

Evil and Theodicy

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Part 1—Philosophy

Introduction

In treating of Evil in relation to Theodicy it is quite impossible to leave out of consideration metaphysics and epistemology. The views of sin will vary as the conceptions of God and man vary. If we view God as infinite, eternal, and immutable in His being, intelligence, and will, and man his organic creation, if we accept the supernatural, grant the need of special revelation, accept the fact of special revelation and the fall of man, we must needs also come to the Biblical view of sin with redemption and restoration. If on the other hand we deny these premises, we must begin with man and experience as we find them, and construct our own views as to the nature of God and man and therefore also of sin, and we come to a fundamentally different theory of Theodicy.

We have accordingly two main theories of evil and two kinds of theodicy. The one is the product of a system of thought that bows before the authority of supernatural revelation and studies the phenomena of experience in the light of the Scriptures. The other is the product of the philosopher who also views the phenomena of experience but feels that it devolves upon him as a rational creature to give an account of things to himself, and that he is able to do so. This may lead him to skepticism or phenomenalism but he will not seek aid from supernatural revelation. "The philosopher as philosopher and irrespectively of his attitude toward the Christian faith, approaches a question as if there were no truth which claimed to be revealed. For him the plan of the world may or may not have been divinely disclosed to man; it awaits discovery or interpretation through the exercise of reason."¹

The question thus becomes first of all an epistemological one. Can unaided reason explain experience or can it not? If it cannot, can it find aid or is it left alone so that skepticism must result? "The theory of knowledge is usually entangled at a very early point in the theory of reality; and of course where the question is one of validity, the inquiry is bound to issue sooner or later in the region of ultimate problems. But it is a tactical error to force on a final speculative issue before the ground has been reconnoitered and before it is certain that such

¹ F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* (Cambridge, 1902), p. 42.

issue can no longer be deferred.”² If we avoid as long as possible the entanglement of which Professor Bowman speaks, we would gain much in simplicity and clearness. To be sure, we are after validity and the theory of knowledge is only to be studied with a view to obtaining validity, but the knowing process must first of all be studied so as to determine what is to be our ultimate bar of judgment, our last ground of certainty.

Failure to do this has often led to much confusion. Take, for example, Mr. F. R. Tennant’s attempt to reconcile the Augustinian and Pelagian view of sin by his solution of the development of the moral consciousness. He admits that he starts from the standpoint of natural reason but fails to appreciate that the difference between Augustine and Pelagius involved an impassable epistemological gulf. Tennant cannot span this gulf because his standpoint is on the same side as that of Pelagius. His presupposition is the correctness of Pelagius’ standpoint; how then can he assume the role of a judge?

In general it may be stated that any attempt to bridge the gulf mentioned is foredoomed to failure. Attempts have been made again and again. Mediaeval scholasticism furnishes an interesting example. Unaided reason was to explain the lower strata of experience and special revelation the higher. But their theories naturally ran amuck in the doctrine of a twofold truth. A thing might be true philosophically and untrue theologically. “Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Voltaire were all first rate logicians but does anybody suppose that they would have convinced one another had they argued together for an eternity.... In the discussion of questions of principle each disputant is at bottom defending himself and his own inherent character.”¹

Not as though unaided reason cannot posit an *a priori* to experience. It may be led in its own reasoning to the necessity of this, as was the case with Kant and idealism in general. But this *a priori* is the fruit of the very production of unaided human reason and is therefore to be carefully distinguished from the *a priori* which a supernatural revelation affords to him who recognizes his own inability. Here again has been a prolific source of error. The *a priori* of Kant has been taken as interchangeable with that of scripture. Kant has been hailed as a defender of the faith on this very basis. But his *a priori* is not only subjective as opposed to the *a priori* of Hegel, but is based on an epistemology entirely distinct from that presupposed in scripture. When, for example, Principal Fairbairn argues that:

² A. A. Bowman, “Problem of Knowledge from the Standpoint of Validity,” *Philosophical Review* 23/1 (January 1914).

¹ Rudolph Eucken, *Main Currents of Modern Thought* (London, 1912), p. 90.

"time ought to have within itself its own apology and ought not to require to depend for justification on an appeal from itself to eternity,"² what exactly is he militating against? Against the *a priori* of idealistic philosophy or the *a priori* of scripture, or against both? It certainly is not clear from the words or the context; we can only determine it from his entire philosophical position. And confusion reigns.

We see accordingly the host of thinkers divided into two camps, or to use for the time being a milder figure, we see them at the parting of the ways. We stand here at the crossroads. Which way shall we go? Choose we must. But what makes us choose this road and not the other? Your beginning will be to the other man your and vice versa. There is but one road that leads to the truth.

It becomes necessary to treat the theory of knowledge first of all in a general way. Only afterwards can we review the theories of explanation offered on either standpoint and finally take a stand with one or the other or perhaps offer a modification of solutions offered on the side on which you have taken a stand. This method is also in accord with the general method of modern thought. "*Die erkenntnistheoretische Fragen stehen gegenwärtig im Mittelpunkt des philosophischen Interesses.*"³ If we want to get a hearing for our viewpoint we cannot neglect the trend of the times and ignore the method of modern philosophy.

Epistemological Basis

It has been stated in the introduction that we must needs choose between one road and the other. We cannot do anything but choose. We may feign to let the various theories of knowledge pass before our impartial bar of judgment, but we cannot do so in reality. If we speak of our reason as the impartial bar of judgment we have already taken sides. We have chosen ourselves as an absolute and final standard. There may be fifty-seven varieties of theories of knowledge still to choose from, or we may form a new one outdoing Heinz's ingenuity but we belong to the same species and will need a forceful mutation to be transferred to any other. Equally on the other hand, if we choose to accept special revelation we have used our reason. It has declared itself bankrupt. But it is exactly here that the difference between the two roads becomes clear because he

² A. M. Fairbairn, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 109.

³ Valentine Hepp, *Het Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Generale* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1914), p. 1.

who accepts special revelation posits the working of the Holy Spirit upon his essence and consciousness to bring him to the realization of his own impotence.

It is of prime importance to grasp the nature of the antithesis of which we have spoken. It is not, on the one hand, an abrogation of the faculties of the human mind in favor of supernatural revelation, and on the other an acceptance of these. Thus it is oftentimes presented. Thus Dr. Orchard in his "Modern Theories of Sin" reviews the contribution of Theology to the problem of evil as in absolute contrast with philosophy. Thus even Principal Caird argues, as though special revelation as opposed to reason involved the contradiction of a revealed mystery⁴, as though if one bows before supernatural revelation in the accepted sense one can only get a *Deus ex Machina* connection between God and experience. Opposed to this, he argues in neo-Hegelian strain for the natural implications of the infinite in the finite. This, however, is subsumed under and presupposed in the Christian view of supernatural revelation. Professor Caird's presentation is true of human nature as such, but the supposition is that sin has obstructed these natural roads of approach to the infinite and that therefore these roads must be reopened by the Holy Spirit. No new roads of philosophical immediacy or anything of that sort need be found; the old road of the general consciousness of man need only be reopened.

Thus a certain theory of evil is already accepted at the outset by whosoever thinks upon the subject. Evil means something for each of us as we begin. We stand in some sort of relation to it. It can be no isolated phenomenon. It affects us in some manner, speaking now barely in the general philosophical sense. It is, as Mr. Bradley points out, an inconsistency to speak of entities and actions as existing without relations and vice versa.⁵ We are all in the water while describing the swimming process. It is not, as Hegel criticized Kant, that he stood on the shore trying to examine the knowing process without knowing. This is admittedly impossible. No man can jump out of his own skin. Evil stands in some way related to our consciousness, and our view of our own reasoning ability will already be affected with it. And this is especially the case when it touches on questions of morals and religion. Conditionality of knowledge on the inward life is especially strong "in relation to objects which stand in the innermost centre of spiritual life and therefore pervade the entire life, while on the surface in relation to knowledge of more abstract and formal nature, it vanishes."⁶

⁴ Fairbairn, *Philosophy of Christian Religion*, p. 64.

⁵ [Refers to Francis Bradley, British idealist.].

⁶ Julius Müller, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1885), 1:188.

This reasoning seems entirely in accord with the line of argumentation used by Principal Caird and men of similar type. Every existence implies all other existence; strange to say, he can still at the outset assume reason as an infallible judge unaffected by the fact of evil. Is evil then an exception to the law of mutual interpenetration of all existence and action? This standpoint is already a floating straw indicating the direction of the current and, incidentally, an argument for the position against him.

Thus we are beginning to feel our way. The problem is stated, and with the statement of the problem we see its far-reaching implications. Either you accept that evil has affected your thinking process and posit the necessity of supernatural revelation objectively and supernatural illuminations subjectively, or you conceive of your consciousness as having escaped the influence of evil and use it as your final bar of judgment.

There may of course be many gradations and different shades of theories. Some on the one side may allow to unaided human reason some remnant of power to know truth (Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism) or on the other side it may be allowed that there is need of a supernatural revelation of some kind (Pelagianism, modern theology) but fundamentally you cannot help but be on either one side or the other.

Naturally every view of evil and theodicy will thus be colored by the consciousness or lack of consciousness of evil in the knowing process itself. So we expect to and, as a matter of fact, do find only two great types of theories of evil and theodicy. The one type of theory is based on the assumption of special revelation, the other on that of the soundness of human reason.

Let it not be objected that thinkers who do not admit the need of scripture still admit evil in their own consciousness, for they place themselves, in thus speaking, on the judgment seat in determining the character of that very evil. In the act of putting themselves up as judge, they regard their reason as capable of judging and this implies absolute soundness, for nothing but absolute certainty can here suffice. If they admit evil in their own consciousness they would logically have to descend from the judgment seat and take a position among the tried. Unless, forsooth, one wants to accept the illogical position of retaining himself as judge, well aware of his bias. Such a position could lead only to skepticism and despair.

It is not necessary to give a survey of the various epistemological theories. Enough has been said if it has become clear that there are and can of necessity

be only two great classes of theories of evil and theodicy, the one based on the assumption of a sound reason, the other based on the assumption of an unsound reason and the need of special revelation. "*Der moderne Mensch beansprucht vor dem andere Zeitalter gesundes Denken. Er behauptet, sich im Besitz wie im Gebrauch eines solchen zu befinden. Nach Auffassung des N.T. ist ein Denken gesund, wenn es mit dem weltgeschichtlichen Gesundmachungsakt der Erlösung zusammenhängt, an seinen befreienden Segenswirkungen teilnimmt.*"⁷

On such a standpoint it is possible to recognize and appreciate one another's views. There is no need of the believer calling the non-believer all sorts of unpleasant names, of accusing him of the blindness of moles. Neither need the man of faith be accused of Mediaevalism because his position is philosophically as sound as that of his opponent, as the latter must admit, because subjectivism and probability and no more can be granted to both.

This is after a fashion pushing the question back on neutral ground as far as possible. It corresponds to the hypothetical starting point of Hegel's philosophy in its distinction in bare possibility between *Sein* and *Nichts*. The one may be interchanged with the other, yet the one has ideality and may become everything though it is as yet nothing, while the other must remain where it is. So after all they are not entirely the same; neutral ground cannot be reached, only a no-man's land. The moment the one or the other begins to assert anything positive, the other must disagree.

With this fundamental unity and distinction before us, let us survey the various theories of evil and theodicy. The position taken in evaluating them is that they are valid insofar as and to the degree that they have regarded evil in all its full reality, in contrast to the highest good. According as the width of the gulf shall the bridge be. According as the depth of the antithesis shall the profundity of the synthesis be. Only that theory of evil that has seen evil at its worst can offer the best theodicy. Such a theory we take it, is that of the theistic standpoint and more particularly that of the Reformed world and life view. The philosophical statement and justification of this claim must appear in the development of the discussion.

In surveying the field of theories on this subject we might take them and divide them irrespective of their time of appearance in the history of philosophy, according as they are pantheistic, deistic, etc. However, it will give us the advantage of historical perspective if we view them as they are implicit or

⁷ Karl Francke, *Metanoetik* (Leipzig, 1913), p. 1.

expressed in the different metaphysical theories that appeared in the course of time. We can see the human spirit moving through the ages from Thales to Kant and Hegel, grappling with the problem of philosophy and as its views develop from the immediacy of the Greeks to the synthesis of Hegel we see the theories of evil and theodicy deepen and widen, but deepen and widen not sufficiently to be satisfactory.

Then there comes another stream of thought to us from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and the prophets, through Jesus of Nazareth, the apostles and the history of the Church. Not as though these currents have not intermingled; not that positive Christianity has not operated on the minds of extra-biblical thinkers, or that Aristotle did not sometimes dominate the Church, but the essential distinction spoken of before, as to the fundamental viewpoint of reason as sound or unsound, remains.

Greek Philosophy—Plato

In our survey of philosophic speculations we begin with the Greeks. With them we have the first systematic thinking on the nature of the universe. And again in Greek philosophy it is in Plato that we meet with the first great metaphysician who reinterpreted the previous threads of thought into one theory.

With a deep appreciation of the beauty of nature and their conception of the immediate connection between man and the gods, the Greeks also saw an inexorable law above it all. Heraclitus and Xenophanes both looked upon the Absolute as something in which all the finite is lost, and not found again—an abstraction. They in a measure sense the dialectic of the finite, but this dialectic could lead only to a pantheistic unity. This strain of thought already in evidence among the Pre-Socratics we again meet with in Plato. Another strain in Plato's thought is idealistic or spiritualistic. In this strain he not only tries to get away from the finite by means of abstraction but wants to reinterpret phenomena in terms of mind.

He is bent on establishing an ideal or spiritual conception of the principle of unity towards which the dialectic of the finite tends. Socrates in the Memorabilia had cleared the way. To him the mind is "a little ray of intelligence drawn from the great soul of the universe," like the body is taken from the matter of the world. But Socrates was no metaphysician. Still, this metaphysic was inherent in his ethics, and Plato grasped and developed it. For Socrates, the source of evil

was the want of thought, the want of a definite knowledge of the meaning of life. If man only reflects on the implications of his moral judgment he will spontaneously be virtuous. Each man for himself must search out the moral universal, the *summum bonum*, and live it. Whether he is a part of a greater teleological network makes no essential difference. If the individual does that which is good he will also be of service to the whole; but the starting point is always the ethical individual. But Socrates' demon already reveals the contradiction of his own theory. He did not always know clearly beforehand what course to pursue and had to have recourse to the still small voice of the universal.

Plato combined these two tendencies of thought and interpreted the one with the other. He took the universal of the Pre-Socratics together with the Socratic idea of reason but converted the latter from an ethical ideal to a metaphysical reality. Thus he thought to cure the individualism of Socrates and give content to the negative universal of his predecessors.

Already in the *Protagoras* Plato faces the difficulty of the relation between the finite and the infinite. "If the premises be presupposed in the conclusion what is the use of drawing it, and if not how can we legitimately draw it." The relation of the universal to the particular is at the same time the relation of the infinite to the finite. His first answer is his memory theory of the soul. The soul knows all in a dim implicit way. Plato's slave Meno works out a geometrical problem upon the slightest suggestion. They who do not know, may still have true notions of that which they do not know. This is the beginning of idealism.

Moreover, to Plato all things are related to one another in organic union. You may know the whole from any of its parts, but no part can be entirely known separate from the whole. Plato makes no great distinction between knowledge and ignorance. Opinion is not mere ignorance but a state between ignorance and highest knowledge. Right opinion is a kind of accidental grasping of the right without realizing its organic implications, like Poets and Prophets tell us right things oftentimes but do not entirely grasp the meaning of their own words. So the mind is possessed of a universal faculty; deduction must receive a place.

Socrates' method had been purely inductive. He would add all the various pleasures, then subtract from their sum the number of pains and thus arrive at the *summum bonum*. Plato, on the other hand, rather begins with the whole to interpret any of its parts which is always the safer method. In the *Gorgias* the universal is conceived of as the organizing principle which determines the relations of all the parts. This principle is not external but implied in the parts, or at least in our conception of them, from the beginning.

Thus Plato seems to be on the road to something far superior to that of his predecessors. He tries to harmonize their antagonisms and establish a vital teleological relation between the finite and the infinite. But with the principle of unity that he employed it was impossible to get the two together. His method essentially remained that of abstraction, though he tried hard to get away from it. Accordingly, in the later dialogues we meet with a twofold current of thought which ultimately must lead to dualism. First there is a seeking of a separation from the things of sense and the body as a "muddy vesture of decay." Does this not reveal the apotheosis of abstraction in which neo-platonism later ran amuck? Yet even here Plato does not consistently use abstraction or make absolute distinction between body and spirit. Even here opinion is not total ignorance but imperfect knowledge. Only through opinion "which is mediated by sense can we rise to a knowledge of the ideality of things."¹ Hence Plato's universals do not become merely the highest abstractions. His ideas were unity of differences, though in the *Phaedo* he employs the negative of the dialectic so strongly that it seems as though "all that is necessary to attain to the ideal is to turn away from the world of sense and opinion."² Secondly, Plato makes a direct attempt to interpret the things of sense by the idea of a final cause. Plato's imaginary Socrates thinks to find satisfaction in the Anaxagorean but only found reality explained by efficient cause, like all the physical philosophers explained it. Plato sought teleology, but his teleology was too hasty. His teleology could not include all of reality; some parts of it could not be idealized. His farmers and mechanics are instruments of a society whose higher advantages they do not share. He needs his philosopher kings: these are to teach the people that up to that time there never was quarreling among people. Evil is to be kept out of sight, and insofar as it may be treated as an impossibility. "Poetry is to tell its noble untruth; and no skepticism or criticism is to be allowed to breathe a breath of suspicion upon it." In the *Republic*, then, only the philosophers are to reach an optimism including the reality of evil; the larger number of the people must be satisfied with the immediate unreflective optimism of previous mythology without facing the facts of evil. So that in the *Republic* we have a duality. Plato cannot see his way clear to draw his synthetic principle clear through to every part of the universe. The Idea sometimes seems to be an abstraction of some common elements in the particulars, at other times a synthetic principle explaining their differences.

¹ Edward Caird, *Evolution of Theology among Greek Philosophers* (Glasgow, 1904), 1:116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

It is clear that only in the latter case can any satisfactory theory of evil be formed; the former is only a denial of the question. "The end of Plato's philosophy is dualistic. Plato cannot get his Ideas connected with phenomena, his *actus purus* with the passivity of nature by any one comprehensive principle. There is a certain externality and necessity in the things of sense that even reason cannot overcome. It realizes its designs in the world in so far as necessity will permit."¹ Matter has some sort of chaotic existence before the infusion of reason which transformed it into cosmos, but the nature of the material is somewhat reluctant to receive perfect form and goodness. Hence *illae lacrimae*; hence all the strife and conflict in the visible world. Man's soul is a sort of middle term between the two worlds, but since these are absolutely separate, the middle term needs mediating terms both ways. Thus we are led into a vicious infinite. After all, we only know God as far as we are material through a changing, uncertain, undependable world which can at best give an unsatisfactory adumbration of god. As far as our spirits are divine they see the pure Idea of God, but the purest activity of our souls is obstructed and weakened by our moral nature.

Nor can his idea of the universe as the only-begotten universe of God mediate between the two worlds, because in the light of the rest of his philosophy, this can be only a metaphorical expression of the close relation which he wanted to have between the two. In the last analysis "evils can never pass away; for there must needs exist something which stands opposed to the good. They have no seat among the gods but on necessity they cling to the nature of mortal creatures and haunt the region in which they dwell."²

Aristotle

In Aristotle we meet with a similar dualism. At first it would seem as though he has made an advance on Plato. He works out more logically the category of the organism, as expressing the relation between the lower and the higher aspects of being.

This, however, is constantly intermingled with the idea that "all finite existence is a combination of elements which are not essentially related,"³ so that in the end we obtain a view of matter not as the true correlate of form, but as something external in which the form needs to realize itself.

¹ Eucken, *Main Currents of Modern Thought*, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 176.

³ Caird, *Theology among Greek Thinkers*, 1:278.

We see Aristotle struggling in his attempt to bridge the gulf between pure reason and matter. But again he takes refuge in a middle term, namely that of human reason. Now because he assumes reason and matter to be entirely separate to begin with, he must needs introduce a distinction in the reason of man. In part it moves in the ethereal spheres of the universal and as such is free; in part it is conditioned by external influences of sense and is subject to them. But such a mediary which is mechanically part of one world and equally mechanically a part of the other world cannot form a real bridge. There is no real interpenetration. Aristotle conceived of our relation to God as only theoretical, not practical. Therefore, in contrast to Plato who would at least attempt to form his ideal state upon the basis of knowledge of the Absolute Good, Aristotle separates ethics and politics from metaphysics entirely. Goodness is shown in making the best of circumstances. The gods have no virtue because they do not descend to the practical; they have no evils to contend with. Nor is there any connection possible between the relative truths of ethics and the absolute principle of pure metaphysics. So man is really a combination of reason and an irrational element. Reason is the real man, while the life of reason that man lives he really lives not as man but as manifesting something divine within. This theoretical reason which man manifests is of the nature of intuition, grasping the universal in its completeness and therefore has absolute truth, but practical reason deals with the doubtful through discursive thought. The unity which the theoretical reaches is not a unity of synthesis which embraces all things in their concrete nature, but only a synthesis of all things in their pure form without any matter; it is a unity which is reached by abstraction.

Aristotle does indeed think that he has established a firmer connection between the physical and the spiritual than his predecessors. The Pythagorean numbers and the Platonic Ideas do not satisfy him, but his conception of the *actus purus* as the final cause is scarcely more satisfactory. Aristotle does not explain how pure thought only contemplating itself "can become the determination of anything but itself." He certainly does feel the need of a God who is closely related to the things of sense, but his synthesis can only be in "contemplative reason which cannot see anything but an ideally complete whole in which every element is in perfect harmony and unity with every other."¹ The subjective and the objective are, in the last analysis, for Aristotle two distinct entities, the union of which they never presupposed, and yet the union of which must be presupposed in any thoroughgoing idealism. No theodicy can be built upon a mechanical connection between God and the world.

¹ *Ibid.*, 2:24.

Plato and Aristotle "healed the hurt of philosophy slightly" because they could not probe its depth. They started from a dualism of form and matter which they sought to overcome by subjection of the latter to the former. Their philosophy was an attempt to explain the world "on the principle of Anaxagoras that all things were in chaos till reason came to arrange them." Both, however, at least attempt to reach to their system by means of comprehension and synthesis, and this is more than can be said for their followers in Greek philosophy. The latter sought unity only by abstraction. The various parts of reality are separated, some ignored, others explained away. Questions are put in exclusive alternatives. These systems then contribute no advance to the thought of Plato and Aristotle but find their philosophical justification in revealing the premature synthesis of the former, and then to destroy one another in skepticism. Thus they exhibit the deeper nature of the conflict, calling for a peace and not a compromise or truce. The truce of Greek philosophy only prepared for fiercer battle; the fiercer battle led to peace.

In Greek philosophy we have on the one hand a naive assumption of unity between the individual and society, and on the other hand one of opposition between the soul and the world, the inner and the outer life. So we can see a group of Athenians seeking their entire existence in the State and yet having no metaphysics or an imperfect metaphysics as a basis for their religious life. In as far as the early group needed a metaphysic, this was found in Plato's ideas and Aristotle's pure activity, but they are unsatisfactory. In later Greek thought even this group consciousness is broken down and the individual is left without any shelter, while formerly they could at least huddle together and turn their backs to the storm.

Stoicism and Epicureanism

When we go beyond Plato and Aristotle to Stoicism and Epicureanism, we find that the nature of the problem has changed somewhat. To the former, the distinction between subject and object was quite subordinate to the distinction between the universal and the particular. To the latter, the distinction between subject and object becomes all important. The antagonism of the active form and passive matter is set aside; in its place we have the relative opposition of two elements, both of which are regarded as having ultimately the same nature and origin, both of which are viewed as in one aspect material and in another

spiritual.² Thus taking the nature of the universal and the particular to be ultimately the same, Stoicism built up its psychology and metaphysics.

Zeno joined the individual sensationalism of materialism of the Cynics with the pantheism, idealism, and intellectualism of the Megarians. His independence is accordingly not the inverted independence of Cynicism, but a consciousness of the dignity of man in virtue of his connection with rational beings in general. Being most alone the individual is least alone; in the mirror of the recesses of his soul rebounds the reflection of mankind. *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*. "Instead of admitting a relative difference between subject and object where the Cynics and Megarians opposed an absolute one, he denied all difference and turned to an intuitional monism."¹ But thus he only grasped the negative element. Man's relation to the universe becomes such that he can choose to serve freely or accept forced servitude.

Consequently man's moral ideal is to live consistently with nature, with nature in general as it is manifest in the universe, and with the nature of his own soul, for these two natures are essentially one. On this basis, however, morality can be nothing more than the sacrifice of the individual to the universe. The latter must drown his personality in the former. Stoicism is pessimism when it looks at the particular things of the world. It claims to be optimistic as to the whole, but such optimism is to disbelieve evil, to deny the reality of the individual's struggles, to look upon him as a means and not as an end; it is an optimism that is not all-embracing and hence no optimism at all. Stoicism did well to release the individual from the bondage of society, but when it placed upon him the obligation of a good will in harmony with nature, it scarcely improved his condition. For that good will is, after all for the individual, a contentless thing. The Stoic individual was dependent for his welfare largely on a peculiar form of the state. The individual comes on the one hand to stand absolutely alone without relations to his fellow man; on the other hand he is identified with nature. Now this extreme individualism took away from man his only avenue of self-realization and negation of evil. The consciousness of self cannot thus be separated from the consciousness of other selves. I stand related or I am nothing. Hence we see that their universal becomes one of abstraction, not of comprehension, with which the individual must be identified instead of related. The road from the particular to the universal is not via the only true road of particular interest and relation, but by leaps and bounds from abstraction to abstraction. Stoicism thus sacrifices

² *Ibid.*, 2:86.

¹ *Ibid.*

parts of the whole which it wishes to obtain; thus by losing parts it can never attain the whole. Its whole becomes a part.

The whole of Stoicism thus becomes a refined materialism unable to distinguish between matter and mind; their theory of knowledge is expressed by the term "impression" of one form of matter upon a more refined form of it. Thus the individual can, strictly speaking, only know himself or his own states and cannot enter into any but external relations with his fellowman; only with God within him can he converse because he is identical with God.

After the individualism of the Stoics and Epicureans came skepticism, and it served the purpose of overthrowing the superficial epistemology of Stoicism and revealing its contradiction. Upon Stoic epistemology the world about us is only a show world; we must rest content in ourselves; there is no help for our own evil. But skepticism went the wrong way in refuting Stoic epistemology. In refuting any kind of dogmatism it puts up its own dogmatism of the unknowable. "Now any attack upon the possibility of knowledge is foiled by the impossibility of finding a ground upon which to place its batteries."² It is an attempt to get beyond the intelligible world by an act of the intelligence itself.

Thus far then we find that Greek philosophy can offer no solution for the problem of evil and theodicy; its two worlds are either entirely separate or identical; responsibility in any deep sense of the term has no meaning. On such basis there cannot be any real evil, and certainly no theodicy is necessary. Do we then expect to find a better solution from Philo, who intermingled Greek philosophy at this stage with Judaism?

Philo

In Philo's theology, God has to call in the aid of subordinates to "create a being who is not altogether good." Philo introduced the tendency to separate God and man as it manifested itself in Greek thought, into the Old Testament. He thinks Greek philosophy has stolen this notion of separation from the O.T. Accordingly all anthropomorphism goes by the board. Creatures are related to God, but God is not related to his creatures. When Philo then introduces his middle term or his subordinate, the Logos, he finds it difficult to connect this middle term with the two entities that it is to bring together. And no great wonder, he was trying the impossible. Two entities separated by supposition can

² *Ibid.*, 2:177.

never more than mechanically be brought together by any mediary, or whatever nature this mediary partakes, and mechanical connection is no connection for human spirits. Sometimes this mediary of Philo partakes of the nature of the one entity then again of the nature of the other. No larger unity or relative distinction is allowed between the entities; only absolute separation and therefore only mechanical connection. In the nature of man a similar division is introduced. He becomes a combination of "dross and deity"; the soul is related to God; the body is its prison house. As somewhat of an advance upon Stoicism, Philo offers his individual rescue from himself not only in himself but in God. But this refuge is obtained not by realizing the spirit of the divine through the faculties of man, but by renouncing these very faculties, by being absorbed in ecstasy, in immediate communion with God. So the main trend of this philosophy is emphasis on the transcendence of God.

Plotinus

Now of this emphasis on the transcendence of God and the only union conceivable upon it, namely negative mysticism, Plotinus is the classic exponent. In him this tendency in Greek thought finds its culmination. That extreme transcendence and mysticism should go together may seem strange at first sight, but it is only natural. The soul cannot do without union with God. If this union cannot be affected through the ordinary faculties of man it must be sought in the merging of the consciousness of self and the world in the consciousness of God. In ordinary thought we presuppose the union of the finite and the infinite; here it is not presupposed, rather the contrary, but it is made an immediate object to strive after. God escapes our knowledge but does not entirely escape us. Thus Plotinus would steer free from agnosticism because even negative relation is relation and penetrates the impregnable aloofness of the Absolute. God is supposed to be in immediate contact with us. The mystical approach involves an entire reversal of the natural order of consciousness. The mystic Plotinus, though his language is often similar to that of Pantheism, is in his conception of the way of knowledge entirely opposed to Pantheism. He does not see God in everything, but must rather be released from everything to see God. With Spinoza he speaks of God as absolute indeterminateness, but does not add to it the self-determination which Spinoza attributes to God. Plotinus cannot find the finite again in the infinite as Spinoza did. "Thus we have the strange paradox that the Being who is absolute, is yet conceived as in a sense external to the relative and the finite, and that he leaves the relative and the finite in a kind of unreal

independence which has no value, and yet from which it as finite cannot escape.”
1

Now Plotinus' view is important especially as marking the culmination of all Greek philosophy. The dualism began already with Anaxagoras'. Plato also distinguishes between the world of pure intelligence and the world known by a kind of spurious intelligence. Even Aristotle, though at times he tries hard to conceive of form and matter as necessary correlatives, fails to develop any organic union between the two. The existence of the world of sense he cannot entirely account for in terms of his *actus purus*. It has some sort of vicious independence. Absolute intelligence is absolutely separated from the world. This standpoint implies a psychology on which a self can be absolutely separated from other selves. The Stoics had recourse to this in their materialistic individualism. The self of the Stoic is an abstract individual. Its union with the universal only adds another abstraction because God is also above all relation, so that the result is only abstraction. Zero plus zero equals zero. The skeptic follows on its heel and denies the reality of all external things because they have no relation to the individual. When the consciousness of this lack of relation is taken to its logical consequence, as applying within the subject as well as in its relation to the object, we have a tragedy of a thorough skepticism which out-Pilates Pilate and draws the quiet spectators to the scaffold to suffer from the flames of their own kindling.

Thus the abstraction process goes on and we find no possibility of building up any conception of evil that grasps it in its reality and overcomes it. Instead of seeking a higher synthesis in which the two worlds are presupposed and the world of sense and evil can be overcome, Plotinus continues in abstraction. One drug is taken to overcome the effect of a previous one, and the craving becomes ever greater. The union of the self-consciousness with the abstract self-consciousness of the Absolute sought in a still further regress than did the Stoics. He would find it in the One preceding all difference or division, preceding even the distinction of self-consciousness. In reality we cannot even call it the One because that already involves relation to the Many, so our only recourse is silence. Plotinus does feel, of course, the necessity of some sort of relation of the finite to it, but the expression of this relation involves him in all sorts of contradictions. Then he has to speak again of the one and the Good from which all springs. But it is difficult to speak of the unknowable and yet we must.

¹ *Ibid.*, 2:232.

Mr. Spencer is the modern embodiment of such a dilemma.² The Stoics had attempted to escape from dualism by identifying spirit and matter, but Plotinus absolutely distinguishes these two, and the only bond he could find was in the soul of man. The union of the soul with the Absolute is therefore different in Plotinus' philosophy than in that of Stoicism. In Stoicism it is a certain identity of being in abstract individuals; both God and man are a refined material. There is no distinction between matter and spirit. With Plotinus these are distinct. Union is sought in an eternal regression from all difference to the annihilation even of self-consciousness. Or rather, union between the world and God is not at all effected; only man, insofar as he abstracts himself from God, can be one with God. The unity of the soul with God, as a distinct sphere opposed to the sphere of the sensible world, regresses into the One which precludes all difference and yet is potentially the source of all difference.

Plotinus attempts in vain to explain the origin of evil by his theory of the individual soul. The soul partakes essentially of the nature of the higher world, and even though upon his principle that the higher necessarily produces a lower copy of itself, which principle is itself already vicious, it is not clear why particular souls should be affected by evil. Was there something defective in them? If we say that some matter existed which was predisposed to evil, we may ask why matter should exist. Why should perfection have to produce imperfection? No intelligible connection between God and the world can be effected on this basis, and still less of evil.

Thus in the end Greek philosophy is afraid to connect the finite and the infinite. It results in giving the finite a sort of semi-independent existence. Evil turns into a positive opposite to God; it is not entirely under His control. The power of God must be limited to excuse Him from evil. We have to abstract from our conception of God to relieve Him from the responsibility of evil. Or rather, there can really be no question of evil in two worlds essentially unrelated; each is a law unto itself and has no responsibility to the other. Evil can only exist where responsibility is; theodicy presupposes intimate relation.

Plato and Aristotle had taken the world for granted so that for them the problem of the origin of evil did not exist, but Plotinus had to explain also the origin and in reality places fate above God. He is "solicitous to guard against attributing deliberation or design to God in the creation of the world because this would throw upon God the responsibility for all the evils and imperfections that

² [Refers to Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who developed the philosophy of evolutionism.].

are found in it.”³ God created because he cannot help it. Plotinus protects God from connection with evil by interposing a series of mediaries, each of which is of necessity forced to cast an image of itself below its own value. Moreover, this production of evil is totally accidental. But we may urge against this that accidents do not fit in with an absolute, and distribution of evil does not explain its source nor excuse it. So it is difficult to ascertain whether Plotinus wishes to justify evil as a means to a greater good as he seems to do in his presentation of the soul as being purified through conflict, or whether he wishes to deny its reality except as a transient experience.

The most we can give him credit for is that in his opposition to the Gnostics, who conceived matter as absolutely evil, he at least contended that it was the best possible image of the good, and that there seems to be some use for it as a battling ground for the soul to develop itself. So Plotinus’ philosophy at least points beyond itself. It brings strikingly to the foreground the great problem of the relation of the divine and the human and the necessity of reconciliation. Thus it prepared the thinking world for the acceptance offered by Christianity. Surely Christianity had to fight the solutions of neo-Platonism—witness the Christological controversies—but in these very controversies we see the biblical solution expressed in the dogma of the person of Christ as very God and very man. In this lies the solution of the problem of evil.

This lengthy discussion of Greek philosophy seems justified because it is insufficient to take mere statements of various philosophers on a subject like evil and weigh them in the balance. It is necessary to see how their views are the logical outgrowth of their systems, and only as these systems are valid or invalid is the theory worth accepting or requiring rejection.

Moreover, it gives us the advantage of historical approach to modern philosophy which cannot be understood when taken by itself. Modern philosophy has entered upon the inheritance of the Greeks; its problems are the same, its solutions slightly different. Then also it throws light, largely by way of contrast on the Christian doctrine. Christianity came slowly to an ever larger consciousness of its own implications much in relation to Greek philosophy. The Christian consciousness was rudely awakened out of its erstwhile satisfaction, joy, and immediacy and roused to a long and bitter struggle which could not help but lead to its victory. The value of Greek philosophy in this respect has often been underestimated. It goaded the Christian consciousness to render an account to itself of its treasure without losing the enjoyment of its possession.

³ *Ibid.*, 2:314.

Modern Philosophy

It is not necessary to dwell long on the transition to modern philosophy. Ancient philosophy even at its culminating point could not bring the sensuous and the supersensuous together. The sensuous world is left to itself with all its evil. It cannot eradicate this evil nor can it get rid of it by reference to the other world. Then also, the category of personality, as it exists for modern philosophy, does not yet exist. Even the individual of the Stoics was a material individual; subject and object were as yet imperfectly distinguished. Hence no adequate, not even a deep, theory of evil could be formulated. Not until we see evil working in the deepest fountain of human existence, in the individual personality, have we at all grasped its import. To refer evil to matter only is to ignore the greater part of the problem. The higher can never be interpreted in terms of the lower; the lower must always be interpreted in terms of the higher.

We now take a leap from Plotinus to Descartes. It is not necessary to dwell on Gnosticism and Manichaeism here; they have been refuted implicitly in the survey of Greek philosophy because to them sin lies in matter altogether. Moreover, insofar as it must be touched upon, it, as also scholasticism, can be treated in connection with the Christian doctrine of which it was a departure.

That we take the leap from Plotinus to Descartes does not mean that no thinking on the subject was done between their respective periods. Besides scholasticism, there was Meister Eckhart who offers little of importance over the ancient negative theology of the East. To him man must come to God by pure abstraction, but abstraction always leads to impoverishment. God remains unknowable, to whom one is scarcely responsible. Evil must be got rid of through mystic contemplation, which is to crawl out of one's own shell, leave the husk behind, a thing impossible; and if possible would furnish no theodicy because evil is left behind—unexplained, unjustified, ignored.

Of more importance is the thinking of the Renaissance. Its chief value, however, lay in its preparation for modern philosophy. The Renaissance thinkers have not only the heritage of ancient philosophy but also that of Christian dogmatics and scholastic speculation. A new tendency shows itself first of all in an attempt to explain everything in terms of the individual man. "The inner became conscious of its unity and entrenched itself within its own territory while the outer world receded to take an inferior position and lost all inner life, since its function of movement in space did not seem to need any explanation by a

spiritual principle.”¹ On the other hand, there was a movement that gloried in the beauty of the external world, that dwelt upon its magnitude and grandeur and the insignificance of man in comparison with it. As the former was a movement toward the subject, this was a movement toward the object. On the one hand, we find concentration within the subject; on the other absorption of the subject in the object.

Thus we see the possibility of a new problem arise—the psychological. It is now no longer only the relation of the sensuous, including man, to the supersensuous, but within the one term a split has been made. The individual man as a spirit is opposed to the rest of nature. The relation between these two now absorbs the greater interest. Metaphysics is largely abandoned for psychology. Now as far as the immediate consequence was concerned this was a loss, but if taken in its setting it was an immeasurable gain. Metaphysics cannot be completely studied without psychology. The ancients too had tried to study the origin of evil in the individual, but they had never taken him as an individual spiritual existence and studied him as such in relation to the things about him.

Thus now also the problem of evil takes on a more variegated, more distinct and deeper form. A division can now be made between physical and moral evil upon the basis of the earlier metaphysic. Better distinction and more clearness of thought results.

The chief advantage of the new tendency at the dawn of modern philosophy lies in its opening the way for a better epistemology which led the great thinkers of a later period to a more fundamental handling of the problem of evil.

From Descartes to Kant we see two currents of thought based on the same psychological presupposition, that of a total distinction between the new subject and object. They wander farther and farther apart till the cord that held them together burst. Kant healed the breach and led them back to a new beginning. The one current is empiricism. Through Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume it leads out into skepticism. The other current is rationalism, foreshadowed by Nicholas of Cusa and Bruno, worked out by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and finding its reduction to absurdity in Wolff. Both of these currents went to such extremes in their *Konsequenzmachei* as to reveal the invalidity of their method. These two tendencies are brought together in Kant and especially in Hegel, who includes the most extreme abstraction with the wealth of empirical fact in his *Notion of the Concrete Idea*. Since then, thought has made little progress along

¹ R. Eucken, *Main Currents of Modern Thought*, p. 39.

epistemological lines and accordingly the theories of evil offered have been in the main, modifications of those of the great masters.

Descartes

Let us now briefly return to empiricism and rationalism and examine their solutions to the problem of evil. Both trends of thought are found in Descartes. "He placed the two worlds of mind and matter in direct opposition in the full conviction that each must be studied in itself, according to its own special laws and nature, and that it only remains to discover in what way these act upon one another as our consciousness itself assures us that they do."²

Descartes' dualism is explicit. Not as though he had no metaphysics. His idea of matter is that it is a passive [?] which is determined purely from without. He remains so far at the same point where Plato was, but he, in distinction from Plato, considers the spirit as a substance totally apart from matter. But the essence of this spirit is self-consciousness of which thought is the highest function. Upon such a dualistic metaphysic Descartes builds his epistemology and method of philosophy. The consciousness of self is turned against the external world or against God or against both. The external world is to Descartes not only extended and external to itself, but also external to us. But these are already the results of his investigation. He has reached them by his famous method of doubt. The natural prejudices which we inherit tend to give us wrong conceptions of things. Hence we must begin with doubt. Now we can doubt the existence of everything except the existence of the doubter. But this is a judgment and implies the reality of the self-consciousness. Even if a superior being sought to deceive me in all my thinking, he could not succeed unless I existed; he could not cause me not to exist so long as I thought.

Now this *cogito ergo sum* is not to be thought of as a syllogism, with a major premise that whatever thinks exists. We must rather turn this about—that whatever thinks exists is an inference derived from my particular self-consciousness. The latter is to be the Archimedean . Having this premise, it follows that whatever idea is as clear to me as the idea of my self-consciousness, exists also. Such an idea is God. Thus the ontological argument of Anselm, that the idea of God is an integral part of human nature, is changed to one of clarity of idea. This much established, Descartes is prepared to establish the reality of the rest of

²L. Noir, *Development of Philosophical Thought from Thales to Kant* (New York, 1903), p. 124.

the universe from the nature of God. Thus the existence of nature is established via the consciousness of God. But all existences are external to one another and unrelated. His method must, therefore, become that of the scale and the yardstick, that of mathematics.

It was necessary to dwell at some length on the Cartesian metaphysic because it forms the assumed basis of rationalism and empiricism. If we refute Descartes' standpoint we have done with rationalism and empiricism. A theory of evil built upon a false basis cannot stand. Now the main criticism of Cartesian metaphysics is that it does not see the reciprocal implications of all the principles on which the world as an intelligible world rests. The question for him is how we are to know anything besides our selves and our own ideas. And we cannot know upon his basis of a world of unrelated mechanically separated units. Knowledge first of all implies the relation of subject and object. "Hence the value of mathematics in helping us to explain any phenomena is in inverse ratio to the complexity and comprehensiveness of the phenomena themselves."³ In a sense we may say that the inorganic world can be explained on Descartes' method because its chief essence consists in being externally exclusive entities, though even these cannot entirely be so explained. But when it comes to the things of the spirit, these surely cannot be known by the thumb rule and quart measure. Things are never mere units having no relations being capable of addition. "They are what they are just because they attract or repel each other chemically or mechanically, and which combined are never merely the sum of their parts."⁴ Thus we need only take the weapons of Kant to refute the Cartesian dualistic metaphysic and the Newtonian arithmetical method of thought.

As to his theory of evil, little further need be said. The foundation under it has been removed. He really offers no systematic theory of evil at all. "The problem of the moral faculty he ignores, assuming with Plato that there is but one intellectual faculty which judges right and wrong as it judges falsehood. The problem of moral obligation he shirks altogether, or else resolves it in an eudaemonistic sense, as merely a proper computation in attaining the greatest happiness."¹ We are to follow virtue as best we know how.

The extravagance of the Cartesian hypothesis itself awakened a protest and a controversy which was not settled until the limits of the merely mathematical explanation of physical phenomena were established and the idea of quantity

³ Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (Glasgow, 1889), 1:30.

⁴ *Ibid.*

¹ *Ibid.*

was subordinated to the idea of force or physical causality in the nineteenth century. But for the time being, empiricism and rationalism each took a side on the metaphysical gym floor laid by Descartes, and fought the psychological battles of innate ideas versus *tabula rasa*; or to use another figure, each stands on a side of an unbridged chasm and the arrows aimed to kill the foe are carried away by the waters that flow between. Neither finds the way between the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. Rationalism listens to the Siren song of rational consistency only to lose its material world; empiricism escapes this danger because it has not heard the music.

Spinoza

Spinoza's logical presuppositions lie in the fundamental ideas of Descartes. These he accentuates, transforms, and adopts. His *Brevis Tractatus* is divided into two parts, the one concerning God—that he is known from our clear idea of him, the other that God is a substance which includes all possible attributes. There is no limited substance. There cannot be, for if limited then it must be limited by itself or by something else. If unlimited, there can be only one. So we are led to believe that God is the only substance. There is consequently only one category of Being. There are not two equal substances, nor can one substance produce another, so there is no more in God's mind than is revealed in nature. God then is nature. For Descartes, nature was a limited substance, *natura naturata*. For Spinoza, God is nature, substance, the only category of being. It follows that God also has the attribute of extension.

Turning from his metaphysics to providence—chapter five of the *Ethics*—his thought is explicit. Nothing exists or is intelligible without God. Whatever is, is necessary. Are there then accidents in nature? No, since uncaused existence would be self-contradictory. Everything proceeds according to eternal law. There is here no room for the freedom of the will to which the origin of evil might be attributed. What then is the source of all the evil in the universe? There is no confusion or evil at all. For you to say so would mean for you to know all possible causes. There may seem to be confusion to you, but you cannot judge because you are only finite. Sin is a term relative to us; it comes in only when we compare things or circumstances. Sin is a matter of relations, not of things. Spinoza here takes up the problem of evil and answers that every individual thing has its individual purpose. It follows that you would have to know every individual purpose or cause before judging whether a thing is good or bad. "Vice is as truly an outcome of nature as is virtue; virtue is power, vice is weakness; the former is knowledge, the latter is ignorance. But whence the powerless natures? Whence

defective knowledge? Spinoza answers that the concept of imperfection expresses nothing positive, nothing actual, but merely a defect, an absence of reality. It is nothing but an idea in us, a fiction which arises through the comparison of one thing with another possessing greater reality or with an abstract generic concept, a pattern which it seems unable to attain.”² Music is good for the melancholy of one but may be bad for the mourning of another. If evil were something real, God would be the cause of it, but Spinoza shows that evil has no reality. It follows that the question of theodicy can be dropped; in God is no idea of evil at all.

The nearest that Spinoza comes to explaining the existence of evil to our consciousness is that it is inherent in finitude, involved in a chain of causality. Secondly, because God created everything that He conceived, matter “was not lacking to Him for the creation of every degree of perfection from the highest to the lowest; or more strictly because the laws of his nature were so ample as to suffice for the production of everything conceivable by an infinite intellect.”¹ Now sin and error is the lowest degree of perfection.

Thus we see in Spinoza all qualitative distinctions reduced to difference in degree. His ethic implies a denial of the freedom of the will and the result is only a “physics of morals.” The universe is immanent in God, therefore Hegel has called Spinoza an acosmist instead of a pantheist, but this distinction does little to relieve the situation and has later been dropped.

By a parsimony of argument, Spinoza’s system is its own refutation. Man on his basis can absolutely know God, in the manner that he knows the attributes of a triangle. But how do we reconcile this with the statement that we as finite beings cannot judge whether anything is evil because we do not know all causes? The relation between the finite and the infinite is not consistently the same in Spinoza with the result that he can offer us no consistent theory of evil even on his own basis. Considered from the point of view of later philosophy, Spinoza’s system is especially weak in its epistemology, which is based on Cartesian dualism. Yes, we may speak of a dualism in the case of Spinoza though he himself was led to a monism. For to him also, things are only extensively, quantitatively related. This is itself a dualism. The only logic for Spinoza also is that of mathematics. This, Kant has once for all overthrown by showing the primary reciprocal implications of an intelligible world. The evil of the spirit—how can it be measured in Spinozism?

² Falckenburg, *History of Modern Philosophy* (New York, 1893), p. 140.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Before taking up Leibniz's philosophy as, in a sense, a further development of rationalism, it is well to trace the development of empiricism because Leibniz in a sense tries to join the two; in him they are brought into contact, yet not joined.

Locke and Empiricism

Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* in some measure disturbed the philosophical world at the time of its appearance in 1690. "Descartes had divided ideas according to their origin into three classes, those which are self-formed, those which come from without, those which are innate, and had called the third class the most valuable."² Locke disputes the existence of ideas in the understanding from birth and makes it receive the elements of knowledge from the senses, from without. Thus epistemology is turned about, the perception of external objects becomes the basis for the perception of self. Ideas come to us from without, not in the narrow sensationalistic sense that thinking is mere transformed sensation, but in the sense that the mind in itself is a tabula rasa upon which external and internal perception inscribes its characters. Thus passively the mind takes into itself knowledge of the primary qualities inherent in things perceived as caused by motion, and secondary qualities caused by motion but not perceived as such. In the reception of simple ideas the mind is entirely passive. The activity of which it is capable is confined to the power of variously combining and rearranging simple ideas. Mind is active but not creative. Complex ideas arise from simple ideas through voluntary combination of the latter.

As to their validity, ideas are valid if they correspond to their archetypes, as things real or possible or an idea of something. But our ideas are, in the nature of the case, inadequate as representations of the inner essences of things because we receive only copies of these essences upon the retina of our understanding. It follows that knowledge can never be direct but must always be only "relations of ideas among themselves." The mind can perceive and operate upon nothing but its own ideas cast upon it. Has the mind the criteria to know whether the ideas actually correspond to things? As for complex ideas, they make no claim to represent things, except those of substances, since they are only combinations of simple ideas; so they need not be considered. As to the simple ideas, the passivity of the mind is a guarantee that they are not creatures of the fancy. The world does exist. As for ourselves, every pain or pleasure, every emotion or thought is proof of our existence. As for God, since we know that a real world and a real self

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

exist, and since we cannot rest in infinite regression, we cannot but conceive of an eternal infinite cause with infinite perfection.

We need not long dwell upon the philosophy of Locke. His contribution to the theory of freedom lay within the psychological sphere, as determining the relation of volitions to thoughts and emotions. His real significance for our purpose lies in the fact that he developed empirical epistemology, which was later to refute itself in Hume and thus reveal its total inadequacy in solving the problem of evil. He was of much influence on practical British thought. The easy-going Deism was to some extent his product. Locke can lead us only to probability in knowledge and remains in the dualism of Descartes. Mathematics is still the method, though modified from the purely rationalistic sense by the data of sense.

We may note in passing that the tenets of Deism are equally incapable of doing justice to the question in hand. Its fundamental principle is that truth is one, comprehensible by all and communicated to all men. The claim of supernatural religion must be tested by the standard of religion revealed in the heart of every man. Anything that does not agree with this standard is only the result of priestcraft and general deceit.

Naturally any such philosophy can have only a very unsatisfactory conception of human nature and sin. As to its metaphysics, that God has created the world, wound it like a clock and left it to its own laws cuts off all vital relation between God and the world and attributes such great independence to secondary causes that the evil in the world scarcely stands in any connection with God at all, and thus we need not trouble about theodicy.

Berkeley and Hume

But we pass on to Berkeley. He grasped the notion of Locke's primary and secondary qualities. How does Locke know that there are any primary qualities inherent in things? Are not extension, motion, solidity, etc., just as purely subjective states as color, heat and sweetness? These are also only secondary qualities which the subject adds to the object. We cannot have anything apart from mind; there is no abstract matter. Nothing exists except minds and their ideas. *Esse est percipi*.¹ Thus spirit is made entirely independent of matter, a distinctive advance towards skepticism. Yet we receive ideas which we ourselves

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

do not produce. These must therefore be the effects of a mightier Spirit than we. This forms some sort of subjective proof of causality for the existence of God.

Another important advance that Berkeley made was his denial of the reality of universal ideas which Locke, though a nominalist, had still maintained. General ideas and the existence of material things have been destroyed. That was the life work of Berkeley and he made such a thorough job of it that Hume could with little difficulty develop his philosophy into skepticism.

Hume began with Berkeley's ultra nominalism, though not rejecting the reality of the material world. He worked out the idea suggested by Berkeley's rejection of the primary qualities as subjective to the point that immediate sensation includes less than is ascribed to it, as, for example, in vision we perceive colors only and not distance. ² Then also, our conception of causality is purely subjective. We see only temporal succession but have no guarantee of causal connection. The result is that substantiality can be denied as well to immaterial as material beings.

In full accord with this is his psychology. The combination of ideas is no longer left to the understanding, as with Locke, but is subjected to the laws of association. Freedom thus gives way entirely to the inexorable laws of nature. We need not pursue his argument in detail. Enough has been said to convince us that as to the great realities of life, God, man, and the universe, we cannot be sure. To call him a thorough skeptic would perhaps be going too far because he never impugned the validity of mathematical reasoning nor experiential truths concerning matters of fact. But at least we can have no certain knowledge of God and the universe. The phenomenon of religion rests only on the sensuous side of man's nature, on his practical needs. We form a God or gods after our own image, endowed with a greater power than we, so that they may supply our needs. At an advanced stage we may reach the conception of monotheism, but the most cogent theistic argument, that of teleology, has at best only the value of probability because we read cause into nature.

The final word of Hume is doubt and uncertainty. Now Hume has doubtlessly been of great service to the history of philosophy. He showed the logical outcome not only of an out and out empiricism but of a dualistic metaphysics as well. As Spinoza took up the speculative side of Descartes' philosophy and developed it till he absorbed all empirical reality in it; so Hume developed the other wing of thought already inherent in Descartes' system and, preceded by

² *Ibid.*

Locke, absorbed spirituality in it and then cast the result into the seething cauldron of doubt.

The great merit of these two series of thinkers so far has been negative, in reducing to absurdity the dualism of an external unrelated world. If evil exists in one part of the universe, we conveniently escape it by dodging into the other, or we dare not face the problem because we can have no certainty as to the existence of God and consequently have no theodicy, which is the justification of God.

Leibniz

Leibniz after a fashion tries to reconcile these strongly opposing tendencies. Of great productive genius and transformative powers, he tried to do justice to both. To empiricism he imparted a relative justification, but maintained for the necessary truths of reason the greater validity. In a controversy carried on with Locke on the question of innate ideas, he argues that instead of ideas being impressed on the mind and contained in it spatially, they are rather forms of the mind's activity and may be unconsciously present. They are not mechanically caused by bodies as Locke had supposed. All causality is ideal, i.e., that which causes the present is not the past but the future. We feel in thus following Leibniz that we have lost some of the mechanism of empiricism and rationalism; there seems to be some growth in the process of knowledge. Yet the two are not blended, as is evidenced in his maintaining the absolute distinction between geometrical and factual truths. The former is deductivism: pure logic with the impossibility of the contrary; it deals in analytic judgments. The latter is inductive with the possibility of the contrary; it deals with synthetic judgments. At first Leibniz seems to hold that God thinks absolutely analytically, that He thinks things through according to the principle of contradiction. Later he makes the principle of twofold truth metaphysical as well as epistemological, i.e., the division goes through to ultimate reality, to God. Thus he gets two kinds of necessity, conditioned and unconditioned.

This much of his metaphysics and epistemology was requisite to appreciate the implications of his *Théodicée*¹, which naturally must come up for discussion. With Locke, being was prior to activity, but with Leibniz being is activity. This law holds good in all self-consciousness. All being as activity strives towards God, the ground and end of the world. Thus Locke introduces categories of teleology, and

¹ G. W. Leibniz, *Théodicée* (Amsterdam, 1710).

we expect great things from his *Théodicée*, but in general we are disappointed. Leibniz has not been able totally to divest himself of mechanism and the systematization of his predecessors and contemporaries.

In the first part of his *Théodicée*, Leibniz proves the existence of one omnipotent and all-beneficent God with arguments similar to those of Locke. In the second part he answers the question: *Si Deus est unde malum?* Now we see evil in the world unmistakably. But since creation, as exemplified in the monad, must follow the pathway of development from the lower to the higher, it follows that the lower cannot be as perfect as the higher. Creation implies a certain amount of limitation. This world is the best possible world. If God had created a world with less imperfections we also would have seen less perfections. Thus metaphysically evil is absolutely unavoidable.

When Leibniz comes to the consideration of physical evil, he again resorts to the balance and skillfully weighs the suffering and disease over against pleasure and joy. This method is also applied to moral evil or sin and naturally with still less satisfaction. The sum of the bad is still less than the sum of the good. But even by virtue of their creation, moral beings cannot be entirely good. Nor is there any being that is entirely bad. Leibniz's theodicy is especially inadequate in the treatment of moral evil.² He applies mathematics to spiritual realities.

The greatest objection, however, to the whole *Théodicée* is the bad metaphysics at its basis. God's knowledge is, like ours, partly analytic, partly synthetic. Herein lies His justification as much as in the conception of evil as necessary to creation. If God's knowledge is also partly synthetic, we have, to be sure, found a possibility for the entrance of sin because some sort of independence is thus attributed to man, somewhat after the fashion that Müller later employed. But we have bought this for a price too great; we have bought it at the expense of a completely omnipotent and all-wise God. The retardation of the vessels is due to their own bulk, but God has not loaded them, and is not responsible for the speed of the cargo. He is applying as much power of current to the one as to the other.

But even outside of the necessity of having a full-orbed conception of God before we can get an adequate theodicy, we lack the deep sense of sin in Leibniz which characterized later thinkers. It is not a wide contradiction that must be overcome, as was later the case with Hegel. It is not that grim reality before which Schopenhauer and Hartmann succumb. To Leibniz there is no serious evil at all. It

² *Ibid.*, p. 290.

is rather a sort of sluggishness which is contemptible but to a certain degree tolerable. Man scarcely needs justification for bringing moral evil about; how much less God who in his kind creation of the best possible world could not avoid a certain sluggishness to pervade its development.

Had Leibniz's followers only grasped the stimulative elements in his philosophy—its teleology. Instead they made him the exponent of the rankest rationalism as it found expression in the Wolffian *Aufklärung*. On its basis, truth can all be spun out of the reason in spider fashion. The activity of the intellect answers the question as to the whence of our ideas. "It believes that it has discovered an infallible criterion of truth in the clearness and distinctness of ideas and a sure example for philosophic method in mathematics."³ But Leibniz's monadology and Spinoza's pantheism are equally the outcome of the same clear ideas. This shows the invalidity of their presupposition. It is impossible to conjure being out of thought. Rationalism analyzes given axioms but how can it justify the axioms? Is analytical knowledge sufficient for us? Do we not want progress in knowledge? Rationalism does not justify its own axioms; the system built upon them must fall.

Kant

We have now seen the contending parties of empiricism on the battlefield. Both live before the age of gunpowder and can accomplish little. Their battles are largely sham battles. They have swords and staves and even slings, so that now and then a Goliath among them falls, but they have no poisonous gas. The no man's land between them is psychological; when either party gains it he has gained but a barren spot of wilderness. Kant, as an ambitious youth, has watched the fight. He is anxious to join the fray. He too in his first period fights with their weapons and wins their trophies. But the rationalism of Wolff within him is defeated by the skepticism of Hume. As his genius grows, he sees that the spoils of psychology are not worth their price.

He accordingly turns to an investigation of the dualism which lay at the basis and had so long been accepted uncritically. He subjects the entire knowing process to investigation to determine its validity. He felt that empiricism and rationalism both had a false notion of objectivity. For them, a thing had to be an external exclusive identity in order to exist at all. The subject and object are mutually exclusive. Kant tried to bring these together because, after all, even if

³ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

rationalism should win the psychological battle what guarantee would it have that its knowledge carried metaphysical validity? It assumes uncritically that our knowledge is real while skepticism equally uncritically denies its validity. So in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant tries to determine whether real knowledge is possible for me. How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? This is Kant's transcendental question. So long as *a priori* judgment is analytical there is no difficulty, or so long as your synthetic judgment is not *a priori* you have no trouble. The difficulty arises with synthetic judgments that are *a priori*. In other words, can I come to progress in knowledge which is still universal and necessary?

The answer to this that Kant offers is positive. Synthetic judgments are *a priori* possible because there are certain principles native in the human mind. But when Kant affirms this he again reverts to psychologism, for the question immediately arises: whence are these principles?

However, as Kant proceeds he tries to establish an *a priori* for the facts of experience. In the *Aesthetic* he argues that the science of mathematics is a fact. It is possible because space and time are *a priori* forms of mind. Space is transcendently ideal, i.e., it is never entirely absent from experience and yet it transcends every experience. Space is the form of outer sensibility; time is the form of all sensibility. Anything you can sense is in time; if it is external it is in the form of space besides.

Now time and space seem to be subjective in Kant's presentation. In a sense they are. They are subjective but still universally necessary. It follows that what was to the Pre-Kantians the objective is with Kant subsumed in the subjective. Thus Kant thinks he has found a genuine *a priori*. But the question of subject and object reappears within the self. Kant did not test the categories as such but only the relation of their subjectivity and objectivity. In fact he quite uncritically accepted the Aristotelian categories. He needs them in the further handling of the material of the mind, received from without, molded in the mind's forms of time and space, placed in juxtaposition and succession.

The question now become, how does the mind actively create the world of objects existing in necessary relations to each other, out of the manifold of the aesthetic (sense-experience). Kant wants to get at the activity of the judgment itself. And here lies his suggestiveness that he saw the problem of philosophy to be one of logic. As such he is the forerunner and father of all later philosophy. How is it possible to get from the individual's experience, related in space and time, to the individual's consciously making a universal and necessary judgment

on his experience? This question Kant never fully answers because he takes over the old categories bodily. However, Kant views them from a new angle. Objectivity becomes an activity of the mind. Objects are objects not of themselves but due to the constitutive activity of the mind. This synthetic and constitutive function of the mind has its basis in the fact that I am a unity not in the empirical laws of association (Hume) but in the transcendental unity of apperception, as a member of the human family. This true apperception expresses itself through the categories as *a priori* means. Thus we get objects. To call anything an object involves conjunction, synthesis. Sensation can give no relation; it gives only a manifold representation intuitive as in space and time. It takes the spontaneous activity of the mind to give relation and form objects. Now conjunction and synthesis is accompanied with the idea of unity. We cannot make statements of relation without unity. To know the synthesis as synthesis there must be unity. This unity is implicit in every judgment and makes thought possible. Thus we reach the category of all categories—the transcendental unity of apperception. The “I think” is the assumption of any judgment. In our very judgments we are part of the transcendental unity. Our individual empirical self in time is just as phenomenal as the world of matter, but as forming judgments the mind is part of the large mind of humanity and its oracles have universal validity. As such we cannot help but see things in relation, as a unity; whether reality corresponds to this is an entirely different question, says Kant.

In fact, here is where our knowledge ends. We are always limited to time and space. This is our only way of schematizing. There is thus an inner contradiction in all our knowledge. It must guarantee itself; otherwise it cannot know. It postulates objects which by postulation it can never know. For if these objects could be known they would not be objects able to guarantee our knowledge. In our knowledge we want to get from the conditioned to the unconditioned, but this by postulation can never be given in experience. The search after truth is possible only if we postulate that the search will be successful, yet it would not be truth if we could possess it. We need and want to get at a real, a genuine infinity; all we can obtain is a vicious one, one of an infinite regression. In every judgment given, the ultimate judgment that Absolute subject and object are one, is implied. Yet knowledge by means of the categories which we possess is only in space and time. When it comes to the great realities of the soul, the world, and God, we know nothing except that they are regulative, *Grenzbegriffe*.

We cannot apply substantiality to the soul nor can we prove that it has no substantiality. Psychology may be able to show that to explain the unity we find between sense and intelligence it needs the idea of a fundamental ground as a

regulative principle, but it cannot make an intelligible object of this unity. If we try to do this we are committing a paralogism, i.e., we are trying to fit higher realities into inadequate categories.

Similarly in rational cosmology. By the law of contradiction we can sometimes assert exactly opposite predicates of the same phenomenon. Now if two contradictory statements can be made of a phenomenon, that phenomenon is not real.

In rational theology we fare no better; the ancient theistic arguments must be demolished. That the existence of God is to be derived analytically from a concept, as the ontological argument tries to do, would imply a leap into the dark. So the cosmological argument can at best give us an infinite regress of finite causes, and even if it could bring us to the concept of absolute cause we would again be switched over in the track of the ontological argument and would still have to bridge the gulf between the concept and reality. As for the teleological argument, it can at best give a world-framing architect.

The conclusion of the matter is that pure theoretic knowledge of the soul, God, and freedom is impossible. We cannot nor would deny their existence, but we must acknowledge our limitations so as to make room for faith. Hence we see Kant, in the *Critique of Practical Judgment*, restore to us the great realities of which he has just deprived us in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But these now are to be objects of our faith. To be sure, they have a connection, a very close connection with our lives. The "*du sollst*" is rooted in our very natures but cannot further be explained and forms the deepest foundation and highest authority in morals.⁴ As far as form is concerned, our religion and morality is based on our inmost nature, but as to content our religion and morality is autonomous. Kant saw a difficulty here and tried to overcome it by saying we should act in such a way that our manner of action could be safely universalized, but this scarcely fills the bill for this too is subjective.

The thrust of Kant's philosophy is consequently negative in the main and, as such, was very valuable. Kant showed once for all that the methods of empiricism and rationalism with their dualism between subject and object is untenable. The judgment presupposes the relation between subject and object. He has shown the necessity of the interrelation of experience. But why did not Kant apply this also to the noumenal world? Kant upon his standpoint could not do this. He still fought with the rationalistic weapon of the validity of the law of contradiction. As

⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Hedendaagsche Moraal* (Kampen, 1902), p. 27.

long as Kant himself used this weapon we may not expect him to slay the dragon of skepticism. He himself, however, supplied us with the argument to refute him. He would limit our knowledge to things of sense. But he shows that the world of necessity stands related to our consciousness and can therefore not be interpreted as being an external subsistence. Similarly, the necessary relation between the finite and the infinite should imply that our knowledge of the infinite is normally true indeed, and that the great realities of God, the soul, and freedom can be known if our human nature is not itself a grand deception.

Again it was imperative to dwell at some length on the basis of Kant's philosophy. It will help us to estimate correctly his contribution not only to the theory of evil, but also that of his many followers who still follow him in applying the law of contradiction to the realm beyond sense and are cast into skepticism. If we have refuted Kant we have at the same time refuted Hamilton, Mansel, and a host of others. We need not fear the weapons of Kant nor follow him in his conclusions because in refuting eighteenth-century Newtonian mechanistic logic, he did not study the validity of these categories when applied to the higher realities of life. These categories Fichte first found wanting and Hegel once for all destroyed.

As for Kant's theory of evil, we can now be brief. "Freedom, like autonomy, is no quality of the natural will. It is only in the power of adopting the moral law as a maxim governing our will and adopting it so intimately that the maxim is thought as the very utterance of our own wills that we are free—in other words, have a real causative originality—a power of absolutely commencing a series of events. Freedom therefore is revealed by the moral law. When a statement unconditionally commanding action is accepted by the will as its own utterance, when the 'thou shalt' of the law becomes the 'I will' of the agent—then in this high region, where the subjective volition is identified with the objective law, we have a synthetical judgment *a priori* which is practical and govern conduct."⁵ It follows that evil is our unwillingness to conform our wills to the categorical imperative "thou shalt."

Moral evil is hedonism which argues from utility and subordinates all others as a means to an end. Kant brings the supersensuous back to us in the categorical imperative. But why should we ever wish to disobey this master? This is because man consists of a twofold nature—the sensuous and the moral. The one cannot be without the other because of the unity of the willing personality. The right relation between these is that the moral should dominate over the

⁵ William Wallace, *Kant* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons), p. 213.

sensuous, but we find the reverse to be true, "and since the sensuous impulses are evil as soon as they even merely resist the moral, there is in man a natural bent towards evil."⁶ Kant speaks "von dem Hange zum Bösen in der menschlichen Natur." In this inclination he distinguishes three stages. "Man kann sich drei verschiedene Stufen desselben denken. Erstlich ist es die Schwäche des menschlichen Herzens in Befolgung genommener Maximen überhaupt, oder die Gebrechlichkeit der menschlichen Natur; Zweitens der Hang zur Vermischung unmoralischer Triebe mit den moralischen (selbst wenn es in guter Absicht und unter Maximen des Guten geschähe) die Unlauterkeit; drittens, der Hang zur Annehmung böser Maximen, d. v. die Bösartigkeit der menschlichen Natur oder des menschlichen Herzens."⁷ "Der mensch ist von Natur böse." Yet not as though this would follow from the concept man, "denn als dann wäre sie nothwendig, sondern er kann nachdem, wie man ihn durch Erfahrung kennt, nicht anders beurtheilt werden, oder man kann es als subjectiv nothwendig in jedem auch dem besten Mensch voraussetzen."⁸

This radical evil is therefore not necessary as far as human nature is concerned. If it were, as has been often maintained since Kant rightly argues, man would not be responsible for it. It is something inexplicable but deep. Man needs a reversal of his moving springs. He feels the terrible majesty of the *Du Sollst* above him and he is terrified. He is thus compelled to posit the existence of a divine power "which imposes upon him the moral law but also grants him the help of redeeming love to enable him to obey it."¹ Evil is to be overcome by moral perfection in the Logos by the redemption of vicarious love and the mystery of a new birth.

But such an interpretation of evil based on a dualistic epistemology cannot meet the requirements. The Radicale Böse is not evil enough. Nor does it help if he account for the source of this evil in a will above time because we can have no certainty as to such an hypothesis at all even Kant's own basis.² We feel that somehow we are responsible, but when confessing our sins we have no guarantee that this is not to a blank. Nor need we justify a God that we do not know.

⁶ W. Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 557.

⁷ Kant, *Werke* 6 (Leipzig, 1868), p. 122.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹ W. Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 557.

² J. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Edinburgh, 1893), p. 197.

Hegel

To Hegel we shall have to go for a new beginning. Fichte and Schelling also made their contributions, but of Hegel it may be said that he initiated a new line of philosophy still widely prevalent today in many such men as F. Bradley, Bosanquet, H. Green, J. Royce, F. H. Wenley, et al. It will again more than repay us to review the Hegelian metaphysics and epistemology, rather than to investigate some stray statements with respect to evil.

In his *Encyclopaedie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* he works out his logic.³ The first thing he does is to review the metaphysics of his predecessors. They are one and all found wanting because they sought truth by abstraction. The older metaphysics preceding Kant studied nature and mind as fixed entities in juxtaposition and attached to them numberless external predicates. Now on the one hand, because these phenomena were regarded as self-subsistent entities, their relations could be only external and mean nothing, but could only lead to a vicious infinite, as with the Hindus and negative theology in general. On the other hand, because the relations could be only external we cannot see the truths in the objects they relate.⁴ Thus the older metaphysics could not see the truth at all.

Critical philosophy tried to overcome this difficulty by combining the *a priori* with the *a posteriori*. But all that Kant established was to move the absolute distinction between subject and object within the self. Kant only removed the playing ground. He did not see that the great problem was one of logic. Proof of this is that Kant could never bridge the gulf between the mind and *Das Ding an sich*.⁵ "*Sie läst die Kategorien und die methode des gewöhnlichen Erkennens ganz unangefochten.*"

Neither did the intuitional school see into the true dialectic and it therefore failed to see the truth. They left behind all mediation, all process of the *Verstand*, and returned to the method of the prophet and the poet.⁶ Yet it wants to grasp more than abstract truth but in this attempt it is contradictory. In fact, it uses mediation itself and could not do otherwise. Immediacy without mediation is nowhere possible, not even in religion. It thus leads to subjectivism without

³ Hegel, *Werke* 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65 ff..

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121..

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

content and gives free scope to superstition of all kinds.⁷ It takes away the element of necessity from the "*consensus gentium*" and can at best but lead to the existence of God and not to his nature. "*Geist aber kann Gott nur heissen, insofern er als sich in sich selbst mit sich selbst vermittelnd gewusst wird.*"⁸ To know God as "*Geist*" is the demand Hegel makes upon philosophy and this the immediate school could never do, because of its attempted omission of mediation.

What Hegel wants to get at is the concrete Notion, *Gott als Geist*. Now truth to Hegel has a twofold sense. First it means an inherent dialectic movement in all things. In this sense we have grasped the truth of a thing or an object when we see that it points beyond itself, that it involves its own contradiction. Thus, for example, death is not something external which cuts life off, but in life itself the germ of death is already contained. Life reveals its own dialectic; it cannot be regarded as something entirely in itself. If we do the latter we have in so far not grasped the truth of life. Hegel expresses this aspect of the truth in a rather novel way. "*Wir sagen dass alle Dinge (alles Endliche als solches) zu Gericht gehen und haben hiermit die Anschauung der Dialektik als der allgemeinen unwiderstehlichen Macht, vor welcher nichts, wie sicher und fest dasselbe sich auch dünken möge, zu bestehen vermag.*"⁹ Here we have the statement of the general principle. Everything finite points beyond itself. The planets reveal the dialectic in their change of place. In the spiritual world it is embodied in many such sayings as, "the highest law is the highest injury." Anything "*auf seine Spitze getrieben*" veers about into its opposite.¹⁰ Now in as far as we have grasped this inner necessity of a thing to disintegrate and again become a factor in a higher resultant, we have in this sense grasped the truth. Then we realize that the ideal is the real, i.e., that the reality of any finite appearance, and therefore also its truth, lies in the recognition that in itself it is unstable, nothing hard and fast, but that through negative and positive dialectic it finds its truth on a higher level as a factor together with others forming a new unity.

Now since all the previous schools of philosophy had failed to grasp this dialectic and consequently did not know the truth in the finite through sublation, they could not attain to truth in the second sense, i.e., in the comprehension of the *Notion*, *Idee*, or *Gott*, the concrete all-inclusive reality. Truth is in this sense all comprehensive and consistent. All the finite is seen in its relation to the infinite,

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134..

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the infinite is seen as including the finite, and subject and object are no longer exclusive but complementary. Truth in this sense is the finished product of truth in the former sense; it is the resultant of the dialectic. It is what Hegel expounds in the third division of the logic, the idea of the Notion. Nature is seen as expressing the "*Idee*,"¹¹ not as identified with it, and mind also is not something opposed to the Notion but only another form of expression of it. One who sees the truth in the first sense cannot help but see it in the second; the dialectic is the truth and it leads to truth. We have eternal life and we are going to it. In the first sense we are idealizing the real; in the second sense the real has become the ideal, or the ideal the real.

This in the barest outline is Hegel's metaphysics and at the same time his logic, for to him logic is metaphysics; dialectic is truth; truth is dialectic. Hegel studies the categories as such in their own pure medium of thought. He perceives the genuine negative dialectic and through negation of the negation comes to reaffirmation: He works within the truth, not outside of it and comes to the "*Idee*" and its "*Erscheinungen*," not merely to "*Schein*."

Now without doubt we have in Hegel a marked advance on Kant. Hegel's method is still largely followed by men like F. M. Bradley, the Caird brothers, H. Green, J. Royce, etc. But we may ask in examining the validity of the system, what is its starting-point, for all looks well and good when you are once in the current of the dialectic. But how do I know that I am in that current? Hegel will reply that this is trying to learn to swim on shore. Man cannot know anything without knowing that he knows. In his treatment of the Logic, Hegel begins with pure Being. "*Das reine Seyn macht den Anfang, weil es sowohl reiner Gedanke, als das unbestimmte einfache Unmittelbare ist, der erste Anfang aber nichts vermitteltes und weiter bestimmtes seyn kann.*" We have to begin with absolute, pure, indeterminate being. This is at the same time also indeterminate Nothing. "*Sein und Nichts ist dasselbe.*" We merely distinguish them in thought. We could as well begin with pure nothing; only the one has the possibility in it of everything and the other remains negation. Their truth lies in "*Werden*."

We need not pursue his argument any further. We have seen his starting point. But what guarantee has Hegel that his absolute "*Leerheit*" is going to produce the absolute "*Fülle*"? What guarantee has he that his swimming will lead him to the shore? He can at most reach probability. To be sure, skepticism must refute itself. Our human nature cannot sustain it, but Hegel left no room for the possibility that our finite knowledge may be off the true path of dialectic, that

¹¹ J. M. E. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1896).

though it may still be able to see the truth, in the first sense, of everything finite pointing beyond itself, this does not of necessity lead us to truth in the second comprehensive sense. Hegel looks too exclusively at the continuity of experience and not enough at its discreteness. So also all later idealistic philosophy thinks to have reached the highest synthesis including all differences. Its synthesis is, however, still too hasty. Sin is a bit less tractable than was supposed. It is not so easily whipped into the line of the relative good, but maintains its vicious independence in spite of all idealization. In fact it has been left in the very covert of the human mind itself where it needs most of all to be uprooted if it is to be overcome and made conducive to a higher synthesis. So we must urge against this Idealism their own favorite method of argument "that he who omits any element in the whole, will be driven to omit other elements connected with them, and others again connected with these, till the whole is emptied of its contents and reduced to a barren identity."¹² Even idealistic philosophy has left out of its comprehension an element of sin, or rather first changed the nature of sin so that it could fit into its scheme. It has sin made to order.

To Hegel and the neo-Hegelians, evil is therefore only the negative dialectic of the finite—it is the inherent contradiction of the finite. In the "*Mythus vom Sündenfall*," there is this much truth: that man stepped out of his immediacy into the current of the dialectic and was thus led to truth. Instead of falling into sin, he fell out of sin; the fall was upwards.¹³ Evil, error, imperfection do not really belong to him [man], they are excrescences which have no organic relation to his true nature." Imperfection and finitude remain indeed and must remain forever, in this sense that the individual is not the whole."¹⁴ This shows Principal Caird's view. Then his brother Edward states: "The drama of human life is the struggle of freedom and necessity, of spirit with nature, which in all its forms within and without seems to the purely moral consciousness the guise of an enemy. But the possibility of the struggle itself and of the final victory in it lies in this, that the enemy exists in order to be conquered; or rather that the opposition is, in its ultimate interpretation, an opposition of the Spirit to itself and the struggle but the pains that accompany its process of development."¹⁵ But an opposition of the spirit within itself cannot answer to the nature of evil. It is a theory of evil that takes the evil out of evil. In a similar strain F. H. Bradley argues in his *Appearance and Reality*. So also argues Josiah Royce: "The existence of evil then is not only

¹² Caird, *Theology among Greek Thinkers*, 1.

¹³ Hegel, *Werke* 6, p. 55.

¹⁴ Principal Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Christian Religion* (Glasgow, 1880), p. 299.

¹⁵ Edward Caird, *Hegel* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1883), p. 125.

consistent with the perfection of the universe, but is necessary for the very existence of perfection.”¹⁶ Evil is necessary to experience the good. Moreover, God sorrows in our sorrows. This is essentially also the idea in Oscar Wilde’s “*De Profundis*.” Peace is found in beautiful triumphant warfare.

Now it is evident that from the Christian viewpoint all such idealistic interpretations have their attractions. Its epistemology may be regarded as well nigh the best possible obtainable for unaided human reason. But it does not allow for a break between the finite and the infinite, so that the transition from the one to the other is perhaps not as smooth as was supposed, and the implications of the finite necessitate. The very fact that it has taken the human spirit all these centuries to see through the implications of the finite, in a pregnant sense, ought to warn us that there has possibly been some flood that washed away parts of the road. The path is extremely difficult; we know there must be a way, we could have come no other way, but why can we not easily and quickly get back?

In terms of religious experience, this criticism amounts to saying that a definite consciousness of moral responsibility and sense of guilt is lacking. If evil were anything inherent in the finite nature of man and things, it is scarcely conceivable that we as persons should feel responsible. On an idealistic basis there can in reality be no free human nature, for all are but moments in the infinite free necessity. Nor can there be any adequate conception of a personal God to whom we are responsible, for we are a part of God who is still in the making. With evil thus reduced to metaphysical necessity, responsibility and freedom is destroyed. God and we are ultimately one. Crime, the perpetrator, and the judge are identified. The court can be dismissed; there is no cause for action. God is to be his own theodicy but why should he justify himself to himself, for it is his very nature that must objectify itself through a process of finitude and evil.

Thus we have reached practically the climax of strictly philosophic thought. Says Windelband with reference to the nineteenth century: “A survey of the succeeding development in which we are still standing today has far more of literary and historical than of properly philosophical interest. For nothing essentially and valuable new has since appeared.”¹⁷ The main question in the nineteenth century becomes to what extent the natural science mode of cognition is to reign supreme. We have, to be sure, still several wings of philosophic thought. Idealism still maintains itself, materialism in Arnold Ruge

¹⁶ Josiah Royce, *Studies in Good and Evil* (New York, 1902), p. 168.

¹⁷ Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 623.

and Feuerbach, associational psychology, neo-Kantians, etc. Lotze tried to combine the materialistic motif with the idealistic but offered no essentially new philosophy.

Shall we perhaps expect better results from critical Realism? J. E. Turner in the "Monist" of July 1922 thinks not. Says he: "A realism in which perception as such is incapable of ever apprehending material *existents qua existents* if obviously completely debarred from direct awareness of the physical universe. It may either by means of explicit arguments or of instinctive and irresistible belief posit the reality of such a universe, but only as a world with which the knower can never come into absolutely primal contact and direct relation.... If then the content apprehended in and through perception is never under any circumstances ontologically identical with the material world, realism degenerates into Noumenalism." To be sure, a system that concludes with a confessed lack of certainty in which that "what we contemplate is in the case of perception apparently the very physical object itself, but *semper, ubique et ab omnibus* only apparently," cannot offer any solution of the problem of evil. There is no certain knowledge of a God before whom evil is accounted as guilt; there is not even a God that we know as the source of the objective world. Then why bother about evil in the world?

Neither will neo-Realism help us. It resolves reality into relations. On such a basis all that can be done with evil is to push it farther and farther back into more intricate relations, but it cannot be solved.

Then if we pin our last hope on the revolution wrought by Einstein will we fare any better? At present there is a lively debate going on in the philosophical magazines as to whether the philosophical implications of the relativity theory will prove revolutionary. One thing seems certain: that it will lead to no greater certainty in knowledge, though possibly to more complication, and evil can at best be reduced to relative terms.

Before dismissing the field of philosophy it remains briefly to discuss a couple of definite theories of evil built upon the philosophical premises of the preceding century, namely, systematic pessimism and the interpretation of evil on evolutionary basis by Mr. F. R. Tennant.

Pessimism of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann

Under Systematic Pessimism we understand chiefly the systems of Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann. In earlier philosophy, like that of Berkeley and Kant as well as in the poetry of Goethe, there are pessimistic elements, but pessimism as a world-and-life system does not rise up till the time of Schopenhauer. The romantic poets of Germany had sung their own distresses but pessimism became so prevalent that it needed more scientific systematization.

So Schopenhauer gave to the world a systematic pessimism. He was so impressed with the evil of the world and found it so deeply rooted in the very nature of things that his theory of the ultimate reality of the universe is the specific result of an attempt to explain evil. He brought the *Weltschmerz* to a point of unity. As to the antecedents of his philosophic thought, Professor Wenley says: "Add Indian Buddhism, Plato, mediaeval mysticism, and Schelling and the elements of his system are enumerated."¹ Reasoned pessimism was the result. Kant had left two unknowns and unknowables: on the objective side the thing in itself, which is the unknown source of our sensations; on the subjective side, the subject's own synthetic power constituting in each individual all that he really is and therefore transcending his experience. Thus Schopenhauer saw that Kant failed to explain reality either on the side of things or of thought. Yet these realities exist. He accepts with Kant that the known is only phenomenal and therefore we must fall back on the subjective. Searching the faculties of the soul, Schopenhauer finds that there is in the soul an "unwearied effort to assert itself." Thus the Ego beyond experience, which Kant failed to grasp, is the Will. "That I exist is due to the fact that I will. I am I because I will." Not only do I know that the will is the ultimate reality because of intellectual cognition, but it is directly perceived in the bodily movements which are its manifestations. "The body is the objectification of the Will." So I conclude that the Will is the ultimate reality of the world. This primal Will is an impersonal unconscious force. "Its one positive characteristic is that it is pregnant with indefinable desire." Why this force should seek self-consciousness in man is not clear, but it does, and for some more mysterious reason still it is causally directed in each operation by archetypal ideas.

¹ R. H. Wenley, *Aspects of Pessimism* (London, 1894), p. 256.

This Will is essentially fraught with pain and imperfection because in its ceaseless frantic effort to find perfect expression it is ever baffled. "Man's greatest crime is that he was born.... Curse God—who is so framed that he must have your existence and this without taking one iota of responsibility for its inevitable evil.... Curse God who can do nothing to redeem you from sin into which his efforts have forced you. Die, because death being a negation of individuality is the one good in life."² This quotation is simultaneously a statement of Schopenhauer's system and the refutation of its theory of evil. God cannot help produce evil. Therefore we need not justify Him; we need not justify an evil force. The moment we leave out of the concept of God, the element of loving personality, theodicy is out of the question. Nor is evil seen as deep as it seems to be; it becomes rather easy to explain. Fatalism, lifeless submission is no heroism. Evil only becomes a real problem when we see it as the direct opposite of an omnipotent and all-wise god. We may weep and wail with Schopenhauer, but our tears must be hotter than his or we shall have to remain with him in the slough of despond. Only when we have wept evil away can we also laugh it to scorn.

Does von Hartmann in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* weep like Schopenhauer? Yes and no. He too ends in pessimism but in his time the emotional Weltschmerz period had passed away and natural science was making its advance. "He united evolutionary optimism with metaphysically decreed misery." Active effort to annihilate pain is the burden of his teaching. Seeing mechanism in nature he yet must needs posit teleology. Schopenhauer's Will is not sufficient. Von Hartmann combines with it the Hegelian Notion; intelligent Will is the cause of all things, efficient cause as well as final. The Unconscious ejects the phenomena. Thought and being are not identical, as with Hegel. But as to the individual soul, it has no free will because its origin lies in unintelligent first principle. Wretchedness and evil is inevitable. Yet for all that, ours is the best possible world that could be; there is some hope for the future. Here we see the influence of evolutionary science on von Hartmann in distinction from Schopenhauer. The latter's quietism becomes an absurdity. But why should we try to get rid of pain? Is there any real hope for the future? As has been already mentioned, Will and Intellect were both contained in the Unconscious, but the Intellect was long dominated by the Will and therefore could not prevent the creation of the world. Yet there was a striving towards consciousness so that the Intellect might free itself from Will. "But consciousness itself is ever a conflict, that is a source of wretchedness. So it cannot be a final end; it must be relative to something beyond itself. So mankind has in vain in philosophy and Christianity

² *Ibid.*

sought positive happiness; mankind, not the individual, but the whole should long for nothingness, for annihilation. So also infinite distress is the nature of Deity, infinite because pertaining to absolute being. Thus the universe is an agonizing blister which the all-pervading Being intentionally applies to himself, in the first place, to draw out and eventually to remove an inner torture. So God's self-preservation becomes the justification for the creation of evil. "Pity God who is a miserable devil, and live to lessen his eternal wretchedness." "The principle of practical philosophy consists in this: to make the ends of the Unconscious the ends of our own consciousness."¹ Thus evil can at last be got rid of and God and man can come to a nothingness in which is absence of pain.

The great merit of von Hartmann seems to be this: that "if the Absolute Being is impersonal, the gospel of despair necessarily follows. Pessimism has taken its place as the inevitable sequel to a theology which finds Deity in impersonal Will or in the Unconscious, or in Force or in any principle devoid of selfhood and rationality,"² and also in revealing to us that happiness cannot be found on earth. But these are only the negative aspects of his philosophy. When it comes to the positive aspect we shiver. We are to strive to become nothing; teleology and extinction are combined—a contradiction in terms. But not to speak of its metaphysical contradiction, its theory of evil is outside of the two poles between which it can be rationally explained—namely God, personal and almighty, and man endowed with intellect and will, an individuality and end in himself though to God. Von Hartmann's God is not of such a nature that we can justify him or let him justify himself. We do not claim for him any love and omnipotence which we are to reconcile with the existence of evil. Nor is man taken as an individual soul, responsible yet finite. The distinction between man and God has not been made deep, and consequently there is no need of a deep theory of evil or theodicy. Evil and theodicy are really dropped on this basis, for we all tend to nirvana.

But we have seen in von Hartmann a positive strain. There was in his Unconscious an Intellect groping above it for light. From out of the womb of the Unconscious arise Mind and Matter. There is at least progress, though it can at best lead to annihilation. Will there not be someone to help us out of the difficulty, someone that can develop this positive strain and lead us to a haven of rest? If we have reeled back when looking into the abyss towards which we were headed when following von Hartmann's arrows, Mr. F. R. Tennant will lend us a hand and lead us by the safe pathway of evolution to better lands.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

² *Ibid.*, p. 318.

F. R. Tennant

Mr. Tennant begins his investigation by reviewing the Augustinian and Pelagian controversy. He thinks Pelagianism is too individualistic and intellectual. It attributes the source of evil to the individual free human being. Augustine has a deeper insight into the problem; he maintains the unity of evil as a racial phenomenon, explained as to its universality largely by propagation. Yet the metaphysics of Augustine is bad. It does not allow man the requisite freedom really to have originated evil or to be responsible. Neither did philosophy solve the problem. It dealt with the problem according to the requirements of a preconceived system. Kant led to the despair of ever solving the problem from the *a priori* standpoint. Müller, maintaining the old assumptions that evil is universal and that its guilt rests upon everyone, was forced to go beyond the realm of time and seek refuge in a pre-temporal fall of every individual. This is only adding a celestial to a terrestrial Pelagianism and an unwarranted step beyond experience.

Thus every attempt to solve the problem from an *a priori* viewpoint has failed. Hence we must reject this method. We must take man as evolved like the animal, totally unmoral. Morality and consciousness of guilt only grew up with maturity. Now we do not blame a child for actions that we reprimand in a grown-up. The seething life of appetites tries to reassert itself time and again so that as we see life now, there is a remnant in all of us of the life of the beast. Evil has an evolutionary necessity; it is an anachronism. "Evil is not the result of a transition from good, but good and bad are alike voluntary developments from what was ethically neutral." Yet each one of us falls into sin; each one of us miscarries in our attempt to overcome the animal inheritance, hence our sense of guilt. So responsibility for the opportunity of sin lies in God because we as human beings cannot help being enveloped in a legacy of inherited nature prone to evil. But responsibility for the actuality of moral evil lies with man who is an individual. We see from Mr. Tennant's work that his philosophical presuppositions are theistic.³

But how can we harmonize man's responsibility for moral evil with his theory of evolution? Is man on this basis really accountable? Now Mr. Tennant finds that there is much of that which belongs to the world plan which belongs to it only incidentally, as a mere accompaniment or by-product, without being itself a divine end at all.⁴ This position, Tennant admits, gives to the finite spirit a real

³Tennant, *Origin and Propagation of Sin*, p. 120.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 124.

power to thwart and oppose the divine end of the world, and it is difficult to determine the bond between the soul and God in whom it lives and moves. Here then at the crux of the problem, the relation between the finite and the infinite, Tennant's entire structure rests on a wild speculation, admittedly loose. From the strictly scientific viewpoint, already we may object to Mr. Tennant's position that his explanation of the development of sin and guilt is contradictory. If our knowledge of the inappropriate and the incongruous is to determine the nature of sin, whence then is this knowledge? If natural impulses are not wrong in themselves, how can they become wrong by our knowledge? Secondly, we object that though he tries to harmonize Augustinianism and Pelagianism, he is really an out-and-out Pelagian, for he says that inheritance belongs to and affects only our sensuous natures; there is no traducianism of souls. Now since sin is in the soul it again becomes a purely individual something. The possibility of a perfect life is open to everyone, though not quite so easy realizable as with Pelagius. But the main criticism comes when Mr. Tennant, in his attempt at theodicy, artificially combines a naturalistic evolution with Christian Theism as to the relation between God and man. The concept of God must be limited by an accidental influence from without, able to originate evil independently of Him, somewhat as Müller wants it, only Tennant remains within the realm of the temporal. Now these are two opposing conceptions—an omnipotent God and yet an independent man. To take away part of God's power, or to posit that he has given away part of it voluntarily is, after all, only subtle argumentation calculated to excuse him because he is helpless with respect to evil, and our justification drops *ipso facto*. Nor have we a very deep conception of evil on this basis if its universality consists only in a common inheritance of a sensuous nature. Then the soul in its deepest life is not affected. If sin is merely our personal failure to deny that which is behind, we may be in need of a redemptive influence, but at the most, a redemptive influence of moral example. There is no great chasm to be bridged between God and man. Thus with a limited conception of God and an unsatisfactory theory of evil, our theodicy can only be meager indeed.

Or if for one moment we would leave the field of philosophy and see whether the people as a whole perhaps reflect an attitude toward the world entirely opposed to that of philosophy, we should only find that here too we have uncertainty and doubt. To take only an example of our American literature, we see this spirit reflected in our "Symptomatic Babbitt," as one reviewer calls the latest novel of Sinclair Lewis. "As Lowell might have put, authors habitually mistake their vials of Prussic acid for their inkwells." Sinclair Lewis also seems to have done this. "If you are an author you are not sufficiently in love with life to be a good one; if a statesman you are the most incompetent of incompetents; if a

Puritan you are immoral; if religious you are a hypocrite; or if an idealist you are a poor deluded soul." This is not mere mirth-provoking, instrumental, temperamental, or realistic satire. It voices a deep-rooted disgust with life in general, which is helpless and for which man is not responsible at all. If man were responsible, the authors would take the judge's chair denouncing it, with the implication of faith in a higher moral order. But no, the best that can be done under the circumstances is to amuse ourselves with the foibles of men. "And yet can anything be more pathetic, more heart-rending than to see disillusioned mortals grinning with sardonic humor at the chaos which engulfs them and of which they constitute an essential part." Is there then no hope, no light, no dawning of the day?

Conclusion

We are now prepared to draw our general conclusion from our review of the various philosophical theories. We have noticed a tendency throughout the history of thought, that it has ever deepened itself. Subject and object became more and more distinct. The metaphysical, epistemological, physical and moral problems have emerged to definite formulation. We have further noticed that as the antitheses of thought were brought out fuller and fuller we have higher and better syntheses. Modern philosophy, especially in the idealistic types, present to us far deeper contrasts and far wider harmonies than ancient philosophy. But at best we cannot absolutely know, nor can we not know; we are left in uncertainty. Evil has not been seen in its entire depth; theodicy could therefore not be complete.

We have thus also given philosophical justification of the standpoint taken by the Christian Theist. Speaking only from the point of view of philosophic thought, the position of him who accepts special revelation is at least as justifiable as any other. All are groping for certainty. Why should the naturalist's uncertainty be any better than the supernaturalist's? But this is as far as our apologetic can go.

Moreover, we are now prepared to notice in the history of theology a tendency similar to that manifest in philosophy proper. We are prepared to notice that every theologian who has conceived of evil as touching only the circumference of man's being cannot gain an adequate theodicy. On the other hand, that theology in which evil is presented not only as having touched man's moral nature so that his will has been perverted but also as having touched the intellectual part of man's makeup so that it renounces once for all all rights of being competent to judge, and thus assumes a thorough, receptive attitude to

the scripture, is able to render a satisfactory theodicy. The second part of our essay must seek to prove this.

Part 2—Theological

We find the deeper view of sin with the corresponding deeper theodicy in Augustinianism, further explicated by Calvin, and set forth for modern times by the great exponents of Reformed theology. To be sure, it is implied in all evangelical thought but only Reformed theology has made it more explicit and has logically adhered to the biblical principle of evil throughout as affecting man's entire being.

Christian theology was soon forced to give dogmatic statement of its beliefs concerning the Trinity and the person of Christ. Now the simple faith of the early Christians, based on the gospel message, was that they as lost sinners were saved by Christ. It was up to the theologians in the face of heretical attack to give this faith dogmatic formulation and philosophic justification. Now in the orthodox formulation of the creed, especially in its doctrine of Christ as very God and very man, yet of one person, with a distinct human nature, we have at the same time a view of sin. Sin was, to them, such an antagonistic reality to God, that the Son of God himself had to become truly man and suffer on the cross, and through the eternal value of his person absorb the wrath of a holy and just God to make man free from sin. This was at the same time a biblical statement of doctrine and a defense against heresy. Several theologians expounded this doctrine and worked it out further. Especially may we mention Augustine as a representative of the early church view of sin. We will center our attention on him to the exclusion of others, because his system formed the basis for later Calvinism and also it formed an effective opposition to Manichaeism and Pelagianism.

Augustine

Against the dualism of Manichaeism, which regarded good and evil as equally primitive and represented a portion of the divine substance as having entered into the region of evil, for the good to war against, Augustine defends the Monism of the good principle, or of the pure spirituality of God. Against the Manichaean position he explains evil as a mere negation or privation, and even seeks to show that evil is necessary and not in contradiction with the theory of creation.

But whence did he draw this inference with respect to Manichaeism? It was after he was converted and convicted of sin. He never ceased to admire philosophy and especially neo-platonism. He rather marveled that it reached as

high a conception of God as it did, but he also held that without the aid of philosophy the Christian knows from the Scriptures that God is our creator, our teacher and giver of grace.¹ Augustine's epistemology is one that absolutely submits to the special revelation of God. It is absolutely necessary for man to have the truth; it is not sufficient that he only seek for it. Philosophically, Augustine makes our knowledge to be possible on a principle similar to Descartes. "*Tu qui vis te nosse, seis esse te? Seio, unde seis? Nescio. Semplicem te sentis an multiplicem? Nescio. Movere te seis? Nescio. Cogitare te seis? Seio.*"² Now it may not have been perfectly clear to Augustine how to connect his idea of absolute revelation with his philosophical theory of knowledge, but the implications are clear, that to him the human faculties, as such, are still capable of receiving the truth, but it must be revealed to them from on high because sin has totally separated himself from God and the truth. Thus we are prepared to follow Augustine's exegetical method of interpreting evil. His theory of evil reveals itself in his doctrine of sin and grace especially in the controversy against Pelagianism. His tendency toward sacerdotalism which he received largely from Cyprian and transmitted to Catholicism need not concern us here, for that has to do only with the means of transmission of the gift of grace. Though means can never be entirely distinct from purpose, yet his principle of grace was not vitiated by the means because the means were also received out of grace.

Now as Augustine had maintained against Manichaeism that evil is not a metaphysical principle, that it has no *causa efficiens* but only *deficiens*, so now he maintains against Pelagius that nevertheless this principle of evil is negatively active in the entire human race. He calls sin a "*transgressio legis, voluntas retinendi vel consequendi quod iustitia vetat,*" a "*deficere*" which includes a "*tendere deficere autem non jam nihil est sed ad nihilum tendere, inclinatio, ab eo quod magis est ad id, quod minus est.*"

He gives this definition of sin: "*peccatum est factum vel dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem; lex vero aeterna est ratio divina vel voluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans.*" Thus sin is not a "*mera or pura privatio sed actus debito ordine privatus, a privatio cum positiva qualitate et actione, a actuosa privatio.*"³

This reveals the deep sense of sin in Augustine. His *Confessions* are a monumental witness to this. God, according to Augustine, had created man good

¹ Augustine, *De Civitas Dei*, 7, p. 10.

² Augustine, *Soliloquies* 2.

³ Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1908), 3:135.

and in his image, endowed with intellect and will and in a measure self-determining. Now man willfully chose evil as Satan had done before him; man is therefore responsible because evil originates in his will. How this is possible, how a finite will can originate anything for which it is strictly responsible is impossible for man fully to determine. The nearest we can come to an explanation is to say that evil is a negation, that nothing positive is created. Evil is no substance but the marring of substance. But this Mr. Burton maintains, in his criticism of Augustine, which only pushes the question back, because even so the question remains how a loving God should have permitted it. Only we know from the scriptural concept of God that evil must redound to the glory of His name. "God permits evil, Augustine declares, because he judged it better to utilize it for the sake of the good than not to permit its existence."⁴

But we must admit with Burton that this does not satisfy our thought. The only question is whether our thought must absolutely be satisfied. The entire creation is, to our conception, a mystery because God is all-sufficient to himself. We shall have to rest then in his inscrutable will. God places man in paradise and offered man eternal life upon obedience. But could man earn eternal life? Did he have something of his own to give to God? Did not eternal life have to come to him out of free grace based on the inscrutable will of God? How could God give man eternal life as a reward and still maintain his dependence. So, on the other hand, how could God allow (to use a meaningless term) sin, i.e., make man in any real sense accountable and yet maintain his dependence? All this goes to show that an attempt for human logic to understand this is foredoomed to failure. The only reasonable position to take is that of absolute submission to the Scriptures or to absolutely oppose it.

Augustine chooses the former and further traces the concept of sin. The sin of Adam was so far-reaching and thorough that every human being is guilty in him. Guilt does not merely arise upon the arrival of self-consciousness but is there from birth. Every man is alienated from God and worthy of eternal punishment. How the sin of Adam is attributable to all men is a problem Augustine has not entirely solved. He knows it is the biblical doctrine and grapples with it to make it explicable to our minds. Mostly he favors traducianism, but not consistently. So much is clear that every man is a slave to sin. Not as though the faculty of will, as such, is enslaved because, as a faculty, the will is only the neutral tool of character.⁵ But man's nature is enslaved and yet responsible. This does not

⁴ Burton, *Augustine*, p. 51.

⁵ B. B. Warfield, *Two Studies in the History of Doctrine* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1897), p. 127.

implicate God into the responsibility for sin because it was through man's own fault that he fell into sin and misery.

Against this presentation of hereditary sin and responsibility Mr. Burton militates. Hereditary sin, original sin and therefore also predestination are abhorrent to the man of the world. "All are sinners, each is responsible—this is readily admitted, but while men honestly acknowledge their responsibility they repudiate the idea of guilt attaching to a choice made while yet they existed potentially in the first man."⁶ But the same argument that Mr. Burton thinks fatal against the Augustinian position may be urged against his own hypothesis of "countless generations of mere brute existence," from which man has emerged with a burden of sensuous nature. Was man, in that, not determined also? Whence on that basis comes man's free will for the acts of which alone he may be held responsible? Whence the effort to moralize the non-moral? To postulate such a background for man, and then to imagine an elevated act of self-consciousness to appear, is strangely incongruous and a more superficial explanation of evil. Augustine therefore bows before the inscrutable mystery of God and explains only insofar as explanation is possible, though in his explanations often falling into allegorisation.

Concerning mankind thus fallen into sin, Augustine further develops this idea. God saves some as monuments of his mercy and leaves others as monuments to his justice. This is ordination which is merely working according to his plan. Is foreordination and election unjust? Not in the least, for it logically follows from free grace. It is only free grace followed out on a definite plan, therefore it is really against free grace that men rebel. And yet has not God the right to dispense the gifts of his grace to whom and when He wills? The entire new life of the Christian is a gift of grace, not only regeneration but also sanctification and the perseverance of the saints.¹ Thus we see that evil, to Augustine, is metaphysically a negative, but morally an activity of the will of mankind for which it is accountable. This evil has entirely separated man from the love of God though it has not changed the attributes of his being, intellect, and will. So if evil is to be overcome, it cannot be man, but must be God that initiates a new principle of good within the core of man's being, where evil began and whence it penetrated to man's body and to nature. Moreover God must maintain that good, for man can of himself not even do that. But God will maintain the good which he implants in his elect so that in the world to come evil will be entirely done away and God will be glorified for the riches of his sovereign grace whereby

⁶ Burton, p. 194.

¹ Warfield, *Two Studies*, p. 137.

he has sought man in his blood and restored him from willfull sin to eternal life in fellowship with God.

Obviously then, Augustine does not presume to give a definite rational explanation of evil. He accepts it in all its full reality as a universal phenomenon affecting the core of human personality, accepts the remedy for it in Christ's redemptive death, and lets supernatural revelation explain as much of it as it sees fit. He lets God be his own theodicy in the real sense of the word, without in the least compromising his omnipotence, wisdom, or infinity.

Here in Augustine we have already the core of the biblical teaching on sin. This has been explicated more fully by Calvin and later theologians. Especially as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit became more clearly formulated than was possible in the time of Augustine was it possible to work out a more systematic epistemology and come to a clearer statement of the relation of sin to the human faculties. But in substance we have the gist of the biblical idea of evil and theodicy in Augustine's doctrine of free grace and we are prepared to judge by it the deviations of Scholasticism and mediaeval mysticism.

Since we are now on Biblical ground with the presupposition of creation and redemption, the question becomes from now on, even still more than before, one of epistemology. The various systems of Christian theology differ on the question of evil only as to the extent they allow evil to have influenced man. And since a thorough consideration of evil is necessary to form a theodicy we are led largely to discuss the cognitive influence of sin.

With this question definitely in mind we shall study mediaeval scholasticism and mysticism and connect them immediately with Calvin, because the striking similarities and differences make simultaneous treatment preferable.

Mediaeval Scholasticism and Mysticism

At the outset then we may state, to eliminate irrelevant matter, a few basic conceptions on which scholasticism, mysticism, and Calvin agree. All agree that the *principium essendi* of theology is the self-consciousness of God. That there is a knowledge of God at all we owe to Him, to his self-consciousness, to his good pleasure. This means the way by which we obtain that knowledge of God is revelation.² Man reveals himself through appearance, word, or deed. So also

² Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 1:212.

does God. Accordingly the *principium cognoscendi* of theology is the self-revelation, the self-communication of God to his creatures. On this, scholasticism, mysticism, and Calvin agree. Neither have they any quarrel as to the purpose of this revelation. All three want to know God and, knowing Him, glorify Him. Moreover they alike acknowledge the fact of sin, and the fact that God is willing to again receive man in grace.

When, however, we reach the question of how man attains to the knowledge of God when normal, or to what extent man's psychical functions have been affected by sin, in how far man at present is normal, and what is necessary for man to attain once more a true knowledge of self and God, as well as what the nature of that knowledge of God is; when we reach these questions there is a parting of the ways.

As to the nature of the human soul, Scholasticism, especially its leading representative Thomas Aquinas, teaches that the soul is the substantial form of the body. "Man is a substantial compound of which the soul is the substantial form and the body the primal matter."³ Moreover, the scholastics taught that in its highest operations the human mind is independent of matter. From the immateriality of the soul they conclude to its immortality, for immaterial substantial form is eternal, and finally, they held to the creationist view of the origin of the soul.

The vital functions of the soul they divided into three: first the lower or vegetative functions, then the cognitive, and lastly the appetitive. The latter two including the whole psychic life proper are divided into two orders—the sensible and the suprasensible; we have knowledge of and desire for sensible things and we have knowledge of and desire for suprasensible things."⁴

Knowing now what scholasticism thought of the nature of the soul, we must proceed to learn how man obtains knowledge through these functions. In doing this, the question of the "Universals," insofar as it has a psychological bearing, must briefly be discussed. Avoiding the extreme rationalism which seeks the source of knowledge in the subject and wishes to make the phenomenal world conform to the world of ideas, and avoiding empiricism which derives first thought content, then the faculty, and lastly the substance of the soul from the visible world, thus forcing the world of the intellect to conform itself to the world of sense, most Scholastics were realists. On the one hand the favorable principle

³ Maurice De Wulf, *The History of Mediaeval Philosophy* (London, 1926), p. 126.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

with Thomas Aquinas was that the known object is known according to the mode of the knowing subject. "*Cogitum est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis.*"⁵ This principle maintains the independence of the intellect over against Nominalism and empiricism. Thomas rejects the Platonic theory of inborn ideas but maintains that the intellect itself is born to them. On the other hand, he equally upholds the empirical proposition, "*nihil est in intellectu quod non prins fuerit in sensu,*" even speaking of man as a "*tabula rasa in qua nihil scriptum est.*"⁶ This latter he maintained because man in distinction from the angels is connected with the cosmos. Putting the two together, we come to a moderate realism which maintains the integrity of the intellect as well as its dependence upon the senses. The Universals are in *re*, externally in the object, and *post rem* in the human mind.

This position was a happy medium which Calvin later accepted and which accounts for much of his logical system. This enabled him later to lay a better foundation for the theory of the Lord's Supper than was possible on the nominalism of Luther, but it is especially of interest to us that it also enabled Calvin to have a more thorough conception of the Holy Spirit's operations and therefore also of sin.

But thus far we have treated only of the cognitive faculty. The appetitive faculty is regulated by the universal law: "*Nihil volitum nisi praecognitum.*"⁷ "The rational appetite or will is moved to action by the presentation of good in the abstract," just as sense, appetite or will is moved to action by the presentation of a concrete object known as an individual good. We see then that the intellect precedes and determines the will. This is in strict accord with the whole intellectualism of Scholasticism. The chief object of the scholastics was to obtain knowledge of God, and this knowledge is largely intellectual in character. God is conceived of more as Infinite Intelligence than as Infinite Love.

But we are still in Eden. Let us therefore hasten before the angel with the two-edged sword, for the Scholastics too, like Calvin, tremble before the face of a righteous God who cannot condone sin. The question therefore suggests itself, in what way has sin affected the *via cognitionis* of man thus far described? Or rather, let us take a concrete specimen of sinful humanity and see by what process he again obtains a true knowledge of self and God.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁶ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 1:215.

⁷ De Wulff, *Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 136.

Scholasticism held that natural reason can attain to some knowledge of God. This is in accord with their theory that contingent beings are reflexes of the universal, and that things are known according to the mode of the subject knowing them, *pro mensura humana*. The world as it is, then, still reflects some of the attributes of God, and the human intellect in virtue of its integrity can, upon the suggestion of the visible things, abstract notions of the Infinite. This is not all. Scholasticism holds that the higher revelation must be accepted on authority or in faith. But the human reason also has value for this higher revelation. It can prove that the contents of special revelation and nature are not contradictory, that revelation is *supra non contra rationem*. It can furnish motives of credibility for the unbeliever. And when once upon the ground of faith, reason can furnish constant apologetic so that faith can work itself out of doubt.

We see then that Scholasticism does hold that on account of sin man cannot truly know God by the ordinary psychological processes, but that for the higher knowledge of God we must have a special objective revelation of God. Nevertheless, the subjective condition of man and the revelation of God in nature have not been affected by sin to such an extent that man cannot by his natural reason attain to some true knowledge of God without the Scripture; that man's reason is also of much value in producing and confirming faith in the higher revelation.

The faith thus produced was, for the scholastics, in accord with Catholic doctrine, purely intellectual assent to the content of revelation. This faith has no saving effect as such, but can bring salvation only in conjunction with supernatural grace and good works.

Coming to mediaeval mysticism, we must first eliminate all forms of pantheistic mysticism such as that of the German mystic, Eckhart, or of that of many mystics of the earlier middle ages. Eckhart thinks of the godhead as a negative universal something which by force of its inner nature must reveal itself. The resulting revelation is the son of God and includes every human being. In the soul of man is found a ground of substance that is one with the divine.

Such a mysticism Hugo of St. Victor and Bonaventura would reject, and so would Calvin. These men were orthodox, individual mystics. Now this orthodox mysticism was practical and speculative. "Practical mysticism arises directly from the heart from religion. It flourishes more and more according as the religious sentiment is deeper and more universal. Speculative mysticism rests on a unitive tendency already revealed in practical mysticism, a tendency which urges man to an intimate, personal, hidden union with the Infinite. Its object is to describe the

relation of the direct communication between the soul and God, and to explain the universal order of things by the union thus effected.”⁸

We have spoken of a direct, personal communication with God. With the individual mystics this communion takes place “by an extraordinary exalted activity of man’s cognitive and appetitive faculties.” As such it is theological and supernatural because it conceives of the mystic union as due to the supernatural intervention of God. It is therefore distinguished from natural or philosophic mysticism in which the mystic communion is thought of as the highest manifestation of psychic life. We treat here then of individual, orthodox, supernatural, theological mysticism. From the practical, but chiefly from the speculative, side as a way of knowledge that was later discarded by Calvin, it can never lead to an adequate conception of evil. On its speculative side, then, this mysticism must give an account to itself of what it conceives true religion to be. On its speculative side it was a theory of faculties. As opposed to the moderate Realism of the scholastics, most of the mystics were nominalists. They had little faith in the intellect. Opposed to the theory that things must be known according to the mode of the one knowing, they held that things must be known according to the mode of the one revealing. All natural knowledge they reject as of a lower order, through which man cannot obtain true knowledge of God. In this they strongly opposed Scholasticism. They held that true knowledge only accrues to man by means of a direct communication with the divine, without the process of discursive thinking. Moreover, they conceive of this communication with God as necessarily an individual experience through supernatural grace. God must reveal himself to the heart of every individual.

The object of all their theology was to describe this mystical union with God. According to Bonaventura, “from God all light descends; but this light is multiform in its mode of communication. The exterior light or tradition illumines the mechanical arts; the inferior light which is that of the senses gives rise in us of experimental ideas; the interior light which we call reason makes us know intelligible truths; the superior light comes from grace and from the Holy Scriptures, and it reveals to us the truths which sanctify.”¹ The superior light is that which reveals immediate truth. This is generally called the mystical experience. Whether the soul has a higher faculty to receive this higher light or whether it comes through the highest activity of the intellect and will there seems to be considerable difference of opinion. *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 9 p. 84 says: “The mystic experience has undoubtedly a noetic value. But it

⁸ *Ibid.*

¹ Ozanam, *Dante and Philosophical Thought* (New York, 1898), p. 86.

consists of leaps of insight through heightened life, in an intensifying vision, through the fusion of all the deep lying powers of intellect and will, and in a corresponding surge of conviction through dynamic integration of personality, rather than in the gift of new concrete knowledge of facts.”² Now such a theory of knowledge denies part of human nature. Its extreme individualism cannot do justice to the concept of sin as a racial phenomenon, so also its individualism and subjectivism cuts it loose from the objective cure for sin, or at least it loosens the bands. It was by avoiding this extreme that Calvin could come to a better epistemology and therefore to a better theory of evil and theodicy.

Calvin and the Reformation

As compared with Scholasticism, it is remarkable how far Calvin adopted practically without change the scholastic view of the faculties of the soul as above discussed. Aquinas and Calvin alike avoid extreme rationalism with its corollary idealism, and extreme empiricism with its corollary materialism. Both maintain the independence of the intellect in its sphere, but nevertheless cling to the formula “*nihil est in intellectu quod non prius est at in sensu.*” This is no small parallelism. Realism is the only strait by which to escape from stranding on the cliff of Platonic idealism, on the one side, and modern positivism leading to materialism, on the other side. On this question, then, Calvin stands foursquare on the scholastic tablelands and opposes the nominalism of the mystics. He upholds the primacy of the intellect and combats the “mystic ways.”

As to the nature of the human soul, then, scholasticism and Calvinism have the only sound basis upon which to build any adequate conception of evil. But here the Scholastics wander off on a tangent and Calvin must for the rest seek his way alone. When it comes to the question of the noetic influence of sin, Calvin parts once for all from Scholasticism. He has been called pre-eminently the theologian of the Holy Spirit. And here seems to lie the key to the difference between Calvin and scholasticism. Thus far they have traveled together; now they part. Guided by his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Calvin journeys a new, less perilous way, a way less beset by the snares of human reason and false mysticism.

Calvin had an intensely deep realization of the wretchedness of sinful man. The heinousness and hideousness of sin he did not underrate. He clearly apprehended his utter helplessness. “Saved by grace” reverberated as a constant echo through the compartments of his soul, when once he found his Saviour.

² Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 1:125.

Now his logical mind could not help trace this sense of restoration back to its inception, the predestination of a sovereign God. So here we have the givens. Calvin, possessed of a legal training, as to psychology a realist, bowing in the dust before an incensed God, finding restoration in the blood of the cross, now studying in the scriptures, finds no cause for changing his psychological views. He knows that his adoption of the Saviour is due to a supernatural working upon his consciousness. With the scriptures in his hands he concludes that this must be the working of the Holy Spirit.

Briefly sketched, this doctrine according to Dr. Warfield, who paraphrases and explains Calvin's first book of the *Institutes* in his "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,"³ is as follows. On account of sin, man finds himself in a miserable ruin. To be rescued from this he must truly know self and God. Man as unfallen, by the very implication of his nature would have known God, the sphere of his excellence. But for man as fallen, Calvin seems to say that the strongest force compelling him to look upwards to God above him streams from his sense of sin filling him with a fearful looking forward to judgment. Calvin holds that all men have an ineradicable *sensus deitatis* and this not only as a bare perception of God but as something producing reaction to this knowledge in thinking, feeling, and willing. This native endowment may consequently also be called the *semen religionis*. For what we call religion is just the reaction of the human soul of what we perceive God to be. Knowledge of God and religion then, are universal. This knowledge is not, however, a competent knowledge of God. In the state of purity this knowledge would show only love and trust. But in sinful man this knowledge produces a reaction of fear and hatred until the grace of God intervenes with a message of mercy.

In addition to this innate knowledge comes the revelation of God in nature and providence. This revelation is clear, universal, and convincing in itself. But sin has altered the condition of man's soul, so that he is unable truly to know God in nature and accordingly incapable of giving the proper reactions in his soul. However convincing, then, the ontological, teleological, and other proofs of the existence of God may be in themselves, to which Scholasticism hung with such tenacity, they cannot serve to effect the true knowledge of God in sinful man because his mind is not normal. "Were man in his normal state he could not under this double revelation internal and external fail to know God as God would wish to be known."⁴ But sinful man is incapable of reading God's revelation in

³ B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), p. 139.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

nature aright and his instinctive knowledge of God, embedded in his very constitution, is dulled and almost obliterated. The natural knowledge of God is therefore bankrupt.

What is needed now is a special supernatural revelation objectively, on the one hand, and a special supernatural illumination subjectively, on the other hand. This needed revelation is found in the scriptures. It is a special revelation documented for the universal use of man. It serves as spectacles to enable those of dulled spiritual sight to see God. Of course the scriptures do more than this. They not only reveal the God of nature more brightly to sin-darkened eyes; they reveal also the God of grace. Scripture then provides the objective side of the cure Calvin finds to be provided by God. But man needs not only light; he also needs the power of sight. This spiritual sight is the result of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*.

What does Calvin understand by this *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*? It is that operation of the Holy Spirit on man's consciousness which restores to him his true sense of God. The abnormality of man's consciousness produced by sin is removed and man is made normal in principle so that he can again recognize the divine revelation, thus gain the true knowledge of God, and produce appropriate reactions of soul in the form of religion.

The change in man effected by the Holy Spirit we generally speak of as faith. But what is this faith but an experience of an act of God? Behind faith must lie the truth, the will, the act of God. In other words faith is the fruit of election. "Faith," according to Calvin, "renews the whole man in his being and consciousness, in soul and body, in all his relations and activities."⁵

We see then that faith restores man's consciousness in principle to normal, rendering man perceptive and receptive of divine revelation in scripture. Scripture is there manifesting its divinity objectively by its style of speech, its contents, etc., just as plainly as snow reveals itself as white, and now through faith man's spiritual sight is restored so that he can again see the divinity revealed in Scripture, as easily as his natural eye perceives the whiteness of snow.

Calvin conceives of the action of the Spirit, then, as coalescing with consciousness. Faith is not a new faculty of the soul but it must be brought about before man's faculties can again function normally. It is not an immediate revelation of supernatural truth, as the mystics conceived of it. "To attribute to

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

the Holy Spirit renewed or continued revelations would be derogatory to the Word which is His inspired product.”⁶ Neither does Calvin conceive of it as in the nature of a blind conviction, as has been often alleged by the followers of the so-called “free attitude toward Scriptures.” These people claim that upon Calvin’s theory of faith one can reject as unauthoritative any part of scripture which does not immediately commend itself to the religious judgment as divine. This cannot justly be inferred. In the French and *Belgic Confessions*, so largely influenced, it would seem, as though the nature of faith is spoken of as a blind conviction, it says that we accept the canon of scripture not so much because the Church says so but because of its immediate commendation of divinity. Dr. Warfield explains this as being due to the fact that the term “canon” is used not only quantitatively but also qualitatively as meaning divine. As such, he claims it is used in the confessions.

Calvin, then, conceives of faith not as a blind conviction but as a grounded conviction formed in men’s spirits by the Holy Spirit, “by an act which rather terminates immediately on the faculties, enabling and efficiently persuading them to reach a conviction on grounds presented to them rather than producing the conviction itself apart from the grounds.”⁷ These grounds presented to them are the *indicia* of divinity spoken of before. Now as to the action of these *indicia* in conjunction with the Spirit, Calvin does not appear to speak expressly. “He sometimes even appears to speak of them rather as if they lay side by side with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, than acted along with it as co-factors in the production of the supreme effect.”⁸ “Nevertheless, there are not lacking convincing hints that there was lying in his mind all the time the implicit understanding that it is through these *indicia* of the divinity of scripture that the soul, under the operation of the testimony of the Spirit, reaches its sound faith in the Scriptures.”⁹ He has withheld from more explicitly stating this only by the warmth of his zeal for the necessity of the testimony of the Spirit which has led him to a constant contrasting of this divine with these human testimonies.

I have dwelt on this question of the *indicia* rather at length because upon the question of their value and time of employment Scholasticism and Calvin give radically different answers. It was largely because Calvin thus led to a better epistemology and noetics that he was able to give direction to the course of later Reformed thought and thus lead to a much clearer understanding of the problem

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

now before us. With Scholasticism, the *indicia* have value for the natural reason, so that they can prove to unregenerated man the divinity of Scripture. The *indicia* and supernatural grace each do their bit in producing faith. Not so with Calvin. The Spirit must operate first before the *indicia* have any value, or at most they have value in conjunction with the working of the Spirit.

But once the supernatural revelation in Scripture is again accepted by man as divine, his reason is restored to its normal place, at least in principle. Reason, man's intellect, now assumes its original functions besides those made necessary through sin. But with Calvin it is the reason of a regenerated consciousness, with Scholasticism the reason of natural man.

Calvin thinks it the duty of this regenerated consciousness to assimilate the revelation of God and give it expression according to the nobility of human reason. He rejects speculative Mysticism as a theory of knowledge, of direct individual revelation. He adopted the normal psychology of Scholasticism but differed with it as to the time when reason has any function to perform and what function it has to perform. With Scholasticism, natural reason can furnish proofs of God's existence, can produce motives of credibility, can furnish constant apologetic, while grace is needed only to know the Essence of God. With Calvin, natural reason can of itself do nothing, but the reason of the regenerated consciousness has a glorious mission, the mission to digest, assimilate, and reproduce the revelation of God.

Calvin's theology, then, is Augustinianism made more explicit especially through his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Calvin and Augustine hold to the same root principle. Man is sinful to the core. Mankind is absolutely incapable of knowing the truth. Intellect and will are alike deflected and turned away from God, hence, when restored by the Spirit, its deep, submissive, receptive attitude towards the Scriptures. Both maintain equally strong that God in his infinite mercy has predestined some to eternal life and left others to their sin. Both defend that this is beyond our comprehension; we can only marvel that God has seen fit to redeem any at all out of the mire of sin.

Here we have then a thorough theory of evil, as deep as it can be conceived of. Here also, God is made His own theodicy; it is His inscrutable will in which man is to rest. God's own implicit love and righteousness is His theodicy, and if this were not enough His free grace will add thereto. But back of all the deepest theodicy lies the mystery of His will and being before which we humbly bow and keep silent.

Calvin worked this out more fully than Augustine because of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of Common grace, so that justice could be done to the human faculties as well as to the corrosive influence of sin. Scholasticism deserves the credit that it changed the fight to epistemological fields, but just because it conceived of evil as not having penetrated thoroughly to the human cognitive faculties, it could not have a firm theodicy. Over against this, Calvin's *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* is placed. Mysticism, afraid of intellectualisation, sought to find a new individualistic *via cognitionis* apart from the ordinary faculties of man. Against this, Calvin's doctrine of Common Grace maintained that the essence of man is not affected by sin, that man's faculties of intellect and will can be restored to normal, that in fact only through these faculties can man ever truly know God. We cannot but marvel at the genius of Calvin that enabled him to steer clear of the extremes of Scholasticism and mysticism, and to give the evangelical principle such clear expression that for generations after him men have been guided on the right path when using his compass.

Calvin was the theologian par excellence of the Reformation. In him alone the ideas inherent in evangelicalism received logical expression. But the ideas of Scholasticism and Mysticism maintained themselves in the Catholic system and in much of Protestantism. Even within the bosom of the Calvinistic churches there was a departure from the road marked out by Calvin.

As for Roman Catholicism, its position is that of Aquinas as before reviewed. His doctrine was virtually accepted as the church doctrine at the Council of Trent. The original righteousness of man was a *donum superadditum* to man's nature, so that with the fall, man did not lose God's image but only this *donum superadditum*.¹ Originally God created man soul and body. These were naturally in conflict except when original righteousness was added by God to preserve their harmony. With the entrance of sin, then, man is restored to this original position of disharmony between soul and body. The question of evil is in this manner directly referred to God for creating this good and evil. It is only a refined Manichaeism, of an original evil substance, and fits in remarkably well with the refined form of Semi-Pelagianism of Thomas Aquinas. "The conflict between the flesh and the spirit is normal and original and therefore not sinful."² And man by his natural reason can attain to some knowledge of absolute truth. In immediate connection with this is the sacerdotalism of Rome, which externalizes evil and makes its destruction possible by the mechanical action of the sacrament upon the mere intellectual assent of the recipient. Sin thus becomes not something in

¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 2:103.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

the core of man's heart that needs to be immediately uprooted by the Holy Spirit and a new life implanted. This is especially clear from the Romish doctrine of second causes. God is presented as desiring the salvation of all, but putting the work of its accomplishment entirely into the hands of the Church which must administer salvation through the sacraments. "As this system of second causes has not been instituted with a view to the conveying of the sacraments to particular men or to the withholding of them from particular men, but belongs to his general provision for the government of the world, the actual distribution of the grace of God through the Church and the sacraments lies outside the government of his gracious will."³ Salvation therefore depends upon the working of these second causes; if one is lost, it is not God's fault. This is the best theodicy that Rome can furnish. It is at the expense on the one hand of the biblical conception of God's omnipotence and direct work in the redemption of man and, on the other hand, at the expense of the biblical conception of natural man as well as that of the penetrating influence of sin. If we maintain that God allowed these second causes thus to function, it does not release Him of responsibility and if these second causes are independent of Him then He is no longer God.

Lutheranism

While Catholicism thus maintained itself with its quasi-supernaturalism, we might expect that in Lutheranism we would find a thorough cleansing not only of sacerdotalism but also of naturalism. It is difficult to ascertain what is the core of Lutheranism. One thing is certain, that Luther prided himself on being an Occammist. This accounts for much of his system insofar as he had a system. On account of it he could never form a unified life and world view. He could not see the cosmical implications of evil and redemption. Historical studies of recent years have traced the various doctrines of Lutheranism back and tried to find in it one root principle. It has been found that Luther was of a different spirit than Calvin. The essential difference between Lutheranism and Calvinism, says Dr. Bavinck, is that Luther is anthropological in his doctrines and Calvin theological. The Calvinist is not satisfied till he has risen above the phenomena of history to the idea of God and His plan. Calvinism wants to know the of things. Lutheranism felt no need of this; it is satisfied when it enjoys salvation through justification; it needs no more than the of things. Hence with Calvinism predestination is the *cor ecclesiae* and with Lutheranism justification is the *articulus stantis et cadentis*

³ Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1918), p. 68.

ecclesiae.⁴ Because Luther went back to Augustine's doctrine of free grace and election to oppose the Catholic church, he at first defended predestination as strongly as did Zwingli or Calvin. Nor did he ever recall it. So did Melanchthon in the first edition of *Loci Communes* in 1521, but later turned to a deflection from predestination to an open synergism⁵, and Luther watched this change without criticism.

The first position, then, of Lutheranism as it is reflected in the *Formula Concordiae* is that man is absolutely incompetent to do any spiritual good, and that faith is the free gift of God. This should logically have led to absolute predestinationism which alone can do justice to the biblical idea of sin as formulated in this very *Formula Concordiae*. But since with Luther the confession of sin was, to be sure, the fruit of the observation of the deep corruption of sin, but rested after all on anthropological grounds without being led back to God, it could not lead to a speculative and consistent particularism of absolute predestination.

Consequently, as Luther emphasized the doctrine of the means of grace he also put to the fore a doctrine of *voluntas signi*, of a universal will of salvation of God to man. This already lowers the idea of sin, because this is really a rebellion against the idea that God is merciful and just and yet selects only some to be saved. "The fundamental presupposition of such an assumption [that God's mercy must be poured on all alike] is no other than that God owes all men salvation, that is to say, that sin is not really sin and is to be envisaged rather as misfortune than as ill-desert."⁶

We saw that synergism was already introduced by Melanchthon. Hesshusius already accused Calvin and Beza that their doctrine led to a *fatum* and made God the author of sin. To avoid this, the distinction was made between a *voluntate antecedente* of God, by which he desired the salvation of all men, and the *voluntate consequente*, by which he wished the salvation only of those whose faith he saw beforehand. This, as has been said, lowers the conception of sin and already makes God somewhat dependent on man. Such a principle was bound to develop rapidly. When at the *Synod of Dort* (1618–19) five articles were formulated against the Remonstrants, many Lutherans identified themselves with the cause of these men, and in 1724 Mosheim declared that the five articles

⁴ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 1:173.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:365.

⁶ Warfield, *Plan*, p. 91.

contained the pure Lutheran doctrine.⁷ Later, Haller taught that man cannot cooperate with God in producing salvation but he can fatally resist and that “an absolutely new power is created in him by God, the action of which whether for blessing or for cursing is dependent on the subject’s subsequent or even already operative decision.”⁸ On the Lutheran standpoint, sin is therefore, after all, not such a heinous thing for God would be unjust if he did not offer salvation to all. We can rather expect pity from God than judgment. Neither has sin penetrated the human faculties so far but that they are still able to resist the actions of the Spirit. God is justified because he somewhat condones sin and offers a welcome return to all that care to come back. Lutheranism in its doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ holds a better doctrine, but this is vitiated by an admixture of synergism and universalism as well as sacerdotalism, which makes salvation depend upon the means of grace. This at once cuts sin short of its extreme antagonism, of its being a transgression of the divine law requiring punishment. Sin in its real character and deadening power is toned down. Hence its theodicy is again deficient; there is not so much to be forgiven, therefore there cannot be as much love to the praise and glory of God which is the justification of evil.

Lutheranism does not have a systematic metaphysics or epistemology and hence is open to every wind of doctrine. Accordingly, it was easily drifted into a sort of semi-universalism. But a system that is still weaker in this respect appeared in the form of Arminianism.

Arminianism

Already at the time of the Reformation the doctrine of predestination, with its concomitant that man is absolutely sinful and that therefore salvation in its entire process is the gift of God’s grace, was opposed by men like Erasmus, Bibliander, Pighius, Bolsec, etc. The Socinians taught that predestination was only a plan of God to give those salvation who should see fit to do His commandments and exchanged the omniscience of God for the freedom of the will. But it was especially Arminius who formulated the doctrine that God would save those whom He saw would, by virtue of *gratia praeveniens*, believe and, by virtue of *gratia subsequens*, maintain their faith. Here he still maintains the necessity of grace and faith but man has the power to resist. Salvation becomes dependent on man. Man is not to such an extent the slave of sin, but that he can determine

⁷ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2:365.

⁸ Warfield, *Plan*, p. 98.

his lot as to his future life. God wills the salvation of all; if man is not saved, that is due to his own resistance.

In this position even the Saumur school fell to some extent. Amyraldus taught a double decree. The first one was general and consisted in the plan that God wishes all men to be saved. But knowing through his *praescience* that none could believe of himself, God added to this first general decree a second particular and absolute decree which determined to grant some and maintain in them the grace of faith.¹ This is an inconsistent position because it contends at one and the same time that Christ died for all, and that God nevertheless determined that Christ's death should avail only for those whom God should select. Moreover, this introduces temporal categories into the eternal decrees and makes God dependent upon the actions of men. On such a basis they would have to form a conditional substitution theory of atonement by which God made salvation possible for all men, i.e., He has removed all obstacles. Pajonism even went so far as to deny *gratia efficax* and spoke only of a suasive influence of the Spirit on the heart of man.²

Everywhere Arminianism crept into Reformed theology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Neo-nomianism, deism, Quakerism, Methodism, all showed some relation to Arminianism. Only a few theologians such as Comrie, Holtius and Brahe in the Netherlands, Boston and Erskine in Scotland, and especially Jonathan Edwards in America maintained the Calvinistic doctrine.

Now all these doctrines cannot do justice to the conception of God as omniscient, omnipotent, all wise, infinite, and eternal, because he is made dependent on temporal conditions. Such a God needs no great justification; it is man that determines the issue. Nor is sin a very real thing because it has not taken away from man all his independence. Hence no thorough cure in the biblical sense of restitution is necessary, but only a removal of obstacles. Hence with a weakened conception of God and a strengthened and less sinful man, our theodicy becomes flabby.

Schleiermacher and Müller

A deeper study of nature and the history of man proved the untenability of such individualistic Semi-Pelagian views of sin. In the nineteenth century we

¹ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2:375; Warfield, *Plan*, p. 120.

² *Ibid.*

consequently meet more often, even on would-be positive Christian grounds, with a Pantheistic or materialistic determinism. Now any form of determinism does away immediately with the biblical conception of God and his intelligent world plan and cuts at the root every idea of moral evil except in a derived sense, and accordingly makes theodicy entirely impossible. This is the sum and substance of Schleiermacher's views. "Spirit entering into earthly existence must become a quantum and as such appears insufficient in an oscillating life of the individual in relation to the subordinated functions."³ The curtailment of the spirit by sense is sin, it is "resistance against the determining power of the God consciousness." Sometimes Schleiermacher seems to identify sin with matter. At other times it seems that "every independent merely self-conscious determination," which lacks the complete sense of dependence, is sin. In a review of his theory of sin we must not forget his conception of God as Absolute Causality. He allows no attributes of God on the analogy of the human consciousness. Neither has the human will any freedom. "The feeling of freedom is by Schleiermacher nothing more than a determinateness of sensational self-consciousness but not at all that which mediates with respect to the union between sensational self-consciousness and the consciousness of absolute dependence."⁴ Justice is with him a causality of God which connects suffering with sin.⁵ With Schleiermacher, nothing proceeds from the human will which is not entirely an effect of God. Yet he does not wish to make God the author of sin or find the character of sin only in negation. Second causes have their cause in God: yet God cannot be the author of sin. Wherein then lies the nature of sin? In sin two elements related to each other, the expression of the impulse of sensational nature and the God-consciousness, lie together. We deduce both without hesitation from the eternal causality of God, but both together are not yet sin. Sin only arises when the determining power of the God-consciousness is insufficient to dominate the strength of the natural impulses. "But this non-powerfulness of the God-consciousness we can only regard as a consequence of the gradual character of our spiritual development, and therefore, as grounded in the conditions of graduated existence on which the human race stands, and the original perfection of man is not thereby done away with."⁶ So on his standpoint sin is, after all, a negation.

But Schleiermacher says that our sense of sin is necessary so that we may feel the need of redemption. This redemption is the communication to us of the

³ Julius Müller, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885), 1:371.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

⁵ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 1:41.

⁶ Müller, *Christian Doctrine of Sin* 1:382.

perfect God-consciousness of Christ. But this brings sin altogether on the ground of the subjective, at least the consciousness of guilt. We feel as though the lack of a strong God-consciousness is our fault, our guilt. So we are really guilty only before the judgment bar of our own consciousness and not before God, because from God's point of view sin is an absolute necessity. But why should we be subjected to such misery if sin is, after all, subjective? To keep alive in us the feeling of the need of redemption. Yes, but there is no real redemption necessary on such a basis. Dr. Julius Müller has well refuted this viewpoint. For such a conception of sin as that of Schleiermacher is open to the greatest contradiction psychologically. The moment one becomes fully conscious of the absolute causality of God in such a sense that his own contributions account for nothing whatsoever, he has seen through the fake, and it no longer exists for him.

But equally elucidating as to his own theory is Müller's treatment of Schleiermacher's position. Together with Schleiermacher's conception, he thinks to have refuted Augustinianism and Calvinism. To him, the combination of the concept of God as the absolute cause with the notion of man's responsibility for sin is mere jugglery. To believe in an absolute God and hold man nevertheless responsible in a real sense so that his guilt is not a fake, that the blood of Calvary was not in vain, is to him a contradiction. Nevertheless Müller has a very deep conception of sin. None of the individualistic Pelagianizing theories will suit him, and since Augustinianism is to him the same as fatalism, he is driven to the unique position of seeking the origin of sin in a pre-temporal fall of every individual, so that man may still be held responsible, and teaches a final restoration of all so that God may be justified. Only those who will not bow themselves in order to become truly exalted in the future aeons will at last be made powerless.

Müller tries very hard to gain for man so much independence that he can originate a new course of action and thus be held responsible for his deeds. To him Calvinism can not do that; it makes man in his creation too entirely dependent upon God to attribute to him any freedom of the will in the real sense of that term. For the dependence of the world a transcendental ground is necessary; a temporal creation apart from preservation. "The existence of evil as a positive contrast to the good, can just as little be denied away from life as explained by a necessity grounded on the divine plan of the world; which in truth is only another way of denying evil."⁷ "If we are to succeed in breaking through this circle, it can, manifestly only be done by our pointing out in the very nature of the creature, in which evil exists, a primitive principle of such independence,

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:1.

that the causality of the same is able to make a new beginning, and therewith to set a boundary beyond which the origin of sin is absolutely not to be sought for.”

This is the impossible task that Müller sets before him. He wants to create a series of little gods, each with a little kingdom of his own. Thus he hopes to find the true basis for a full-fledged theory of sin. Other systems have found rest in dualism, or have found sin to be only a consequence, or condition of certain moments in the plan of God. Müller is going to do justice to its awful reality on a rational basis and at the same time take in all scriptural facts.

Accordingly, he sets out to develop a theory of human freedom in which the action described by the predicate can be attributed to the finite subject alone and to nothing else. To explain evil as originating in man and not in God, to explain our sense of guilt, we must posit a certain independence for man even in relation to God. Müller says it is easy enough to object to this and say that the very notion of man as a creature involves absolute dependence, but this argument can be proven invalid. An unconditioned principle in man is fully reconcilable with the unlimited determination and knowledge of God. To understand this fully we must needs introduce the idea of personality into God. The personal essence distinguishes or discretizes itself in itself and indeed not merely formally, since the self-consciousness, the subject, sets itself at the same time as object, but also in a real manner.⁸ Now self-consciousness is the self-retirement of the Ego from another, but self-retirement is the self-extension of the Ego to another, in order to possess in this other itself.⁹ But this applies only to human personality. The contents of the self-consciousness of God is an “internal infiniteness of determinations.” “Consequently, this conditionateness of the self-consciousness by the exclusion of another is not contained in the idea of personality itself but in particular limitations and relations which attach to the personality of man to his self-consciousness, according to the peculiar nature of its contents.”¹⁰ God did not require another being to become manifest to himself. Thus absolute personality is possible, and God’s actions will all be personal. He will not be merely the Absolute Cause of finite existence. Here no mathematical necessity of Spinoza “nor dualistic necessity of more modern philosophy; here only the freedom of love, of the will in which the production of another being makes this new self its own end, that it may partake of the goods of existence insofar as it is receptive for the same in the highest and perfect

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:126.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

good, in the fellowship with God.”¹¹ Now that which can determine God absolutely sufficient to himself, to create a being distinct from Himself, is love alone. Therefore creation is the free self-communication of God. Neither can we call this a moral necessity, because God’s love is conditioned by his own nature. God finds in the trinity itself sufficient distinctions of personality to return His love upon his own essence. Perfect love to another essence is possible only for him who is absolutely “self-dependent and self-sufficient.”

By this line of argument, Müller thinks he has opened the way for essential existence without and besides God, insofar as this is compatible with the notion of derived being. The way is especially open for the existence of beings like God, to finite personalities who can know and love God. This very knowledge and love of God presupposes a certain amount of independence in relation to God. An essence that does not know and love itself cannot love God. They must therefore not only have being from God “but also a being in and for themselves.” God in his inscrutable love could give and has given man such self-dependent personal existence. “In this will of God that there may also be in the sphere of creaturely existence personality as copy of the Divine personality as eye and heart of the world, the will is at the same time contained that there may also be besides God essential essences which as undetermined are able to determine themselves and insofar of themselves to ground themselves as *causa sui*.”¹²

A sigh of relief. At last we stand on Müller’s new platform. Now if it will only hold, we can move the world and sin, for we have the leverage. We shiver, we tremble, we hear some creaking of the joints. Our leader himself is not perfectly sure of himself. He betrays no visible signs of perturbation because that might demoralize our courage. But he has his misgivings. We overhear him in his private ruminations. “To make the freedom of man the unconditioned principle of all determinations of the human essence, therefore, to consider the totality of its determinations as self-determination, is most certainly contradictory to the notion of its derivation of being.”¹³

The conditionality of man even upon his surroundings was too obvious even for Müller entirely to overlook it. Accordingly, he has recourse to compromise. “Not the totality of the human essence but only a determinate sphere of the same can human freedom have for its immediate, creative principle—it can only have that sphere, in which the capacity for the love and Divine peace is

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

contained, by the power of which the existing limitations are at the same time as limitations cancelled.”¹⁴ This sphere is the moral. “That which man as moral essence is in his natural condition apart from that which he may and will become by means of Redemption, has its origin in the unconditioned State, i.e. in his self-grounding.” Yet in the moral sphere there is a presupposition “to which it must in some way stand related although it is not thereby determined and bound in its self-decision. Wherever we may have to seek the first decision of human freedom, one thing is certain, that it is preceded by God and His will and that the human will by freedom may abide in fellowship with Him. This freedom of this primitive decision concentrates itself in, or reduces itself to, the choice between fellowship with and departure from God, in the choice whether man shall determine to abide by or sever himself from his origin in order to be absolutely himself.”¹⁵

Thus we see Müller break down nearly all he built up. A human freedom altogether self-dependent in its decision and yet having God as its presupposition is a very weak foundation upon which to build a theory of sin. Müller seems to feel the tension of his logic. It must break unless he release somewhat and give in a little to that despised Calvinism which would at the same time maintain man’s absolute dependence and his responsibility for the actions of his choice.

The weakness of his argument is further apparent in the fact that he has to admit that even in the notion of absolute freedom as such the result would not necessarily be evil, for that would contradict our notion of the freedom of God, who cannot sin. A further objection is that Müller must furthermore admit that if man cannot absolutely originate the good, then why should he be able to originate the evil. God wills “in an eternal and immutable manner the absolutely perfect in Himself and nothing else, but man cannot lay the foundation of the good in himself in an absolutely original and self-dependent manner, and therefore does not possess it as his own essence. But he can only be good by his relation to an essence different and separate from him, conditioning him in his inmost existence—namely to God. But because man has the good not as his own essence in him by virtue of his self-determination, the possibility and the immanent imperative of the good are found together with the possibility of evil, of departure and falling away from God.”¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Now this explanation does not offer a solution. As it stands, it is just Calvinism or Augustinianism on the one hand and Pelagianism on the other that the author is trying to escape. And as an attempt in that direction it was bound to fail, because he could only run into the wall of mystery. He wishes a logical explanation of the origin of evil or rather of the possibility of evil. Instead of admitting with Augustine that man is absolutely dependent and that he nevertheless had responsible freedom of choice when placed on earth, admitting that here is mystery; or instead of flying in the face of facts, as Pelagianism does, and accepting the absolute freedom of the will for man, Müller wants on the one hand an absolutely new beginning for the will of man. Otherwise he cannot be held responsible; but on the other hand must admit that man is derived and that even his will is based on presuppositions. Such a position is certainly no more logical than Calvinism and if it is not more logical, it has no reason to exist because its only claim was to give a logical explanation of evil.

Now as to the nature of sin, Müller formulates the biblical presentation that it is positive alienation from God in the moral sphere though metaphysically negative. It is a free choice of the self-determining human will to live totally apart from God.

And finally, to justify God, to form a theodicy, he once more returns to his pre-temporal free choice of man. "If there is to be truth in the declaration of religion that God is not the author of sin but its enemy, then the freedom of man must have its beginning in the sphere beyond the domain of time, in which alone pure unconditioned self-determination is possible." This is certainly a leap in the dark and that backwards for which neither experience nor scripture give us any basis. And even if the transition were valid, how could we be sure that pure self-determination is possible there? To Müller, God is so far as he wills personality outside of Himself; He also wills the self-grounding of personal essences. The self-grounding, as we have seen, is only possible out of time. Yet this is something else than eternity, otherwise were man another God. But here Müller, dissatisfied with the unsolved mysteries of Calvinism, has certainly entangled us into confusion worse confounded. What intelligible meaning may be ascribed to an extra-temporal and yet not eternal self-grounding of essences is difficult to see. Here accordingly Müller himself can resort only to figurative language and calls it "this silent, timeless, shadowy kingdom is as it were the maternal womb in which the embryos of all personal essences lie enclosed."¹ We might place the emphasis on the word "shadowy" in the preceding sentence. The very figure he uses intimates that here he himself must bow to mystery. Then why not bow to

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

the mystery of experience or of revelation instead of rejecting these and forming a more obscure one for ourselves?

If we should object, however, to Müller's theory of human freedom that it is out of harmony with the notion of the omnipotence of God and that therefore his theodicy based on it cannot hold, he replies by saying that it was the voluntary love of God that forced Himself to a limitation of the exercise of his divine power. This self-limitation is due to this love. But again this cannot help to build a thorough theodicy because it has to reduce again or have God reduce the concept of His being.

Then if he would still add to his theodicy by positing numberless aeons after death where mankind as a whole will be restored, except the self-hood that there also will not bow itself in order to become truly exalted and will not die to live, we can only reply that this is a leap in the dark ahead. It would aid nothing to theodicy even if it had a scriptural basis because it could not really be God that is then overcoming the evil but man himself, because man is self-determinative.

But what finally cuts off once for all any possibility of a scriptural theodicy lies in the fact, that according to Müller, God has created man as an end in himself. Now the explicit statements of scripture are many that God has created all things for Himself, and that also he will cause evil to contribute to his glory. In fact, no theodicy at all is possible on Müller's basis because God and man have been severed so entirely in the moral sphere that we can scarcely at all speak of evil having any relation to God. We need not justify Him who only created self-grounding beings; nor can there be any real biblical sense of evil at all because evil is transgression of the law of God, while a self-determinative being can scarcely be subject to the law of God in any real sense. So we will have to abandon Müller's solution and see whether we can find any that comes nearer to the biblical statement.

Neo-Calvinism

For this we shall have to return to much despised Calvinism. We have seen that it offered to lead us on the right track. We have seen that other systems failed to give satisfactory answers because they did not follow its path. We have seen, finally, that Calvinism itself for a large part lost its original purity. But in the last century Calvinism has a new revival. Valiant and mighty men have risen up to its defense and further development. Who does not call to mind the inimitable trio—Warfield, Bavinck, and Kuyper—all dying within a year? And there have

been many others to revivify the old doctrine and reveal its inherent power and strength to adapt itself to the advance of the times.²

This neo-Calvinism has been attacked as being only a covered naturalism under the cloak of an old name. Thus Hylkema in his "*Oud en Nieuw Calvinisme.*" But that was due only to lack of sympathetic study, as has been proven since by refutations of Dr. Bavinck.

It is remarkable indeed that Calvinism has thus found new exponents and more remarkable that these exponents have immediately gone to the root principles of Calvinism, tested these, found them alive and ever verdant. The first attempt to give Calvinism reconstruction and advancement was again directed towards its metaphysics and epistemology. Witness the monumental work of Dr. A. Kuyper, *Encyclopadie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, in which the author devotes an entire volume to the idea of science in general, the relation of theology to other sciences, and discusses the basic problems of psychology and metaphysics. Witness also the psychological studies of Dr. Bavinck, and Dr. Warfield's studies in Calvin and Augustine. Witness further the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

To be sure, no systematic work on epistemology exists as yet from the reformed viewpoint which might correspond to Dr. Karl Francke's "*Metanoetik*" but enough has been indicated to note the importance attached to it by leading theologians. And since this is brought into immediate connection with total depravity and the view of absolute predestination, it is important for us to note that these men have invariably considered a biblical metaphysics and epistemology absolutely fundamental to any adequate conception of evil and therefore also of theodicy. As noticed in the review of the various systems, every deviation from the biblical view of sin was due again and again to allowing too much independence of intellect and inherent moral goodness in man, and this was in turn due to a failure to lead back to the givens of the Scriptures, to the basic concepts of God and of man as a creature fallen into sin.

Hence we find the strength of neo-Calvinism in its thorough, systematic treatment of the problems of the personality of God, the nature of man, the *via cognitionis* and the influence of sin on it. It introduces nothing new into the concept of God. His attributes are those mentioned in the *Westminster Catechism*. Nor is there any change in the view of the nature of man. Man is an

² Warfield, *Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1909).

organic creation of God, organic in the sense that he is a spirit, of a kind with God and can consequently hold fellowship with Him in distinction from the brute. Man is a creature. This marks him off as dependent and derived. So also the *via cognitionis* remains a moderate Realism, as it was with Calvin. But neo-Calvinism again reemphasizes and develops the idea of the deep-going noetic influence of sin. Therefore it works out anew its epistemology. It would know how far man can judge of this life and of the life to come.

The result of this investigation is, in the case of Dr. A. Kuyper on the one hand, the doctrine of Common Grace and on the other hand the doctrine of the absolute antithesis. The idea of Common Grace is found in Calvin, as Bavinck has pointed out in a lecture on "Calvin and Common Grace." The idea in brief is this. According to the scriptures, the immediate and logical result of sin is death. But God has graciously put on the brakes to the cart that was running headlong from the mountaintop to the abyss. Man lost God's image in the stricter sense of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, but God's image in the wider sense of intellect and will he has not lost. Man remains and develops as a race on earth, and can do natural good. There are still *scintillae* or *rudera* of the image of God in man. This accounts for all the natural good that we see about us—love of family, friendship, etc. This makes society and State possible. All these activities are therefore attributed to the grace of God and are not credited to man. Deep down in his heart every man is only evil. But this Common Grace is efficacious for this life only. If man is to be released from sin and obtain eternal life, he must receive of God His special grace. These two graces are of a different kind, not merely of a different degree. Nor is *Common Grace* only preparatory for special grace because the former comes to all men alike.

Sin has affected man's inmost being. To use a favorite phrase of Dr. Kuyper, instead of turning the wheel of his existence towards God, he has turned it away from God. At an evil hour man would not be man, but would feign be as God himself. From this turning of the soul of man as the centre of man's being sin permeated his body and the effects of it are seen in nature, so that now the whole world lies under sin, and even the inanimate creation groaneth and travaileth together.

Man's entire being was thus touched by sin, his intellect and his will deflected. But as Calvin says in the *Institutes*: "Our wisdom insofar as it ought to be deemed true wisdom consists almost entirely of two parts—the knowledge of God and of ourselves." Now since man's intellect is darkened and sin has entered into the very heart of man, it follows that God himself must uproot sin in man's heart

before he can know God. The result is that we get a sharp antithesis between him whose being God has renewed and him who is left to sin. This is most certainly not a distinction of greater merit of one over the other, for it is nothing in man that causes God to make the distinction; the antithesis is due to the mystery of His will.

The splits mankind in two and consequently also the consciousness of mankind. Not at all as though the powers and the faculties of the soul were changed, as though the one could now think more logically than the other, as though creation were changed by re-creation. "*Het terrein der palingenesie is geen nieuw geschapen erf maar vrucht van herschepping, zoodat het natuurlijk leven er in gesubsumeerd is, en dus ook het natuurlijke bewustzijn, d.w.z. die krachten, eigenschappen en bestaansregelen waaraan het menschelijk bewustzijn, uit zijn natuur, krachtens de schepping onderworpen is.*"³

The antithesis is therefore not physical, as has often been held by mystics of every description—it is spiritual. Since it is not physical, there may be territories in the field of science where the unregenerate and the regenerate consciousness may cooperate as, for example, in the collection of sense material, also in the somatic aspects of psychological science, and thirdly in logic, for the laws of reason have not been abrogated. But when it comes to the interpretation of facts, there must be a parting of the ways for then he that has his foot fixed on the basis of the is guided by supernatural revelation because he recognizes that he himself has no light. He has only the machinery of thought left; God must originate and guide its motion. He recognizes that the axis of his thought has been affected by sin and that it is therefore deflected from the . Only can cure this. Without this , his mind is as a sickle operating fast but set too high to mow the grass.⁴

We see then that Dr. Kuiper finds his last ground for certainty in the , in the restoration of the contact of man's inmost being with God. Of course, this can appear to one who is not touched by the magic wand of regeneration as pure subjectivism. But as before pointed out, it is, philosophically speaking, at least as justifiable as any other system of philosophy, while to the believer it is the real objectivity. Accordingly, the believer cannot submit this *principium speciale* to the judgment of the *principium generale*, for its very presupposition is that the *principium generale* is incapacitated to judge. The moment you admit that the

³ Abraham Kuiper, *Encyclopadie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1910), 2:541.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

principium generale has the right to judge, you have recognized it as sound, and all sufficient reason for a special revelation has been set aside. "Ge moet dus of het recht van beoordeeling er aan ontzeggen, of bijaldien gij dit recht er aan toekent verdwijnt het object waarover oordeel geveld zal worden."⁵

The very idea of a *principium* includes this. A *principium* is exclusive in its own sphere. Either the one or the other must be taken absolutely. And here we see the consequence of this with respect to the nature of sin, for it is equally a moral question. On the basis of the *principium generale* I must maintain that my judgment is sound, for the moment I admit that it needs a corrective, I acknowledge that it itself is unsound and incompetent to judge. "Sta ik daarentegen in de hooghartige overtuiging dat het principium naturale in orde is, dat er niets aan ontbrukt, en dat het deswege recht heeft op suprematie, dan volgt hieruit dat alle correctief mij eene beleediging moet schijnen, moet ik over elk correctief, dat zich aandient wel een vernietigend oordeel vellen, en kan ik niet rusten, eer zulk een correctief ten doode gedoemd, en door het ontleedmes der critiek geexecuteerd is."⁶

Hence it is unreasonable to expect a man of unregenerate heart to see your standpoint. For him to do that would mean a turning about of his being, and this is the work of the Holy Spirit. For even if he should agree, which is unthinkable, that reason needs a corrective, what guarantee is there that the Scriptures is this corrective and not an imagination of your brain? This impossibility of the justification of the standpoint of the *principium speciale* to a non-believer is not contradictory to what has been mentioned about the philosophical justification of its standpoint, i.e., that it is philosophically just as reasonable as any other system, because this latter refers only to the negative aspect of it and is contentless, while the former is positive, full of content, and claims objective truth.

We see then that in the presentation of Dr. A. Kuyper the reality of sin is faced to the utmost, as is especially manifest in his conception of the absolute antithesis. This is also evident from his supralapsarian view of predestination and free grace.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

Bavinck

Essentially the same epistemology is presented by Dr. Bavinck. We need not dwell on this point. His view of sin is for the greater part the same as that of Kuyper, as the most cursory reading of his *Dogmatiek* will show, while his lecture on *Common Grace* even preceded the monumental work of Kuyper. Bavinck is not afraid to accept the consequences of this doctrine of the penetrating power of sin so that in his thinking man can find no contact with God at all except through regeneration. This is apparent in his entirely different attitude towards the apologetic for Theism than that of Professor Flint.

Professor Flint in his work on "Theism"¹ exhausts every ounce of logic to show that the theistic arguments should be convincing to any unprejudiced man. Flint here forgets that every man is prejudiced. Moreover, on the basis of Theism itself, Prof. Flint attaches great importance to these arguments and tries to save every thread of them that he can, while Dr. Bavinck relentlessly weighs their evidence and does not try to make them prove any more than they can. Take, for example, the argument from causality. Prof. Flint together with many others thinks that it must necessarily lead us back to a personal absolute cause of the world, because we cannot rest in an infinite regress. "Those who object to the causation argument, that it does not take us beyond the world and does not lead up to a personal cause of the world have failed to apprehend what causation signifies.... Reason, if honest and consistent, cannot in its pursuit of causes stop short of the rational will. That alone answers to and satisfies its idea of causes."² In spite of such an assertion, Dr. Bavinck maintains that all we can establish from the idea of cause is that the world needs a cause. "*Wie uit de wereld tot eene oorzaak besluit, welke zelve ook eene oorzaak behoeft, heeft aan de logische kracht van dit bewijs genoeg gedaan.*"³ Dr. Bavinck here seems to have the better of the arguments. A finite effect can lead to a finite cause and we may regress *ad infinitum* into a vicious infinite, but who gives us the right to span the gulf between the finite and the infinite, and then to a personal God? Our idea of causation is not satisfied with less, says Professor Flint, but is this not perhaps already due to our theistic consciousness? To be sure, we cannot rest in a vicious infinite; some absolute is presupposed and only on its presupposition can the cosmological proof lead us to an absolute cause. But whether this cause is transcendent as well as immanent, personal as well as impersonal, conscious or unconscious, cannot be determined

¹ Robert Flint, *Theism* (London, 1886).

² Flint, *Theism*, p. 130.

³ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2:61.

by the argument. At most then, according to Dr. Bavinck, the argument from cause can lead to the idea of an absolute cause but not to that of a personal God.

This may be taken as a typical illustration of Bavinck's attitude to the problem of sin from its noetic aspect. It is as deep and satisfying as that of Kuyper. Bavinck can afford to let sin have the loose rope and let it work its havoc to the utmost for he knows the cure. For him as well as for Kuyper, the Archimedian is the action of the Spirit on the heart of man, whereby he is brought anew into living contact with truth.

That this is, in the main, also the position of Dr. Charles Hodge is evident from the fact that although he appeals oftentimes to the common consciousness of man in presenting the reasonableness of Christianity, he maintains that in the last analysis the truth of God is the basis of all knowledge. "That our senses do not deceive us, that consciousness is trustworthy in what it teaches, that anything is what it appears to us to be; that our existence is not a delusive dream, has no other foundation than the truth of God. In this sense all knowledge is grounded on faith, i.e., the belief that God is true."⁴ But Dr. Hodge also teaches that God can be known as absolutely true only to the consciousness of the believer; only to him can the truth of God be the basis of knowledge and to him also nothing else can form such basis. Now faith is given by the Holy Spirit, so that again it depends on the restoration of the union between God and man through the Holy Spirit; on it all knowledge is based. Sin, therefore, also in Dr. Hodge's presentation, has affected the core of man's being and consciousness from which it can be removed only by the Spirit. Man of himself is totally unable to effect his own salvation and is at enmity with God. Building upon the results worked out by these men, Dr. V. Hepp has elaborated on them in his work on the Holy Spirit. He holds the same position but furnishes a more elaborate epistemology, though as yet only one volume of his work has appeared.

The *testimonium Spiritus Sancti generale* which he distinguishes from the *speciale* is, to him, the last ground of certainty for the trustworthiness of our human nature. It guarantees us that our senses do not deceive us and that our entire consciousness is not a sham: "*Het testimonium generale is die onmiddelijke en onwederstandelijke werking van den Heiligen Geest waarin Hij tot en in den mensch getuigenis geeft aan de waarheid in haar centrum en daardoor in ieder*

⁴Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 1:437. [It is obvious that Van Til clearly disassociates himself from common sense realism at this early point.]

*mensch een onomstootelijke zekerheid doet geboren worden. Of filosofisch gesproken: het testimonium generale is de laatste zekerheidsgrond onzer kennis.”*⁵

Thus we are dependent upon the Spirit of God not only for the knowledge of eternal life but also for the knowledge of this life. In Him we have our only guarantee that existence as it appears to us is not a fake. In conjunction with this, Dr. Hepp intimates that the knowledge of the truth of the content of Scripture is based on the *testimonium speciale* of the Spirit and this special testimony works on the ground prepared by the *testimonium generale*. This is essentially the logical consequence of the view of Reformed theology that creation is not abrogated by regeneration or recreation but subsumed under it, or rather, that regeneration builds upon the basis of creation.

Other leading theologians might be mentioned defending a similar view, for example, Dr. W. Geesink in his three-volume work on Vans' *Heeren Ordinantiën*. So also Dr. Wisse Jr. in his *Geloof en Wetenschap*, p. 99, says that faith is the only basis of our knowledge: “*Alleen de Logos-leer biedt hier [with respect to certainty] principieelen waarborg. Het geloof in de waarde van onze denkkraft, van onze logica, van onze begrippen en oordeelvellingen, heeft eenig en alleen hechten grond in het christelijk geloof, dat God zoowel den mensch als de overige schepping door den Logos heeft geschapen die zoonwel in ons, als in de dingen rondom ons woont.*”

So we see that Reformed theology today, following in the footsteps of Calvin, has laid anew the foundation for a thorough conception of sin, through the study of its noetic influence. With the result of this study, as it is implied in the scriptural statements of the total depravity of man, it could do justice to the entire biblical conception of sin and work out a system of theodicy.

The presuppositions of a biblical theodicy are accordingly that the *principium speciale* take the place of the *principium generale*. Objectively, man needs a special supernatural revelation and, subjectively, the illumination of the Spirit as it has been worked out by Calvin.

On this basis we can form the biblical notion of sin. Sin first of all is not a metaphysical reality. Christian theology has sometimes gone too far in emphasizing this negative aspect of sin. This was the case with Augustine, but essentially it is true. If sin were either a material or a spiritual substance there would have to be a substance that God has not created, and God would not be

⁵ Valentine Hepp, *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, p. 245.

God, or otherwise God is the cause of sin. Both alternatives are emphatically denied by the Scriptures.⁶ Augustine said, "*Amnis natura in quantum natura est bona est.*" Therefore, "*non potest essellum malum nisi in aliquo bono quia non potest esse nisi in aliqua natura.*" Itself is "*nulla natura,*" but "*amissio, privatio corruptio boni, vitium, defectus naturae.*" It has only a *causa deficiens*, not *sufficiens*. Sin needs a creaturely and moral substratum. Creaturely, because otherwise it could be in God; moral because it is an act of the intelligence, though no intelligent act. Hence sin can assume as many forms as the nature of angel or man may assume. Any theory that conceives of sin to consist in sensuousness or selfishness stands condemned on this standpoint. Sin is always an action that proceeds from the centre of man or angel. In this centre, sin is a corrupting and destroying influence. We can scarcely say, therefore, that it originated in any definite faculty of the finite consciousness. Augustine conceived of it as originating primarily in the will. Dr. A. Kuyper ascribes it rather more to the intellect and imagination. According to him, Satan saw or conceived of himself as God and therefore willed to disobey God. The question, however, is only of psychological interest. The unity of the human consciousness makes it difficult to give these distinctions much value.

Though not a metaphysical reality, the Bible ascribes to sin the greatest activity. Sin is described in very positive terms especially as a transgression of the law. It is therefore a morally active principle.

Etymology can help us to some extent in bringing out the biblical conception of sin.⁷ חָטָא [חַטָּא], like ἀμαρτανειν means to act so as to miss the purpose of the action; it is a deflection from the right road. עָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר לֹא יְצַוָּהוּ is separation from and rebellion against. Lv 16.16, Lv 16.21 עָזַב is *decedere*, depart from. קָעַל a falling away from Jehovah. עָשָׂה, opposed to עָזַב [עֲזֹבָה] is like ἀδικία versus δικαιοσύνη. אָשָׁה is to lose the way or designates unintentional evil, though here Kuyper forms his own derivation and does not base it on Cremer, etc. עָרַע most etymologists derive from עָרַע is to break. עָרַע is guilt; עָרַע unfaithfulness, אֲשֶׁר לֹא יְצַוָּהוּ falsity and חָכְמָה foolishness. Then in the further Greek words παραβῆς and παραπτῶμα, the preposition παρα stands for the *a-privans* and renders these words self-explanatory. All this is in accord with and corroborates the exposition in Rom. 8:7, where sin is pictured as ἔχθα εἰς τὸν θεόν, i.e. enmity in the core of man's being against God, His will, His law, and justice.

⁶ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 3:133f; Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek* 3; *De Peccato*, p. 27f; Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 2.

⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* 2:552; Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 3:123; Kuyper, *Dogmatiek* 3; *Peccato* 3:1ff.

Many of these words already had the connotation of sin among the heathens, it is true, but as taken over by the Holy Spirit on the territory of special revelation their original meaning is corroborated and now brought into direct relation to the true God. So that on the basis of etymology we find the idea of sin in the scripture to be a conscious and willful departure of the finite consciousness from the straight line or law set before it by God.

Sin is thus ἄνομια (1 John 3:4) and is always brought into connection with the law of God. That sin is transgression of a law is apparent from the consciousness of moral obligation. But this is the law of God to whom alone we as creatures are responsible, to whom we owe life and all things.⁸ The law of God for man demands perfect obedience. Love is the fulfillment of the law. Hence, sin is not confined to actions as such but may be in the disposition of the heart, Matt. 5:22—anger in the heart is murder; vs. 28—impure desire is adultery. Luke 6:45—“the evil man out of the evil treasure [of his heart] bringeth forth that which is evil.” Heb. 3:12—“An evil heart of unbelief.” Ish. 1:5—“the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.” Jer. 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it?” Here the sin that cannot be known is not sin of the act but sin of the heart.

The state of the soul which gives rise to the wrong acts and desires is even sinful: John 8:34, “Every one that committeth sin is a bondservant of sin.” Rom. 7:11, 13, 14, 17, 20—“Sin beguiled me ... working death to me, I am carnal sold under sin ... sin which dwelleth in me.” Sin exists therefore in the soul prior to consciousness and is awakened by the law. Rom. 7:8: “apart from the law sin is dead.” The law acts upon the heart bringing to light the sins which are there as the sun thaws the ice of a marsh and brings to action the dormant hordes of insect life. “The fire in a cave discovers reptiles and stirs them but they were there before; the light and the heat do not create them. A beam of light piercing into a room reveals thousands of moats floating in the air, never before suspected.”

Now one thing is important to note in the idea of sin as ἄνομια that the law assumed various forms throughout the history of revelation. If we do not keep this in mind we are in danger of looking upon the New Testament conception of sin as entirely different from the Old Testament conception of it, for the reason that then their organic unity is not clearly perceived. Everything in the New Testament is implied in the old, and everything implicit in the Old is to a degree made explicit in the New. The same faith that saved Abraham also saves us. The tabernacle of the Old Testament was a symbol of a reality in heaven and a type of

⁸ Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 2:182; Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 3:124.

the Christ and his Church. Thus also the conception of sin in the Old and New Testament is the same in principle but takes different forms according to altered circumstances and different manifestations of the law.

Adam had the content of the law engraved upon the tables of his heart. His transgression of that law has caused all men to be sinners. Consequently the argument from Rom. 4:15: "For where no law is there is no transgression," and 5:13: " ... but sin is not imputed when there is no law" cannot be urged against the proposition that sin is transgression of the law. Adam already transgressed the law. Nor was there any positive external law from Adam to Moses. Therefore, at that time sin could not be transgression of the law. In reply to this, Paul answers from Rom. 5:12: that through the transgression of Adam, sin has ruled over all so that all have been personally guilty because like as the righteousness of Christ, the second Adam, is later imputed to man for salvation, so sin was imputed to all through the first Adam. If imputation of the sin of Adam is untenable, then the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is also. Then also this universal condition of sin of which Paul speaks was, in the case of the heathen, a transgression of the law still in their own hearts. Rom 2.12–12.6 They are lost because they are *ἀνομῶς*. There is a revelation of God in nature of religious and ethical import which takes away all ground for excuse. Rom 2.10, 1 Cor 1.21

Among Israel since Moses' time, the moral law assumed external form. So sin also assumes a different aspect. Moreover, sin takes on a different form here because the ceremonial and civil laws were included in the economy of redemption as well as the moral law. Every sin was at the same time a transgression of the law of the state and of God. The essential nature of sin is not affected by this, for here the civil and ceremonial laws were also the direct laws of God. The second table of the moral law was in form much like the laws of other people, but Israel's law received a new meaning because the first table precedes the second. God is the covenant God of Israel and the transgression of any of the laws of the theocracy was a breaking of the covenant relationship. Hosea presents Israel as the bride of Jehovah and is himself the type of Jehovah, forsaken by his spouse.⁹ Gn 3.13, Gn 39.9, Ex 10.16, Ex 32.33, 1 Sm 7.6, 1 Sm 14.33, 2 Sm 12.13, Ps 51.6, Is 42.14, Jer 14.7, Jer 20

Christ takes over this old Testament conception of sin and the law. He judges everything according to the law of God as his example. He strengthens the concept of sin and the sense of sin. He reveals clearer the spiritual nature of the

⁹ Dr. Geerhardus Vos writes a beautiful poem on this in *Verzen*.

law and separates the ethical from the physical (Mk 7:15), posits love as its fundamental principle (Mt 22:27–40) so that we can know the law as a unit (Jas 2:10). The law, read in the light of the gospel, brings out the heinous character of sin still clearer. For now the new law is faith in Him who came to take away sin; unbelief now becomes the greatest sin. Jn 15.22, Jn 15.24, Jn 16.9 The law is now no longer that, obedience of which is a condition to salvation, but the law's demands have been fulfilled by Christ so that now it becomes to the Christian a guide for his life of gratitude.

The character of sin is therefore throughout the Scriptures presented as a transgression of the law of God. It is ἐχθρα εἰς τὸν θεόν in the centre of man's being. Man seeks to be a law unto himself. God placed man in Eden in immediate fellowship with Himself in which man's life consisted. Man's perfection was complete in the sense that no fault was in him as a creature of God. But because created in the image of God, endowed with intellect and will, man was objectively and subjectively capable of still higher development. Objectively, because in Eden man still could sin, *posse peccare*, and did not yet reach the stage of *non posse peccare*. Subjectively, because as a rational creature he could choose for or against God. Therefore the need of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God wanted an act of voluntary obedience. If this was given, He would open to man vistas of still higher perfection as symbolized by the tree of life.

This higher life would then already be a gift of grace and not the wages of obedience, because man owed obedience to God. Grace already shed its radiant light in Paradise. But Satan watched man there. Milton pictures Satan as he calls his council. He would attack man because through man, as God's representative on earth, he thought to attack God himself. Hence he assumes the form of the crafty serpent and asks of Eve whether possibly God has forbidden them to eat of all the trees of the garden. And now in the answer of Eve we see that the poison of sin has already entered. Eve apologizes for God that He has forbidden to eat only of one tree, but thus admits by implication that if God had forbidden to eat of all the trees he would have trodden under foot the rights of man. And herein exactly lies the character of sin, that he thinks to have rights absolutely of his own, that he does not wish to be lime in the hands of the potter. He wishes to be as God himself instead of being subject to the law of God, which had been placed in his very being as creature. He does not want to find his freedom in the law of God as his native element, as a fish is free in the water.

So God drove man out of Paradise. Now the Cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every way must keep the way to the tree of life. Only through

satisfaction to the wrath of God could communion with Him again be effected. This is prefigured in the entire Old Testament ritual. There the blood, the soul of the animal, had to be spilt for the soul of man that had sinned. This prefigured Christ. If sin were not a heinous transgression of God's law, it would not be necessary for the only begotten Son of the Father, beloved of Him, to die in the form of a man for its destruction. The Father would not have to make such sacrifice. The coming of Christ in the world is the best testimony to the character of sin as enmity against God in man's deepest ego. Only an eternal sacrifice could remove it.

We therefore find the essence of sin to consist not in a metaphysical principle but in an active, though negative, moral principle at the core of man's being and consciousness, by which man uses his own powers to oppose the law of God.¹

But you say that this presentation does not satisfy our thought. This presentation maintains the concept of God in all its fullness; it seeks no refuge in a creaturely self-grounded substratum for the origin of sin, but maintains man as an organic creation of God, derived, totally dependent, and yet responsible for sin. But why should an omnipotent and all-wise God allow the entrance of sin? How can we even speak of God permitting sin when there is no other ultimate source of substance and activity than He? How can a totally derived being originate sin? How can he be held responsible? Or how can each individual be held responsible for the action of his representative, or how could each man sin in Adam if we hold to the Realist's view? What can be the purpose of it all? How can we justify God?

God is His Own Theodicy

To explain the dilemma, as we have seen, we may not ignore any of its parts. The problem of theodicy finally stands before us in all its glaring reality.

The only logical procedure seems to be to accept all the givens of the Bible and let it reveal to us as much as it sees fit of the reason of it all. For standing once on the basis of the *principium speciale*, we must accept its verdict here also. God must be His own theodicy. The moment we try to justify Him by any of our own devices we have again given up our *principium speciale*. We must rest secure in its final dictum, not rebel against it because we cannot comprehend it.

¹ Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek 3; De Peccato*, p. 27ff.

God, then, is His own theodicy. He is all sufficient to Himself. He seeks the manifestation of His own glory. He has seen fit to enhance His glory by the creation of man and the universe. How the creation of the universe could add to the glory of an all-sufficient God we cannot explain. In his inscrutable will he has also planned the reality of sin for the revelation of his glory. To say that God only permitted evil and has not planned it is only a fruitless attempt to justify Him by our own logic, because further thought cannot rest in the idea of a permission of evil by one who could prevent it. God does not need our little fences for his protection; nor do they do us much subjective good, rather harm. We need not be afraid to take the consequences of scripture statement. We find then that creation, sin, redemption, election, and rejection are all willed by God for the glorification of His name. "*Begin en einde, reden en doel van al het Zijnde is dus iets goeds.*"² On this basis, then, sin becomes a means to a higher good. "*Zij is zijdelings een goed, omdat ze onderworpen, bedwongen, overwonnen wordt en alzoo Gods grootheid, macht en gerechtigheid toont. Want hierin komt zijne Souvereiniteit ten slotte het schitterenst uit dat Hij het kwade nog ten goede weet te leiden. Gen. 15:20 en dienstbaar maakt aan de zaligheid der gemeente Rom 8.28, 1 Cor 3.21–23; aan de heerlijkheid van Christus 1 Cor 15.24, Eph 1.21–22, Phil 2.9, Col 1.16; aan de glorie van zijn naam" Spr 16.14, Ps 51.6, Jb 1.21, Jn 9.3, Rom 9.17, Rom 9.22–23; Rom 11.36; 1 Cor 15.28*"³

Thus election to eternal life is presented as manifesting the mercy of God, and rejection as revealing His justification, and election and rejection both as means to God's glorification. We could here use Hegelian terminology invested with a new meaning. Evil has no metaphysical reality; it exists in the moral sphere only to be overcome, through negation of the negation to reaffirmation.

Anything short of referring the justification of the existence of evil to the character of God and His purpose to glorify Himself, and to His sovereign will to accomplish this by means of creation and sin, is unsatisfactory. Anything short of this is illogical and unbiblical. With the election to eternal life it is not sufficient to say that it reveals God's mercy, for he elected angels to eternal life without manifestation of mercy. To man God's election is mercy, but the election of some cannot be explained on the basis of mercy only, because then He would have to be merciful to all. His sovereign will has seen fit to discriminate and that without any reference to human merit. Our minds are baffled and we can rest only in the concept of an all-wise God with a logic higher than ours. So also, rejection reveals God's justice, but not only his justice because then surely all men would have to

² Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2:417.

³ *Ibid.*

be rejected; again we are driven to faith in the character of God.⁴ Election and discrimination, therefore, can never be an end in themselves but must always be subservient to the glory of God. Consequently, it does not seem to be an altogether fair presentation of the supra-lapsarian standpoint to say that discrimination for discrimination's sake is its characteristic.⁵ Also from the supra-standpoint, discrimination is only a means to an end.

Only on the basis of absolute faith and confidence in the character of God can the presentation of the new heavens and the new earth obtain its full significance. For these also do not furnish a complete theodicy in themselves. That sin shall be finally done away is in itself no justification for its present existence. But that it shall be done away is again to the praise of His name. We may rejoice in the fact that God has triumphed and will triumph over sin, and our rejoicing, too, will be for Him. In the heaven and the new earth everything shall be "*Pro Rege*," as Dr. Kuyper has styled one of his massive works. Sin, as it entered the soul of man and thence spread to influence his body and nature around him, will be done away. Satan's plan to frustrate the work of God is brought to naught. He, too, must serve to enhance God's glory. Then all things will be put under Christ's feet (1 Cor 15:26–28). They that are washed in the blood of the lamb shall sing a new song and yet an old song: "Saved by grace." "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him than shall the son also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him that God may be all in all." This is the true theodicy and the true universal gospel. The organism of the world is saved, though in its growth many parts decayed. This question of the salvation of the world is not a question of numbers, but of quality placed in it by God. The tree is saved, though many of its branches are lopped off. God has accomplished His plan with creation, with sin. His name is glorified.

This logic is higher than ours; it is too marvelous for our ears. There is a milestone beyond which no infra- or supralapsarianism can go. Then go as far as we may, for such is the requisite of our nature, but leave the rest to a logic that is higher than ours.

⁴ Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2:420.

⁵ Warfield, *Plan of Salvation*, p. 112.

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