

January
three
1939

Dear Dr. Clark

Thank you for letting me read this manuscript. I have greatly enjoyed it. I agree with you in the primary importance of the intellect. However, I do not believe that the word faith can be correctly understood if emotional and volitional content is excluded. If we have a merely intellectual faith without the love of God and without the yielding of the will to Him, we seem to be on the ground described by James "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." (James 2:19) In my article on "The Ethics of Pisteuo in the Fourth Gospel" in the Bibliotheca Sacra for January, 1923 I think I demonstrated that pisteuo in John is not a simply intellectual word but implies a total ethical reaction of the whole man.

Now for a few detailed comments.

Page 1, line 5 up. I do not, of course, object to the phrase "that man grasps God." The Scripture often speaks in such terminology. However, for purposes of your discussion I wonder whether it would not be better to speak in terms of God grasping man or making Himself known to man. If we state the question from that point of view, does it not appear that obstacles are found in all three of the channels you mention, -emotional hatred or lack of love, volitional stubbornness or unyieldedness, intellectual fog?

Page 2. I surely cannot accept the definition of emotion which you seem to suggest. Emotion in my vocabulary is simply the feeling tone of consciousness. The whole Bible stands up to say that God loves, is angry, and experiences pain. In other words, there is nothing left to the Bible if there is no feeling tone toward the creature in the consciousness of God. But this makes it impossible for us to define emotion as seems to be suggested in your first paragraph on page two.

With reference to your material centering on page four, I do most heartily agree with your argument against irrational faith. I thoroughly agree that such teaching leads directly into skepticism.

I also share your view of Knudson's volitionalism and of all volition which is not completely rational. I do think, however, that there never is a mental process in which one comes to an intellectual conclusion without also a volitional act. Accordingly I believe it is immoral to be illogical.

Toward the bottom of page nine I have a violent fit over your statement that "God can hardly be said to aim at all." This is gnosticism!

[F]

p. 29. Why is intellectual assent unethical?

§ 34. Jesus' objection to a demand for signs does not prove that belief is not intellectual. The difference betw. Jn 4:50 & 5:3 is not the intellectuality of belief, but the obj of belief.

Isn't it? I recognize, of course, that there are many figures of speech in the Bible in which God is spoken of anthropomorphically, but the statement that the Son of Man is come "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) certainly implies that God aims at something, and cannot, I think, be taken otherwise than literally.

Top of page ten,- I agree that obedience is meaningless without intellectual understanding of the meaning of the command. Of course we do not mean a complete understanding.

To me, the illustration of reaching for a pencil, or holding a pencil (page ten) does not click. It seems to me that the motion may be entirely involuntary, whereas the decision to retain possession may be a definite act of the will.

It seems to me that the entire picture in the Scriptures and the whole tradition of Calvinism (barring that type represented by Jonathan Edwards) presents the decrees of God as volitional. Yet this conception (possibly I do not correctly grasp your definition) hardly seems to square with your definition of volition.

Page 11, paragraph 2, line 2. Here again I have another violent fit over your words "static perfection." Certainly I agree in the necessity for "immutable truth." The future is just as absolutely certain in every detail as is the past, and all the decrees of God are absolutely true. God is just as truly glorified by the glory that ~~shall~~ be ascribed to Him as by the glory that has been ~~ascribed~~ ascribed to Him. There is nothing imperfect in His glory at any point in time, but the glory of God is not static unless the whole Bible is to be evaporated into Spinoza's conception of things.

I am now shouting hallelujah at the bottom of page eleven. I rejoice in your admirable handling of the pragmatic and Ritschlian epistemologies.

On page twelve, line five, I should not say "Truth is primary, value secondary" but "Truth is of primary value."

I am afraid I'm having another fit at the bottom of page twelve. Why should you think that the beasts have volition? Of course if volition is defined as power to act without the slightest original freedom in accordance with a nature which is not only certain but necessitated, then the beast has just as much volition as man. I still believe, however, that (remember our old argument about Harvey Carr) that definition of volition is a quibble. Volition to me involves the blameworthy responsibility for free, certain, but not necessitated moral choice within certain limits, blameworthy clear up to the throne of God's absolute justice.

Now I am shouting hallelujah again at the conclusion.

Very cordially yours

JOB

Dear Mr. ...

Jan 6 1939

May I attempt to clarify matters by replying to your letter more or less paragraph by paragraph.

The reference to James 2:19 does not seem to be inconsistent with the position of the paper because the statement of James says that the devils believe merely that there is one God. To believe that there is one God is not sufficient to salvation. The devils did not believe that Christ had died for them. The mere fact, therefore, that one intellectual operation does not produce salvation, does not prove that salvation (including sanctification) is not to be found in another intellectual act. My paper does not hold that we know God by any random intellection, but that our knowing God is an intellection and not an emotion. Your paragraph ends with the phrase "total ethical reaction of the whole man" which must, it seems to me, make intellection basic, because I cannot conceive morality except as founded on truth.

This leads to another point which is preliminary to discussing detailed comments. The point in question is that of the exact scope of the article. I have asked and tried to answer the question; What is the religious activity par excellence, or to make it more definite, how do we grasp God himself. For I hold that our personal appreciation, contemplation, grasp, or God is more fundamental than obeying some particular command he may impose on us. My answer is, of course, the intellect. That is, I am defending the primacy of the intellect in religious (and in all) matters. But note: if the intellect is prime, it has no equals. To put something on the level of truth and to deny primacy to anything. This accords with the notion that God is Truth. God, then, is a being to be known, not willed or felt.

And further, as in every discussion, definition is essential. We must say exactly what we mean, and stick to our meaning.

As for details: Your comment on p.1, line 5 up is not clear to me. I am asking what action of man grasps God, not that action of God grasps man. I am not raising the question of whether man needs God's grace to come to this, but simply, assuming grace, how can man have the most intimate relation possible with God.

Your note on p. 8. The term feeling tone seems to me a little vague. As a matter of fact, modern psychology texts do not attempt to define emotion; so, wanting a better, I have adopted the historical definition of confused thinking. That God has no emotion is an article of faith. The Westminster Confession, II 1, states that God is without body, parts, or passions. The original meaning of passion is any modification, or change, or suffering. There is a good section on this problem in Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, II Vol. I, pp. 170-178. To be sure, he does not verbally agree with me, in that he concedes God emotions, but only because he (fallaciously) identified absence of emotion with Spinozism. (p/173) When I remove emotion from God, I certainly do not mean to say, as Shedd infers, that God is indifferent. But though thus he differs from me verbally he grants my contention on p. 174 by stating that God does not experience fear, jealousy, grief, or repentance.

I must admit that my phrase on p.9, that God does not aim, is very poor and must be recast. What I must say ~~is~~ is that God never changes his aim.

The point of the illustration of holding the pencil, p.10, is that the reaching is a motion, the holding is an activity which is not motion. Behind this is the thought that volition is change, intellection is unchanging activity.

P. 11, on static perfection, refers of course to the being of God. Without an immutable God we have radical dynamism, and therefore skepticism. Does not Hodge say that the glory which creatures ascribe to God does not increase God's glory? What do you mean by saying that God's glory is not static? It seems to me that if God changes, it must be either from the worse or to the worse.

I did not say, Truth is of primary value, as you suggest in your criticism of p. 12, because this phrase seems to me to classify truth under value, and that is exactly the Nietzschean position which I am combatting.

At the bottom of p. 12 I say that animals, as opposed to plants, have volition because they can initiate motion. The ancient distinction is, the nutritive soul for plants, the appetitive for animals, the intellect for man. Apparently your use of the word volition envisages the Aristotelian proairesis. But proairesis is distinctly intellectual, even syllogistic, and of course animals do not have it. But in keeping with the main burden of the paper, I was thinking of volition as the faculty of self-motion.

Now may I append some final remarks? How would you go about defending the primacy of the intellect? Do you believe that we can either will God or feel God?

If I should ask: does Rom.10:9-10 make emotion necessary to salvation, you would reply with your

article in the Bibliotheca Sacra. Two points: On p. 34, Jesus' objections to a demand for signs does not prove that belief is not intellectual. The difference in meaning between Jn. 4:50 and 53, is not the intellectuality of belief, but the object of belief.

Your article on pisteuo is an excellent summary of the usage of the word and I am glad to have read it. But it really attacks a different problem than the one now under discussion. On p.29 you reject faith as intellectual assent, but do not give an explicit reason. The implicit reason seems to me to be that intellectual assent is unethical, non-moral. With this I should disagree. Our thinking is our chief moral problem. Every thought is either moral or immoral. And I haertily agree that faith is ethical. But I cannot draw the conclusion that therefore ~~xxx~~ it is not intellectual.

Already I have tried your patience, and I may not press the discussion; but if you should care to reply you would help me considerably by answering these questions:

1. How can one defend the primacy of the intellect?
2. Can man will God or feel God?
3. Why is not faith assent or intellection?

With many thanks,

January
twenty-six
1939

Memorandum to Dr. Clark

Dear Dr. Clark

I am attaching herewith your manuscript on intellectualism and the Scriptures, my memorandum of January third, your letter from Dr. Van Til dated December fifth.

Thank you very much indeed for your memo of January sixth. I read it and Dr. Van Til's letter soon after receiving it, but put it away for an opportunity for personal conference with you. Now it seems that I shall not have an opportunity for two or three weeks at least. Hence I am doing my best talking to the dictaphone in sunny California.

I am very much interested in Dr. Van Til's letter. I am encouraged by your "how so" opposite the last paragraph on page one. I am really having quite a time with youngsters who have swallowed whole Van Til's dictum that the unsaved man cannot know anything correctly.

I am a little disturbed by Van Til's preposition "into" in the next to the last line on page one. This seems not to be a typographical error, because it is used again in the eighth line from the bottom on page two. I have sometimes feared that although Van Til clearly defends the doctrine of creation, he sometimes inadvertently slips into the idea of projection rather than creation. If God created the world out of Himself and projected it out into nothing, then we do not have the distinct otherness of the created universe properly safeguarded. I am not sure that Van Til does properly safeguard the fact that the created thing is distinctly other than the Creator.

I say amen to Van Til's comment in the middle of page two. It seems to me here that Van Til is giving a proper emphasis to the doctrine of creation.

However, I am really agitated about your marginal comments at the top of page two. If what Van Til says is not true, then it follows that the universe is not created but merely derived. How can you defend creations in time if the total of rationality is always the total of reality? Surely the mind of God before creation was totally rational and contained the total knowledge of all rationality. From this it would follow that all that is real in existence is also eternal.

Here I should like to sit down with you for about a day and sharpen up a few definitions. Surely we believe that the entire realm of reality is intelligible, but this is quite different from holding that it is rational. If the rational is the real then there is no irrational. If there is no irrational then the word rational has no meaning but reality. Then it follows that nothing is rational in the sense in which we should define the word by correct methods of lexicography.

Now if there is no real irrational then there is no sin. If sin is not a reality the atonement is a farce.

A child's problem in arithmetic worked out with mistakes to a wrong conclusion illustrates exactly what I mean by irrational reality, which is nevertheless intelligible. I can understand the very irrationality of the example. I know it to be what it is, namely a mistake. A really existing irrational phenomenon.

Sin is, of course, more than a mistake. It is an act or a state of rebellion against God. Sin is irrational, but it is not unintelligible. When we are born again, then we know sin to be what it is, unethical, irrational, but nevertheless intelligible and real.

If Van Til is not correct in saying "God might have created the universe otherwise than He did" then it follows that sin is a necessary emanation from the character of God.

I am not clear about Van Til's comment in the middle of the fifth paragraph on page two. He seems to object to the idea that "reality is all on one level." Of course if he means ethical level, or value level, or even physical level, his statement is obvious. I fear that he means to imply that there are different degrees of reality, or that between existence and non-existence there are intermediate stages. I believe that you and I agree that there can be no different degrees of reality.

Now with regard to your comments on Van Til's paragraph one, page three, - I wonder if there is not a sheer lexicographical difficulty. In theological or in Scriptural language the word "to know" with reference to God frequently means "to know and to be in fellowship with" or "to know and to love." This is so simply because it is so. The usage is just that and there is no argument about it for one who knows the facts. Usage establishes meaning and that is just that.

But it does not follow from this particular usage of the word "to know," that there is no distinction between knowing and loving. The Scripture certainly makes the distinction very clear. God knows and hates the sins of the wicked.

You and Van Til both fall into the Greek ethical fallacy at times. (Not at all times.) You do not always seem to me to recognize that the sinner may know the good and do the evil, that there may be deliberate, conscious, purposeful acts of rebellion in which man knowingly asserts himself against the will of God.

Now turning to my memorandum of January third and your reply, - with regard to your comments on my first paragraph I am not conscious of ever having held that intellectual assent is necessarily unethical. I only argue that intellectual assent may be coupled with a distinctly unethical and rebellious attitude. I have to confess that I am perfectly amazed and dumbfounded at your reaction and Van Til's reaction to such Scripture passages as Romans 1:21 "Without excuse because that knowing God they glorified him not as God."

Now with regard to paragraph three of your memorandum of January sixth, I think you are not quite fair with the statement in James 2:19. I think the whole context, the whole book was written to show that faith is more than merely a rational process.

The last phrase in this paragraph of yours seems to me to slip right past the point. You say, "I can not conceive morality except as founded on truth." Of course, I agree with that but the difficulty is that you do seem to conceive morality as consisting in nothing other than an intellectual apprehension of the truth. Here again is the old Greek ethical fallacy.

I think your fourth paragraph on page one of your memorandum is quite distinctly anti-scriptural. It seems to me to tend toward certain well known historical movements which I know you regard as errors. Pisteuo and peitho are almost interchangeable in the New Testament. Both words mean "trust and obey." Both words clearly imply a distinct intellectual content but both words demand far more than mere intellectual apprehension.

In paragraph four, page one, I find one of those places in which we sorely need definitions. What in the world do you mean by saying that the intellect is "prime"? What does it mean to say that the intellect "has no equals"? Intellectual apprehension is certainly fundamental to ethical conduct. There can be no truly ethical behavior without understanding. However, if your statements are correct then we shall have to take Socrates logically and not just humorously (as he takes himself) when he says that the man who does wrong deliberately and consciously is a better man than the man who does wrong inadvertently.

At the top of page two, your attitude toward my definition of emotion seems exactly parallel with the attitude of the behaviorist toward consciousness. He looks out the window at the grass and says, "What do you mean by green? There is no such thing."

Your interpretation of the words "without passion" in the Westminster Confession seems to me a gratuitous introduction of a purely pagan conception into Christian theology. Dear brother, please do try to justify such an opinion from the Word of God. God loves and God hates and God is "angry with the wicked every day." The only possible Christian interpretation of the impassibility of God, it seems to me, is that God's emotions, or attitudes toward different men and different situations are always perfectly consistent with his own character and with his own eternal purposes. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." he does not mean that Jesus Christ is an immovable iceberg, but that Christ always cares for His own and that the plan of salvation by which God's love is manifested is the same in the Old Testament as in the New. The impassibility of God must simply mean His perfect self-consistency. Jesus did not change when He wept and when He said that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. He always is emotional in a perfectly self-consistent manner. Please let me

emphasize that I appeal to the Bible as a whole and in every detail of its presentation of God against your doctrine of non-emotional deity.

The above sounds rather excited, I am afraid, but I am sure you understand my attitude. I have been deeply concerned over the practical aspects and applications of theology in our own problems in dealing with our own young people.

I greatly rejoice in your second paragraph on page two.

What in the world can "unchanging activity" mean? If unchanging then it is not activity. If activity, then it is not unchanging.

Your fourth paragraph on page two gives me very great distress. The whole Bible and every part of the Bible presents God as intensely active, not in the slightest degree moving from the worst to the better or from the better to the worst but moving within His eternal purposes exactly in accordance with His eternal decrees. It seems to me that this paragraph of yours implies that time is an illusion. From this it would follow that the incarnation and the atonement are not historical realities. I might hold up a picture of Brunner at this point to scare you if I thought it would have the desired effect.

Your fifth paragraph on page two is quite certainly historically inaccurate. The Ritschlian position was not that truth is of value but that there is no truth other than value. James Orr, seems to me, to be quite incisive on this point. Surely you can grasp that distinction. The fact that there are degrees of value but there are no degrees of truth, it seems to me, ought to be quite clear. Everything that is true is true but some truths are more valuable than others although all truth has value.

Your third from the last paragraph on page two seems to me again to show guilt of the Greek ethical fallacy. You seem not to recognize the fact of volition in any aspect of life as distinguished from intellectual apprehension on the one side and irrational movement on the other. When a man says, "I do not see the grass as green," though I see it green, it is not easy to proceed rationally.

Your next to the last paragraph on page two needs a definition. What do you mean by "primacy of the intellect"? Of course, we can not will God but we can, if the Scripture is true, by the Spirit will to do the will of God.

Now on page three paragraph two, how in the world could you possibly come to the conclusion that I hold that faith is not intellectual? My whole argument is that faith while it must be intellectual must also be more than intellectual. To answer the Greek ethical fallacy it is not necessary to show that moral action is not intellectual but merely to show that moral action is more than merely intellectual.

Now as to your three final questions I do not know what you mean by "primacy of the intellect." If you mean that the rational is the whole of reality, then the word rational ceases to have any meaning

whatsoever. I have already gone into the consequences of that view with regard to the doctrine of sin.

Your second question I think I have answered. The evangelical appeal on every page of the Scriptures is not merely to the intellectual acceptance of a logical proposition but to the volitional, emotional, and intellectual yielding to the truth in God. I think if you will really get a logical place in your system of thought for the devil and for the condemned as they will be in the lake of fire, you will see what I mean by the distinction between mere intellectualism, and Christian faith.

Your third question is of course the whole meat of the argument. Faith is assent, intellectual assent, but faith is more than that, otherwise the devil has faith, and those described in the first chapter of Romans as knowing God must also be regarded as having had faith.

I have not time to revise this memorandum. I'm afraid I have put things in too strong a way. I am sure you know that the strength of expression is only with a view to break through the crust and really get at the point at issue. Let's go fishing some day and talk this thing all over.

Yours in Christian fellowship

John Russell, Jr.

JOE/VD

P. S. I thought this had reached you, but it was held for my revision of the rough copy.

Feb. 9th 1939.

Dear Dr. Buswell,

Although your letter on my letter on Intellectualism was dated Jan. 6th, it did not reach me, as you probably know, until yesterday. I hesitate to reply because it takes so much of your time, and I am well aware that you have plenty to keep you busy; yet the misunderstandings have so increased that some sort of a reply is almost demanded; but again, will another letter increase or diminish them. I wish I could take your suggestion to go fishing seriously.

Some of your remarks on Van Til's letter may be considered irrelevant to our purpose; for example I had not noticed what you pointed out that he talks about creation into nothing. What he means I do not know. He also says creation ex nihilo. But let this point pass.

is a slightly different question, on which

Quite true; but whether

You are perhaps unduly exercised about my note at the top of page two of Van Til's letter. In reading a letter I sometimes jot down notes hurriedly to guide me in my reply. Van Til said the rational is not the real with respect to the created universe. You take this to mean that there are ideas in God's mind which are not realized in creation, ~~is~~. God might have created some other sort of world. ~~On this question~~ Augustine and Anselm disagree. Talking about the plan of salvation (and if true here it is true everywhere) Augustine says that God could have ordered it differently but Anselm says an absolute rational necessity prevents any other mode of atonement and God could not have decreed otherwise. So far as I can see, both views are consistent with creation. Anselm is not forced to say that the world is "not created but merely derived" (your letter p.1, next to bottom paragraph); but I must confess that I am unable to decide between the two views. Very consciously I tried to avoid this particular problem in my paper. So there is not the profundity in my note at the top of p.2 of Van Til's letter which you find there. As a matter of fact, I had in mind the notion that the real is not rational (granted that is not what he said) and I drew the conclusion that it could then not be an object of knowledge.

Connected with this is your distinction between rational and intelligible. Did you not at the dinner in honor of Miss Dow refer to the irrationalism of Barth? This seems to me to be perfectly good English. But if the distinction you make at the bottom of p. 1 is to be rigorously applied, it would be necessary to use the word 'unintelligibility'. You do not define rational and irrational in this bottom paragraph; perhaps if you should do so, I can correct my English, for that seems to be the only point involved. (But also: if the intelligible is the real, or v.v., then by exactly the same argument, nothing is unintelligible; yet unintelligible is a good English word.)

P. 2, parag. 5. of your letter is also something that need not be discussed. Van Til is interested in making two levels of being, the uncreated which exists per se and the created which does not exist per se, (per se i.e. self-existent) The Augustinian tradition usually asserts many levels of being. I am not sure, but this proposition may be involved in the ontological argument: cf. Anselm, Bonaventura, Descartes. At any rate, the orthodox doctrine is that in God essence and existence are identical, but not in us.

My comment on the top paragraph of p.3 of Van Til's letter referred to a previous discussion with him. In the present letter he seems definitely to distinguish between knowledge and love; previously he refused to give me any distinction -- for the reasons you give. It is not a question of argument about Scriptural usage; merely that I objected to Van Til's denying me the distinction in one argument and forcing it on me in the next.

*not exactly - know
increases respons.
but respons. does
not depend on
personal know. bec
infants are born in
and - guilty.*

In several places you accuse me of the Greek ethical fallacy. No doubt I am confused. The problem is extremely complex. But obviously, by the statement of Scripture in Luke 12:47 responsibility is proportional to knowledge. I think the difficulty lies in the fact that I have not made clear what the primacy of the intellect is; and I suppose at this point we pass from unessential details to the main point. Hence your remark exactly at the bottom of p.2 is quite beside the mark.

Now perhaps I have done some misunderstanding too. With reference to the last paragraph on p. 2 of your last letter, did you not argue in the Bibliotheca Sacra that belief or faith could not be intellectual because it was ethical. I think you said this, though I do not have the magazine here now. It seems to me that from this it follows that intellectual activity cannot be ethical; for if intellectual activity were ethical, then the fact that belief is intellectual would not take it out of the realm of ethics. At any rate that is the way I understood your article. Of course some intellectual acts are coupled with rebellious attitudes. That is beside the point. The point is that faith (not rebellious) is an intellectual act. Just because some intellectual acts are bad, it does not follow that all are. This ties in with the exegesis of James 2:19. (top of p.3 of your letter) I do not think that the book of James was written for the purpose of showing that faith is not intellectual. I think it was written to distinguish two kinds of faith (though both are intellectual) The devils are said to believe that there is one God. But this kind of faith is not saving faith, it is not faith in Christ; and therefore the word faith in James does not mean exactly the same thing as it does in the Pauline epistles. Hence when James says faith alone does not save, he is not inconsistent with Paul, because they are not talking

of the same faith.

of course faith in Christ produces volitional action; the belief which the devils entertain also produces volitional action; but in neither case is it necessary to deny that faith is an act of the mind or intellect.

P. 3, paragraph 3 of your letter requires the same reply. I have never denied anywhere that voluntary action is ~~unnecessary~~ necessary in the Christian life. I tried to say that it is not the chief thing; that it must be based on a knowledge of the truth; and since truth is basic, the intellectual act is the most important. What ~~historical~~ anti-scriptural tendencies you have in mind, I do not know.

The next paragraph raises the question of the definition of the primacy of the intellect. I tried to define my phrase very accurately in the paper. It is restated badly in the paragraph immediately above this. Obviously if truth is basic and most important, it can have no equals. This simply is another way of expressing the material in Bishop Butler's sermons in the Ethics text. His whole argument is that conscience, which he defines as intellect (cf. his other sermons and his discourse on virtue), is prime, is the judge; that though other factors in man may dominate de facto, they do not have the right. The way I put it in the paper was, by what act do we come closest to God; and my answer follows Christ's commendation of Mary over Martha.

P. 3, pr. 5. This concerns the definition of emotion. I gave the only definition I knew. Simply to call it feeling tone is only to rename it. At any rate I am talking about what I define, and it is not fair to change my meaning. Nor do I see how I can be justly accused of "a gratuitous introduction of a purely pagan conception into Christian theology." P. 3, pr. 6. Is it not true that the word passion includes all modifications, motions, and changes?.. The Scriptures teach; Mal. 3:6, I, Jehovah, change not. Jas. 1:17 "with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." Not only does the Scripture teach this in general, it teaches it in particular; Jer. 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." It seems clear, therefore, that there are none of the emotional ups and downs which characterize "passions." God's love is exactly that unchanging activity which you seem to think is unintelligible. Why you say on p. 4 that if 'x' is activity it is not unchanging, and if unchanging it is not activity, I do not know. The idea of itself is easy, and Jeremiah confirms it in the case of God.

P. 4, 4th full paragraph. God is not a body; but body is not an illusion. The proposition that God is not temporal does not imply that time is an illusion. I cannot see why anyone should object to a state of perfection which does not change. Otherwise there would be no permanent criterion of truth or goodness.

~~position~~ P. 4, 5th pr. Your statement of the Ritschlian

Dictionary gives: an agitation, disturbance, or tumultuous movement, either physical or social.

position is quite correct; I think mine is too. To say that truth is of primary value seems to me to make value the basic concept, under which truth happens to be one, even though important part. At any rate, why object to my original statement that truth is primary. Values are values because it is true that they are values; but truth is not truth because it is valuable.

P. 4, last complete paragraph. I said that you held that faith was not intellectual, because I thought that was what you said in your Bibliotheca article. As best I remember, you said, faith is not intellectual assent. I think that all you need mean for the purposes of that article is that faith produces works; but faith is not works; the concept of faith is different from the concept of works. All my contention has been on the nature of faith per se. What other things faith may give rise to is beside the point. In the letter under discussion, p.5, you do assert that faith is intellectual assent. All I can say is that of course the devil has faith; he does not have saving faith, or faith in Christ; but it is true that he believes some things. The distinction between the faith the devil has and the kind the regenerate man has, is not in the mental function involved, but it is a difference of object. We put our faith or belief in Christ's finished work for us; the devil does not. But in both cases, belief is intellectual; at any rate I do not see how we can believe anything with the emotions or with the will. And my argument has centered on the mental or conscious function, assuming - or regardless of the object. My impression is that our difficulties have arisen by not keeping clear the distinction between two beliefs or faiths (both intellectual) and between faith and its products - for even the devil's faith produces works: good faith, good works; bad faith bad works: but faith is always intellectual, works may not be.

And in spite of it all you seem on p.4, next to last complete paragraph, ~~from better~~, you seem to grant my main contention: that volition only ^{grasps} the commands of God, but God himself is known.

Let me repeat one of the three questions: How would you defend the primacy of the intellect against the ~~the~~ personalists like Knudson and others? If there is any better way, I am anxious to know it. I wish you could read Knudson's Philosophy of Personalism, Roussetot's The Intellectualism of St. Thomas, and Gilson's Philosophy of St. Bonaventura. I do not agree with any of them; but they certainly make one recognize the problem.

Cordially yours,

Ernest H. Black

March
twenty-three
1939

Dear Dr. Clark

I have read with great interest the chapter on the Latin fathers and the sections on Anselm and Aquinas in this very interesting work of R. S. Franks.

Our last conversation was so interrupted that I am not absolutely sure that I remember the exact point this reading was supposed to bring out. It seems clear that Anselm regarded the atonement as necessary because of God's nature and that Thomas Aquinas regarded it as arbitrary and based only upon God's will, which might as well have been exercised otherwise. Franks pays meager homage to Anselm. Hodge understands him as adequately setting forth the orthodox view that the atonement is necessary to vindicate God's holiness. That was my impression when I read the Cur Deus Homo some time ago.

I have read the context of Thomas Aquinas' quotation from Augustine, De Trinitate, Book XIII, Chapter X, Section XIII. It is true that Augustine admits that the mode of the incarnation and of the atonement could have been willed otherwise by the will of God. I am no authority on Augustine's systematic views, but from what I have read in his works and about his views, I am not at all convinced that Augustine taught what St. Thomas taught, that "this justice [in God's nature] depends upon the will of God." (R. S. Franks, page 280) Augustine constantly argues on the basis of what is necessary and seems always to assume that some things are absolutely necessary because of the truth which is in the nature of God, or in other words, some things are absolutely necessary because of God's character.

I am still hoping for the fishing trip and the opportunity to discuss these things further. I am still worried about there being only one kind of force in the universe, namely force of will. I must look up Leibnitz on that point. I know that Descartes taught that God's will might just as well have decreed that the three angles of a plane figure bounded by three straight lines would be equal to more or less than two right angles. However, Hodge at this point throws Descartes out the window.

Let's go fishing!

Very cordially yours

John Baswell

JOB/AW

Trinity p. 398
Luther 383 + 413
Calvin 427

March 24th 1939.

Dear Dr. Buswell,

The book on the history of the doctrine of the work of Christ is safely returned. If you have time and inclination you may have the second volume also, though I do not think it so interesting.

The point which led me to mention this book was the problem whether the necessity of the Satisfactio, or of anything else, was absolute and rational, or hypothecated, on God's decree. It is a question I have as yet been unable to answer for myself.

You noted that Thomas Aquinas and Augustine stand against Anselm. Did you also note that Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin oppose Anselm on this point? Of course the Reformers accepted Anselm's view of the Atonement as a satisfaction of God's justice; Anselm deserves credit for being the first clearly to formulate the doctrine. But whether God could have willed otherwise is a separate question.

As for the ~~ka~~ other point: the nature of force. The reference in Leibniz is New System, 3. This is based, at least partially, on the fact that our only experience of force comes through our willing to resist some motion; we have no other experience or concept of force. It also aids him in explaining inertia, which Descartes had trouble with.

A minor point. I am not aware that Descartes said "that God's will might just as well have decreed that the three angles of a plane figure bounded by three straight lines would be equal to more or less than two right angles." I am always willing to learn; so, may I have the reference? In Meditation V he says, "the existence can no more be separated from the essence of God, than . . . the equality of its three angles to two right angles, from the essence of a triangle." And a page later, "whenever I am desirous of considering a rectilinear figure composed of only three angles, it is absolutely necessary to attribute those properties to it from which it is correctly inferred that its three angles are not greater than two right angles."

But I do know that given a hook, line, and fly, it does not follow by absolute rational necessity that a trout will bite.

Cordially yours,

March
thirty
1939

Dear Dr. Clark

The quotation from DesCartes is found on page 409 of Volume I of Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology. It is taken from the Meditations, Responsiones Sextae, VI, Amsterdam edition, 1685, page 160. On page 410 of the same volume Hodge has an interesting paragraph headed "Confounding Will and Power." On page 412 Hodge quotes Spinoza in a very interesting way, illustrating the opposite extreme from the position taken in the quotation from DesCartes. Hodge concludes that Spinoza's God "is not a personal being."

I shall read your reference in DesCartes' Meditation as soon as possible. I shall also read Franks' sections on Luther and the reformers.

I think this discussion is very near the center of an important matter.

Very cordially yours

JOB/AW

Hodge defines a Person as a self-determining being. Spinoza's God is self-determining + possibly self-determining. These C confound will + power. Hodge intend to deny that God has will - tho Spinoza can be easily understood.

Sixth set of objections. (1) For Cogitatio sum to be valid, it is nec to know it I think, + to know it I know it I think ad inf. (2) When you say Cogito, perhaps you are mistaken + instead of sum you are only moving. (3) Is not man as much a machine as are animals? (4) I atheist will insist it is ad to deceive him in geom. ∴ G.) nec to suppose I think of geom. (5) G. ad deceive us - or allow us to deceive ourselves - as to an external world without injustice, perhaps to keep us humble of. I know. &c. (6) Desc's doctrine makes indifference an imperfection instead of max free will comest noble. For clear & distinct know wd eliminate free will. ∴ G. is) free.

Reply:

infinite satisfaction if any are to be saved. "This it is that the Gnostics and New Platonists in the first centuries; the Scotists and Franciscans during the Middle Ages; the Socinians and Remonstrants at, and after the Reformation; and Rationalists and the speculative philosophy of our own age, have striven to overthrow. But it remains, what it ever has been, the foundation of the faith, hope, and life of the Church." (Hodge, Volume II, page 495)

On page 576 of Hodge, Volume II, we find the following quotation from Limborch and comment by Hodge. "'Ita pretium, quod Christus persolvit, juxta Dei patris aestimationem persolutum est.'" (Limborch, Theologia Christiana, III. xxi. 8, edit. Amsterdam, 1715, p. 262, a.) This is the old Scholastic doctrine of 'acceptatio'; a thing avails, irrespective of its inherent value, for what God sees fit to take it. The death of Christ was no more a satisfaction for sin, than that of bulls and of goats under the old dispensation. God saw fit to make the latter the condition of the pardon of violations of the ceremonial law; and He has seen fit to make the former the condition of the pardon of sins against the moral law."

Franks makes it very clear that Thomas Aquinas, Occam, Biel, and the Scotists denied the necessity for an infinite satisfaction in the salvation of sinners. Biel is said to have held (Franks, p. 344) that a change in the divine will [not considered impossible!] would make a sinful act no longer sinful. *Biel - w Franks does not say this*

Now when it comes to Luther and the Reformed theologians, the difficulty in Franks' work seems to me that he does not divide between the two forms of necessity held by Anselm. When Franks finds one of these writers stating that God did not have to redeem the lost, did not have to show any consideration to the power of sin (in terms of patristic theology), could make of the clay what he would, Franks insisted the author is standing against Anselm when in truth the author is only standing against Anselm's first necessity and not against the second and more important one.

non require
The following material shows Luther in harmony with Hodge. Christ died in order to "satisfy for me and pay my debt which I had to pay." (quoted by Franks, page 364)

"If now indeed out of pure grace our sins are not imputed by God, He has not willed to do this without first His law and His righteousness receiving satisfaction before all things and superabundantly. Such gracious imputation must first be bought and obtained for us from His righteousness." "From a sermon of Luther's quoted by Franks on page 377) *must because decreed or willed*

"(From another sermon) 'It could not come about that God's wrath, judgment, and all evil things should be removed and all good be won, without satisfaction having to be made to the Divine righteousness, sin having to be paid for, and death having to be overcome in accordance with justice.'" (Franks, page 378) *under these conditions*

"For it shows that it was necessary that these great things should be accomplished in that one only person of Christ..." (From the commentary on Galatians quoted by Franks, page 380)

It is true that on page 355 Franks states that Luther was subject to the influence of Duns Scotus. On page 382 Franks concludes from the quotations there given that Luther held to the Scotist-Occamist doctrine that God is above all law and that Christ could have redeemed us by His mere power. The quotation however does not prove what Franks says it does. All that the words can rightfully be made to mean is that God did not have to redeem anybody at all. The quotation is against Anselm's first necessity but not at all against his second.

The following quotation from the works of Zwingli seems quite clearly to show that he held to the position maintained by Hodge.

"And as His justice being sacrosanct must needs remain no less untouched and unshaken than His mercy -- the divine goodness found a way whereby while justice was satisfied, God's heart of mercy might allowably be freely opened without harm to justice." (Franks, page 392)

"Nevertheless His justice must be completely satisfied, that His anger might be appeased." (Franks, page 392)

On page 398, Franks comments on the quotation given in the center of page 392, but his comment only shows that Zwingli rejected Anselm's first idea of necessity and not his second. In view of the distinction in necessities, it seems to me Franks' comment on pages 398 and 399 is not justifiable.

Franks quotes Melancthon as follows:

"...and yet there needed to be a victim on our behalf..." (quoted by Franks, page 405) Franks says of Melancthon's theology "To transfer the cause of forgiveness to men's works is both to extenuate men's sins and to imagine that God can be placated out of Christ." (page 407)

The material on pages 412f seems clearly in line with the doctrine of the necessity of satisfaction if any are to be saved. I notice that in the middle of page 413 someone has written "not clear" opposite Franks' comment on Melancthon's theology. I think Franks' comment is made clear if it is realized that he regards the necessity as a whole including (1) necessity that some shall be redeemed as well as (2) the necessity that there shall be a satisfaction if any are redeemed.

The most significant comments of Franks on the work of Calvin are found on page 427. Here he shows that Calvin argues for the necessity of the incarnation if any are to be redeemed. Calvin argued (chapter XII) that the necessity for the incarnation flowed from the decree on which the salvation of man depended. This is not, however, to say that there could have been a decree to save men without a satisfaction but merely that there being a decree to save men through the offering of a satisfaction, the incarnation flows from that decree. I must read this chapter in the Institutes carefully but I do not believe Calvin would have said what Thomas

No. he has some
of Anselm's
first, but I
clearly not to

Aquinas said, namely, that the justice of God is subject to change by the will of God or that God could have called right wrong without satisfying his own justice by a work of atonement of infinite value.

On page 428 Calvin is quoted again as arguing from the necessity of satisfying the justice of God.

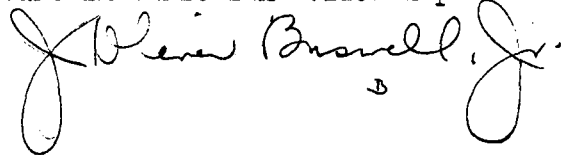
"'Because a deserved curse obstructs the entrance, and God in His character of judge is hostile to us, expiation must necessarily intervene, that as a priest employed to appease the wrath of God, He may reinstate us in His favour. Wherefore, in order that Christ might fulfil this [priestly] office, it behoved Him to appear with a sacrifice By the sacrifice of His death He wiped away our guilt, and made satisfaction for sin.'" (quoted by Franks, page 431)

At the bottom of page 435 Franks interprets Calvin as teaching that salvation depends upon God's mere good pleasure. This is, of course, perfectly correct and contrary to Anselm's first idea of necessity but not at all contrary to the second and more important idea of necessity.

I feel that Franks has not in any sense destroyed the great teaching of Hodge on this important subject. I must read the quotation from Calvin in the context but Franks has not lined up Calvin with Thomas Aquinas or with Biel so far as I can see.

Thank you very much for lending me this book. Please continue the argument. I get great profit out of such discussion.

Yours in Christian fellowship

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. Owen Brunell, Jr." with a small "Jr." at the end. The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

JOE/jw

April
seventeen
1939

Dear Dr. Clark

I dictated the enclosed long memorandum in Louisville yesterday. I hope you do not find it too burdensome.

Leibnitz' "New System" does not seem to be in the Library. I shall try to get hold of a copy somewhere. I want to read the chapter three to which you refer.

If you find the reference in Descartes please let me know. If we cannot find it I should like to place an order with some second-hand dealer for the work to which Hodge refers.

By the way, at the bottom of page 409 in Volume I, Hodge makes a remarkable reference to Calvin.

In the context Calvin says some things which might be interpreted in an opposite way, but in the following section Calvin seems very clearly to regard the character of God, not the arbitrary will of God, as the ultimate determining factor in Ethics. Calvin strongly denies that anything outside of God is superior to his will, but I do not find Calvin saying, as Thomas Aquinas does, that the justice of God's character is subject to change by his will.

Very cordially yours

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.

JOB/B

*Dictated before we talked
the other night
JOB/B*

April 27th 1939.

Memorandum on Descartes et c.

Dear Dr. Buswell,

Your lengthy, and yet for that very reason all the more interesting material on our current discussion could very well stand a great deal of consideration. Without a dictaphone and stenographer I must omit some details I should like to include.

The notion to which Hodge refers, that God could make a plane triangle with interior angles other than two rights, is found in answer to a series of objections. The particular objection is that Descartes' doctrine makes indifference an imperfection instead of making free will something noble; for, clear and distinct knowledge would eliminate free will, and hence God would not be free.

With the intention of showing what a minor part Hodge's quotation plays, I shall translate the first half of Descartes' reply.

"As to the liberty of free will, it is certain that the reason or essence of the kind which is in God is quite different from the kind in us, seeing that it is absurd that the will of God has not been from all eternity indifferent to everything that has been made or that ever will be made; for there was no idea of the good and true, of what one should believe or do or omit, that you can claim to have been the object of the divine understanding before God's nature had been constituted such by the determination of his will. And I do not speak here of a simple priority of time, but much more I say that it is impossible that such an idea should have preceded the determination of the will of God by a priority of order or nature, or of reasoned reason (raison raisonnée) as they call it in the schools, with the result that that idea of good should have inclined God to elect one (choose one thing?) more than another. For example, it is not by having seen that it was better to create the world in time instead of from eternity, that he willed to create it in time; and he did not will that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two rights because he knew that it could not be otherwise, et c. But on the contrary, because he willed to create the world in time, therefore it is better than if it had been created from eternity; and seeing that he willed the angles of a triangle to equal necessarily two rights, for that reason the same is now true, and it cannot be otherwise, and so on with everything."

Descartes then goes on to show that this does not compromise the Romish doctrine of the merits of the saints; and concludes on the will of man and his freedom.

My conclusion, so far as Descartes is concerned, is that the notion that the nature of God depends on his will, and that a thing is good simply because God wills it, rather than that God wills it because it is good, is all very clearly expressed. But the example of the triangle is poorly chosen because the sentence reduces to nonsense syllables.

In fact, this will permit us to phrase our main problem; and if it can be properly phrased we have made an advance. Is this not the question: Is the nature of God determined by his will, or is his will determined by his nature? Of course Hodge, I p. 406, expressly denies Descartes' position, but he gives no reason.

Hodge also, I p. 408, seems to me to misrepresent Descartes by saying that "According to this doctrine contradictions absurdities, and immoralities are all within the divine power." This is exactly not the case. Hodge tacitly inserts one of his own premises, viz. that an act is immoral regardless of the divine will, and then concludes that Descartes says God can do something immoral. On the contrary, Descartes is sure that God can do no wrong; God only does right, for the simple reason that God's doing it or willing it makes it right. For the same reason God can do nothing absurd, because he is the criterion of rationality, the creator of rationality, or if not creator, at least producer. Colloquially speaking Hodge and the Scriptures as well teach that God can do the absurd, I p. 413. For to change a stone into a human-being-who-has-descended-from-Abraham seems both absurd and also more plausible on Descartes' view than on Hodge's. In fact this Scripture passage is one of two or three factors which attract me to Descartes' position. There are also opposing factors.

With the phrasing of the problem given above, perhaps I can plunge into the discussion of your letter of April 15th, but with hesitation, because it is almost a theological treatise in itself.

The main line of your argument there seems to depend on the distinction between two grounds of necessity. Now I am not an authority on Anselm, and you may very well be correct. But I should like to have your source for this distinction. I am not at all sure that Anselm is to be interpreted just that way. In Shedd's History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II p. 274 bottom, we read, "Everything is referred to a metaphysical or necessary ground." The following page speaks of both a rational necessity and a scientific rationality. To be sure the satisfaction is necessary for salvation, and Shedd, not having our discussion in mind, does not dispel all doubt, but he continues near the bottom of p. 275 to say ". . . is required by a necessary and immanent attribute of the Divine

Nature, then a scientific character cannot be vindicated for the doctrine; for nothing that is not metaphysically necessary is scientific." Shedd's words do not absolutely prove my interpretation, but they seem to support it, viz. that the motif in Anselm is rationalism, that everything is as it is because it can be deduced syllogistically from the Being of God. This ties in with his ontological argument. For Anselm, I think, nothing could be otherwise than as it is. He could never have accepted the hybrid notion of Duns Scotus that God could have imposed different commandments to take the place of numbers four to ten, but could not have commanded anything diverging from numbers one to three. (Protestant numbering.) Hence, whenever your argument depends on the assumption of two distinct grounds of necessity, I must question the premise.

But if there be but one ground for necessity, viz. the rational Being of God, many of the paragraphs of your letter become irrelevant to the answering of the question as formulated above. For example, the quotation from the Westminster Confession states what Christ did, but it does not settle the question whether will or nature is basic. Or on p. 2 of your letter, the last four short paragraphs: the must, and could not, and was necessary, may very well be true in view of the actual will of God. Note near the bottom of page one of this effusion, that Descartes insists of the necessity of the theorem, but it is necessary because God willed it. Therefore these passages do not conflict with the doctrine of acceptatio.

As for the view of Calvin his if, of course Franks takes his stand; and from my reading of Calvin before ever I had read Franks I had thought the same thing. I have just now quickly glanced over the Institutes II xii ff. but the problem is hardly and vaguely mentioned in the first paragraph. I did not chance to see anything more definite in the discussion of the Atonement. The most definite passage, therefore, remains III xxiii 2. This section still seems to me to substantiate Franks' view. Calvin says, ". . . how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists. For if it had any cause, then there must be something antecedent (N.B. he says antecedent, not external) on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it."

I must say, it is difficult to see a difference between that last sentence and the view of Descartes.

page four.

To conclude with a reference to yours of April 17th. In Calvin III xxiii 3, I do not find the notion of subjection of will to nature which you mention. To be sure, in the preceding section he repudiates the doctrine of absolute power, but in what respects and what exactly the doctrine is, he does not say; and he continues immediately to say that the will of God is the law of all laws. Perhaps you have some other section of Calvin in mind.

One thing, it seems to me, will have to be done before much more progress can be made, and that is to define the term nature. It must be defined so that, it will not only fit into this discussion, but also so that it will fit in with Christ's one person and two natures. I recall pondering over this problem a few years ago, but I did not succeed.

Well, if I Cor. 8:2 is discouraging, at least we also have I Cor. 13:12.

Very cordially yours,

P.S. Hodge I p. 406, §10, seems to agree with Leibniz that power or force depends on will power.

P.P.S. This evening I have just read a certain statement that "His ethics is hated by most of the alumni body." No doubt you are aware that it is feared by the student body; but two alumni have told me that in their Christian work in the world they have found your theism and ethics the most valuable courses they took at Wheaton.

May
second
1939

Memorandum to Dr. Clark

Dear Dr. Clark

Thank you for your good letter of April twenty-seventh, especially for the P.P.S.

Thank you very much for the translation from Descartes. His one phrase "Before God's nature had been constituted such by the determination of his will" seems quite definitely to commit him to the position of Thomas Aquinas. I have recently read through Descartes' meditations and do not find this element in them.

I think I shall have to admit that you are right in saying that Hodge imports an assumption into his judgment on Descartes so far as ethical ideas are concerned. I think Hodge would have been correct if he had said that according to Descartes' reasoning God might have made it right for men to lie or might have made anything that is now immoral moral.

X Does Hodge, however, introduce an assumption when he says that according to Descartes, contradictories might be made harmonious by the will of God? It seems to me that this is correctly inferred, but would introduce irrationalism.

I do not think that Luke 3:8 teaches that God can do the contradictory, -make descendants of Abraham who did not descend from Abraham. Such an interpretation would seem contrary to Hebrews 6:18 which taken categorically "it is impossible for God to lie." Luke 3:8 may be said to imply the absurd in the sense of the ridiculous or the extraordinary. I do not think it means that God can make a thing which by definition is not what it is, -make a five-year-old cow in two minutes. Parallel references in the words of Jesus in the controversy with the Jews, and in Paul's discussion in the Epistle to the Romans, seem to indicate a contrast between physical descent from Abraham and spiritual inheritance of the promises to Abraham. As I understand the Jewish idea of heredity and family relationship, physical paternity is not at all essential to sonship. The adopted sons, or the sons raised up "out of these stones" might be just as truly sons according to the Jewish definition of the word. See also Paul's usage of this conception in the Galatian epistle.

Creation?
mature cow

Dr. Clark - page two

I am inclined to think that you are entirely right in saying that Anselm is a thoroughgoing rationalist. I feel however that his rationalism is implicit and that he would be rather shocked by Jonathan Edwards' argument. In Edwards' essay on the will, you remember he states that God has no freedom of will whatsoever but is naturally bound always to do the thing which is fitting.

I do not mean that Anselm makes a distinction between two kinds of necessity. He simply runs along on the assumption that everything is logically deduced:- God must have a number of created spirits in harmony with His will. Since some have fallen He must redeem a number equal to those that fell. Since there must be a number redeemed He must provide a satisfaction to His justice in the process of redeeming them. My point (or rather, Hodge's point and the point which I think is maintained by the great confessions of the reformed churches) is that there really is a great difference between the necessity for a satisfaction of divine justice if any are to be saved, and the necessity that God must save a certain number. Hodge sees this distinction clearly but Franks does not seem to be at all conscious of it. Surely the Westminster Standards teach that God's election to save a people is "of his mere good pleasure" or in other words not of any necessity whatsoever. On the other hand I think I showed from the quotations found in Franks' work that the reformed theology as represented by the great confessions insists upon the "satisfaction" theory of the atonement, namely that God's holiness must be vindicated if any sinner is to be saved.

I must make a more thorough study of Calvin's writings on the point under discussion. I am composing this memorandum at home without my "institutes". I must also look up your interesting reference to Hodge (Vol. 1, p. 406 sec. X) on Leibnitz. I have not yet got hold of Leibnitz' "New System".

Well, thank you very much for your patience in all of this discussion which is very interesting and profitable to me.

By the way, if at any time you wish to do any dictation please speak to Miss Burgeson. She will be glad to arrange for a good stenographer to take whatever you care to dictate. She can also arrange to put a dictaphone at your disposal if you will give her a little advance notice. There is nearly always one free about the place.

Very cordially yours

J. Oliver Burwell

JOB/DW

May 22 1939.

Dear Dr. Buswell,

In reply to memorandum of May 2nd.

The comprehensives seem to have prevented me from replying sooner, and now that summer is near I suppose that the exchange of views must cease for the present. It has been profitable: I now know more accurately what certain historical figures have said, and think I have the issues more clearly defined.

Paragraph 3 of the memorandum of May 2nd seems to me to be the correct interpretation of Descartes; and the same mode of procedure will solve your question in paragraph 4. That is: God ordains truth by thinking it. He makes rationality what it is. He cannot lie because if he said that water freezes only after alcohol has frozen, it would forthwith be true. And so on. I agree with you that this is a form of irrationalism: on this scheme the will of God and not the intellect of God would be absolutely basic. The picture then would be of a perfectly free God, volitional, and in contrast a man in which intellect is basic. We would have intellectualism for man, but voluntarism for God. It is objected that we cannot think of the law of contradiction being false. Quite true, because we are made that way; but the theory replies that God could make us otherwise, could give us other categories by which to think, and under such conditions we could not think the possibility of the present law of contradiction. Sounds queer, doesn't it; but I see no logical flaw in the argument.

That Jesus words on making sons of Abraham applies to spiritual and not to literal sons, I think quite correct. It still remains absurd, queer, or something of the sort, to think of human beings of Adam's race (for must we not say this to take care of original sin?) being produced not from flesh and blood, but from stone. But let it pass.

The distinction you made in your previous note, and which you repeat on page two, paragraph two, between two necessities is certainly in the mind of many of the reformed theologians. In addition to previous references, see Shedd, Hist. of Doctrine, II 299-304, esp. notes 1 & 2 on page 302. Fran's naturally does not consider this distinction, for it is subsidiary to his interests. His question is, Is God subject to any necessity? For Franks, therefore, it makes no difference to what kind of necessity God is subject. He notes that Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, are opposed to Anselm, on the ground that the former make God subject to no necessity. Shedd in the discussion of the Arminian view of this question sees clearly that neither view

page two

view conflicts with the necessity of a satisfaction of divine justice in the plan of redemption actually in effect. He rather minimizes the importance of this discussion by calling it merely academic; but I suspect that it is systematically important.

Another subject. George Bragdon relayed some of your and some of my remarks on Barth to the father of a graduate of the Biblical Seminary in N. Y., and the father sent the remarks to his son who is now studying either in Scotland or with Barth. A rather indignant letter came in reply. I have asked Bragdon to see you, and hope you can give him more actual quotations than I have done.

Cordially,

May.
twenty-two
1939

Dear Dr. Clark

Thank you for your letter of May twenty-second. I am afraid I am wearying you. This whole question of freedom and responsibility, freedom and character, in God and in man, really does impress me as being tremendously important. Perhaps we can make progress later on if we let the matter rest for the present. I am afraid I may push my points too hard and produce an opposite reaction.

insert → However, I will venture two remarks. (1) That which I understood as your definition of "emotion" from Webster's dictionary, is in my large copy of the dictionary marked "obs.!" The definition which apparently holds in current usage of the language is the one which I tried to state some time ago.

Secondly, in regard to the irrationalistic argument which you state in paragraph two, you say, "I see no logical flaw in the argument." I should prefer to say:

"I" - but I do not know whether there is an I or what it is if it isn't.

"See" - but the word see has lost any significance so therefore I will leave it out.

"No" - but negation and affirmation are the same thing, so that word might as well be dropped.

"Logical" - but logic has evaporated leaving a picture of a desert with the desert fled away.

"Flaw" - but since flaw is all there is left, therefore there is no flaw. But a flaw is the same thing as absolute perfection.

"In" - but prepositional relationships have disappeared.

"The" - specification however is of no avail.

"Argument" - but I have not heard any argument. Every word in the supposed argument assumes that the assumptions thereof are false.

Now since in my poor system of reasoning I still believe that the probability argument is probably valid, I must conclude that an argument which cannot state itself without assuming itself false, has some rather apparent flaws in it.

Please forgive this effervescence.

Very cordially yours

J. O. B., Jr.
B

JOB/W