruit into quarters...then into eights...then sixteenths...then he began slashing aimlessly at the residue.

- Hunter S. Thompson
Fear and Loathing in
Los Vegas

PART I: STATEMENT REGARDING SCRIPTURE AS AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENT LIMITATIONS FOR THEOLOGY

In Christianity God has chosen to make Himself know, not through a system of teaching, but through a series of actions in history. This perception of God as able to relate dynamicly within history is fundamental to our concept of God. Hence, ours is a religion predicated upon the work of a living God who expresses Himself through the dynamics of creation. It is not a religion constituted primarily of abstract speculation.

Scripture witnesses to the actions of God in history. This witness is phenomenological, that is it describes what is preceived. For this reason the reality described in Scripture is the reality of appearances. The reality of appearances is a reality expressing change. The philosopher attempts to determine the underlying structure of that change as it relates to the world. The theologian attempts to determine the nature of God as it is expressed in Scripture.

The word ontic refers to the objects of mundane reality: clouds, chasubles, and cantaloupes. The word ontological refers to that conceptual structure of paradigm through which we interpret the ontic world. The philosopher's enterprise is ontological in nature. The theologian's enterprise lies beyond ontology. The theologian is interested not in the structure of the ontic per se but in the nature of the Creator of the ontic. Both the philosopher and the theologian are involved in a constructive endeavor but the philosopher attempts to construct an ontology (a system of teaching about the world) while the theologian attempts to construct a theology (a system of teaching about God). In attempting this the theologian may employ the tools of the philosopher but the object of the theologian is distinct from the object of the philosopher.

In the resolution of philosophical or theological disagreements an appeal to Scripture alone is seldom adequate. Scripture is comprised of historical documents. As such it expresses a culturally modified

phenomenology. Scripture is a source for theology but the province of theology lies beyond the scope of Scripture. However, as the theologian steps beyond Scripture he must remind himself that he is doing theology and not philosophy. The great danger in the western tradition has been the seductive potential of the Hellenistic tradition.

PART II: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It seems to me that a division exists in the Protestant mind over the nature of God as creator and God as redeemer. I have come to believe that much of the difficulty lies at the very heart of the Protestant tradition. That tradition grew out of a voluntarist theology which was developed at the end of the Medieval Period as the synthesis between philosophy and revelation which Patristic Period had achieved began to break down. This voluntarist theology because of its identification of essential with particular reality was unable to affirm the specifics of the Constantinopolitan Creed. Thus, for Protestants, the integrative advantages of that creed were lost.

In this essay I will be discussing the Reformed tradition as it was developed from Augustine by Calvin and from Calvin by Schleiermacher. Using the concept of angels as an illustration I will analyze the consequences of the shift from the substance/form paradigm of Hellenism to the mechanistic paradigm of the early modern period in an attempt to determine how the assumptions in the voluntarist tradition have misled us.

PART III: THE AMBIGUITY OF THE SCRIPTURAL WITNESS CONCERNING ANGELS

Angels appear throughout both Testaments (Cruden's Concordance, for example, lists over two hundred and fifty references to them) but their focus is overwhelmingly New Testament. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to explore those references at great depth but it is important to point out that the term is used ambiguously. It would appear that occasionally "angel of God" refers to a theophany¹ but more often the term connotes something very different. The two angels who rescued Lot from Sodom (Gen. 19) were beings of a lesser status than God² as was the angel who shut the mouths of the lions in Daniel 6:22. The angel who brought Manoah and his wife word that they would have a child is specifically not God (Jud. 13:15-20).

On occasion angels are destroyers. Psalm 78:49 refers to a band of destroying angels. It was an angel of God who slew the Assyrian host (II Kng. 19:35; II Chro. 32:21) and another such angel who smote the people of Jerusalem with pestilence (II Sam. 24:15-17; I Chro. 21:14-18). In Revelation 19 seven angels, each with a bowl, pour plagues upon the earth. Later one of these angels takes John to see the Bride (Rev. 21:9). It is as agents of wrath that angels appear most

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1. The Harper Study Bible considers the angel of the Lord who appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16:7) as a theophany. The angel who accepted Joshua's worship and did not rebuke Joshua as John was rebuked in Revelation 22:9 is generally accepted as an example of another such occurrence. The Ryrie Study Bible considers almost every angelic appearance in the Old Testament as a theophany, a position which betrays a modern bias as we shall discover.
 2. There is a famous icon in the Eastern Church which depicts the three angels who visited Abraham as aspects of the Trinity. It is the opinion of the writer of this essay that such an understanding is erroneous and that such an icon, depicting as it does, not the incarnate Christ but the essence of God, is a violation of Deuteronomy 4:15-18. Justin Martyr identifies one of these men as the Logos and the other two as angels (Dialogue with Trypho, translated by A. Lukyn Williams, LVI, 22-23, p. 117) but such an understanding casts doubt upon the significance of Christ's act as recorded in Luke 24:41-43 and creates serious difficulties for a pre-incarnational theology regarding Christ.

ambiguous. On the one hand they express God's will. On the other hand Satan³ at least is described as being able to move God to destroy a blameless and upright man without cause (Job 2:3). The use of lying spirits by God (I Kng. 22:19-23) coupled with Jeremiah's lament that God had utterly deceived the people and Jerusalem (Jer. 4:10) and Jeremiah himself (Jer. 20:7)⁴ must qualify to some extent our understanding of those passages which tell us that God cannot lie (Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 89:35; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Perhaps God's inability to lie is an expression, not of His moral character, but of His creative capacity. Lying is impossible for God because His spoken word is creative. What He speaks comes to pass. But through His angels God can deceive, can do through secondary agents what Isaiah calls "his strange work" (Isa. 28:21).

Occasionally the word "angel" is used in the KJV to refer to men. In Smith's Bible Dictionary we read:

Besides this, which is the highest application of the word angel, we find the phrase used of any messenger of God, such as the prophets, Isa. 42:19; Hag. 1:13; Mal. 3:1, the priests, Mal. 2:7, and the Christian churches, Rev. 1:20.

Augustine in his City of God makes the same point, "Now the Holy Scriptures give abundant witness that men were often entitled 'angels'."⁵ He makes the same point while arguing that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are descendents of Seth. Origin, however, would disagree with part of the defination found in Smith's for he understood the angels of the

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3. It has been argued based on the apparent distinction of Job 1:6 that Satan is not to be considered as one of the sons of God. Hebrews 12:9, however, specifically states that God is the Father of the spirits and Satan is certainly a spirit. Moreover, to insist on such a distinction is, as we shall see, to open the door to Manicheanism.
 4. See also in this regard Paul's statement in II Thes. 2:11.
 5. Augustine, City of God, Book XV, Chap. 23, page 638, translated by Henry Bettenson.

churches referred to in Revelation to be divine beings.⁶ This brings up the problem of translation, a problem which can have most arresting consequences. For example, the KJV, RSV, ASV, and NIV all render Acts 12:15 as "it is his angel". Such a translation in the light of Matthew 18:10 has led some to believe that Peter had a guardian angel who looked like him. Yet each of these versions render II Cor. 12:7 as "messenger of Satan". The word in either passage is "ἄγγελός". The passage in Acts reads "Ὁ ἄγγελός αὐτοῦ". The passage in II Corinthians reads "ἄγγελός Σατανᾶ". It could very well have been that the disciples only thought that Rhoda was in her excitement confusing a messenger sent from Peter with Peter himself. Such an understanding does no violence at all to the text.

The point of this very brief discussion has been to show that although the word "angel" appears often in Scripture, its meaning is anything but clear. It is a term expressing a culturally modified phenomenology, not ontology.

6. Danielou, Jean, Origin, Part III "Origin's System", Chap. II "Angelology", pp. 243-244.

PART IV: ANGELS: THE ATROPHY OF AN IDEA

The development of western thought has occurred within four successive paradigms: the mythic, the substance/form paradigm of Greek philosophy which dominated from the time of Plato until the end of the Middle Ages, the mechanistic matter-in-motion paradigm of Newtonian physics, and the evolutionary/gestaltic paradigm which has been emerging since the end of the last century. Even as philosophical proofs for the existence of God are system dependent, so some Biblical imagery is more readily adaptable within one conceptual paradigm than another. The idea of angels is a case in point. As an aspect of the revelation, angels could be coherently integrated into a mythic or substance/form paradigm but were abandoned by Protestant theologians who attempted to "do theology" from within the structures of a Newtonian universe. In this section we will examine the place of the angelic in each of these paradigms in an attempt to understand why this happened and what the effects of it were for Protestant theology.

A) The mythic: The transcendent, conceived in terms of myth, is expressed primarily as creative power, that is: power to provide structure. Manifested in the world such creative power is associated with specific geographic locales or "holy places". From such foci that power is conceived as spreading outward, bringing order to a pre-existent chaos. As the power expands from its point of manifestation it grows weaker until a boundary is established between pattern and chaos. Within such a worldview change threatens the edifice of creation. Thus time through which change is expressed is evil. Men, through ritual, can serve as agents of this creative power, can seek to curb time by the continual reintroduction of creative power. History in such a worldview is cyclical, an endlessly repeated series of moments characterized by creation, decline, and destruction. The creative power beyond these cycles is particularized by location, function, or both and is personified as "gods" or "angels". The relationship between these particularized creative powers is disclosed in story

form. These stories are myths, grave tales of "timeless events" which structure the events of time.

This worldview began to crumble as empire builders like the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or the Persians crushed and uprooted entire populations. Within the Mesopotamian universe the fortunes of any given divinity were closely tied to the fortunes of the locale over which that divinity presided. The power of divinities was tied to the prosperity and victory of the people who worshipped them. A deity could command allegiance only so long as a deity could deliver victory or prosperity. Those which could not were soon forgotten. As pantheons were trampled under the heels of the armies of Tiglath-pileser III or Nebuchadnezzar two phenomena occurred. First, the gods themselves began to be recognized as being subordinate to the cycles of history. Second, the incompatibility of the various myth systems was thrown into sharp relief.

Concerning the first consequence, the various particularized creative powers began to be conceived as agents or expressions of a greater creative force. A hierarchy of celestial beings began to emerge in more clearly defined detail. The tremendous upheavals which racked the Near East during the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C. created a situation where questions of ultimate purpose and issues of good and evil became paramount. In response an apocalyptic worldview began to emerge.¹

Concerning the second consequence, initially a great deal of

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1. The apocalyptic writer wrestles with the problem of good and evil from what he considers to be the worst period of history. His worldview is dualistic, that is, he understands events on earth as mirrors of events in a spiritual realm where good and evil are in conflict. Because there is little he can do to effect the outcome of this conflict at any given moment the writer tends to be fatalistic. His short-term outlook is pessimistic (things will get worse) but his long-term outlook is optimistic. This type of writing had a great impact on the Jews. Examples of apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament are Isaiah 24-27, Joel, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. It influenced the Jews from the eighth century B.C. until 135 A.D. when the Ben-Kosebah revolt was crushed but was most influential between 200 B.C. and 70 A.D.

syncretism occurred as attempts were made to reconcile the conflicting systems in areas where there was sufficient similarity in the symbolic content of those systems to render the results credible. But such attempts, because they added both to the uncertainty and complexity of the systems made those systems less functional as means for thematizing human experience. Eventually the systems began to be abandoned.

B) Substance/form philosophy: Thales (636-546 B.C.), the father of Greek philosophy, became interested in the question of origins. What he asked himself was, "What is the world made of?" Comparing the account of creation as it was related in various myths he concluded that they could not all be true and might all be false. Putting the stories aside he began to investigate the world around him in an attempt to discover clues about its genesis. This conception that the world could be understood in its own terms without recourse to transcendent realms marks a watershed in western thought.

During the next two centuries the Greeks, rejecting polytheism and raw experience as inadequate to explain the apparent order of nature, would propose three alternatives to explain the unity they perceived, alternatives which continue to provide us with models today. They were idealism, materialism, and theism. As they explored the possibilities in the various positions they were soon confronted by the same problem which had plagued Thales when he sought solutions in the mythic tales: they could not all be true and they might all be false. The world seemed to defy explanation when considered purely in its own terms. Socrates (469-399 B.C.) addressed this problem by asking the question, "What is truth?" The systems of Plato and Aristotle which in the end were to provide a definitive paradigm for the west had their roots in a response to that question.

Plato (427-347 B.C.), a student of Socrates, asked the question, "How do I know a thing: what it is?" He proposed as a solution the existence of a transcendent realm of forms, an Ideal realm which was manifested in this chaotic material and gave structure to that realm.

The parallels to myth in such a system are obvious. In the first place, creativity is understood in terms of that which structures chaos. Next, the particularized creative powers are there although they are expressed universally rather than locally and in terms of forms rather than in terms of persons. Finally, time remains the enemy and its cyclical nature continues to be affirmed.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), one of Plato's students, asked a somewhat different question. Rather than wondering how he could know a thing was what it was he pondered the question, "Why is a thing what it is?" His solution was to make the forms immanent rather than transcendent and to argue that a thing was what it tended to be. Plato had proposed formal cause as a solution to the problem of knowing thereby implying that a knowledge of invariance could not be derived empirically.² Rather true knowledge implied a union of the form in one's mind with the form in the world and was derived rationally and intuitively. In this solution Aristotle grasped the implication of final causality and argued that by applying the laws of logic to observation universal principles could be derived from a study of the particulars.³ Again, as with the solution of Plato, the mythic parallels are plain. Creativity is expressed as the structuring of chaos. Particular creative forces are conceived as forms. Time is evil and cyclical.

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2. Plato argued that universals could not be derived by empirical means for the following reasons. First, all material objects change. This means that experience is always relative and incomplete and that such knowledge as we have is historical. Second, perception cannot give true knowledge because perception varies with the observer. Third, any empirical judgment we make pre-supposes a non-empirical standard.
 3. We should note at this point that the immutability of species is a peculiarly Aristotelian doctrine but not a peculiarly Christian one. It is proposed as a solution to the problem of being, a problem which may be solved as well by an appeal to God's sustaining power. As we shall see the issue will come to a head at the end of the Middle Ages when theologians began to understand forms as a restriction on God's freedom and began to wrestle with the realization that human societies were expressions of historical contingency and not static.

There are three points to make here. First, the issues which provoked the Greeks were philosophical. Second, the conceptual structure which the Greeks proposed, attempting as it did to answer ultimate questions and paralleling in many of its particulars the mythic worldview from which it emerged and which it replaced, suggested itself naturally as a tool for resolving religious issues. This structure was so employed by Christians as they explicated and defended their faith and it served admirably but its basic assumptions were not peculiarly Christian which meant that one need not affirm those assumptions to retain one's status as a Christian. Third, this substance/form philosophy, whether in its pagan or Christian formulations, provided a coherent role for spiritual intermediaries. We will consider Augustine's City of God to illustrate this last point.

The ancient world took the reality of invisible spiritual entities for granted. It is difficult for the modern to appreciate fully the flavor of such a conceit. For example, the Old Testament although it was written in an environment dominated by polytheism is limited in its reference to angels and remarkably free of references to demons. By contrast the religious literature of the gentile nations teems with spiritual beings. Inter-testamental Judaism, apparently under the influence of Persian Zoroastrianism, began to evidence a strong interest in the nature of spirits and other worlds. The three pillars of Judaism were monotheism, covenant, and torah but within that framework was great variation in belief and lifestyle. As a consequence, many rabbis at the time of Christ believed in the existence of a hierarchy of demonic powers and sought to gain control over those powers either by winning their favor or commanding them through systems of white or black magic. Within the Roman world generally belief in supernaturalism was universal and as converts flocked to the church they brought with them a conflicting host of such beliefs. The existence of spirits was affirmed by all the early fathers although there was little general agreement about the particulars of such a belief. However, the Book

of Enoch appears to have had a significant impact on the way the angelic host was conceived and Philo the Jewish Neo-Platonist philosopher was a source for much of the speculative Christian thought which took place in Alexandria. The idea of guardian angels was a very common one and eventually developed into a cultus of angels which was officially recognized by the Second Nician Council (787 A.D.) as part of public doctrine.

The influence of Neo-Platonism on early Christian theology was profound. Although there was in Antioch of Syria an early attempt to express Christian ideas by means of Aristotlean catagories this was not generally accepted and the Neo-Platonic philosophy of the Alexandrian school dominated until Aquinas reintroduced Aristotle in the thirteenth century. Neo-Platonism, wrestling as it did with the problem of how the many derived from the one and proposing as a solution the concept of emanation via a λόγος or rational principle in a descending order of being, provided an ediface within which an angellic hierarchy could be structured but it was not until Pseudo-Dionysius (500 A.D.) that such a classification developed. Interestingly Augustine, who enjoyed the use of allegory when dealing with Christ's parables because it provided him with an opportunity to excersize his creative faculties, who devoted several hundred pages to a discussion of spiritual beings in City of God, and who in his Confessions acknowledged his debt to Neo-Platonism for helping to extract him from Manichean dualism and elimanating his rational objections to Christianity, discouraged this kind of speculation. But he did not doubt the existance of such beings. He quotes extensively from Aduleius, for example, particularly De Deo Socrates and it can be argued that he placed far too much importance on evil spirits.⁴

4. see David Knoeles "Inrtoduction" in the Pelican Classics edition of City of God translated by Henry Bettenson. Note particularly pages xxiii through xxvi of that discussion.

Augustine (354-430 A.D.) began the City of God early in 413 at the urging of his friend Marcellinus who felt that Augustine alone was capable of answering the anti-Christian attacks of those pagans who saw the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth in 410 as the consequence of the Roman's abandonment of their ancient traditions and gods. He finished it in the spring of 462. As such the book is in many ways an apologetic for the faith. Augustine argues that throughout Rome's turbulent history disaster had not infrequently been visited upon her and that her worship of her gods had done nothing to mitigate those disasters. He also points to the moral superiority of Christ. In doing this he is able to develop three points. First, he is able to defend human suffering, whether pagan or Christian, as just. Second, he is able to argue that the ancient gods were really demons who deceived their worshippers and who sought, because of their own depravity, to corrupt and destroy men. Third, he is able from his emphasis on morality to awaken his readers to the imperatives of love. For the purposes of this essay we will concentrate on his second point.

Augustine's discussion of demons covers several hundred pages. He begins by observing

There is an evil spirit which drives men's minds to wickedness by a secret compulsion, which goads men to commit adultery and finds satisfaction when they do so; it is this same evil spirit which rejoices in such rites as these.⁵

The stage plays which honor this spirit

...automatically....kindle the most depraved desires in human hearts by giving them a kind of divine authority.⁶

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5. Augustine, City of God, Book II, Chap. 26, p. 84. Note here the emphasis on compulsion. Men sin when they are driven and goaded. These are not free choices as we understand the term. Augustine will continue to insist on this quality of bondage, particularly as an aspect of deception.
 6. Ibid. Chap. 13, p. 64

[They] give by their example a presumed divine authority to criminal acts.⁷...Men observed that the divine beings take pleasure in such offences, and therefore believed that they should not only⁸ be displayed to the gods but also imitated by mankind.⁹...the gods of the nations are unclean demons.¹⁰...false gods whom they used to worship openly and still worship secretly, are really unclean spirits; they are demons so malignant and deceitful that they delight in the wickedness imputed to them.¹¹...

Rome, he argued, had

...prostituted itself to a mob of demons.¹²...[had] obstinately worshipped a mob of demons (for clearly they were not gods).¹³...They are, in fact, demons who teach depravity and rejoice in degradation.¹⁴...an undistinguished mob of gods.¹⁵...unclean spirits whom they took for gods.¹⁶...the demons' greatest desire is to deceive. The demons can only get control of men when they have deluded and deceived them.¹⁷...[Those consecrated to the service of such gods are the victims of] foul superstitions and under the sway of filthy demons.¹⁸...Christian truth proves those 'gods' to be useless images or unclean spirits and malignant demons, creatures at any rate, and not the Creator.¹⁹...These institutions [of the pagan religions] are either the work of men, or of demons, and not of 'good demons', as the pagans call them, but, to speak frankly, of unclean spirits or undeniably malignant powers. Malignant, because with consummate spite they secretly instil into the thoughts of the impious, and at times openly suggest to their senses, pernicious notions...and they support those¹⁹ notions with fallacious evidence in every way they can.

7. Ibid. Chap 25, p. 81

8. Ibid. Chap. 27, p. 85

9. Ibid. Book VII, Chap. 33, p. 294

10. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. 1, p. 135

11. Ibid. Chap. 8, p. 144

12. Ibid. Chap. 16, p. 155

13. Ibid. Chap. 27, p. 170

14. Ibid. Book VI, Chap. 10, p. 251. Augustine is quoting Seneca here.

15. Ibid. Chap. 9, p. 244

16. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. 32, p. 176

17. Ibid. Book VII, Chap. 16, p. 287

18. Ibid. Book VI, Preface, 225

19. Ibid. Chap. 4, page 232

To hope to receive eternal life from

the gods of poetry and the theatre, the gods of the game and the plays [is] monstrous, blasphemous insanity.²⁰

But the truth is that

the malign demons....did not venture to make any great promises in return for those ceremonies; but they were able to exact such cruel sacrifices.²¹

He suggests that the reason for this is to be found in the truth that

...men's souls...resemble the demons in their avidity for frivolous entertainment....[but that] there is no possible comparison²² between the devout man's hope and the demon's despair.²³

He also suggests that the demons

can only act within the limits allowed them; and they are given liberty of action by the profound and just judgment of God most high, in accordance with the deserts of men, some of whom rightly endure affliction, but no more, at the hands of those demons, while others are, with justice, deluded by them, and brought under their sway.²⁴

Such is Augustine's position in his own words. Let us now examine that position. The problem, as Augustine sees it, is spiritual. Men are enslaved to a spirit of evil. The sins they commit are expressions of that enslavement. The power which the evil spirits exercise comes from the power to deceive but their ability to deceive is predicated upon man's capacity to be deceived. Men, in fact, can be deceived because they are in their souls like demons. Thus, the power which the demon's exercise directly by deception comes ultimately from God and represents God's just judgment. Some men under

20. Ibid. Book VI, Chap. 6, p. 237

21. Ibid. Book VII, Chap. 24, p. 284

22. Ibid. Chap. 18, p. 276

23. Ibid. Book VIII, Chap. 321

24. Ibid. Book VII. Chap. 35. p. 297

the affliction of such judgment endure even as Job endured. Others are captured by the evil.

For Augustine God is both creator and sustainer. He worships

God, who made the sky and the earth, and everything that exists in them, who make every soul, the souls which simply exist in some manner, without sensibility or reason, and sentient souls as well, and those endowed with intelligence.²⁵ ...who governs the universe by motion and reason.²⁶ ...who, being the one true God, gives earthly dominion both to good men and to evil....in accordance with the order of events in history, an order completely hidden from us, but perfectly known to God himself. Yet God is not bound in subject to this order of events; he is himself in control, as the master of events,²⁷ and arranges the order of things as a governor....we recognize a God who is supreme and true and therefore we confess his supreme power and foreknowledge. We are not afraid that what we do by an act of will may not be a voluntary act, because God, with his infallible prescience, knew that we should do it....we assert both that God knows all things before they happen and that we do by our free will everything that we feel and know would not happen without our volition....we deny that anything happens by destiny....It is not that we deny a causal order where the will of God prevails; but we do not describe it by the word 'fate', unless perhaps if we understand fate to be derived from fari (speak)....We cannot in fact deny that it is written in Scripture, 'God has spoken once'....The words 'has spoken once' mean 'he has spoken immovably,' that is, unalterably, just as he knows unalterably all that is to happen and what he himself is going to do....there is for God a fixed order of all causes....Our wills themselves are in the order of causes, which is, for God, fixed, and is contained in his foreknowledge....we do not deny the existence of causes call 'fortuitious'...only we say that they are hidden causes and attribute them to the will, either of the true God, or of spirits of some kind....This implies that

25. Ibid. Book VII, Chap. 29, p. 291

26. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. 31, p. 175. Augustine is paraphrasing and agreeing with Varro.

27. Ibid. Chap. 31, p. 176

28. Ibid. Book V, Chap. Chap. 9, p. 190

the only efficient causes of events are voluntary causes, that is, they proceed from that nature which is the 'breath of life!...The breath of life...is God himself, the uncreated spirit....Thus the cause which is cause only, and not effect, is God. But other causes are also effects, as are all created spirits and in particular the rational spirits.²⁹

Augustine developed this position arguing specifically against Cicero who in an attempt to affirm free will denied the reality of fate and as a consequent the possibility of foreknowledge. Augustine desired to affirm foreknowledge by modifying the concept of fate as it was employed by Cicero. Rather than caprice it was a good and divine will which was the cause of everything. All that happened achieved God's purposes regardless of how it appeared to men. The concept of evil as a teleological good is scarcely concealed beneath the surface. The danger here is the trivialization of sin. The Church in an attempt to defuse this threat would throughout the Middle Ages rely on a doctrine of Satan which would attempt to pit Satan against God but that solution was predicated upon a doctrine of angels which could be intergrated meaningfully within the dominant worldview. As we shall see, the scientific worldview which emerged at the end of the Middle Ages allowed no place for angels.

C) The shifting paradigm: Greek philosophy with its pre-supposition that nature and order existed as a single system provided the conceptual framework for the western church for over a thousand years. It underlay the ecumenical creeds, the theological constructs, and the speculative systems which set the tone for the community of the orthodox. It perceived man as part of a rational purposeful universe controlled in a hierarchal fashion by the divine λόγος. Through this λόγος a necessary relation was assumed to exist between God and the world so that truths about God could be apprehended rationally as men contemplated the world. This perception gave credance to that branch

29. Ibid. Book V, Chap. 9, pp. 191-193

of metaphysics which strove to prove the existence of God. It acted as a divine justification for maintaining a social system borrowed from the Roman world by the church. And it set the tone for monastic life and for those theologies of redemption which were purposed by those who had adopted such a life.

The Greeks had believed that the essence of a thing was manifest in the material world only imperfectly. Thus, for Greek science what was important was comprehending essential nature. Nature in its material aspects was largely ignored. In order to affirm both that nature as a creation of God was good and that sin was alien to that creation and not part of its necessary constitution the church had affirmed the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. Thus, from the third and fourth centuries on Christianity became a religion of creation as well as a religion of redemption. However, the philosophical tradition was Greek and the church understood the creation to be marred by the fall so that in practice an asceticism quite compatible with those "works of merit" found in the pagan world was adopted. The life of the religious was world-denying. The focus of the religious was on the life to come. The reward of the religious in this life was a spiritual vision. Regardless of its original intent, in the end such a vocation became supremely selfish. It was against just this selfishness that Luther railed.

...we ought not to consider so much the wicked lives of the papists, as their abominable doctrine and hypocrisy, against which we specially fight. And they themselves do not defend their wicked lives; but the best of them do detest it....Therefore we fight not against the manifest wickedness of the papacy, but against the greatest and holiest saints thereof...

But this attack of Luther's was the culmination of an historical process that went back several hundred years. Population shifts in the thirteenth century from the rural areas to the towns reflected

30. Luther, Martin, Commentary on Galatians, Ch. IV, vs. 30, pp. 295-296

that increase in commerce and manufacturing which saw the beginnings of the middle class. The rise of this class was coupled by an improvement in the lot of the peasant. The result was a hope for economic improvement in this life and an increased interest in practical knowledge. As the urban centers grew they provided an environment which nurtured communities of learned men who could go there to teach away from the watchful eye of the monasteries. This increasing autonomy helped to foster the switch from Neo-Platonism with its transcendent forms to Aristotialism with its immanent forms, a switch which would transform the theology of the west. This switch with its emphasis on the sensible origin of knowledge was to complement the awakening secularism of the age. The strict delineation between the natural and the supernatural, faith and reason, religion and the world, was to set the stage for the Nominalists and, ultimately, for the Reformation.

In the fourteenth century another factor was added which seemed to punctuate the lessons being learned in the thirteenth. It was the advent of the Black Death. Coming out of Asia in 1345, it had by 1350 swept Europe leaving millions dead. Death coming so unexpectedly and on this magnitude seemed miraculous but no miraculous deliverance came. In the end men were to learn the value, not of repentance, but of sanitation. Thus, increasingly, the focus of thought shifted from a contemplation of heaven to a study of the world.

The issue which had its origins in the debates of the pre-Socratics was the problem of universals. The concept of forms proposed by Plato had been a means of resolving that debate by providing an explanation of the apparent order of creation. However, as theologians explored the implications of the doctrine of creation ex nihilio they began to see the concept of forms as limiting the freedom of God. Concomitantly they also began to question the idea of a necessary relation between God and the world. Men like Roscelin (1050-1125) and William of Occam (?-1349) rejected the appeal to essential forms in toto. This position, called nominalism (from the Latin nomen, name), conceived

of reality in terms of particulars, particulars which shared certain similarities, similarities to which we gave names, names which we understood as expressing universals. Peter Abelard (1079-1142), though attracted to Roscelin's nominalism to the extent that Roscelin denied the existence of either material or transcendent universals, proposed as an alternative that God thought and created in terms of universal concepts. This is known as conceptualism. John Duns Scotus (?-1308) rejected the degrees of being found in the hierarchy of being by arguing that there was only one sense in which a thing could be said to exist. Something either is or isn't. To be is to be individually. God creates and knows individuals.

The result was the development of a voluntarist theology which conceived of creation in terms of God's will rather than His intellect. The idea of God as free, limited only by the law of non-contradiction, gained adherents. A view of the world as a contingent creation which could be understood contingently (i.e. by an application of the principle of efficient causality) began to emerge. This theology was characterized by concepts like transcendence (God as distinct from the world), differentiation, and individually (a feature of the theology which provided the conditions for that atomism which was an attribute of Newtonian physics). God, it stressed, was present in and cared for all the particulars of His creation.

This theology became the theology of the Reformation. It was to have a tremendous impact on the understanding of Luther and Calvin as they rejected the Thomistic synthesis and attempted to return to the Augustinism of the earlier church. God was conceived as the direct and particular cause of everything that happened. Augustine's doctrine of double predestination, one of the only aspects of his thought not affirmed by the Council of Orange (529), was grasped as a necessary element of the doctrine of salvation by faith. Luther in an exegesis of Romans 9:15 writes:

That means: I will give grace, in time and life, to him

concerning whom I purposed from eternity to show mercy. On him will I have compassion and forgive his sin in time and life whom I forgave and pardoned from all eternity. In doing this, God is not unjust, for so He willed and was pleased to do from eternity, and His will is not bound by any law or obligation. God's free will, which is subject to no one, cannot be unjust. Indeed, it is impossible that it should be unjust.³¹ this act of God proves the divine election that He permits many to commit great sins and yet they are brought to repentance and are saved (David: II Samuel 12:13) while others who in the beginning lead a pious life and do many good works are not saved (Saul: I Samuel 13:13).³² Compare for this also Judas and the thief on the cross.

God, so conceived, is hidden, "wholly other". This position on the surface is reminiscent of that position taken by Eastern Orthodox mysticism which experiences God as unknowable in His essence but knowable in His energies and it finds parallels in the German mysticism of the later Middle Ages but what makes it different from either of these traditions is that the hierarchy of being has been eliminated. No longer does God employ intermediaries. Now He is seen as the direct cause of all which transpires.

The implications of this were in embryo. During the early Reformation issues of soteriology and the role of the church were far more immediately significant. Luther, for example, does not challenge the concept of angels. Calvin, too, as we shall see, donates several sections of his Institutes to spiritual beings. But here in the seeds of Protestantism everything is in place for the construction of a theology in which angels will play no relevant part. Such a theology when it finds its voice will focus almost entirely on God as creator. Such a theology will comprehend evil as a teleological good. And such a theology, in the end, will fall before the forces of secularism which gave birth to it. God, as the author of both good and evil, will in the day to day lives of believers appear increasingly ambiguous.

31. Luther, Martin, Commentary on Romans, Ch. IX, vs. 15, p. 139

32. Ibid, Ch. VIII, vs. 28, p. 130. This is said in reference to Romans 9:15.

God as hidden encouraged the development of theologies which focused not on God's being but on aspects of that being. God, said Melanchthon, was known through His benefits. Calvin, too, wrote a theology which concentrated on God's works. Even as Luther's thought might be conceived as the last great flowering of medieval theology, so Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion can be described as the first great theological system of the modern world. When John Calvin was born (1509) Columbus was already dead and colonies were being established in the Americas. Before he began writing his Institutes, Magellan had circumnavigated the globe. Francis Bacon was born at the end of Calvin's life and Galileo was born in the same year Calvin died (1564). Descartes and Newton would be writing within a century of Calvin's death.

Raised a Catholic he experienced a "sudden conversion" in 1533. In the Institutes he summarizes his understanding of the gospel as follows:

For what is the sum total of the gospel except that we all, being slaves of sin and death, are released and freed through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...and that they who do not acknowledge Christ as their liberator are condemned and sentenced to eternal chains.³³

Like all the Reformers he would affirm that salvation was accomplished by faith. We read:

...faith is the principle work of the Holy Spirit....by by faith alone he leads us to the light of the gospel...[The Spirit is] a supernatural gift that those who would otherwise remain in unbelief receive Christ by faith....faith itself has no other source than the Spirit.³⁴

Typical of the men of his time, Calvin understood the imago deo as reason. We read:

In the beginning God fashioned us after his image....Thus,

33. Calvin, J., Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book IV, Chap. XI, sec. 1, pp. 1212-1213

34. Ibid. Book III, Chap. I, sec. 4, p. 541

in order that the great nobility of our race (which distinguishes us from brute beasts) may not be buried beneath our own dullness of wit, it behooves us to recognize that we have been endowed with reason and understanding so that, by leading a holy and upright life, we may press on to the appointed goal of blessed immortality.³⁵

Later we read,

We see among all of mankind that reason is proper to our nature; it distinguishes us from brute beasts, just as they by possessing feeling differ from inanimate things.³⁶

But reason must work in concert with the Spirit. It is in their recognition of this that Calvin believes Christian philosophers may be distinguished from pagans.

...all Philosophers were ignorant of the transformation [engendered by a life in the Spirit]... For they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they trust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to submit and subject itself to the Holy Spirit so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning with him.³⁷

Calvin, then, sees reason as that which is peculiarly human and life in the Spirit as something peculiarly Christian. The merely human must ofcourse submit to Christ. However, because faith is that by which we are saved and because we are preeminently reasonable, faith is for Calvin primarily cognitive. He insists that, "Faith rests upon knowledge, not upon pious ignorance."³⁸ But he also insists that reason in its submission to Christ must sometimes bow in humble silence.

It is certainly true that our own and all men's wisdom must become foolish, that we may allow him alone to be wise.³⁹

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35. Ibid. Book II, Chap. I, sec. 1, p. 242
 36. Ibid. Book II, Chap. II, sec. 17, p. 276
 37. Ibid. Book III, Chap. VII, sec. 1, p. 690
 38. Ibid. Book III, Chap. II, sec. 2, p. 544
 39. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. X, sec. 24, p. 1203

Scripture for Calvin is primarily propositional, a source for truth beyond that truth naturally apprehended by reason:

Consequently, being aware of their own weakness, nothing better is left for them but to keep themselves carefully within the limits of God's Word....all those matters which elude our gaze and far exceed the capacity of our minds either be believed as from actual oracles of God or utterly cast away.⁴¹

In this regard, Calvin's references to superstition are significant. Superstition, Calvin says, deforms the worship of God.⁴² What is not well understood is prone to lapse into superstition.⁴³ Discussing celibacy he refers to "superstitious little fellows who dream up something new to win admiration for themselves."⁴⁴ Superstition, he notes, is strangely prevalent in all ages⁴⁵ but Christ's illumination of us by his gospel will free us from its shackles.⁴⁶

Calvin's discussion of angels can be found in Book I, Chap. XIV, sections 3-12 of his Institutes. He conceives of them as the ministers of God (from Heb. 1:14). God, he says, created them although he notes that such a creation is implied rather than explicitly stated in Scripture. They are not divine although

...they are more than once called gods, because in their ministry as in a mirror they in some respect exhibit his divinity to us.⁴⁷

Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius he says that it is

for the most part nothing but talk. The theologian's task it not to divert the ears with chatter but to strengthen consciences by teaching things true, sure, and profitable. If you read that book you would think a man fallen from heaven recounted, not what he had learned, but what he had

40. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. VIII, sec. 11, p. 1160

41. Ibid. Book III, Chap. XXV, sec. 5, p. 995

42. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. II, sec. 2, p. 1042 and Chap. XIV, sec. 19, p. 1295

43. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. XII, sec. 14, p. 1241

44. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. XII, sec. 26, p. 1252

45. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. XIII, sec. 1, p. 1255

46. Ibid. Book IV, Chap. XIII, sec. 21, p. 1276

47. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 5, p. 165

seen with his own eyes.⁴⁸...leave those empty speculations which idle men have taught apart from God's Word concerning the nature, orders and number of angels.⁴⁹

In contrast Calvin proposes a concept of angels which is based upon Scripture alone. He begins by saying that

angels are celestial spirits whose ministry and service God uses to carry out all things he has decreed....God employs them as intermediary messengers....they are called "hosts" because...they adorn his majesty and render it conspicuous.⁵⁰

Besides gods and hosts, Calvin also points out that in Scripture angels are called virtues, principalities, powers, dominions, and thrones. He affirms that being "dispensers and administrators of God's beneficence toward us"⁵¹ they help and protect believers, keeping vigil for our safety and directing our ways.⁵² They were ever present with Christ when he walked on earth and they "fight against the devil and all our enemies, and carry out God's vengeance against those who harm us."⁵³ However, he does not feel that he can with confidence affirm that each man has a special guardian angel although he traces that notion back to Acts 12:15, a passage to which we have already made reference. God makes use of angels, not for his sake, but for ours for he recognizes that we in our frailty, though he has promised to help us, still ask him from whence that help shall come so he "tells us he has innumerable guardians whom he has bidden to look after our safety."⁵⁴ Yet all our help truly comes from God and it is God alone we must worship.

The devils are fallen angels who

were when first created angels of God, but by degeneration

48. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 4, p. 164-165

49. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 4, p. 164

50. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 5, p. 165

51. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 6, p. 166

52. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 6, p. 166

53. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 6, pp. 166-167

54. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 11, p. 171. This being the case one wonders why angels ministered to Christ.

they ruined themselves and became instruments of ruin for others.⁵⁵

The "can do nothing unless God wills it."⁵⁶ The intentions the devil harbors are wicked. He desires to overthrow God's purposes but God has the devil well in hand. The devil is "ruled by his [God's] bidding" and "compelled to render him service."⁵⁷

Therefore God does not allow Satan to rule over the souls of believers, but gives over only the impious and unbelievers, who he deigns not to regard as members of his own flock.⁵⁸

There are several important points to notice here. First, Calvin's method affirming as it does the testimony of Scripture above tradition and demanding, as a consequence, silence from men where Scripture is silent, relying as it does on clear and logical inference to illumine, where possible, Scriptural ambiguities, and insisting on a cognitive content to faith has to a significant extent abandoned angels as concepts having almost no religious significance. Calvin affirms the reality of angels for Scripture affirms their reality. He insists that they are not ideas.⁵⁹ But recall his remark that the author of the Celestial Hierarchy must have seen the angelic host instead of learned about them. Such a statement reflects that sixteenth century emphasis on the sensible origin of knowledge that was given imputus by Aquinas. Yet recall, too, that for Calvin Scripture is a source of information about reality beyond our senses. Calvin employs angels in his theological system solely because Scripture affirms their existence but he can say nothing theological about them. His philosophical presuppositions bid him be silent. Angels for Calvin are not ideas, they are something stranger: beings which effectively elude our ideas. They have been voided of any religious consequence. They have become a non-descript

55. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 6, p. 175

56. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 6, p. 175

57. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 17, p. 176

58. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 18, p. 177

59. Ibid. Book I, Chap. XIV, sec. 9, p. 169-170

host, not divine, receiving no worship, and working good for believers only through the agency of God. If they were eliminated it would make no practical difference.⁶⁰ The cultus which the church affirmed at Nicea in 787 was swept away. It was for Calvin little more than superstition.

Second, note that this did not happen to the devil. The angelic retains some of its vitality in the demonic. An appeal to Satan still serves to resolve the problem of the goodness of God and the reality of evil. He and not God is still the source of evil for evil springs, not from God, but from the devil's self-perversion.⁶¹ However, the devil barks on a very short rope. Regardless of his own intention he is able to accomplish only what God allows.

Finally, note that the influence of voluntarist theology is expressed in the Institutes by an emphasis on autonomy. In Augustine the picture was more a picture of the world under the thrall of evil beings who forced men to sin. While Augustine saw these beings as controlled by God and in the final analysis as agents of God's judgment on sinful men, he also saw them as enemies which were overcome by Christ. They were a spiritual army of occupation from which God's own must be liberated. In Calvin only the ghost of this army remains. The true enemy has become human sin and the need is understood more as a need for re-creation than as a need for liberation. Seen in these terms the nature of the atonement will become increasingly obscure. Questions like why did God not create Adam without the capacity to sin? over what did Christ triumph? or why was vicarious death necessary at all if God had from the beginning chosen to forgive some and condemn others? would take on a new urgency. Calvin does attempt to deal with these issues

60. This difficulty has worked itself out in diverse ways, effecting even those who profess to take the Bible "literally". As a contemporary example, Ryrle, taking Calvin's lead, has nearly emptied the Old Testament of angels by describing as a theophany nearly every angelic appearance recorded there.

61. The question is emerging though and lies behind the infra- and supralapsarian debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

but it is the nature of the questions which is of greater interest to us than those solutions which Calvin proposes. The questions and their persistence reveal a shift in the focus of the Christian faith, a shift which had been developing for centuries. Christianity, as we have already seen, was a religion both of atonement and creation. Theologically it traced its roots both to Israel and to Greece. The concept of sin and creation was different in each tradition. In Judaism God as creator was the predicate of God as judge and God as judge made intelligible the concept of God as merciful. In the Hellenistic mind issues of sin were not understood in terms of God's judgment but were seen as problems inherent in the fabric of creation and as resolvable in terms of enlightenment (the Epicureanism of Lucretius is an example) or of the will (Virgil's Aeneid takes this position). The issue for the Jew was primarily one of sin. For the Greek it was one of origins. Greek philosophy as it was adopted by the church as a vehicle for explicating and defending the faith quite naturally brought with it those concerns which it had been developed to resolve, concerns which were at base ontological. As long as the superstructure of the faith could be coherently maintained, then the shift from God the atoning God to God the creating God could be concealed but when that superstructure collapsed, as it did with the emergence of mechanistic science, then the disparity which had been developing between those two concepts of God was revealed. In their attempts to deal with the increasingly difficult issues raised by the scientific world Protestant theologians would increasingly abandon the God of atonement and concentrate on the God of creation. As a consequence the salvation offered by Christianity would be understood more and more in terms of the church's work in the world and less and less in terms of Christ's work on the cross. In the end the Christ of this new Christianity would become like the angels, a being who effectively eluded our ideas about Him.

D) The rise of epistemology: The development of a voluntarist theology entailed the abandonment of formal and final causality as

working concepts to explain the apparent unity of nature. In their place the European mind began to think in terms of material and efficient causality. With the debouch of this "matter in motion" paradigm a new set of problems revolving around the theory of knowledge began to emerge. To understand why let us recall that inherent within an appeal to formal cause was the assumption that knowledge involved union between the knower and the known. As part of a rational purposeful universe men knew essential nature through the union of forms in the mind with forms in the transcendent or immanent realm, both internal and external forms being an expression of the same λόγος. In the absence of formal cause, however, no such union could be assumed. Plato's critique concerning the limits of empirical knowledge (that such knowledge was relative and incomplete, that perception varied with the observer, that empirical judgment required a non-empirical standard) was still valid but his appeal to rational intuition as a means of achieving certain knowledge was rejected. Instead of a necessary connection between men's knowledge of the world and the world as it was being assumed, a sharp delineation between the self and the world was posited. Within this new conceptual model knowledge became increasingly probabilistic and will as a means of achieving knowledge began to take precedence over reason. As God had created by a free act of His will (any necessary connection between God and the world having been denied) so man the individual knew by an act of will rather than by participating in any spirit expressed in the world. The result was a denial of the λόγος doctrine begun by Justin Martyr, a denial of the validity of natural theology as a means of knowing truths about God, and a denial of the existence of any natural ethic. This new model also reflects the beginnings of an ontological shift away from static space as more basic to our knowledge than time and toward a view of time (or process) as more basic to our knowledge than space. Thus, epistemological questions began to take priority over ontological ones.

Two schools of thought began to develop in response to this

challenge. The first was Continental Rationalism represented by men like René Descartes (1596-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). The second was British Empiricism represented by men like Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776). Continental Rationalism was characterized by a belief in the reality of a priori (or innate) ideas which had been created in the mind by God. Hence, for the rationalist God and not reason was the ultimate guarantor of certainty in knowing. British Empiricism rejected the idea of a priori knowledge and argued instead that all ideas had their origins a posteriori (or in particular sense experience). For the rationalist the order of the world and the order of the mind existed as two distinct aspects of a greater reality and functioned in harmony to reveal the truth of that reality. For the empiricist the mind was a blank slate upon which the order of the world was engraved by means of particular sense experience. The rationalists attacked the empiricist on this point arguing as Plato had argued that judgments regarding particular experience required a non-empirical standard (i.e. innate ideas). The empiricists in their turn attacked the rationalists arguing that in children, for example, such a priori knowledge did not seem to be evident.

These two traditions were united by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who, through the use of what he called "synthetic a priori judgments", was able to provide a framework for doing metaphysics within this new scientific paradigm. The issues had begun to revolve around the nature of material and efficient causality. What was at stake was the Newtonian concept of the universe. Newton had assumed that matter consisted of hard impenetrable pellets which moved in accordance with a mathematically discoverable set of laws through three dimensional space. The empiricists pointed out that this mechanistic view of the world was a high level abstraction and could not be verified through the senses. In the first place there was no way of determining the nature of matter from sense

perception. Space, too, could be conceived of, not in Newtonian, but in relational terms. Both the empiricists (Berkeley) and the rationalists (Leibniz) raised objections to Newton's concept of space. Finally, the system of laws which Newton proposed to define mathematically assumed effecent cause as an objective realtiy. It was David Hume who argued against such a conception most forcefully. Hume distinguished between two kinds of knowledge: relations of ideas (or analytic a priori knowledge) and matters of fact (or synthetic a posteriori knowledge). The former expressed necessary truth but added no information to that which was already known. The latter did profess to add information to the general fund of knowledge. Concentrating on synthetic a posteriori knowledge, Hume concluded that experience told one nothing about about the validity of one's ideas concerning the objective world. Instead, said Hume, through the constant conjunction of events habits of mind were created that led one to expect that the uniformity which one had experienced would continue to be experienced. Custom, then, was the guide to life.

Kant, in an attempt to elevate scientific knowledge above the level of mere custom, proposed in addition to the analytic a priori and the synthetic a posteriori knowledge of Hume a third alternative, the synthetic a priori judgment which, without empirical input, could tell one certain things. For Kant a priori meant that which was universal and logically necessary. The synthetic a priori would enable Kant to defend the universality of scientific statements and to resolve the tension which had arisen between the German pietist tradition with its stress on the inner life of the believer (a tradition in which Kant had been reared and which he never denied) and the value-free causal determinism inherient in the Newtonian worldview. Kant would argue that the mind ~~structured its~~ experience of the world through a priori subjective catagories. Forming experience, these catagories created a truth which was neither purely subjective or purely objective. It was instead truth shaped by imagination. As such it was human truth. It

was universal for its categories were universal but as human it was phenomenological. We could never know, said Kant, the world beyond our senses (what he called the numenal world) but we could know our experience of it. Nature, said Kant, conformed herself to man.

Much of Kant's work involved an analysis of the transcendental by which he meant the subjectivity of the human mind, the inwardness of human experience. This focus represented what amounted to a Copernican revolution in philosophy. The focus of philosophy shifted from an inquiry concerning the nature of the external to an inquiry concerning the nature of the internal. Kant did not deny the reality of the numenal world. Borrowing the concept of intentionality from Duns Scotus he argued that sense perception indicated the reality of the numenal world and that this numenal reality kept the claims of sensibility within bounds. The numenal world served as a limiting factor. However, Kant did argue that science though pretending to explore numenal reality in fact could as an empirical discipline make statements only about the phenomenal. In this way he was able to deny that the universe was value-free as Newtonian thinkers affirmed it to be. Whether or not it was value free, said Kant, was not within the province of science to declare.

The difficulty which was to emerge here focused on metaphysical questions like beauty or justice. If science, though constantly probing the material world, was unable to shed the humanness of its abstractions concerning that world, then surely the attempt of philosophers to get at the truth about matters which were pure abstractions was a vanity. There was no abstract essence to discover. There was only a human construct. Metaphysics after Kant would never be the same.

One of the early post-Kantian movements was romanticism which emphasized imagination, sentiment, and individuality. It was in human feeling where one might seek truth. This movement, which was primarily confined to literature, produced one of the most significant Protestant theologians to date: Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) attempted to write theology by using Kant's transcendental method. From within the Reformed tradition he attempted to verify the positions of that tradition by appealing to the subjectivity of the believer. In many regards Schleiermacher is Calvin read through Kant but while for Calvin man's knowledge of God and of self were interdependent for Schleiermacher man's knowledge of God came only through man's knowledge of himself. His theology began to become introspective. In our discussion of Schleiermacher we will rely on his The Christian Faith which was published in 1821-22 and represents the culmination of his theological reflection. It is one of the most important works in Protestant thought.

In The Christian Faith Schleiermacher defines Ethics as "that speculative presentation of reason...which runs parallel to natural science"⁶² and the Philosophy of Religion as "a critical presentation of the different existing forms of religious communion...the complete phenomenon of piety in human nature."⁶³ Piety he defines as "a modification of feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness."⁶⁴ The church is "a communion or association relating to religion or piety."⁶⁵ Note here that these definitions describe phenomenologically. The method is critical reflection, not on the content of Scripture, but on feeling. The assumption is that the universal human mind as posited by Kant will when in confrontation with the holy tend to express itself in the same way (simply because it is universal) regardless of time, culture, or place. Thus, it is through an analysis of the texture of our feelings, an analysis which Schleiermacher proposes to accomplish, that we may bring content to the message of the Bible.

Feeling, writes Schleiermacher, "lies at the root of every expression of our wills."⁶⁶ Piety (the highest grade of human self-conscious-

62. Schleiermacher, F. The Christian Faith, Introduction, Chap. I. Proposition 2, p. 5

63. Ibid. p. 5

64. Ibid. Proposition 3, p. 5

65. Ibid. p. 5

66. Ibid. Proposition 3, pp. 11-12

ness)⁶⁷ is feeling.⁶⁸ It stimulates knowing and doing but "neither of these constitutes the essence of piety."⁶⁹ Schleiermacher defines "the self-identical essence of piety" as "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent...of being in relation with God."⁷⁰ There is an element of this in all states of self-consciousness. It relativizes our feeling of freedom, causes us to see beyond the contingencies of the world, and so leads us to God.

...God signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant in this feeling and to which we trace our being in such a state; and any further content of the idea must be evolved out of this fundamental import assigned to it.⁷¹

To understand why Schleiermacher defines God in this way we must again refer to Kant. Kant had denied the validity of the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments for the existence of God. Derived from the substance/form paradigm of the Greeks with its assumptions concerning the hierarchy of being and the necessary connection between God and the world, these arguments had assumed existence as an attribute like goodness or majesty. God as most perfect was implied by the existence of creatures which were less perfect and God's existence consequent to the reality of such creatures could be reasonably inferred. However, with the abandonment of that paradigm, existence ceased to be a predicate in the sense that goodness or majesty were predicates. Instead existence was part of the substructure for judgments made concerning those predicates. In place of these classic proofs Kant proposed a moral argument whereby God acted as a regulative principle (much like the numenal world) to give coherence to moral behavior. Schleiermacher is attempting to get around Kant's conclusions by finding evidence of the existence of God in the very fabric of human experience.

67. Ibid. Proposition 5, p. 18

68. Ibid. Proposition 3, p. 8

69. Ibid. p. 10

70. Ibid. Proposition 4, p. 12

71. Ibid. p. 17

This feeling of being dependent upon and in relation to God does not require any outward given object⁷² yet sensible self-consciousness always co-exists with the highest self-consciousness (piety). The relatedness of these two levels of awareness is the highest point of self-consciousness and is called religion.⁷³ In short, as one's knowledge of self matures, one recognizes one's self and one's world and in this, recognition one becomes religious.

Such religion generates emotions and these religious emotions are expressed as poetry in a moment of enthusiasm or inspiration. As such it

is purely descriptive, and sets up in general outlines images and forms which each hearer completes for himself in his own peculiar way.⁷⁴

Such images and forms become the stuff of rhetoric and only later become descriptively didactic. This culmination in the descriptively didactic arises

solely out of logically ordered reflection upon the immediate utterances of the religious self-consciousness [and] finds its confirmation in the whole of history.⁷⁵

Thus, figurative language always preceeds dogmatic language. He argues that

improvements and developments hardly ever proceed directly from the dogmatic discussions themselves, but are for the most part occasioned, in one way or another, by the proceeding of public worship or by popular literature for the dissemination of religion....dogmatic language only came

72. Ibid. Proposition 5, p. 21

73. Ibid. p. 22

74. Ibid. Proposition 16, p. 79

75. Ibid. p. 81. The words of Christ are exempted for two reasons. First, they provide the text for propositions but are not themselves propositional. Second, where they are propositional they are intended to correct popular misconceptions.

76. Ibid. Proposition 19, p. 90

to be formed gradually...the rhetorical and hymnic elements in this latter must have been especially favourable to the formation of concepts of divine attributes....

In fact he earlier states that

the majority of the dogmatic definitions were called forth by contradictions to which the rhetorical expressions had led.⁷⁸

Thus, dogmatics is employed primarily for purposes of clarification.

Dogmatics, then, effects the form of the poetic expression but not its content. Neither dogmatics or poetry can describe God as He is but only as He appears in religious self-consciousness as related to the world.⁷⁹

All attributes which we ascribe to God are to be taken as denoting not something special in God, but only something special in the manner in which the feeling of absolute dependence is to be related to Him.⁸⁰

This construction of absolute dependence reflects that voluntarist theology to which we have already referred. It will enable Schleiermacher to deny deism by first affirming God's preservation of nature within a divine government in which the ideas of preservation are

general which is related to the whole world as a unity,
special which is concerned with the species and, most
special which is concerned with the individual.⁸¹

and second, by affirming the reality of efficient causes. When we recognize that God works through efficient cause in the same way that we once recognized that God worked through formal and final cause (note here that Schleiermacher, like Kant, is denying the value-free construct which Newtonian physics had placed upon natural processes), then our religious emotion should require no miracles. Thus

77. Ibid. Chap. II, Proposition 30, p. 127

78. Ibid, Chap. I, Proposition 16, p. 81

79. Ibid, First Part of the System of Doctrine, Introduction, Proposition 35, pp. 140-141

80. Ibid. Second Section, Proposition 50, p. 194

81. Ibid. Proposition 47, p. 183

as regards the miraculous, the general intrests of science, more particularly of natural science, and the intrests of religion seem to meet at the same point, i.e. that we should abandon the idea of the absolutely supernatural because no single instance of it can⁸² be known by us, and we are nowhere required to recognize it.

For Schleiermacher God is pre-eminently Creator and Sustainer. Such a God is intimately involved with all the particulars of His creation. Schleiermacher has heard the prophet; "'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? declares the Lord.'" (Jer. 23:24 ASV). But with such a perception angels will become completely irrelevant.

The conception...contains in itself nothing impossible.... But...it never enters into the sphere of Christian Doctrine proper. It can...continue to have a place in Christian language without laying on us the duty of⁸³ arriving at any conclusion with regard to its truth.

He notes the ambiguity of the term

Everywhere...in our Holy Scriptures the angels are assumed; but nowhere is anything taught respecting them....⁸⁴ God Himself and the angels of the Lord are so interchanged that the whole can be thought of as a Theophany...⁸⁵ anything can be thought⁸⁶ of as an angel that is a bearer of a divine message....

and concludes that as individual beings angels are poetical representations expressing "a consciousness of the power of spirit over matter."⁸⁷ He goes on to say:

We ought...to think of them as piritual beings, not belonging to any definite heavenly body, who could embody themselves temporarily, according to their tasks, in the manner in which they have appeared from time to time in

82. Ibid, Proposition 47, p. 183

83. Ibid. First Part, First Section, First Appendix "The Angels", Proposition 42, p. 156

84. Ibid. p. 158

85. Ibid. p. 156. We have seen that Ryrie takes this route.

86. Ibid. p. 157

87. Ibid. p. 157

our world. And obviously we know far too little of the interstellar spaces, as also of the possible relations between spirit⁸⁸ and body, to deny outright the truth of such a notion.

Regarding guardian angels he writes:

...the question whether angels exist or not ought to have no influence upon our conduct....we must teach that God has no need of angels for our protection, unless we assume a continual activity on the part of angels, and⁸⁹ thus do away with the entire interdependence of nature.

A theory such as Calvin proposed, that God makes use of angels to give us consolation in our weakness, cannot be carried through successfully

without very limited and almost childish conceptions of God [and] can only feed our vanity if we accept the idea that a whole species of higher beings exists only for our service....[Such a concept] belongs to a time when our knowledge of the forces of nature was very limited, and our power over them at its lowest stage.⁹⁰

The question of the creation of angels as well as questions concerning "their general nature, manner of life, and activities" remain wholly closed for the actual province of Dogmatics "and none but a private liturgical use of this conception is to be recognized."⁹¹

The devil fares no better:

The idea of the devil...is so unstable that we cannot expect anyone to be convinced of its truth.⁹²..our Church has never made doctrinal use of the idea....whatever is said about the Devil is subject to the condition that belief in him must by no means be put forward as a condition of faith in God or in Christ. Furthermore, there can be no question of the Devil having any influence within the Kingdom of God.⁹³

88. Ibid. p. 157

89. Ibid. Proposition 43, p. 159

90. Ibid. p. 159

91. Ibid. p. 160

92. Proposition 44, p. 161

93. Proposition 45, p. 163

Schleiermacher tells us that the devil's origin is apocryphal,⁹⁴ drawn from the common life of the period,⁹⁵ that what Christ said about him and the angels are examples of accommodation of the popular beliefs (no dogmatic statements to correct erroneous concepts here), that the apostles "never quote the devil as the cause of evil."⁹⁶ He argues

the question as to his existence is not one for Christian Theology but for Cosmology in the widest sense of the word.⁹⁷

However, the devil can still continue to serve a role in the language of the church as a poetic personification in religious teaching

...in order to make clear the positive godlessness of evil in itself, or to emphasize the fact that it is only in a higher protection that we can find help against an evil the source of whose power our will and intelligence seem unable to reach.⁹⁸

The consequences of this epistemological shift may be delineated as follows:

1) The role of God has shifted from reconciler to creator. This shift has been accomplished through the abandonment of substance/form philosophy and the adoption of a voluntarist theology which traces its origins to Duns Scotus and the nominalists. This theology had an almost incalculatable impact on the Reformation. Within this tradition God is understood in two senses. First, He is wholly other which means He is unique, free, essentially unknowable. Second, He sustains creation through a system of efficient causality. In fact, He defends the reality of such a system even as the God of the rationalists defended the reality of innate ideas. On this level, God is intimately involved with the particulars of the world. God creates and preserves everything constantly.

As concerns angels, two points are to be made here. First, in the ancient world angels served to remind the believer that God and

94. Ibid. Proposition 45, p. 164

95. Ibid. p. 167

96. Ibid. p. 164

97. Ibid. p. 167

98. Ibid, Postscript, p. 169

His creation are distinct. However, voluntarist theology has eliminated that role for angels by employing the concept of contingent creation. For the angelic host one can credibly substitute natural law. In one sense this concept grows out of the life of Jesus. The descent of the Spirit and the ascent of the risen Lord represent the wedding of two realms. Thus, God can be both transcendent and immanent and needs no angels. Also the presence of the Spirit among believers eliminates the need for guardian angels or angelic messengers.

However, we should note that angels do more than emphasize the transcendent nature of God. They also reveal His personhood. It is significant that the elimination of angels from theology has coincided with the depersonalization of the cosmos. This depersonalization is a consequence of the denial of any necessary relationship between God and the world. To refer to the transcendent God as wholly other, radically free, essentially unknowable is to void the word "god" of any content. What we have witnessed with the elimination of angels is a bifurcation of God. On the one hand, God as transcendent is unknowable and has no ability of self-revelation. On the other hand, God as immanent has been tied to efficient causality so completely that any meaningful concept of personal interaction with the world is eliminated. Instead, we have a variation of the Stoic λόγος except that in this case the λόγος is stated in terms of efficient rather than formal cause. In short, the concept of God as creator has, at the expense of God as redeemer, been developed to such an extent that we witness the emergence of a modified Stoicism that has lain hidden within Christian theology. This Christian Stoicism will be the topic of our next section.

2) Accompanying this emphasis on God as creator there has been a radical shift from the objective to the subjective. This has entailed a loss of the concept of knowable essences and a redefinition of knowledge in terms of probability. Due to the individualization of standards the traditional concept of wisdom as that faculty by which one can grasp universal principles for ordering one's life collapses.

In this collapse ethics will shift from the deontological and become consequentialist in nature. This tendency will be exacerbated by the concept of time as more basic to ontic reality than space, a shift to which we have already referred. Suffering, too, will become increasingly personalized, less easily explainable by an appeal to traditional solutions. Christianity will lose its historical reference and the meaning ascribed to Christ's death and resurrection will become more and more unintelligible.

3) There has also been developing within this paradigm a view of history as linear, progressive, and expressing natural laws which can be known inductively. As such, history becomes the province of the professional scholar who, like the scientist, must see his continuum as self-contained. Even as the scientist qua scientist can say nothing about supernatural causes (i.e. causes with originate beyond the continuum he studies) so the historian qua historian cannot appeal to events beyond history to explain events within history. Instead he must seek an historical explanation for everything that occurs. This prejudice will inevitably color his reading of events. One recalls the bon mot of the the nineteenth century French mathematician Henri Poincaré that the only miracle is that there are no miracles.

PART V: THE NEW STOICS

Founded in Athens around 300B.C. by Zeno of Cyprus, Stoicism¹ was one of the dominant forces in the molding of ancient thought. Much influenced by Platonic doctrine (though Stoics were to deny the reality of the Platonic Ideal), Zeno borrowed elements from Heraclitus and the Cynics and forged a link between the Socratic and the Ionic traditions. By the first century A.D. his concepts had become common coin throughout the Empire. It remains an open question as to what extent Paul was influenced by Stoic philosophy. The Pharisees as they are described by Josephus reveal many similarities with the Stoics and Paul did boast of his Phariseeism (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil. 3:5). As a resident of Tarsus he would have had ample opportunity to have heard the Stoics for by the first century A.D. the academic centers of the city had been inundated by Stoic thought. That Paul was familiar with some Stoic literature is certain for on Mars Hill he quotes the Phaenomena of Aratus of Soli ("for we are also his offspring" Acts 17:28 KJV). Questions of inspiration naturally come into play here but they do not come into play when we deal with patristic theology and there it is incontrovertible, especially after the fourth century, that many of the Church theologians borrowed Stoic concepts to flesh out Christian revelation.

Aspects of Stoicism which are of particular interest in the light of our analysis in Part IV are as follows:

A) The Stoics believed that men and gods are distinguished from other living things by being in possession of a rational soul. There is a spark of the divine in all of us and its distinctive characteristic is reason. Reason is a way of attaining to knowledge but true knowledge may also be acquired through sensation. Thus, rationality uncovers those principles by which we understand sensible knowledge while sensible knowledge acts as a corrective to logic. A modern concept of

1. From the Greek *στοά ποικίλη* meaning a roofed colonade, a place which Stoics often employed as a lecture hall.

empricism is latent here. We have already referred to Calvin's concept of reason as the imago deo. Luther and Calvin split radically on this point, Luther calling reason a "whore". Augustine, too, would have disagreed with Calvin, viewing man more holistically.

B) Believing as the Stoics did in a rational order of which man was a part, they argued that one must submit one's life to that order to achieve happiness. The Stoics believed in the certainty of knowledge. Their problem was to establish a criteria for that knowledge. Once the truth was known, assent would follow naturally but submission was an act of the will which the Stoics thought of as being in some sense autonomous.

C) Religion for the Stoics resulted from man's recognition of this world harmony. For them it was characterized by self-examination, praise of the divine, and prayer. It allowed neither sacrifice or image and recognizing as it did the superiority of internal virtue to external constraints, it had no system of statutes. Instead love was to take precedence in human affairs. Phrases like "City of God", "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man", and "law of charity and benevolence" are characteristic of Stoic literature. It has even been suggested, though no hard evidence supports the supposition, that Seneca and Paul were correspondents.²

The Stoics believed in an all-pervasive fire which was the divine first cause and which was itself structured by the impersonal λόγος. This concept they derived ultimately from Heraclitus. It is interesting at this point to quote from Paul Tillich:

God's life is life as spirit, and the trinitarian principles are moments within the process of the divine life....The first principle is the basis of Godhead, that which makes God God. It is the root of his majesty, the unapproachable intensity of his being, the inexhaustible ground of being in which everything has its origin. It is the power of being

2. Cochrane, C.H., Christianity and Classical Culture. Part I Reconstruction, Chap. IV Regnum Caesaris Regnum Diaboli, p. 166

infinitely resisting nonbeing, giving the power of being to everything that is....The classic term logos is most adequate for the second principle....The logos opens the divine ground, its infinity and its darkness, and it makes its fullness distinguishable, definite, finite. The logos has been called ...the principle of God's self-objectification....Without the second principle the first principle would be chaos, burning fire, but it would not be the creative ground. Without the second principle God is demonic.

The Tillichian concept of the trinity reveals some fascinating possibilities although to this writer it seems inadequate. In the end God as the ground of all being is impersonal and the trinity is discussed in terms of "principles". Also, Tillich collapses the fall and creation into one moment and so conceives of sin in terms of estrangement consequent to finitude. This is pure Hellenism. No longer can we think of Christ's victory as a victory over sin, death, and the devil. Instead, Tillich states specifically that the man Jesus may have sinned. For Tillich the high point of the Messiah's life was his death, not his resurrection. For Tillich there is no literal resurrection. And it is not the devil but demonic estrangement over which Jesus is victorious.

Tillich was much influenced by F.W. Schelling (1775-1854) who, like Schleiermacher, rejected Kant's noumenal/phenomenal distinction and concentrated solely on the phenomenal. Schelling purposed a concept of evolutionary Idealism whereby the human spirit developed through three stages: a contemplative stage, theoretical stage, an active, practical stage, and, finally, a stage which culminated in a synthesis between these two and resulted in the aesthetic and highest stage. For Tillich, however, the human spirit does not evolve but is "cracked open" by the existential crisis. In The Courage to Be Tillich argues that in its ability to resolve this crisis, Christianity is superior to Stoicism. We read:

The Stoic as a Stoic does not experience the despair of

3. Tillich, P., Systematic Theology, Vol. I, Part II, IIB5, pp. 252-253

personal guilt....The Stoic cannot say, as Hamlet does, that "conscience" makes cowards of us all. He does not see the universal fall from essential rationality to existential foolishness as a matter of responsibility and as a problem of guilt. The courage to be for him is the courage to affirm oneself in spite of sin and guilt. It could not have been different; for the courage to face one's own guilt⁴ leads to the question of salvation instead of renunciation.

But Tillich is not able to transcend that aristocratic exclusivity which for him makes Stoicism inadequate. He remains in Harvey Cox's words "a theologian's theologian".⁵ What has been lost is that dynamic personal dimension of God which is fundamental to both the Jewish and the Christian faiths and to which we referred in Part I. Dealing with the phenomenology of Scripture Tillich has relativized the revelation within a philosophical paradigm that is almost exclusively Hellenistic. His theological concerns have become not relational but ontological. He retains his Protestantism but he has lost his Christianity.

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4. Tillich, P., The Courage to Be, Chap. 1 "Being and Courage", Section "Courage and Wisdom: the Stoics", p. 17
 5. Cox, H., The Secular City, Chap. 3 "The Style of the Secular City", Section: "Tillich, Barth, and the Secular Style", pp. 78-81

PART VI: THE QUESTION OF HERESY

The concept of heresy derives from Diogenes. Following Zeno's division of philosophy into the disciplines of physics, logic, and ethics, Diogenes called the preferances of philosophers for their particular disciplines "heresies" by which he meant choices. By the third century A.D. the Church Fathers were applying the term to heterodox opinion, the element of personal preferance in choosing having come to be understood as willfulness against God. The church, as the bastion of orthodoxy, determined the parameters of acceptable theology. Thus, church tradition became in matters of doctrine an authority equal to Scripture.

It was against this tradition that the Reformers raised the cry, "Scripture alone!" Believing that the tradition had been corrupted, they understood themselves as purging an apostate church, as returning to that which was more ancient and authentic. They sought a standard for this return in Scripture by appealing to the doctrine of creation. The Spirit who had brooded over the waters in Genesis 1:2 was the same Spirit who had inspired the Scriptures. Reason was the imago deo. Thus, any Christian, guided by the Spirit, could as he read the Bible, discern those truths necessary for salvation and for living successfully in the world. This "theology of the Spirit" was to betray the Reformers in two ways. First, it took no account of the progressive nature of revelation. As such it was to father that wooden proof-texting which would fragment the Protestant church. Second, although recognizing the historical quality of Scripture it did not fully appreciate the nature of historical relativism. Consequently, by denying tradition in favor of Scripture alone, it was to open the door to that exegetical sundering which has characterized Biblical theology over the last two centuries.

As was pointed out in Part I, because of the phenomenological nature of the historical witness, theology, although it must begin with Scripture and must appeal to Scripture, must also go beyond Scripture. In going beyond Scripture, however, the theologian can appeal to no

ultimate standard. Instead he steps into the flux of history. Thus, theological systems can never be ultimate.

In this sense, then, questions of heresy are particularly difficult for the Protestant to resolve. On the one hand, there are trinitarian and Christological truths to affirm. On the other hand, those truths, insofar as they describe relationships not specifically discussed in the revelation, become subject to re-interpretation as philosophical paradigms shift. We have attempted to illustrate how this happens in Part IV.

It should be evident by this time that a serious problem has emerged in mainline Protestant theology. If the problem only concerned the nature of angels, then perhaps we could shrug and let each believer resolve the issue personally. After all, there is no orthodox position on the nature of angels. However, as we have seen, the status of angels is a barometer of something far more serious. The issue is, in fact, trinitarian.

Scripture is clear on who Jesus is. From the witness of Scripture the divinity of Christ cannot be doubted. However, the doctrine of the trinity does more than merely affirm His divinity. It also defines His relationship to the Father. It does this through the vehicle of substance/form philosophy. The question asked by the early church was, how can the essential be expressed particularly without distortion? The question was resolved by first appealing to the revelation. God's creation was originally "very good". This was understood not teleologically but ontologically. In the beginning creation had expressed essence perfectly through all its particulars. This was not so now but through the revelation one could know it was possible. From there it was argued that Jesus in His particular person expressed essential God and essential man perfectly. How this was to be conceived is the subject of the creeds. What concerns us at this point is the trinitarian rather than the Christological creed.

In Scripture God is described both as a being among beings and as

that being through whom all other beings exist. The former image is more easily comprehensible within a mythic paradigm, the latter within a substance/form paradigm. The doctrine of the atonement assumes God as a being among beings. God calls, is wrathful, triumphs over His enemies. The doctrine of creation assumes God as that being through whom "all things hold together." (Col. 1:17 RSV) Upon reflection, however, these concepts of God appear to be contradictory. This is the conflict which the trinitarian creed resolves. The creed affirms that the essence of God subsists in three persons. This affirmation, within the structures of substance/form philosophy, is not a contradiction. Indeed there would be no logical difficulty in affirming that the essence of God subsisted in any number of persons. With the abandonment of substance/form philosophy and the denial of essential reality save as it appeared in particulars, the creed ceased to make sense. Its integrative power was lost. God who created and sustained the world in all its particulars was set against God the being among beings. Instead of inferring from God's capacity as creator His capacity to judge His creations as the Hebrews had done, the Reformers focused on the more Hellenistic question of origins. In the end they were to ascribe the origin of evil to God who created and sustained all things. In this way the judgments of God were shrouded in mystery. In the face of such uncertainty Christian Stoicism emerged.

The optimistic nineteenth century provided an ideal culture for such Stoicism. Coupled with the militant imperialism of industrial economies and western confidence in the scientific future, this modern Christianity could, for a time, ignore the atonement. Salvation could be conceived as resting with men who in the name of Christ conquered and brought in the millenium. It was solely a question of linear time, eschatological symbols, and human courage. But such a conceit could not long survive in the twentieth century. By the end of World War I Liberalism was floundering.

I have attempted to show that much of our difficulty lies with

the failure of Protestantism generally to intergrate the personal and the universal dimensions of God. That failure can be traced to inadequate assumptions within the voluntarist paradigm from which the tradition sprang, assumptions which have caused us to confuse ontological with theological issues and in our confusion to be too willing to reject one or the other of the equally vital aspects of God's being. The result has been a division of Protestants between those who have accommodated and those who have reacted. Neither solution as been notably constructive. Because the personal aspect of God is an element in Scripture we know that it cannot be an error to think of God in that way. That God as Person may be comprehended in a meaningful though purely symbolic way is a possibility which the accommodations have explored. The failure of their attempt gives us grounds for doubting that such a perception of God is sufficient. On the other hand, the reactionists have abandoned any meaningful attempt to intergrate the revelation with the findings of modern science. The result has been a theology of creation which parodies the theologies of other centuries and a concept of human psychology which is too often little more than grotesque. Our failures should give us pause.

A personal God and a mechanistic universe cannot be wed. They are contradictions in terms. But the mechanistic world model is being abandoned for one which is more organic. Our priority must be to develop a concept of the trinity which will enable us to fuse our divided theologies. Otherwise orthodoxy in any classical sense is doomed within Protestantism.

The years wrap us unevenly
In their variegated textures.
For time unfolds according to its order.
But we get old a piece at a time.
A string of gray surrounds us.
A persistent stiffness,
A crumb of decay, a sudden splinter of pain.
Old age comes unevenly.
Rapping at us like a woodpecker.

Dr. Ben Michael Carter



Mike's library is available for viewing at 2505 W. Northgate Drive in Irving Texas.



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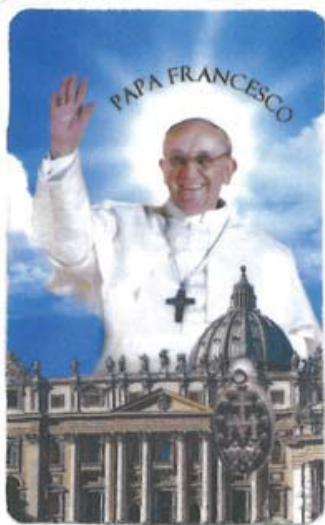
FIRST SECTION - GENERAL AFFAIRS

From the Vatican, 19 September 2017

Dear Ms Carter,

I am writing to acknowledge the gift of inscribed copies of Dr Ben Michael Carter's writings, which you presented to His Holiness Pope Francis.

In expressing appreciation for this kind gesture, I am pleased to assure you of His Holiness's prayers for your late husband and for you and your intentions.

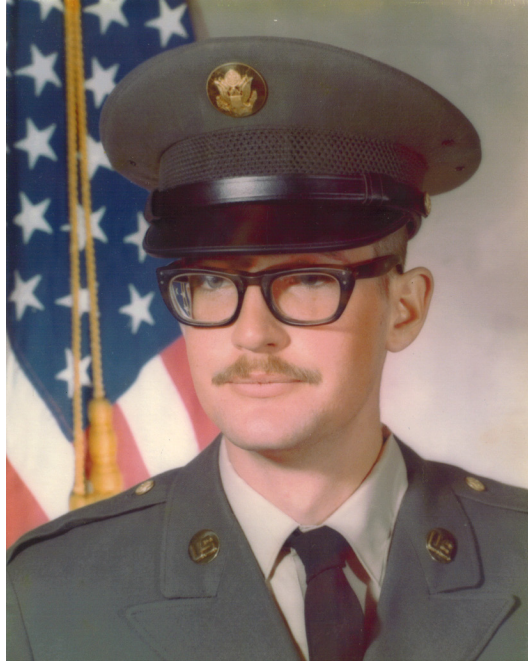


Yours sincerely,

Monsignor Paolo Borgia
Assessor

Ms Salma Carunia Carter
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Ben Michael “Mike” Carter was a Renaissance man who loved writing. He authored six theology books and a novel. He also wrote for magazines, journals and newspapers, as well as poetry reviews. He earned a B.A. in Economic History from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, an MA in theological studies from Wheaton College, Illinois, an M.Th. from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, U.K., and a Ph.D. in History of Christianity in the non-western world from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, United Kingdom. He was a member of the Irving chapter of the Texas Poetry Society, the American Scientific Affiliation, and the Evangelical Theological Society. He was married to Salma Carunia from Dohnavur Fellowship, Tirunelvel, South India.