

OMEGA II

Foreword by the Author

This is book number 2 in a series dealing with the present crisis in Seventh-day Adventist theology, viewed in the light of the history of ideas. I have come to the moment when I am going to put in black and white, with an openness I have never before had opportunity to mobilize, what I have spent a life-time making sure about. I insist on being quite outspoken regarding the formidable impact our pagan Western world has had on you and me. It is astonishing indeed to observe the inroads of modern philosophy, as a pattern of thought and action, within the very ranks of God's people in the end time. Many will here finally get to know a story they were never told. It has been withheld from them in an unfair way. It is high time this unfairness come to an end.

By Carsten Johnsen

My modest book can be read without any special background in the field of philosophy. It can also be read as an independent volume. But you should know that it has been preceded by another book: **The Mystic Omega of Endtime Crisis**. Those who have read that introductory book, will remember the way I have tried to express my most serious apprehensions: The really fatal thing threatening to engulf us -- as a people, and as individual Seventh-day Adventists -- is a spurious Omega, a sham Omega, the most dreadful of all "time spirits". Every epoch of history has its peculiar "spirit" characterizing it. It bears as its main characteristic the ultimate in pagan pride, that is, intellectualism as a consuming fire; so exactly the tragic self-delusion that brought about Lucifer's fall into sin and eternal perdition.

History is repeating itself. What happened about the beginning of this century, is happening again. And one strange word proves true again: The only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history. We refuse to learn. For true learning can only take place in an atmosphere of personal freedom.

Right in the midst of our most influential institutions the proud titanism of a sadly deluded intellectual elite persist in tempting serious young truth-seekers to adopt an attitude of doubt and disdain toward some well-established landmark truths our pioneers arrived at after having battled heroically in a humble spirit of prayer and total surrender to the only One who really knows.

Page 2

It is, first and foremost, the research methods of which our brethren of old availed themselves, that have become the object of deadly attack. What then, was so terribly wrong with those valiant men of a historic era who, together with Ellen White, strove with tears to come to a meaningful understanding of the Scriptures and the will of God for them, as a chosen people of the endtime? The formidable sledge hammer hurled out to crush the last trace of validity and worthiness in their work, is the accusation that their very methodology of theological study was immature and dilettantish. Their general expository system is being downrated as unscientific. By whom? By the great elite of modern men who "really know." A term particularly derogatory, as they use it, in order

to brand the theology of the pioneers as unworthy, is the "proof-text method". They oppose that to the "historic-linguistic" or "contextual method". A little later we are going to have a close look at these different methodologies in the light of just elementary logic.

What is the constant implication -- and sometimes the explicit affirmation -- coming from certain of those scholars right in the field of S.D.A. Biblical research? They boast that an enormously positive change has taken place from a certain date onward. It was only about the time when our Adventist scholars began to come out, with their full Ph.D.s from the theological seminaries of non-Adventist universities, that the marvel could take place. (The mid thirties is suggested as a time of a significant cross-roads experience). Only then could there be any reasonable hope of arriving at reliable results on the part of Seventh-day Adventist researchers in their expository studies regarding a series of difficult passages in the Bible.

Is this a faithful presentation of the real facts? My question is not a negligible one. For if that presentation is true, then we must face all the implications devolving from it. If, on the other hand, the accusation directed against the deepest quality of our pioneers' work constitutes a downright adulteration of the actual facts, then that too is something we shall all have to face squarely and honestly.

Why So Many S.D.A. Readers Seem Uncomfortable When the Word "Omega" is Mentioned

The term "Omega", as I have clearly pointed out in my **Mystic Omega of End-time Crisis**, does not stand for the true Omega. For in the Bible that means only one thing, namely He who is the End, as well as the Beginning, the faithful One who leads His followers triumphantly into the time of the end, the consummation of their faith in the gloriously returning Redeemer, who must put an end to so many old things, in order to establish something entirely new.

Page 3

In this Omega series, on the contrary, the reference is to a false Omega, an Omega just as spiritualistic as the Alpha had been. The great boon in that philosophy is rather timelessness and spacelessness. So there is no talk of either a beginning or an end of anything whatsoever in the concrete sense of Christian realism.

Some of my students and readers ask me with obvious signs of a certain displeasure; Why do you speak in philosophical terms, putting philosophy almost everywhere?

I am not the one who is "putting" philosophy everywhere. Philosophy *is* everywhere. It has always been. You need not urge philosophy to enter. For it is there all the time, for good or for evil. It was Kellogg's philosophy that destroyed his life. And what about those erudite ones today, whose erudition has estranged them from the simple truths of the Spirit of Prophecy? It is their philosophy which is about to destroy their faith in the Advent message, turning some of our most gifted and influential theologians into enemies of the faith given by God to our fathers.

On the other hand, it was Ellen White's peculiar philosophy that carried her across the gulf of darkness and destruction. For a person's philosophy, you see, is that person's deepest outlook, and his inmost being. It is simply the way he looks at life, at the world and himself, and first and last *the way he looks upon God*.

So my Omega series has one purpose. It is to demonstrate the destiny-laden role of philosophy even in your little world and mine. It is my responsibility to do my best to show, particularly to the young who are growing up among us, what has been the nefarious influence of pagan thought-forms in every stage of the deviations happening to our denomination. What has actually taken place was bound to take place from the moment on that we permitted pagan thought patterns to penetrate our minds and our hearts.

Between my **Omega I** and my **Omega II** I saw it important to publish my book; **The Part of the Story You Were Never Told About Agape and Eros**. It is the fundamental motif of the Western World, Eros, which you see ascending upon the throne of mankind wherever and whenever a spiritualist philosophy invades a territory. This was what happened in a most spectacular way half a millennium before Christ, in Europe with Plato, and in the Eastern World with Buddha.

Who is Eros? He is described by Plato himself as the great Sorcerer. In our world today he asserts himself mainly as the incredibly irresponsible Playboy. Did you ever hear about playboy theology? You should know that the Eros theologian is a living reality all around us, and right within us. You had better get to know him as he really is. But that is possible only at the moment when, for due comparison, you have first got to know the greatest thing ever, in any world: **AGAPE**. That is the incomparable force, the matchless personality of Jesus Christ, a specimen of Love man has no chance of being acquainted with outside the kingdom of God, that is, nowhere outside the unique story about Jesus of Nazareth.

Page 4

After we have contemplated the marvels of Jesus Christ and the beauties of His holiness, we may dare to have a brief look, for the completeness of our realism, at some weirdly revealing details of Western man's destiny-laden descent into the abysmal depths of the most dangerous philosophy ever invented by devils or men. In this present book I am trying to give a clear picture of the strange ways in which the most influential philosophers of our modern Western World, wittingly or unwittingly, have gone right back to the same philosophy that used to confuse truth-seekers in the ancient West from times immemorial.

But my main effort will be to show what has happened to you and me, unfortunate heirs to that poison-infested philosophical past. Now some of our own theologians, wittingly or unwittingly, have fallen into the pit of letting *their* thinking also be molded on patterns of thought, which used to give supreme prestige to utter confusion and inward disruption, both logically and ethically speaking. So if you and I are making the typical spiritualist's philosophy the main food our souls are feeding on, how could we expect to have anything different happen to us than exactly what we are experiencing today?

I soon realized with increasing apprehension what it would take for me to lay bare essential facts regarding the underlying reasons for what has happened to the Church at large, and to individual church members. It would require nothing less than a head-on confrontation, not only with philosophies in the abstract - that is not such a delicate task - but with philosophers, that is, individual men, found in a living historical context, men subject, like you and me, to the specific dramas of individual destinies, the strange vicissitudes of human lives.

And this would not be all. Even more scaring would be the necessity for the faithful researcher to venture upon an open confrontation with the equally personal lives of contemporary theologians, perhaps your own colleagues, visible brethren in flesh and bone and blood. How could you manage to do full justice to such men? How could you find out the influence they have permitted those hypnotically forceful philosophers to exert upon their minds and hearts? What do you and I know with certainty about such fellow men? Evidently still less than we know about ourselves. And that does not seem to be an impressive lot.

Page 5

What can I boast of knowing with any amount of exactness about the influence that has come to these fellow workers of mine from worldly thinkers? What can I claim to know about the influence they, in their turn, have exerted on human beings around them, such as their students, their parishioners, their colleagues? Among fairly reliable sources of knowledge, I seem to have one, after all. It is the source enabling me to know something with fair accuracy about the ways and views of those prestigious Western philosophers who have influenced us so tremendously. What they themselves have said, and even decided to put into print, that is what we have to go by. We should be entitled to think that what a man says and writes, is also approximately what he means, shouldn't we? These then will have to be the criteria I shall be forced to rely on in comparing two groups of people: on the one hand the philosophers who have had the greatest influence on the thinking in our culture, and, on the other hand, certain theologians in our own midst, who have also thought, and uttered their thoughts, after them.

Most important of all, however, would certainly be a serious effort to check quite realistically what both these groups of human beings have thought and uttered, and compare it to the peculiar thinking of Holy Writ, and the indisputable utterances of that same majestic document.

I would like to challenge anyone who may question my right to exert a basic human freedom of thought and utterance to this effect. Yes, honestly!

A Continued Personal Testimony in Favor of the Scholarly Reliability of the Spirit of Prophecy in Every Feature of its Theological Philosophy.

In my "*Omega I*" I started giving the evidence I have come across in my own studies of the history of ideas, for an implicit faith in the irreproachable "scholarliness" of the Spirit of Prophecy writings, even in fields of knowledge in which one might hesitate to look for it. There is something here which I am almost inclined to call the "miraculous scholarliness" of our pioneers, over against a certain would-be scholarliness of some of our theologians today. I am speaking about academically high-ranking persons within as well as without the precincts of our movement today.

Page 6

Of course I am fully aware that, fortunately, in our midst, there are modern university-educated scholars, both in theology and in totally non-humanistic fields of study, who have *not* by any means yielded to the model of despair to which their teachers in the universities had fallen victims in this particularly tragic age of systematic doubt. The testimony of several faithful young scholars of ours has been a weighty one. Their incorruptibility should be lauded. In this book however, I shall mainly have to

make plain what has happened to the less incorruptible ones. There are varying categories of men within the privileged class of highly educated Adventists. As far as possible, we should find out essential things about the *categories*, not particularly the individual persons.

On the other hand, I have to admit, the whole matter has affected me in a most personal way. So how could I refrain from treating it in an equally personal way?

The present struggle entered into my life, as well, you see. That happened in a particular way from the moment when I handed in, to Review and Herald Publishing Association, My "Sabbath manuscript," whose strange vicissitudes have now been faithful companions of my life during some decades.

"*Habent sua fata libelli*," says an old Roman proverb. "Books have their own peculiar destinies." Well, the peculiar destiny of my book on the Sabbath was to never reach the stage at all where the dreamful state of mere potentiality unfolds into a state of full actuality, that blessed blossom of all real life. Over the years quite a number of philosophy or theology students at Andrews have heard about Carsten Johnsen's "coming book" on the Sabbath. But they have never seen it. Still their life could not entirely avoid being, to some extent, "contaminated" by its realistic existence in the form of excerpts making their appearance at the most unexpected times, and insinuated into the context of subjects which might seem to "have nothing to do with the Sabbath."

It can now even be announced with greater certainty than ever: The book on the Sabbath is coming. But this is another story.

The only reason why I have to mention the "manuscript on the Sabbath" is the fact that Elder Gordon Hyde, at that time recently elected leader of the Biblical Research Department of the General Conference, happened to be one of the readers charged by the Review and Herald to evaluate my manuscript, and his reading of it misled him to assume that I might have some clues to offer in quite another field of research, namely that of the Investigative Judgment. He must have been positively struck by some points made in that Sabbath MS. So he disturbed me quite a bit by asking me some questions I was not at all prepared to face.

Page 7

This was the time when such fora as the "*Spectrum*" Magazine and other "*Forum*" activities had just attained a sort of semi-official status in our denomination, and maybe the first articles appearing had a tendency of surprising us as particularly iconoclastic. I imagine that Brother Hyde, that staunch fighter against modernist ideologies emerging in our denomination must have been seriously concerned, already at that time, regarding many new things he had to face.

However his letter to me was not about anything of the "*Spectrum*" kind. After all, this was the relatively happy time of our history when we still seemed justified in thinking that the denomination's foes were to be found *outside* our own ranks. At least Brother Hyde's concern, in his letter to me on that occasion, was related to attacks we, as a denomination, had, in a particular way, been exposed to from *without*. Leaders of other churches, churches belonging to main-stream Protestantism, were with particular vehemence challenging our position regarding the *Investigative Judgment*. What they claimed was that it did not have any demonstrable foundation in the Scriptures. Thus it could not be defended in conformity with the elementary demands of the basic Protestant principle of "sola Scriptura".

Now the Biblical Research Director simply wondered if I, the author of a book for which he suggested the title *A New Look at the Sabbath*, happened to have any special insights regarding the topic under discussion.

I had written about the Sabbath as a "**Day of Destiny**". I had started asking a question I had found to be a most timely one, emerging directly from certain facts naturally imbedded in creation history, and therefore a question also coming dramatically out in the entire history of ideas of our disrupted world:

Does the Sabbath (the "Mystery of the Seventh Day") interfere crucially with the basic structure of elementary ethics as this world of ours is bound to experience any ethical reality at all? Does its implication of *Sanctification*, as the all-important matter of our lives, make that day a sort of "Time Bomb" exploding every sophisticated argument that human ethicists have been constructing during 6000 years?

I am very much afraid that my answer on that occasion to Elder Hyde's most direct and most relevant question took a rather irrelevant and round-about movement. My inquiries into the basic philosophy of Seventh-day Adventism, seen in the unique light of a living history of ideas, had not yet got to the place where it seriously attempted to tackle directly the topic of the Investigative Judgment.

Page 8

I am afraid I even tried to ease my guilty conscience as a Bible scholar, intimating that I did not particularly see how we could be "responsible" for always finding clear passages in the Bible, substantiating all statements made by the Spirit of Prophecy writings. And I wondered "if it was not unfair", on the part of the enemies of Seventh-day Adventism, to attack us with the "sola scriptura" principle on these grounds.

Today I know this kind of circumventions constitutes a poor sign of Biblical realism. On the contrary, it is our sacred duty to dig, and keep on digging, deep down into the treasure chest of Biblical philosophy, just in order to arrive at realistic substantiations which are here indispensable. We must never give up before we know for sure exactly where the smaller light leads directly up to the greater One.

What reason did I have for any nagging doubts regarding the triumphant goal to be envisaged and our ability to reach it in Christ's name, with Christ's help? For decades already it had been my unflinching experience during all inquiries into the strange avenues of the history of philosophy, that precisely the humblest ones among our pioneers -- including Ellen White of course -- had distinguished themselves through a factual grasp of essential truths which still seemed to remain almost a total secret to the famous experts in theology in the contemporary world. I had, on so many occasions already, been tremendously impressed every time when I discovered what marvelous light of historical knowledge had come to our pioneers through the inscrutable instrumentality of the Spirit of Prophecy writings.

This applied in a remarkable way to the spectacular case of platonic spiritualism, which I was bound to get particularly acquainted with as *the* one paramount trend penetrating the whole philosophy of our Greek-inspired Occidental culture. In my book, *The Mystic Omega of Endtime Crisis*, I am giving a brief analysis of precisely some weird and little heeded facts connected with the pantheist movement as a special feature in our Church's history, bent on destroying, in our peculiar environment, the effects of *sanctification*, making its penetration simply impossible.

I have become increasingly impressed over the years by the profound knowledge available to you and me about this main-stream phenomenon of all Western philosophy. It is a unique enlightenment for which we are endlessly indebted to the Spirit of Prophecy.

Now why have not theologians in general in the Christian Church become more consciously aware of a matter as essential as this for a due understanding of the rash conclusions theological scholars have tended to draw right in the core of those tremendously important questions so intimately connected with our Lord's call to holiness?

Page 9

I have found one urgent answer to give to that question. The fatal error which even some outstanding representatives of our own teams of Biblical research have succumbed to, can be epitomized as follows: It is an alluring pagan outlook on life that has been inculcated upon our minds and hearts. By what? By an education steeped in the traditional quagmire of proud Graeco-Roman Eros philosophy. As long as we, in our studies, follow this pattern of thought, we are bound to fail. Invariably that was the sad lot of all those who used to find their great intellectual ideal in the Romantic charms of a pagan sentimentalism. What else than tragic failure could happen to a Christian theologian who permits himself to indulge in moods and manners inspired by what is most profane in classical European culture? Vanity of vanities! Clinging to such sham values in religious life is nothing less than an insult against the basic ideals of pristine Biblical realism. There just is not any way a theological researcher with so little Christian backbone could avoid being led astray.

The Peculiar Romantic Way of Solving Problems and Drawing Conclusions, versus the Realistic Way

It is imperative now to demonstrate, by means of at least one plain historic instance within contemporary SDA research, how dangerous it is for a Christian theologian to follow a pattern of classical foolishness. To that end I must first give some general information taken directly from the history of a school of thought called existentialism. That school has influenced, most markedly, an astonishing number of Seventh-day Adventist scholars. A few of those will even openly admit such influence in their lives. But maybe most of them are hardly themselves conscious of what is actually going on in the depths of their beings.

It may sound strange that, in order to understand what is happening in the minds of Adventist theologians, we must first go to Kierkegaard, to Hegel, to Kant and to Tillich. But I shall now have to show you things you hardly ever dreamt of. So let us get one little tidbit of the goody called existentialism. I am now speaking about existentialism in its rather negative modern sense.

What I actually fear as maybe the greatest danger of all, lying in wait for Seventh-day Adventist realism, is a sort of Kierkegaardian false escape from facing irreconcilable facts. I am referring to a weird specimen of the "leap into the absurd" made infamous by a number of ultra-modern existential writers. Could it be imagined as a realistic eventuality that you and I, Seventh-day Adventists of the good old stock, would ever feel tempted to succumb to such influences?

Page 10

You may now entertain the idea that "fortunately there has never been any question of a leap into the absurd as a suggested way out among scholars within our own ranks fighting the hard battle over the Preadvent Judgement and the significance of 1844. I shall very briefly give you evidence that this may happen even to the best among us.

I am not here speaking about temporary whims, playing with the moods of scatterbrains, lacking all scientific training or every established method of scientific research. No, let us rather take the instance of a most well-balanced member of our research teams, charged with tackling the major problems SDA theology has been facing during these last decades. I am referring to Brother R.F. Cottrell. It would be impossible for me of course to quote verbatim from this man's writings, in defence of my own standpoint against his, without mentioning him by name. Here nothing should be pushed under the rug. What I am fighting, in Brother Cottrell's thesis, is something he has been teaching openly, for instance in normally announced lectures in our two universities. So it must be evident that I have the perfect right to go against them with similar openness, in this book which I am sending out as some sort of open letter to my good Brother Raymond. In fact, I consider it not only as my right, but as my sacred duty to tell candidly and emphatically how serious I consider the matter to be. And it is a message I particularly insist that our young people -- the intellectual ones, and the *not* so intellectual ones -- should have opportunity to hear. Please be careful, young friends that you do not follow in the footprints of us old fellows uncritically. You must carefully and diligently compare every bit of our teachings with the teachings of the Bible, the great handbook in Christian realism.

I should admit from the beginning that after having got better acquainted with the extensive work this now retired scholar has accomplished for the denomination through the positions of great trust he has held, I understand the great respect he enjoys, and the exceptional *licentia docendi* he is being granted. I understand it, although I am not able to accept it as fully justifiable.

In the same sense I can very well understand the alternative of escape which that prominent leader among our Bible scholars has here eventually chosen, and which he recommends for his fellow-researchers. But at the same time I fully realize that his choice is the ultimate in pagan absurdity, the most daring race into patterns of thought invented by modernist philosophy that has ever been witnessed in the history of our denomination. At least I for my part have never seen any teaching disseminated among us that was more clearly inspired by the arch-pagan heritage of Western philosophy.

Page 11

This is a particular reason why I feel duty-bound to give a particularly prominent place to a discussion of Cottrell's philosophy, as a way of introduction to the general treatment which later has to be given to the entire complex of extraordinary happenings now taking place within most respected circles of our denomination.

I have not, so far, seen any writer treating these particular things with the openness and philosophico-historical thoroughness they certainly deserve. It is not only in lectures presented publicly in our two universities in America, but also in semiofficial papers in our midst, having a wide circulation, particularly among our intellectuals, that Cottrell's views have had a broad publicity. So I do not see any intelligent reason why a

critical review should not have an equally wide distribution. For I must repeat: never did I observe anything more symptomatic of the boldness with which pagan thought-forms may insinuate themselves into the sacred halls of an ultra-orthodox Protestant Church.

At the same time I fully realize how tempting this "way out" must appear to those who have really come to the conclusion, after years and decades of careful and conscientious study (under the leadership of just such inspiring leaders as Brother Cottrell), that the Bible and the EGW writings pronounce "mutually exclusive" ideas about Jesus Christ's most important ministry. The temptation must be increasing every day to agree with their outstanding colleague, also in the solution he arrives at as the only possible one. For it is in a way a solution which may appear relatively sympathetic to those who still have a deep respect for Ellen White and the Spirit of Prophecy writings in the history of Seventh-day Adventism.

The first time I myself had the extraordinary experience of hearing this "solution" of the "insoluble problem", presented (in a lecture given at LLU), was in the spring of 1980.

To me, with the studies of ancient and modern philosophy as my background, it immediately appeared as a proclamation of ultimate desperateness. It was something I had never had sufficient imagination to expect in our denomination. My feelings might be described as somewhat similar perhaps to those of John, the revelator, where he says (Rev. 17:6b): *"I wondered with great admiration."*

Page 12

The *composite verb admirari*, borrowed by the KJV from the Latin, here still has the meaning of the original simplex: "mirari". Mirari means just staring at something in blank wonder. It means to be flabbergasted, dumbfounded, simply speechless with wonder. You may recall from that text in Revelation that there was something almost like a slight reproach in the ministering angel's question to the prophet on that occasion, as this comes out in the following verse: *"Wherefore didst thou wonder?"*

In other words, how, my dear John, could you expect anything less profoundly pagan than this coming to the fore, sooner or later?

But what, then, was John staring at in such speechless wonder? He himself describes his vision in these terms: *"I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the martyrs (or witnesses) of Jesus."*

It can hardly be denied: What impressed the prophet most, at the moment when he had his vision, was the woman mounted on the beast. And what our SDA Bible commentary here points out, is certainly true: John, for his part, does use far more space to describe *her* (the human individual he saw) than to describe the beast carrying her on its back (7BC 853). The angel, however, in his explanation, *"dwells almost altogether on the beast"*. Why? The explanation is not farfetched at all: The human being just cannot do anything entirely on his own. The woman is not the formidable beast of the bottomless pit. By no means. The human agent of infidelity depends on a vehicle. That vehicle is paganism, the great scheme of the devil himself, his diabolical philosophy devised and introduced into the world from times immemorial. That was the philosophy adopted very early by the nominal Christian Church for long centuries.

So how could we hope to get any adequate understanding, any clear idea, about the rider (in John's case: the incredible woman), unless we have first taken the trouble

to understand the nature of the beast ridden upon. True, the angel does not say that there is no reason whatsoever for the onlooker (John) to be astonished. No, the mystification itself is natural enough, but he (the angel) is going to clear it all up: *"I will tell thee the mystery of the woman -- and of the beast that carrieth her."* Rev. 17:7.

And here it is the strange connection between the two that provides the answer. The woman could not do a thing without the vehicle she had at her disposal (the beast). And that vehicle was pagan through and through. It is the woman who provides the mixture between paganism and Christianity. But in providing that monstrous amalgamation, the only thing she depends upon is the beast, the age-old environment of utter secularization. The pagan beast is her sole foundation, if you can intelligently speak at all about a "foundation" where the ground that carries you is as shaky and illusory as such a beast is bound to turn out to be in the last analysis.

Page 13

With this I am right back to my topic of an entirely worldly trend of intellectualism pervading our minds and hearts, more and more today. At a time when our entire denominational school system is being secularized (paganized) more and more from day to day. (See the last chapter of ***Omega I***), we must be prepared for the worst.

The age-old institution of intrepid paganism, this and nothing else, has deluded man's all-important vehicle, his very motive power. Remember what happened to the woman, drunken with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. The ecclesiastical power that woman stands for, was, from the very beginning, entirely sustained and supported (as long as the support could possibly last, of course) by a secular one, an openly godless one. (See Carsten Johnsen: *Abysos as a Biblical Term of Militant Atheism and Dogmatic Materialism*, Seminary handout 1976, to be published shortly, under the title: *"World Communism, its Crucial Encounter with You and Me"*.)

The Fantastic "Solution" Openly Proposed

It will now be my next task to briefly sketch the essential contents of the solution proposed by Raymond Cottrell. I have already told you how much I appreciate that man's abilities and admirable insights in fields in which I do not hesitate to admit that I myself possess nothing comparable to his special qualifications. But the sensational thing in his life as a scholar is something I just cannot admire in any real sense of the English term. I can only "mirari", that is, stare, remain dumbfounded.

Raymond has suggested to us a "way out" from the "dilemma" our denomination is now supposed to be caught in. That is an escape mechanism based on a theory of the most "miraculous" our Church has ever been placed in front of.

It is imperative that we should consider this theory with all the critical sense that Biblical knowledge and basic common sense can marshal. After the theory has been presented it just has to be clearly pointed out how thoroughly it is imbued with the downright antirealistic spirit of modern humanism's most God-defying philosophy.

Page 14

By way of introduction, Elder Cottrell tries to convince us of the unqualified benefits our denomination has enjoyed as a direct result of one great historical event: A new generation of Seventh-day Adventist scholars were finally blessed with the golden opportunity of education, which had been denied to our Bible students in former days. According to Cottrell, we observed a marked improvement in the accuracy of conclusions

arrived at in Adventist Bible research precisely at the time when those new scholars, with their more sophisticated knowledge, started making their impact in our offices and class rooms.

Of course he does not, in this order of ideas, put any personal blame on the older researchers. They just had the misfortune of not being properly educated. So they were bound to come out as self-educated men, that is, men of mediocre scholarliness. The new enlightenment we are now enjoying, as a denomination, is alleged as the positive reason for a new hope for the future. Infallible evidence of this is a new awareness of problems our previous men of Biblical research were never confronted with. Cottrell is referring to the increasing impossibility of harmonizing the actual contents of some Biblical texts with what our pioneers and the Spirit of Prophecy writings were once induced to put down, firmly and securely, as landmarks of our official creed.

Brother Cottrell never tires of repeating that the large majority of these modern SDA Bible scholars agree wholeheartedly with him regarding the problem aspect of fundamental statements made by Ellen White in, for instance, absolutely decisive chapters of the Great Controversy. Here Cottrell is not one bit less emphatic than Brinsmead and Ford, that objective scholarliness opens a gulf of disparity between The Bible and Ellen White.

But it is in the suggested "remedy" to this situation Cottrell manifests the uniqueness of his spirit. It is his "solution" that is without a rival in the history of Seventh-day Adventism.

By and large, Protestants have never acquired any fame comparable to that of Catholics for what theology and philosophy have called "*reconciliatio oppositorum*"* or "*complexio oppositorum*"**. In fact it is rather secular philosophy -- and not at all traditional religion -- that has developed the habit of astonishing the world of thinking men by having the boldness to blow up the virtual problem of mutually exclusive stand-points into thin air.

In the history of ideas in terms of quite secular thinking, it is true, this phenomenon of *a reconciliatio oppositorum* is so significant that we could not possibly pass it by in silence. Above all, it would be blamable in the highest degree, in fact a fatal negligence, if you and I now decided to close our eyes to what is here taking place right in our midst.

Page 15

**reconciliatio oppositorum* - reconciliation of the opposites.

***complexio oppositorum* - a complex of the opposites.

At first glance, you might not think that Raymond Cottrell would be the man launching out on this kind of an experiment at all, of reconciling the absolute opposites. In the first place you might feel convinced that he, like anyone among his colleagues, must be too deeply troubled indeed by that hopeless "oppositio" (that' gulf fixed') between what he thinks the Bible says and what he thinks the Spirit of Prophecy says. Just listen to the definiteness with which he proclaims the following:

"With the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 as *thesis* the historic-linguistic-contextual method of exegesis, which stands in opposition to it at practically every point, is its *antithesis*. Raymond F. Cottrell: *A Hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14*, unprocessed manuscript, p. 15.

And in the following paragraph the author goes on to describe this thesis/antithesis confrontation within our denomination as something rather untreatable and almost tragic:

"Our interpretational thesis and methodological antithesis are as impossible and mutually exclusive as matter and anti-matter and have the potential of mutually destroying each other, and the church as well. While Adventist Bible scholars have adopted the historical method, the church, as a whole, still basically practices the proof text method. Unresolved this dichotomy could have unfortunate consequences". Ibid.

You might here naturally imagine something about Cottrell which has not come true at all. You might think: Such a man must opt for a clear choice with all his heart, for instance something like the following: "The Bible is right. So Ellen White must be wrong."

Page 16

You might also naturally assume: Such a cutting short of the matter could not take place without a most painful experience in Cottrell's deepest heart. For it is evident that he is still heartily attached to the idea of the Spirit of Prophecy as something an old Seventh-day Adventist can never give up without the agonizing feeling of having had to give up Seventh-day Adventism itself. To Cottrell, the act of giving up your faith in the divine origin of the visions of Ellen White comes pretty close to giving up your very survival as a Seventh-day Adventist. That man seems to have a heart vibrating with existential engagement and ultimate concern. So when I hear his cry of despair, how could I fail to adopt toward him the same attitude of sympathy that I express toward other cases, in the history of modern philosophy, of man's desperate leap into the ultimate absurdity. What I grant to Kierkegaard and Tillich I must grant to Cottrell. It is evident that our man finds his refuge in an escape mechanism which is not one bit less tragic than the one existentialist philosophers in our day have made famous. Raymond Cottrell goes on to say his final say, and it is tragic indeed:

"The only way to resolve a problem such as this, is to find synthesis on a higher level of understanding."

In the following pages he presents that hermeneutic of his, evidently without any sense of shame or hesitation. It is precisely the disrupted kind of pagan synthesis to which we in our culture have fallen victim. He describes it as the "hermeneutical bridge" from the historic method to the concepts Seventh-day Adventists (including Ellen White) have, so far, based on Daniel 8:14.

Was there anything different in what happened to seriously troubled theologians of the past, such as Kierkegaard and Tillich? They, as well, had a deep sigh of relief at the moment when they decided that they did not have to engage in any "positive findings" of modern scientific research, on the one hand, or against the childlike statements of the Scriptures on the other hand. God's truths were of an "entirely different order." They were "beyond all puny mathematical logicalness." God's thoughts and dealings did not need to make sense.

Exactly in the same way Cottrell has found peace for his tormented soul as a sophisticated Bible scholar. He has solved the problem. He has found the principle of a "synthesis on a higher level of understanding."

How that Blessed "Synthesis" is Conceived of when Some Practical Details have to be Faced

Now then, please do not imagine that the depositor of these shrewd ideas among us is a person making the impression of taking rather lightly what the denomination has cherished as sacred from the beginning until now; for instance our traditional faith in the Spirit of Prophecy messages as an infallible guide-line for our feet in times of dire emergency. Rather the very opposite. (By the way, there is something here that seems to apply to all the men among us who have felt they ought to change radically our trends of interpretation in front of the questions of Daniel 8:14, etc. You will hardly find among that group of learned SDA exegetes one single man who directs his criticism against Ellen White. The criticism is directed against certain unfortunate trends of theological interpretation. And Ellen White is "not a theologian."

Page 17

But can these men accept Cottrell's "solution"? I doubt that they would have the lightmindedness of doing that, in the first round at least. I rather tend to imagine that some of the more doubting Thomases among our scholars would have an icy thrill creeping down their spine when they first listen to Brother Cottrell's suggestion of a way of escape.

But what is his "solution" really like then, in this concrete instance? How does Cottrell manage to still defend the doctrine of inerrancy regarding the teachings coming to us through Ellen G. White's ministry? Nobody, You see, is more emphatic in extolling Ellen White as the great prophetess par excellence of the people of God in the endtime. Therefore, he says, we must accept what her message has handed down to us in terms of basic landmarks for our faith as the very truth, the full truth and nothing but the truth.

But then how come that Ellen White apparently can permit herself to go so boldly against certain things the Bible says about Christ's ministry in the sanctuary? For here, as we recall, Cottrell is more emphatic maybe than anybody else, pointing out the great superiority of, according to Cottrell, the modern research method. The modern researchers' accurate knowledge was, according to Cottrell, arrived at for the simple reason that they applied the historicolinguistic method of exegesis. This has led them to conclusions quite opposite to those expressed solemnly and categorically by Ellen White in the *Great Controversy*. But how then can the Prophetess, with "her" now classical doctrines about 1844 and the Investigative Judgement dare to go contrary to the "evident" testimony of the Scriptures?

Cottrell's explanation is scarily simple and straightforward: Ellen White, in her capacity as the great Prophetess of the endtime has a *right* to do all this. She is divinely entitled to *reinterpret* prophecies of the Bible in accordance with God's special intentions in the endtime. "Parallel instances" of this kind are referred to, for instance Paul's "innovating interpretations" of statements in the Old Testament. To the first century Christians such OT prophecies constituted the treasury from which they had to draw.

Page 18

It will have to remain one of the tasks of my continued "Omega" series to examine the nature of those "reinterpretations", allegedly undertaken by New Testament writers, "radically changing" the contents of Old Testament statements, as Cottrell contends. So far, I can only say that this whole trend of thought reminds me terribly of a Norwegian theologian of worldwide reputation, Thorleif Boman. You would hardly think it possible that a learned researcher of Boman's dimensions could devise a pattern of reinterpretation as fantastic as the one he describes in a *festschrift* in honor of the American theologian Piper. First I should point out that this same Boman has become rightly famous in the entire world of Christian theology for the outstanding work he has accomplished in the field of comparing Hebrew thought forms to Greek thought forms. But he certainly has not become rightly famous for his innovating ideas about Pauline anthropology. It is his interpretation of Philippians 1:23 that I can hardly help finding incredible.

Boman argues that Paul arrived at a time in his life when a crisis happened to him and to his ministry, a time when he desperately needed something more heartily comforting than the old Hebrew belief that man is absolutely unconscious in death, and has to wait until the time of the end for the life-restoring miracle of a resurrection. Paul, allegedly, longed so intensely to "depart and be with the Lord", that he caused a veritable transformation to take place in basic Jewish anthropology, actually substituting for it nothing less than the old Greek pattern of belief; that is, a downright platonic belief in the beyond, so a certain type of immortal-soulism.

According to Boman, it was even in God's providence that Paul should thus arrive at a "new insight" of that kind. For God knew what neither Paul nor the other first century Christians could be supposed to know, namely that there would be a vast "delay of the parousia". Centuries and millennia would pass without any fulfillment of the promise of Christ's return. So Paul, the new outstanding prophet and New Testament writer was commissioned by God to prepare the "desperately needed theological transition toward a new great idea; that is, the doctrine of an instantaneous entrance into the presence of the Lord for His dear little children, scared in the face of death."

Maybe the most fabulous part of the story is that Boman visualizes Paul as holding both views at the same time. In other words, the apostle is seen as some sort of tightrope-walker, balancing, anthropologically speaking, between pagan dualism and Christian totality. We do realize, don't we, that "reinterpretations" of this kind are not Biblical. They are rather symptoms of a mental derangement one might call theological schizophrenia (a certain splitness, sometimes happening to outstandingly intelligent minds.) Now, if you and I give doctrinal support to reinterpretations, allegedly produced, not by Paul this time, but by Ellen White, can we claim to be Biblical and truly intelligent, as Christianity counts intelligence?

Page 19

Our most urgent task at the moment, however, will be to make some more general discoveries of prime importance to a general evaluation of this type of derailment in theology, and in sound philosophy as well.

Where Does the Pattern of Thought Behind these Weird Manipulations have its Historical Origin?

For the purpose of making this important question crystal clear, I now intend to do some thorough work along the lines of our Occidental history of ideas during recent centuries. I want to examine some little known facts about four otherwise well-known men who have exerted a profound influence on the thought-forms of modern theologians: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Kant and Tillich.

If you fear that this is going to be a dry, technical drawing out of an unimportant side-line, and should therefore not be imposed upon the attention of our rank and file members, young and old, indiscriminately, then you are regrettably mistaken.

For in that case you just do not have any realistic grasp of the fascinating influence those men have exerted on the basic thought patterns of your own mind, and particularly on the thought patterns of men in our very midst, men who, in their turn, were destined to become fascinatingly influential among us. You may be ignorant about most of this. And you are perhaps not at all the one to be heavily blamed for that ignorance. Those among us who did know, and who have simply withheld the knowledge, are the ones to be most heavily blamed.

This story itself is as understandable as it is humanly gripping. The impact of the classical romanticism it tells about, has been deleterious, wherever it was permitted to penetrate unhampered. And that was again and again the sad destiny, particularly, of environments in which a certain fog tended to constitute the prevailing atmosphere. I am speaking about an intellectual type of haze such as we shall always be doomed to have where blank ignorance or still worse, half-knowledge, is allowed to reign.

Page 20

The Case of Hegel

Nothing could be more fit than Hegel's philosophy to shed a distinctive light upon what is happening today in theological research, as it is carried on by some researchers. In order to evaluate the proper source from which some peculiar phenomena of expository logic must be flowing, we should first have some elementary knowledge about a historic phenomenon called the *dialectical method*. That method has been made particularly famous by two men: (1) the German super-idealist Hegel and (2) the German super-materialist Marx.

Some readers may recall from my first book on "Omega" the fantastic story about ultra-radical spiritualism and ultra-radical materialism coming together in some cryptic meeting-place (p. 50). What those opposite movements of philosophy still have in common, considered from the view-point of Christian realism, is their desperate extreme in terms of bare humanism. Extreme humanism has always been foolish. It was bound to be.

According to Hegel, all human thinking in this world evolves with the inherent dynamism of an irrepressible necessity. That evolution automatically adopts the form of a tremendous movement between diametrical opposites. The idea of "white" inevitably leads you to the idea of "black." Any living notion, it is claimed, will necessarily move toward the stance of its own negation. The idea of good, for instance, irresistibly drives you toward the idea of evil.

"But please do not be intimidated by this fact, little man," seems to be the word of reassurance, flung out to us from the elevated chair of the great philosopher.

What then is the word of consolation whispered intensively into man's ear in order to calm down his troubled brain, as well as his troubled heart? According to Hegel, there is nothing basically tragic whatsoever in this controversial movement. True, it is in the very nature of all spirit that it must split itself up in this odd way. But pluck up your courage, poor human creature: man's thought does not by any means remain at that controversial level of an inner disruption. No-no, the opposite terms have their own invincible way of elevating themselves to a triumphant position of higher totality.

Take the cited case of ontology (the theory of *being*, or *existence*). If you start with the idea of existence, you arrive, very soon, at the idea of nonexistence. Is there something that could unite even opposites as far apart as those? What would raise existence and nonexistence to a blessed state of unity on a higher level of creative thought? Hegel has the reply to your question. Besides *Being* and *Non-Being* there is of course also something called *Becoming*. That is a movement leading from the state of non-existence to the state of existence. Here you are on your way from non-being to being. That is what we call the act of becoming.

Page 21

What you have heard, just now, may impress you as relatively understandable talk, something sensible you can, to a large extent, subscribe to. But please do not exaggerate your optimism. You know perfectly well that certain opposites have no realistic possibility whatsoever of melting into harmonious unity. You are not an unexperienced fool. You have had encounters in your life with necessity and impossibility, controversial extremes which can never dissolve and end in blissful reconciliation.

So, as a person of common-sense human logic, you just cannot buy Hegel's blessed panacea. But that is no reason why you should take his word as a mere joke, something to be laughed at. That temptation is also a dangerous one. Please don't laugh. This case is too tragic for laughter, or any kind of hilarious mood.

What you have here had an encounter with is nothing less than the top tragedy of our contemporary Western World. You have come across its main pattern of customary thought. Seen in the light of Biblical realism, this conception of spiritual reality is bound to entail downright fatal consequences. It means man's total loss of all rational equilibrium. What has suddenly vanished is every solid point of logical reference. And such a point is what you and I basically depend on in order to make sure about anything, about anybody.

We must know what the theory here suggested actually teaches. If it is accepted, it could not fail to create a most precarious situation for radical realism in all realms of human life. The dangerous principle it virtually proclaims, is this: in our very lives something definitely negative on the one hand, and something definitely positive on the other, can merge together into some kind of higher entity, characterized by the most harmonious oneness. A more arch-false statement about falsehood itself could never be devised.

An Argument Against Which I Challenge You to Refute, If You Can

In my book *Man the Indivisible* (Oslo University Press, 1971) I have endeavored to provide a sufficiently clear example, I think, demonstrating how blatantly erroneous -- and terminally diseased -- this Hegelian trend of reasoning proves to be in a world of otherwise intelligent creatures. I have selected among other instances the drama-filled

one of just *spiritualism*, as a main philosophical trend of our culture, and, at the opposite side of the gulf, just pure *materialism*. In accordance with consistent Biblical thought, each one of those two extremes is exactly as deleteriously negative as the other. I have also, in my *Omega I*, pointed out that each one of the two represents an abstraction reducing man, as a body-soul totality, to a mere nonentity, a monstrous specter, stripped of all personality. A "body as such" without any soul, is not a person. Nor is "pure spirit", without any body, a creaturely reality of any kind whatsoever. Man is, *in his entirety, a soul*. He is, in his entirety, a body. This is plain Biblical anthropology.

Page 22

And now comes the question: What happens when that pure materialism eventually some day espouses its diametrical opposite, pure spiritualism? You may recall the issue of our last graphical illustration about the weird destiny of the "ditches" on each side of the "road", "Omega I". p. 50. What was the result of that historic mixture of materialism and spiritualism? A bastard was born, more monstrous than either of his parents: pantheism. Here the fabulous "everything" (pan) is solemnly proclaimed to be matter (the nature, the universe), but in the strangest kind of way, it is being proclaimed, at the same time, to be absolute *spirit* (God, the eternally Self-Existent One). This pantheism type of oneness (a false monism) is the most pernicious movement Christians could ever come across. Why? Because it commits the idolatrous act of reducing God, the only Self-Existent One, to the level of pure matter. Spirit equals matter. Worst of all, it takes away every trace of *ethics*. You remember how the angel in Sister White's vision instructed her to identify this movement of pantheism, breaking in upon us. It was equated with "*the free love tendency*". And that is exactly what I found to be a most striking synonym for what historians of ideas in modern times have termed "Eros", the diametrical opposite of *Agape*, the fundamental motif of Christian philosophy. Pantheism's main intention is to do away with all concepts of holiness. It excludes the all-important Biblical fact of personalism, the freedom of the will. It dulls all sense of shame and guilt. So it is impenitence short and sweet. Its main tool in the field of logic is also a murderous weapon: It just commits the treacherous act of doing away with antithesis. But my main argument here against Hegel is a logical one: the two opposites ("pure matter" versus "pure spirit") do not merge in such a way that they suddenly turn into a higher and most positive entity. "Pure matter" is an idea of nothingness, and so is "pure spirit". So each one of them is a miserable zero. And $0 + 0$ is not something infinitely positive. The sum remains 0, in time and eternity. The mixture of two evils (materialism plus spiritualism) does not produce a super-reality. It rather means the annihilation of all positive reality. It means an indefinitely increasing evil.

Page 23

Now back then to precisely that precarious case of ours in the dramatic age of theological polarizations. At the very moment that you and I have pushed our polarization quarrels in theology to their ultimate extreme, we are ripe for the worst of all. "Operation Vapor" was the name I gave to it in "Omega I" (pp. 32-33). Ellen White's anti-spiritualistic message said: "Heaven is *not* a vapor. It is a place." There is a literal sanctuary, a concrete reality in time and space. Christ has gone to prepare something for us. What is that? It is "mansions for those who love Him, those who in obedience to His commands come out from the world, and are separate." (Letter 253) What always happens after the sophisticated theological quarrels with their culmination in terms of

ultimate polarization, is a reaction significantly described as the "evaporation". What, exactly, is apparently evaporated (or thoroughly neutralized)? It is the reality of *antithesis*. And Hegel certainly was not the first philosopher who taught us to put thesis and antithesis in the same bottle, as it were, shaking them up and then serving the delicious product coming out of the blender as a most wonderful gastronomic new creation: the SYNTHESIS. No, Satan himself was the first masterful operator of the magic blender.

What some of our Bible scholars think they have arrived at as the great unalterable truth, is their THESIS. So, what Ellen White states contrary to this, will inevitably be viewed as the ANTITHESIS. This sounds tragic. But the culmination of the tragedy is not yet.

We can still have considerable respect for research experts who arrive at the conclusion that for instance Ellen White's statements about what happened in 1844 are irreconcilably unbiblical. I have the gentleman duty to assume that those experts are men of ethical integrity in their research. Some of them show signs of being visibly unhappy about their findings. They just have to declare what their famous historic-linguistic research tool, has presented to them as "the barren facts." They decide to face those facts, and take the consequences.

But what now about a similarly convinced theologian arriving at the very same conclusion, but then suddenly saying: Let us apply the method of dialectic concoction to this nasty case. For it is too bad to be faced squarely. Hopefully the synthesis resulting from the blending process will heal the brew. It will simply take the whole venom out of the pot.

Frankly, can we preserve the same respect for a theologian who thus turns into a magician, spiritually speaking? Of course we can still respect him as a magician, a sleight-of-hand expert of admirable dexterity. But let it be noted: to a theological scholar, the simple swinging of the magic wand cannot command any true admiration. It is not realism of any adequate description. It offends the standards of integrity necessarily maintained by any field of respectable science.

Page 24

This just is not the way intelligent science works. Take any matter you have scientifically established as a reliable fact, a true *thesis*. As soon as that thesis meets its plain *antithesis*, one of two things is bound to happen. Either there will be a consistent fight, most likely a life-and-death battle, or another possibility is of course lurking in the background all the time, that is, the "great merger". The two antagonists join heartily in a sort of mystic matrimony. The outcome of that is the bastard phenomenon so passionately desired. It so happens that it is called the "synthesis" in some philosophical circles. But of course it does not have anything to do with synthesis in the normal scientific sense of the term. Here there is, for instance, no question of sound totality. Frankly, what do we ever expect from a *hocus pocus* experiment of simple sorcery anyway?

At the moment when a person makes as if disagreeable encounters with reality do not have any legitimate existence, thus letting the hard fact of antithesis vanish into thin air, he has actually established himself as some kind of miniature Hegel. He has, in his turn, assimilated the art of what Hegel calls "negating the negation".

But that is, and will always be, an affront to all sensible logic, whether human or divine. It is the romantic humanist's day-dream way of dispensing with disagreeable discoveries in his life and in his research. He negates their very existence.

"But are you not raising bugbears in front of us now?" Some opponent might say. "This sounds almost as if the philosophizing theologian were prostituting himself, committing a flagrant moral abnormality very close to sodomite sin, so a veritable crime against the deepest mannishness of man. Isn't that a gross exaggeration, since, after all, we here find ourselves within the realms of purely intellectual errors, rather than typically moral ones? It isn't all that bad, is it?" To such an opponent I would say, "You are mistaken. It is that bad. And your mistake may prove fateful." (See *God the Situation Ethicist*, pp. 75-83: Does the Problem of Knowledge (Epistemology) Inevitably Turn into a Problem of Ethics and Moral Responsibility?)

Francis Schaeffer is a rare realistic philosopher and theologian of the present day. He offers a thought-provoking discussion of the moral effects inevitably implied wherever the absolutes of Biblical realism are obscured by modern pagan unbelief. He first points out the visibly better conditions that used to prevail in the Western World even just a few decades ago: You could then count on certain presuppositions.

Page 25

What were those presuppositions? The basic one was that there do exist such things as absolutes in the world. People accepted the possibility of such an absolute. That applied both to the area of Being (or knowledge) and to the area of morals. Therefore, since they did accept the possibility of absolutes, they could reason together on the classical basis of antithesis. True, they might disagree as to what those absolutes were. But at least they were frankly assumed to exist. So if something was true, the opposite must be false. This gave a true foundation to morality. If one thing was right, its opposite must be wrong. Observe this little formula: "If you have A. it is not non-A." That is the first move in classical logic.

Today this rule, to an astonishing extent, does not hold sway in the public mind any longer. Only when we get to understand this sad condition of the present world, do we have any true chance of realizing what land of meaninglessness and despair we, as a civilization, are bound for.

"The absolute" means an antithesis you just cannot do away with. Schaeffer admits that it was in a certain mood of romanticism even Christians went on operating on this basis of a realistic epistemology and ethics. They did not have the perfectly solid basis they should have had, as Christians, for directing their thoughts and acts in a soberminded Biblical way. But even non-Christians a few decades ago did at least have something of this intellectual equilibrium. Thus it was still possible to discuss with them what was right and what was wrong, what was true and what was false. You might, for instance, tell a non-Christian to 'be a good girl'. Of course you would have no certainty that she would follow your advice. But she would at least have understood what you were speaking about. To say the same thing to a truly modern girl today, would be to make a 'nonsense' statement. The blank look on that girl's face, in response to your approach, would be most significant. It would not necessarily mean that she had rejected your standard. Worse than that, it would mean that your message had appeared rather meaningless to her. (See **The God Who Is There**, p. 14).

Page 26

Paul Tillich, The Tragic Case of a Man Whose Aching Heart Could Find No Other Relief Than That of the Pagan Philosopher's Resignation

I must of course soon discuss some relevant aspects of the Kierkegaardian school and its peculiar way of making a conscious *leap into the absurd*, as a pacifying sedative. Existentialists often equate that absurdity with religious faith. And we must know whether they are realistic in so doing. But first, now, I want to make a literal leap all the way down to ultra-modern times. I need some illuminating facts for the clarification of our own situation of the present day.

You should know something very important about the tremendous influence exerted by the German Protestant theologian-philosopher Paul Tillich, not just his influence on liberal theology in general, but also on some theological scholars within our own ranks. I warn you that the image you will get of that outstanding personality may turn out to be somewhat divergent from what other students of the history of modernism have arrived at. But you should try to listen to my expose' for a while, and then decide for yourself whether it sounds logical and trustworthy or not.

I may immediately admit that I have myself been profoundly impressed by both the ideas and the life of that man. Tillich decided to flee from his native country Germany at the time of Hitler's regime. But of course that does not impress us as particularly unique. He found refuge in a generous America. That is not so unique either.

Americans are known to look back, as it were, to the lands of their ancestors. They may not have forgotten entirely that they themselves, as a band of pilgrims, once had to flee for their lives. It was a real question of life or death for their identity as Christian men and women. A more or less pagan territory of Graeco-Roman origin (Europe as a persecuting continent) seemed to insist on making their lives bitter and without meaning. At the same time there is, evidently, in the hidden recesses of American hearts, some kind of romantic nostalgia which is as far from Christian realism as anything could be. Thus they have a more than foolish sentiment that they have missed something invaluable, without which there is no cultural or spiritual prestige. Is it the vainglorious peaks of Graeco-Roman paganism Americans long to reconquer, as part of their legitimate heritage? Is it those dark centuries of the Middle Ages they have had the "misfortune" of skipping, being a nation established only at the beginning of modern times? One thing is indisputable and truly incredible. Even Americans of Protestant faith seem to lie prostrate in front of representatives of European paganism of the most miserable category.

Page 27

So it also happens that Paul Tillich was destined to enjoy an enormous prestige in the world. And he certainly is not the only European whom academic institutions in America have worshipped like some kind of demigod. Why do not Americans realize that they are infinitely better off without that European heritage of pagan foolishness which has become a shrine of idolatrous adoration and unworthy spiritual bondage right in the "land of the free"?

One thing is certain: America has been immensely proud of claiming Paul Tillich as her own son, and she has disseminated the idea in the whole world that Tillich must be regarded as "the greatest theologian of all times."

The great question of true importance for you and me to deal with is this one: Did that man excel in Christian realism? We are here right in the core of our topic. Speaking about Tillich is tantamount to speaking about a phenomenon in the world of the Spirit that is intimately connected with the theme of *Reinterpretation* as an instrument of theological hermeneutics. I am referring to a type of symbolism which has led many of our best men into a shrewd pattern of unbelief. But let us now rather start by looking at

The Human Interest Angle of Tillich's Story.

Did that youthful German university student of theology and philosophy, during the first decades of this 20th century, find himself face to face with an imagined dilemma similar to that of the generation of scholarly Seventh-day Adventists we are here most concerned about? Yes, very much so. And then what was his inward reaction? What was his outward response? Let us go to that man's life history. It is a pathetic drama. It touches our deepest heart to look into it. There certainly was no lack of a literal existential crisis here. This becomes evident in the years of his beginning maturity. But already as an adolescent Paul went through prolonged periods of assailing doubt.

We know but too well, don't we, what was happening to our civilized world, at an accelerated pace, about the dawn of this important century. A bold and increasingly self-important science was making statements which could hardly fail to impress and seriously unsettle intellectual people, particularly those outside the more or less closed circle of the natural sciences. Man was bluntly told that the story the Bible had recorded about origins just could not be true.

Paul had a particularly great admiration for the cleverness of this dawning naturalism. And very soon he came to the place where he just could not believe in anything supernatural any longer. That abandonment of the idea of the supernatural was to remain with him for the rest of his life.

Page 28

Accordingly the God he had once met in the Bible, and in all traditional Christendom for that matter, was of course the God Christianity has always known; that is, precisely the God that intervenes -- supernaturally, creatively, in the literally miraculous sense. But Tillich felt that the facts around him now forced him to give up, implicitly, his faith in that God.

This was a real cross-roads experience. Intellectually, at a very early age, that master of philosophical thought had made a full surrender to godless humanism, the natural creed of contemporary scientific research.

To the genuine humanist of the scientific mold, not God, but man is obviously the great peak of all essence, -- that is, if there is any essence at all. And if there is any God at all, then that God can be no one but *man*.

Not that the modern scientist feels any irresistible urge to call man "God". On the other hand, he does not, either, find anyone else whom he could think of as more worthy of the title. So if the title has to be conferred upon someone, why not let man have it?

Now Tillich, as we know, was not himself a natural scientist. He just happened to believe strongly in natural science, like so many others in his age. He believed in this more strongly than in anything else. But here something very important should be

noted. In his heart -- and in his profession--that man was a philosopher and a theologian, --above all a theologian. This mood of the deepest affection was bound to pose some definite problems.

As most people well know, there happens to be some connection, after all, between the concept of *theology* and the concept of *God*. The very words ought to be sufficient to indicate a rather close relationship between the two. Well now, if *theology* still literally means the doctrine about God, then it would not look too intelligent, would it, to give to that term an entirely different sense, such as: "the doctrine of non-God", or "the doctrine of nothingness".

Some have insisted on calling Tillich just a philosopher -- and nothing but that. We can understand their reasoning. What more could a consistent modernist claim, placed face to face with his crucial choice of a life calling. Once in Santa Barbara a student put that famous "Christian teacher", Paul Tillich, on the spot, asking him this indiscreet question: Do you ever pray? The answer given was admirable, not in terms of its deep Christianity, but in terms of its consistent pagan sincerity: "I meditate." What more could a genuine modernist say.

Page 29

Yet there is a fact in that man's profoundest life which the critic should not overlook: As far as Tillich's youthful heart at the time of his crucial choice of a calling is concerned, he had definitely cast his lot with theology. There can be no doubt about that. Of course you may, here as well, add: Theology is a multifarious phenomenon, Sometimes one might almost be tempted to agree with those who say: When the devil decided to have an efficient means of destroying religion, he invented theology.

Anyway, we should know something important about Paul Tillich: From the beginning his affection for theology was a heart affair, something intensively existential in the best sense of the term. With the most intimate strings of affective attachment he was tied to the environment he had grown into from his earliest childhood, an environment of old-fashioned pastoral Protestant theology. At the time of his most cruelly assailing doubts, he could have chosen the profession of a philosopher, rather than that of a theologian. Tillich would have made a splendid career in philosophy too. He was, in fact, already in the process of making one. Opting for a chair in philosophy might seem a reasonable -- and desirable -- choice, particularly in the case of a man who had lost his faith in God, properly speaking. But he did not choose that way. He chose the way of a minister. Tillich's *heart* chose his career in life. His brain did *not* choose it.

The world may have reasons to regret that way of choosing in this fateful case. But the choice is a fact of historical reality.

A Touching Human Record

"When he graduated from the *Gymnasium* in 1904, Tillich knew that he wanted to be a theologian. He had been very interested in philosophy, and had read widely in this field. A career as a professor of philosophy looked inviting, particularly during the last years of his undergraduate studies. But theology was his choice. Why? Because, as he wrote many years later, 'the existential question of our ultimate concern and the existential answer of the Christian message are, and always have been, predominant in my spiritual life.' (**Systematic Theology**, vol. I, p. 215)" Arne Unhjem: **Dynamics of Doubt**, 1966.

But we should now also realize that there are inextricable complications involved in a situation of this kind. As a teacher of theology myself, I have often felt the need of making some students aware of something which they seem rather bent on leaving out of the main account of their professional lives, namely, that there are, sometimes, in a person's life, deep sentimental reasons for choosing one particular profession, to the exclusion of all others. Those other ones are excluded as meaningless, and this on the basis of the same deeply sentimental reasons. Of course those "reasons of the heart" are reasons we must respect. And how can we respect them if we are not even aware of their existence?

Sentimentality must be consciously known before there can be any intelligent hope of fighting it. The good counselor in an educational institution has to know it and make it known to his counselee: Too many students go into the profession of Christian ministry who should never have been there, -- and vice versa, of course, although that latter eventuality is not fatal in the same degree.

Tillich's case, I think, throws a glaring light over a truly existential matter. We must know something essential about the conditions under which that boy had been growing up. Paul had a tremendous admiration for his father -- and for the profession of that father. There was a profound heritage of pastoral ministry in the family. Paul's father was one of those traditional Pfarrer's of old, Protestant ministers of the gospel to whom the sacred task has been assigned of caring for the well-being of their parishioners; that is, their temporal, as well as their spiritual life.

The son had ample opportunity to observe the tremendous influence for good such a Seelsorger (care-taker of the souls) could exert, the good deeds he could accomplish toward the true well-being of those blessed souls he was solemnly commissioned to "take care of". One thing is certain and well-documented: the youngster very soon said to himself: It is a great man like father I want to be. I am going to mean something to the very lives of that great community of people whose "Heil" has been entrusted to me. I shall be their foremost guide, secular and spiritual. I am going to be a Pastor in the full sense of the term, a shepherd of the flock. Let nothing separate me from that sacred mission.

How could a young man with such aspirations be turned away from the profession of a theologian? Impossible!

We can see this, can't we? But at the same time we can also see, I hope, what problems were bound to rise up along the path of a young man, who, for the accomplishment of his tremendously existential *humanistic* task, had chosen the career of a *Christian* theologian.

What is Man's Ultimate Concern?

"*Man's Ultimate Concern*," -- you may be familiar with this remarkable concept appearing again and again in Tillich's theological message to the world.

If I were asked what I think has proved to be Tillich's worst mistake, ontologically and religiously -- whichever way a critic might decide to look upon it -- I would say this is not so difficult to discern today as many of his sharpest critics seem to assume. There is one thing you have to discover, as Leonard F. Wheat has quite convincingly pointed

out in his book **Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism**. I might somewhat summarily put it in this way: Tillich has simply made MANKIND his ultimate concern.

And now, who is man? Man is a finite creature, helplessly dependent on an almighty God, a realistic Creator. Man is a visibly limited and absolutely dependent being. You need not necessarily even start studying theology in order to know that much. The regrettable blunder Tillich has then evidently committed -- and he is not the only outstanding humanist who has succumbed to that unreasonable trend of reasoning -- is the following: he makes that same creature infinite, self-existent and divine.

Let us not, however, be so overly excited about the discovery of that trend of human thought. It is not in any respect, sensationally new. It has for millennia been the capital blunder of all humanism: the deification of man. "Men can do everything." They are even supposed to have a right to override all common rules of reasonable thought. They can, with the sweep of a magic wand, change black into white, falsehood into truth, unreality into reality. So they are more than gods. They dare to undertake manipulations which God Himself has never dared.

Tillich is the humanist par excellence. So why do scholars keep asking, with such puzzled looks on their faces, what on earth the reason can be for the "tension" happening to Tillich's life as a theologian? Humanist "theologians" are bound to become tense. There is no way *around* it. Who among men can manage to be truly relaxed in front of a dilemma as disruptive as that of the old Adam in a modern setting? None but the child of faith, faith in the God of a thousand marvels. That man, born anew, and he only, can afford to abandon himself to a spirit of new relaxation, while all other people get into high tension of the serious kind that makes us mad.

Page 32

A typical theologian-philosopher who has decided for himself that he will not be able to have anything to do any more with the *supernatural*, in his philosophy or in his religion, is doomed to the destiny of having both his philosophy and his religion hanging in the air, as it were. His dilemma is bound to remain without any solution-- unless, indeed, you visualize those illustrious antithesis-destroying *reinterpretations* of the adepts in theological magic as a "solution."

What has puzzled Tillich's critics particularly is his concept of God. For in his writings he states pretty emphatically that God is that about which men are "ultimately concerned". And then he describes that ultimate concern in a way just speculatively philosophical, rather than candidly religious. The ultimate concern is something "ultimate" in a highly metaphysical sense, namely what Tillich calls being itself.

At the same time, strange enough, -- and I might sincerely add: sympathetically enough -- he seems to make heroic efforts to give to those concepts a very *human* and a very *existential* character.

Alston, for one, wonders greatly about this duplicity. He says:

"First 'man is ultimately concerned about his being and meaning' in the sense of 'concern' in which it means something like 'being worried about', or 'being anxious about' ('I am worried about his state of health.')

But this is a quite different sense from that which Tillich has given to the phrase 'ultimate concern'. Surely Tillich is not suggesting that we are worried about the fate or condition of being itself." (Alston: **Religious Experience and Truth**, p. 20)

Did you notice that last sentence: "Surely Tillich is not suggesting that we are worried about the fate or condition of being itself." Notice particularly the adverb "Surely", Alston's confident word introducing that sentence.

I should like to ask the author: What makes you so sure about that, Mr. Alston? Personally I do not see much reason to be all that sure. Why should not this be exactly what Tillich consciously planned to suggest: We are definitely worried about the fate and condition of *being itself*. And we have every good reason to be heartily worried. Tillich might very well mean precisely that. For if, in that man's deepest mind, "God" is rather identical with "mankind", as Wheat is convinced (and he gives pretty sound evidence for his conviction. See *Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism*), then what could be more natural and intelligent than being downright compassionately worried about such a pitiable God? A God of that kind should be worthy (or desperately in need of) all the compassion we could ever manage to bring about.

Page 33

So far, that celebrated theologian-philosopher Paul Tillich may have proved to be perfectly consistent in his own secret reasoning. I am not trying to be hilarious or facetious at the great theologian's expense. Tillich certainly knows what "concern" means in terms of human worry, the worry of man about man.

Going to that man's private life history, we know for sure that he was subject to a worry that shook his very existence. I have already told you about the confrontation he had to go through, facing what he, no doubt most candidly, felt obliged (if he was not to give up his intellectual integrity) to consider as mutually exclusive positions: on the one hand the almost unanimous and particularly loud-spoken testimony of natural science in those days, and on the other hand, the testimony of traditional Christianity, the simple record of Holy Writ.

To Tillich this was a thesis/antithesis confrontation, if ever there existed one. How was he going to cope with that? Would he choose the tough road of genuine Christian Realism, or would he choose the cheap one of pagano-Christian dialectic. He had already made his choice.

As a man *without* a God, he embraced the *doctrine* of God (theology). Is a duplicity of that kind realistic? No, such a lukewarm compromise is bound to be tragically unrealistic. It cannot fail to vitiate the integrity of all who engage in it.

By settling for this "solution" Tillich at the same time settled for the greatest worry (or "concern" or whatever you would like to call that heart-rending agony) any man can bring into his life. Such a man has due reason for being chronically worried, so "ultimately concerned" in the fullest existential sense of the term. In fact, that is the most disturbingly human sense imaginable.

Worried about what? Worried about the destiny of his very calling, that profession which his heart counted dearest of all things: the sacred task of being a Christian teacher.

Some may say: This sounds a bit strange, after all. How can anyone be *ultimately* concerned about what is bound to be, in itself, definitely limited, namely man or anything that is merely human?

This may be a very good question. And it is not without a correspondingly good answer. The more an intelligent observer realizes that man, after all, is just *finite*, miserably insufficient, in fact desperately helpless, the more that observer's worry, in man's

behalf, is bound to become *infinite*. Its infinitude is a humanly heartbreaking matter. In this sense his concern grows to be an ultimate concern. Its ultimacy is in the degree of its desperation. What other intelligent interpretation could you think of to account for Tillich's heart-breaking theology? It is ultimacy in terms of Tillichian tragedy.

Page 34

However, the source of everything that is tragic -- heart-breakingly tragic -- in that man's life, was just his desperate flight -- away from the One, the only One, who has healing and wholeness in His wings, the wonder-making balm that is found in Gilead. In its stead Tillich was all the time reaching out his hands, with frantic nostalgia, for an imaginary balm, a mystic one that his deluded heart kept seeking in the metaphysical nothingness of his Hellenist fatherland's pagan philosophy, the most ingeniously thought-out non-sense satanically inspired intelligences have ever forged.

Why should not our own dilemma prophets learn something important from Tillich's tragic failure? What is that theological philosophy, or philosophical theology, for which Tillich has become famous? It is a bastard compound whose best light is just romantic semi-darkness. In the bewitching mood of that romanticism the author set about elaborating a weird metaphysical system of thought whose main goal was to conceal, to himself and to his disciples, its intellectual bankruptcy. That is a bankruptcy inevitably arrived at, whenever recourse is had to such empty ontological phrases as "being itself" and "non-being". They are just words aimlessly thrown up in the air. And it does not help their meaninglessness one bit if they are coupled with concepts equally meaningless, derived from Plato's spiritualistic platitudes, such as "participation", in the mystifying Platonic sense.

But please tell me, you may say impatiently, what should that poor man -- and *our* poor men after him -- have done at the moment when he -- or they -- felt confronted by a double -- and therefore tragically disruptive -- sense of allegiance? I am speaking about the crucial event, in so many a person's life, that he seemed forced by his intellectual integrity to face two opposite masters, to both of whom he had pledged absolute fidelity. On the one hand, there were the noisy voices, in Tillich's case, of an onrushing vanguard of bold new natural scientists displaying their "scientifically overwhelming" findings. On the other, there was certainly the still small voice of the Spirit, summoning him to yield homage to the infallible Word of God, and an old-fashioned attachment to the faith of our fathers.

Well let me speak my mind openly and sternly. If the urgency of a decision was all that important, anything, to be sure, would be better than bluntly denying that there existed any mutually exclusive options whatsoever.

So back to the research teams we are particularly speaking about.

Page 35

What does elementary research ethics demand of them? It cannot be avoided in an intelligent creature's life that he is faced with an *Either-Or*. In the great case of *thesis* versus *antithesis*, common sense logic testifies unambiguously that there is no place for a *Both-And*. Whoever insists on having that Both-And, instead of the Either-Or, is basely unfaithful to his inner integrity, intellectually as well as morally. For intellectual honesty and ethical honesty are inseparable aspects of a tremendous totality.

Do I then say: Tillich should have thrown overboard every bit of his faith in Christianity? No, I just say: This would have been better, infinitely better, than doing what he did.

He went, with his head raised, into the weird no-mans-land of metaphysical speculation. That is a great temptation to some people. For it affords the comforting sense of a certain immunity. The speculative philosopher seems to think that henceforth he is beyond the grasp of anyone who might like to arrest him and haul him right in front of the great tribunal of an ethical right or wrong. But does the God of Biblical realism respect that kind of an intellectual or moral "immunity"? No. To Him all such escape mechanisms are sheer foolishness. And He has clearly told us so.

Well, you may again object head-shakingly, do you then suggest that Tillich should have chosen the way of Thomas Paine, rather than that of the great theologian Paul Tillich? No, not that either. My suggestion is that he should have followed the example of William Miller. He too once was a professor of atheism (or at least deism). But he was a most candid atheist (deist). Right in the midst of his darkest atheism Miller was still struggling to save that sense of meaningfulness in life which no other philosophy than Biblical realism can guarantee. So he went on digging and digging for the pure gold of illuminating truth, a hope based on rock-bottom realism. And he finally found what he was looking for. Do you think William Miller was less intelligent than Paul Tillich in any respect? There is nothing in favor of such an assumption. The uprightness of William Miller's heart made him truly intelligent.

Miller too had a tremendous appreciation of the significance of symbolism in spiritual life. But he did not, like so many philosophizing theologians of the modernist mold, succumb to the alluring temptation of a pitfall I have called *symbolo-mania*.

Page 36

Some Lugubrious Aspects of "Symbolo-mania"

Do not think I am an enemy of symbolism. I have given sufficient expression to the great appreciation I have received the grace to enjoy for a tremendous gift granted by the Creator to personal creatures like you and me. I am referring to what students of the human mind have agreed to call the symbol function. (See **Man the Indivisible**). At the same time, however, I have, to the best of my ability, tried to point out what enormous difference there may be -- intellectually and ethically -- between two very distinct *categories* of symbolism.

Now, to what category of symbolism is that theory of **Reinterpretation Mysticism** related, with which we have to deal in our present discussion? The question is of capital importance in our environment at the present moment. You ought to know what has happened in so many spiritual movements of the contemporary world. Symbolism has acquired a prestige that is simply fabulous. Has this development been for good or evil? Has symbolism, in its most common manifestations in our culture, meant an increase in Christian realism? By no means. In modern theology, modern philosophy, and modern art, symbolism has rather tended to romanticize and, accordingly, cripple everything that is vigorous and soundly beautiful in those great values in life.

In connection with our attempt to face Tillich's life drama unflinchingly it becomes imperatively relevant to make some inquiry into a topic I would call:

Symbolism as the great Magic Tool in the Hands of Modern Naturalism to Abolish the Supernatural -- And Still "Possess Religion"

In several other places I have made it a point to find out to what extent the general trend of spiritualist philosophy (an incredible mainstream phenomenon pervading Occidental lands today) may be accounted for in a simple and fairly understandable way. I think I have found the answer: Spiritualism has asserted itself as man's most efficient means of boosting his darling self-sufficiency; that is, his natural urge to *save himself*. Man has recourse to the most ingenious tricks, just for the purpose of avoiding, by all means, the basic Biblical spirit of *Metanoia* (repentance). That is what the Bible presents as a sinful human creature's only chance to arrive at a viable other-centeredness, or God-dependence. Man will attempt the impossible to get around the Bible's concept of true Spirit, and still conserve the gratifying sense of "being spiritual".

Page 37

Now, does this mean that hyper-modern man -- the one you and I should know quite intimately today -- is perfectly at ease with that time-honored spiritualism of old? No, not quite so. However fashionable the philosophical views of spiritualism have managed to stay, even today, there seems to be one inconvenience a sophisticated modernist will still tend to feel about it. In a rather matter-conscious age like ours there appears to be something even in spiritualism that reeks a little too much, after all, of a much dreaded dimension: the *supernatural*.

In reality I think this is somewhat unfair to the reputation of spiritualism. Spiritualists of the genuine make have always got along splendidly without having any real recourse to the supernatural. Those who know the philosophy best are never troubled by any element of the supernatural there. On the contrary, they are perfectly confident that the immortality *they* claim to possess, is an absolutely natural ingredient of their soul. In fact, every divine attribute of the soul is an automatic phenomenon, a matter-of-course possession. Plato, the great father of Western spiritualism, did not for one moment doubt that his "pure soul" possessed immortality as a natural endowment, an eternal property.

But our modernist theologians do not seem to have grasped entirely this splendidly timeless (and therefore always up-to-date) genuine spiritualism. They fail to see, perhaps, how *modern* it really is. They think its philosophy is still dependent on the supernatural. And even to theologians, at least the modernist elite among them, any dependence on the supernatural will appear a bit too outdated indeed, and hence unworthy of men in a progressive world. It is labeled as "unscientific". So accepting it would be conducive to jeopardizing the theologian's position as an honorable scholar in an advanced society.

Conclusion: something even more sophisticated still than platonic spiritualism (classical Greek idealism) evidently had to be invented in order to preserve an air of genuine modernism, and to give religion a standing as close to that of positivist philosophy as ever possible.

This is where modern symbolism makes its graceful entrance upon the scene. And it has proved to be a device serving the modernist theologian's purpose splendidly. Symbolism, too, you see, brings to the market a smattering of spirituality on the highest level, causing immediate relief to the heavily pressed modern soul. For one aspect of that pressure was all the time precisely a certain desperately felt need of a spirituality

large enough to dispense with the disturbing idea of the supernatural. What was felt as approbrious was the *transcendental*; not in the sophisticated philosopher's sense, but in the candid child's religious sense (also called childishness). Symbolism here seemed to provide an excellent substitute. For it avoided that naivete' of the ingenuous child, and still was perfectly able to evoke a certain sentiment of "salvation."

Page 38

Of course this was bound to be "salvation" in a more or less figurative sense of the term. But many people seem capable of equating that figurativeness with spirituality on the highest level. This has been the confusing trend of stubborn atheist humanism all along.

In an age of an ever bolder scientism and its natural corollary, downright materialism, the demand for something new could not fail to assert itself with irrepressible force. A sedative even still less contaminated by associations with the "spiritual" than spiritualism, was, after all, bound to appear.

In fact, today a symbolism of a newborn and superior type is seen to have been eminently qualified for putting on the market a brand of pseudo-religion from which the divinely miraculous in the Christian sense has been fairly efficiently ostracized.

The Lurking Dangers Specifically Pointed Out

One of them is intimately connected with a well-known characteristic of all symbolism: The symbol tells you, not what something is, but what it *means*, what it vicariously *stands for*. The danger will then always exist, with an exaggerated use of symbolism, that man comes to downrate completely the importance of what the thing really and literally is, in and by itself, according to its own inherent nature, its inalienable essence. You will readily grasp the danger of this development. If the importance of what a thing--or a person--parabolically *signifies* becomes so *all-important* that the thing itself--the person himself --dwindles into insignificance, then, as you can easily understand, there is serious jeopardy in the offing.

Even if we remain at the level of material objects, and the names given to them, we can understand what this has to do with a solid grasp of literal reality, or rather the failure of such a grasp. The logician often calls our attention to the fact that every word in our language is a symbol. Take the word "pencil". It stands for any literal pencil found anywhere in the world. But the word "pencil" does have certain shortcomings as compared to even the least one among all those concrete pencils you can see and touch. For instance, you cannot write with the word "pencil", can you? In so many respects I might mention, that term, or symbol, called "pencil", is on a definitely inferior level of reality, as it were, than any literal pencil you may be holding in your hand, here and now, making it to write, or do anything a pencil is supposed to do.

Page 39

And now let us pass on the field of theology and religion, since that is the main realm of our discussion, our battle field in this book, You have heard about something called the *Sabbath*. Is that mainly a symbol? Most theologians today --Catholic or Protestant -- would say exactly that, without hesitation. To them, what the Sabbath in the Biblical canon figuratively *stands for*, is the essential matter. We shall later on have to deal separately and most thoroughly with the most sensational phenomenon of all, namely certain theologians, even calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists, who now

begin, in all earnest, and quite openly, to express their virtual agreement with the ideas of non-SDA theologians, regarding the essence of the Sabbath.

And now, what does the Sabbath stand for? What does it mean? It means rest in God.

Of course it does. You would never try to deny the truth of that statement, would you? But if the Sabbath's status is narrowly limited just to what it figuratively means, what it vicariously symbolizes, then you should know one thing about that symbol. It can so easily be replaced by some other symbol. By what for instance? Well, why not an entirely different day, for instance Sunday.

Now, in the world of contingent reality the Sunday can never, never become exactly the same as the Sabbath, can it? How could the first day of the creation week become exactly identical, realistically speaking, with the seventh day, which God called *blessed* in a specific way?

The expert in philosophical symbolism however, may laugh you to scorn if you insist on having just one particular day, to the exclusion of all others, as the only eligible one, the only appropriate one, for the purpose of symbolizing that heavenly rest, a true rest, in the arms of a divine Father. He could think of a thousand other symbols which might accomplish the business just as well, or maybe infinitely better.

For instance he might very well say that the Sunday is significantly superior. In what respect would he think it superior? He would think it superior for the very reason that there is no contingency involved, no material literalness involved, no "narrow-minded" specificity involved. Symbol function means "freedom from the shackles of the specific." So the one who feels free to choose another symbol (Mohammed's Friday, or Constantine's Sunday, or which ever day you might otherwise opt for) immediately thinks he has finally broken the chains of "spiritual slavery." On the wings of a glorious symbolism he has transcended the "narrow-mindedness of all Jewish sabbatarianism."

Page 40

So notice this: it is just in terms of a "superior spirituality" such an innovator would insist on the "infinite preferableness" of those other symbols, as compared to the "squareheadedness" of the Bible's peculiar sabbatarianism.

Or let us go to the most serious example of all. What about Jesus Christ? I mean the historical Jesus. Suppose you come to regard Him, like so many liberal theologians today actually do. They consider the Biblical Jesus as just an adequate, and ever so beautiful, symbol for that divine love, which, as a general principle, constitutes the essence of God. In other words the role of the Man of Nazareth is reduced to just *meaning* God. To the abstracting mind of a modern human believer the name of Jesus just *represents* something infinitely elevated. Now what would the practical, as well as the theoretical, implication be of that nice piece of abstraction? Well, tell me, could not then Christ also be easily replaced by some other symbol, perhaps even one that, in the philosophical theorizer's superior mind, would manage the job of representation (symbolization) better, by far, than what they think of as the Man of Nazareth, the historical Jesus?

Do you see the fatal danger of substituting a *symbol* of reality for that reality itself? Could anything come closer than that, in certain cases, to virtual blasphemy?

Why Such a Craze of Symbolo-Mania Just at This Historical Point of Time?

This is a question few people seem prompted to ask, although it ought to be among the most captivating questions throughout the history of ideas. Why did it become so furiously important to inundate the so-called "Christian" territories of the world with a tidal wave of such intensive symbolism? The answer may be a rather simple one: Something significant had just happened to the faith of Christian theologians about this point of time. It had been replaced by doubt. And, worst of all, that doubt had even come to be considered as a tremendous *asset*, not only epistemologically, but also ethically and religiously speaking. The question popping up is: How can man know anything whatsoever? We shall soon have a long look at one most revolutionizing thing in modern history: Kant's epistemological pessimism. How can one have faith in things as such, things as they are in themselves, quite apart from what they symbolically signify?

Page 41

Take the moral law "as such", the law "in itself", the law as "Ding an sich"; that is, the law of God as an objectively valid and factually reliable guide-line for human behavior. I am speaking about the law written with God's own finger "on tables of stone," as the Exodus account claims. Objective reality is simply considered bankrupt among men at this Kantian stage of their "higher enlightenment."

Doubt Suddenly Elevated to a Status of Dignity Equal to that of Faith

Protestantism, as we all know, has something essential called the Doctrine of Righteousness by Faith. At the time when Luther proclaimed that doctrine anew, as we also know, it was destined to shake the foundations of the contemporary Church.

But four centuries later the message from another German Protestant was destined to shake the Church a second time, and now for a different reason. Just read the following statement by Tillich and tell me: Could you think of an "extension of the gospel message" more anti-thetical to the one those great reformers of original Protestantism dug out from the darkest recesses of Western Christendom, placing it in front of a flabbergasted world:

"You cannot reach God by the work of right thinking or by a sacrifice of the intellect or by a submission to strange authorities, such as the doctrines of the church and the Bible. You cannot and you are not even asked to try it. Neither works of piety nor works of morality nor works of the intellect establish unity with God. They follow from this unity, but they do not make it. They even prevent it if you try to reach it through them. But just as you are *justified* as a *sinner* (though unjust you are just), *so in the status of doubt, you are in the status of faith.*"

We all know what Luther rejoiced to discover anew, and he expressed it in his historic translation of the Epistle to the Romans. It was *Gerechtigkeit durch den Glauben allein* ("Justification through faith alone.") Now, compared to that, how would you describe Tillich's version of the message just quoted. I for my part would be inclined to call it: *Gerechtigkeit durch den Unglauben allein* ("Justification through unbelief -or faithlessness - alone.") What authority does Tillich find for that bold inversion of the official Protestant proclamation?

Page 42

He is simply reaching the climax of anti-reformation **PARADOX**. I should here probably rather speak about a bottom level. And that "bottom" of human *doubt* through which Tillich clearly imagines that modern man can -- or must --arrive at "unity with

God", is not in any respect a mediocre specimen of doubt. No, it is the most radical doubt ever imaginable. And when you now hear the word "radical" you should know that we have to do with the basic concept of "radix", meaning just *root*, root in the profoundest sense language can convey. Tillich's doubt is a doubt happening catastrophically to the Western World in its last century, a doubt affecting the very *taproot of man's life, the deepest ground of his existence*. Man is here visualized as doubting the very existence of God, the only Self-Existent One. At the same moment, however, the entire meaningfulness of life is bankrupt.

But the most shattering fact about this doubt, as the famous philosopher-theologian envisions it, is this: Man, at that extreme stage of his furiously existential race into faithlessness," feels -- *in a way*-- that he is responsible for his own doubt" (Sic.)

Do not miss Tillich's peculiar way of reducing the seriousness of that doubt as something of which man is truly guilty. Man *feels* responsible for it, *in a way*. It is a highly *qualified* responsibility. Properly speaking, or strictly speaking, that very feeling of being responsible appears to be somewhat exaggerated. This reminds me of the confusing attitude of so many modern psychotherapists. They positively say about this or that mental patient that he suffers from "guilt." But what they really mean is just *guilt feeling*, in other words a false apprehension of being guilty. "For how in the world should a sick person manage to be morally responsible for his sickness?"

The modernist theologian enjoys a similar inner reassurance: There is no definite question about the sinner's accountability as an absolute and irreducible fact. Like Goethe's Faust, he can hardly help being saved. He is, as it were, a self-evident candidate for salvation. Why? Well, simply thanks to the inherent candor of his inherent humanism. By the very fact that he is driven to utter desperation in this world which he has entered through no choice of his own, man finds his final liberation from all "guilt". *Wer ehrlich strebend sich bemuht*", --that is, whoever honestly makes an effort to be good, is bound to find redemption. Did you know that salvation is all that automatic? The very radicalness of such a person's subjective experience, automatically causes all real guilt to vanish. Being a genuine man is sufficient for the hope of being delivered from any evil. What a sympathetic notion of salvation we are here being initiated into!

Page 43

This is Tillich's pacifying humanism: By virtue of its sheer extremity in existential desperation, man's "radical doubt" is assumed to enter automatically a final stage of inherent salvation. At that extreme level, doubt does no longer reveal itself as a "malfunction that must be cured", but rather as a profound religious experience. (Sic! See Unhjem: ***Dynamics of Doubt, A Preface to Tillich*** 1966, p. 44.)

Doubt then suddenly transforms itself into becoming the means par excellence by which "a spiritual regeneration for the individual" can take place!

Now tell me, is it a Biblical idea that the very radicalness of man's doubt is a sure way of making him eligible for salvation? Of course there is no sense in which such an affirmation can be said to be based on Scripture. It does not either have the slightest basis in any sound common sense reasoning.

Please notice as a general fact: It was not Tillich's *rationality* that led him into those paths of anti-logic. Rationality is basically a sound trend. It was his *rationalism*, inherited from European ancestors of both classical and modern times, that prompted

him to adopt positions as unrealistic as that, both theologically and philosophically. It is *rationalism* that constantly fancies it can dispense with every trace of the miraculous. Simple *rationality* realizes that such extremism, or one-sidedness, goes into utter unreason. Sad to say, human philosophy seems to have an inborn bias toward proud humanistic rationalism. Rationalism and irrationality are two extremes equally abysmal, just like materialism and spiritualism. And just like the latter bastard couple they may even *merge*. In the endtime, particularly the ultramodern era of the present day, their monstrous encounter is a most spectacular event. We shall observe this in the life and the thought pattern of Immanuel Kant. That abysmal fact does not prevent Kantian philosophy from being acclaimed as the pinnacle of modern thinking.

Of course it has always been the characteristic of traditional philosophy that nothing is considered worthy of being accepted as established truth, unless it can be fully grasped by the human intellect. For man is the only "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*) that humanism will buy. The result is bound to be rationalism.

But the idea that the same standards and criteria can be deemed valid for theology as well, is somewhat incredible. In genuine theology you make yourself absurd, downright ridiculous, if outwardly you say "God" all the time, and inwardly think nothing but "man" every time you say it. This must be an absolutely nonsensical and deeply disruptive game we modern men get into the habit of playing.

Page 44

Now Tillich dexteriously handles the problem as though the disruption (the insoluble enigma offering the appearance of sheer nonsense), were in *God mainly*. So he treats the tension as an essentially theological tension.

And of course it is in "God", if what you actually mean by "God" is merely *man-kind*. But unfortunately the reader is led to think that it is into the *real* concept of God Tillich here introduces a terrible tension. For most readers have no idea at all that Tillich's notion of the term "God" is simply *humankind*, and not a thing beyond that.

Consequently the dichotomy here may sound like a pretty audacious one, a downright blasphemous one:

"If God is called the living God, if He is the ground of the creative process of life, if history has significance for Him, if there is no negative principle in addition to Him which could account for evil and sin, how can one avoid positing a dialectical negativity in God himself? Such questions have forced theologians to relate non-being dialectically to being-itself and consequently to God." (**Systematic Theology I** pp. 188-199.)

"He That Hath Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear."

Suggestive phrases such as the ones quoted, ought to be a sufficient indication that Tillich has an entirely different basis for his theology than the Bible has for *its* peculiar concept of God. The real trend is hidden in a miasma of speculative philosophy's most cryptic language so relatively few students perceive how thoroughly unbiblical it is how absolutely pagan that author's thought-forms are--how downright atheistic his philosophy is, in spite of his reputation as the "greatest Christian theologian in our century."

Even Plotinus was not nearly as pagan in his theological disruptedness as Tillich has proved to be. For, as Row puts it, Plotinus "seems to deny that there is any negative principle inherent in the One." (W.L. Row: **Religious Symbols and God**. p. 71)

Let us finish by trying one more case: It is conspicuous that Tillich avoids using "the good" as a term standing for "being itself." Readers have been naturally struck by this curious fact. But again, do they have any valid reason for being so overly surprised? Of course not. For *when*, if you please, as far back in history as we are able to observe him, was *man* ever known to be "exclusively good"? Even the most optimistic humanist would hardly dare to make such a statement about man.

Page 45

In fact, many enigmatic things in Tillich become less enigmatic indeed, from the moment on, when it dawns on the puzzled reader's mind that the "Most High" in that theologian's terminology, is bound to be *man*-- or rather humanity -- which will amount to something not quite so high, after all.

To Tillich, man is the highest reality that has ever happened to our world; in fact he is the highest that could be imagined to happen anywhere, or at any time.

So he is, of course, in the minds of many outstanding thinkers. The only difference may be that they do not all call themselves theologians, most of them not even philosophers. So they do not have the confusing habit of letting man, in his theological-philosophical extension, suddenly turn into "being itself".

This is the unspeakable element in Tillich's philosophy, or at least the unspoken. Perhaps we should rather say the not so expressly spoken element. For, as Wheat has plainly pointed out -- and as anyone can ascertain for himself -- Tillich does speak. "He that hath ears, let him hear." Matthew 11:15

The Case of Kierkegaard -- Alleged Master of Paradox Theology.

First a general word here about what I call Paradox Theology. Christian ministers by the thousands today have fallen fatuously in love with the paradox as the great panacea, the great solution to every crux studding the problem-haunted road of human existence. Is that same infatuation in the process of catching the minds and the hearts of Seventh-day Adventist ministers and laymen alike? I am scared to see some things happening right in our midst.

To give you some idea of what I am speaking about, please let me go back to an experience I had at Andrews University, where I had recently arrived with the assignment of teaching theology and Christian philosophy.

One day we received the visit of a young **SDA** lecturer. Many students and faculty members came to his meeting. He was a physicist and wanted to discuss with us some discoveries he had had the good chance to make in the course of a research program he was engaged in. It would be natural to assume that, as Seventh-day Adventist intellectuals, belonging to different fields of study, we were particularly interested in this lecture. For it attempted to provide arguments in favor of a conservative Biblical view on the age of the earth and similar stirring subjects of the present day.

Page 46

This young scholar was just overflowing with youthful enthusiasm over the progress he felt that his research had given him opportunity to make, in terms of providing new meaningful answers to certain more or less problematic questions raised by modern physicists not particularly in favor of Biblical creationism. As you certainly know, it is not only paleontologists who have advanced theories tending to revolutionize our

world's ideas about the age of our planet. Experts in physics and chemistry have had their full share in promoting ideas in the same direction.

No wonder this young Adventist scholar was looking forward to a fruitful discussion of the new things he was now going to present, and this time in a circle of people who he expected to be quite congenial. In other words, he expected us to be just as eager as he was himself to have some awkward problems removed. He also informed us with visible gladness that he had recently been fortunate enough to publish an article in a well-known scientific journal in America. There space had been provided for a presentation of his findings, and the new perspectives he thought they opened toward an important revision of previous concepts, rather unfavorable to the faith of our Church.

You can easily understand what it meant to that young enthusiast finally to be in a circle of fellow-believers, discussing the possibility of his thesis contributing toward greater insights among us, leading up to a firmer faith in the Word of God. Here he had the chance of meeting sympathetic colleagues possessing the necessary knowledge to follow his presentation quite closely even in a technical way. But probably the main reason for that initial enthusiasm beaming out from the young man's face, was due to his general anticipation of being in front of a group cherishing the same ideals which had inspired him in his present work.

It is from the background of those high expectations I feel I have to view the pathetic thing that happened to that man in that auditory that memorable night. I for one shall never forget it. I think I can still see in front of me the change in his countenance as one opponent after the other attacked him with counterarguments of the sharpest militant type, or sometimes with a shrugging of the shoulders, accompanied by an ironical smile.

Page 47

I particularly remember the merciless treatment he received from one person, evidently quite familiar with both the subject matter at hand and its theological implications. With an expression on his face of mixed astonishment and sorrow the poor lecturer turned to this opponent with one last question: "Then please tell me, brother, how do you account for the problems here facing us as SDA scholars and firm believers in the Biblical record?"

The answer came in a solemn tone from that pitiless challenger, securely pitted in his domestic fortress as it were, and reminding me of the invincible Goliath more than anybody else: "I account for it in one single way: the Paradox."

There was the hush of something I might describe as mute and finalizing acquiescence sweeping down a zigzag line of nodding heads in that audience. There was -- I do not know what mystic kind of cryptic fraternity, comprising science teachers and theologians alike.

I was dumbfounded, almost like that profoundly discouraged visiting scholar who had started his race with such courage and zeal.

Was this the way out, unanimously agreed upon by the leading men of our academic institutions: **PARADOXOLOGY?**

The Marvelous Lesson an Amoeba Taught me one Day, And Why her Teaching was -- Falsely -- Branded as Paradox Philosophy

I must prepare you for a better understanding of that lesson by first telling you about a handout I once distributed among my theology and philosophy students. It caused some of them to wonder if I was the greatest heretic in the Theological Seminary. From the outset the question I asked them probably struck most of them as a dubious one already: Do Bodies Die Simply Because, As Bodies, they are Doomed to Die?

You can easily understand, I assume, that if a teacher in a relatively conservative SDA school of theology raises questions suggesting that he might be teaching the immortality of bodies, qua bodies, then the teacher could expect, quite soon, to find himself in the danger zone, particularly a few years ago when novel forms of theological teaching were not as common as today, and therefore you could not engage in that kind of neologism and still hope to get away with it.

Well now, make up your own mind and tell me what answer you would give to this question:

Page 48

Do Bodies Die Simply Because AS SUCH They Are Doomed to Die?

We must look very closely at this question. The way it is answered reveals a lot of things about our thinking. It tells us how theologians think. It tells us how biologists think. It tells us how we all tend to think in this culture.

First we should notice carefully the actual content of the question. It is about bodies in the biological world. Thus about organisms with life in them. Notice also that it deals with bodies in a general way: bodies "as such." What can, with general validity, be said about the nature and destiny of such bodies in view of the simple fact that they are bodies? Are they naturally mortal, liable to be exhausted in their forces sooner or later?

Very few of us would hesitate to answer this question with a definite yes. Are we biblical in so doing? Are we Christian? Are we scientific? Or is it once more simply our fundamental pagan heritage that has fooled almost everyone of us into pronouncing that yes so unhesitatingly?

What would you say if I state bluntly: It is Platonic idealism that has allured most of us into this rash conclusion: "bodies are --*in themselves*-- doomed to be worn out, to perish miserably, to die, sooner or later."

Do we realize for a moment how absolutely unscientific this is? Or rather, let us approach it from a moral and religious angle first: do we realize how totally unbiblical it is, how downright blasphemous it is? It simply amounts to saying: The Creator who had the unfortunate idea of calling *bodies* into existence did such a poor job of it. He simply produced organisms that were naturally doomed to wear out and vanish.

What a task soundly reasoning and decently feeling observers in a Satan-inspired world like this must have to declare open war against such incrimination! When shall we find the time favorable to start a campaign of vindicating God, of lifting up a holy name that has been so calumniously downtrodden?

"Well", you may perhaps object in the name of stern realism and scientific fact, "human bodies do perish, don't they? Death is a visible reality which no sensible person can remain ignorant about for any great length of time, isn't it?"

Granted, but *why* do those bodies die? That is our question here. It is *because they are bodies*?

Here is something extremely remarkable. Whenever that sad event we call death came to happen, this idea insinuated itself into some unknown conscious or sub-conscious corners of our pagan minds: There must be something wrong with *bodies*.

Page 49

When we average reasoners say *wrong* in a case like that, then we mean *essentially, inherently* wrong. And when we say *bodies*, we children of a dualist culture, what do we exactly mean? We mean that pseudo-scientific and pseudo-philosophical concept of a body "*by itself*". For we are all great "scientists" and "philosophers", you see, we folks of the twentieth century. We are complete masters in the subtle art of making abstractions.

And here our tough biologist friends should not think that they lag behind in any way. They should not be so modest as to imagine that they alone have no part in ancient metaphysics, our precious common heritage as a culture. Oh no, *their* metaphysical conclusions are *just* as rapid, *just* as spiritualistic, as with the rest of us. The cocksure diagnosis we all make, the hard sentence we all pass, is strangely unanimous: there is something wrong with the *body*, the *body as such*. There obviously always was something "basically wrong" right there. Bodies are, *a priori*, as it were, doomed to "go wrong", to be "worn out." It is their destiny to "rot", to "be decomposed," sooner or later. This is definitively noted down as "the case of bodies" -- full stop.

On the other hand, what about that blessed "part of us" we call our "souls"? There, strange enough, we do not seem to be all that sure. We do not feel nearly as pessimistic about the capacities of our "soul". Even the most sensible and down-to-earth realist among our scientists is strangely haunted, ever so often, by the classical idea of a "pure soul" (pure-spirit-ism). Perhaps, after all, something in that soul could manage to survive. He seems to think: If only that poor soul did not have the misfortune (the sad fate) of being "hitched to a body" -- then maybe it would not really *have* to be worn out, rot like a foul potato, gradually diminished and decomposed!

This is quite bizarre, isn't it? We seem to hesitate quite seriously to make our SOULS, even as we now know human souls to be in a world of sin, the likely scapegoats of our major miseries. No-no, it is the *bodies* that deserve all the blame. It is *they* that happen to be the scapegoats. Even in themselves bodies are simply doomed to corruption.

Is there any foundation, Biblical or scientific, for this categorical assertion, this calumny against the Creator of bodies, whoever we may imagine *Him* to be? Of course, if it is pure Evolution that is found to be behind the "making of bodies", then the moral question--the question of guilt and blame -- will not be so glaringly prevalent. But if it is *Special Creation*, on the part of a personal God, then the issue suddenly becomes a far more painfully delicate one.

Page 50

The Verdict of Natural Science

Before we go to the question about the true scientific foundation of that important prevailing notion, we should perhaps make sure what the present-day modern scientist's immediate idea seems to be like, regarding an "inherent deficiency of bodies as

bodies". For if the typical scientist's immediate trend is to downrate bodies, almost exactly the same way our typical spiritualist philosophers tended to do from Plato down, then what could you expect of common mortals, who have no special training in scientific method and logical thought?

Suppose, for instance, that our modern space researchers should one day report that they have, on some special planet in some more or less remote region of the universe, definite evidence of the presence of living organisms. Our biologists would not necessarily discard that as quite unbelievable. Now, suppose it was also reported that those organisms showed signs of being healthier and living longer than corresponding phenomena on our globe. That would not necessarily be though unbelievable either. But suppose it was suggested that there might be no end whatsoever to the healthiness and the longevity of those bodies discovered in some part of God's great universe, wherever this might be. Would that be accepted as believable by our biologists? Their reaction would rather be: this is impossible.

Why? Simply because bodies "are not like that." Bodies are, *per se* perishable.

The only fact we shall here establish, so far, is an historical one. It is a fact about human reactions in a given environment. The scientists in our particular world - and with them all the rest of us - have been indelibly penetrated by a remarkable notion. It is the same old tale passed on and on, from generation to generation: "Bodies are, logically, under a certain obligation to come out in a certain way." They have this in them, wherever they are and whenever they happen: "They are liable to be worn down and die." This is an inevitable inferiority "*bodies* as such" are immediately assumed to possess-- evidently as compared to "*souls* as such".

Please be aware of the close relation there is likely to be between that unanimous depreciation of bodies, as consistently registered in our culture, and the general trend we have consistently observed in the mind of the abstracting spiritualist all the time, whether his name happens to be Plato, or Schopenhauer, or Conan Doyle:

SOULS ("Ideas", "Wills", "Spirits") can so much more easily than bodies be conceived of as going on to live forever. For they are "naturally superior". Corruption is not an epithet naturally applicable to SOULS.

Page 51

And now to the case for a scientific foundation of that general statement about bodies. Is it a statement in fundamental harmony with the empirical data of modern experimental science? Or is it just another false "axiom", something we *think* we must take for granted without even questioning its general validity?

What do the experiments with tissue cultures in modern laboratories tell us about the longevity of bodies? Or let us first go to a field of observation which is more immediately open to any one of us who has a minimum knowledge of biology and a minimum capacity of philosophical and religious thought. What story does the amoeba tell?

Who has not heard about this strange living creature made up of just one single living cell? At a given moment of its natural development, that one-cell organism simply divides into two individual cells of the same kind, with the same function, and the same ability in each one of them to divide up, in its turn, into two independent, living creatures. Here the question naturally arises: Does the amoeba die? Does her "body" die? If not, is this then perhaps due to her particularly robust "soul"?

This is not a purely ironical question. So do not misunderstand me. I am not, by any means, antagonistic toward the idea of speaking about the amoeba as a *soul*. "Soul" simply means *the principle of life*, and the amoeba too is a "living soul". In this she is not different from you and me.

Of course she is a *body* also, and there can be no wrong in focusing our attention on *this* aspect of the marvel called an amoeba.

It is interesting, indeed, to hear the view-point of some health specialists who have given particular attention to that microscopic body. They report that the amoebae get rid of their impurities in a perfect way. We human beings keep so many of our impurities closed up in our bodies. We are simply poisoned by what we should get rid of: *foreign* bodies. That is one reason why we die so early and so inevitably. We die of simple self-poisoning, in other words.

That is certainly no empty view-point. It is probably a very valid one, the more so if we think of poisoning in its widest sense. In the case of man that would immediately mean a *body-mind* poisoning. The necessity of a holistic view here again imposes itself. Poisoning is always a psycho-somatic matter, a body-mind totality. Sin is the terrible poison that kills man. It kills him literally; do not think this is just a matter of figurative killing. It is total killing, a psycho-somatic case of realistic death.

Page 52

Let me repeat however: I have nothing against viewing even the amoeba as a body-mind totality. The amoeba is a living soul and to me that living soul speaks a genuinely spiritual language. Very audibly she says to me:

"Notice one thing, my dear fellow creature. You are of a higher order than I, intellectually speaking. But still I might teach you something of real value: There is a peculiar blessing in giving oneself to the other ones. I have acquired the passion to give myself *totally* to those after me. That is one reason why I do not die."

Is this perhaps the main answer, the principal clue to the whole enigma? In a word: **SELF-SACRIFICE** makes for survival.

This then is the approximately content I imagine of that most spiritual talk made by the amoeba to me, a human intelligence, as I watch her astonishing behavior and her astonishing "immortality", under my microscope.

Of course "immortality" here is nothing comparable to the immortality of God, the Self-Existent One. The amoeba's "immortality" is a *dependent* immortality. What does that mean? It means that the deathlessness of that amoeba colony I happen to be observing, and each individual specimen, definitely depends on essential circumstances in the *environment*. Take away the supply of nourishment, for instance, constantly flowing into the amoebae you observe around you, and you will see them die. That is inevitable.

But please do not tell us, after that dark event, that the amoebae died because they had the awkward misfortune of possessing bodies. There was nothing inherently wrong with the bodies as such, unless you consider "*dependence*" as an inherent wrong!

If that is your philosophy, then, admittedly, amoebae cannot teach you anything of a spiritual order. On the other hand, if you are deeply interested in that capital virtue we just mentioned, Self-Sacrifice, in its deepest essence and ultimate effect, then it may be assumed that the amoeba can teach you an awful lot.

As I here choose to look upon it, I might even contend that the amoeba leads my thoughts directly to the theology and anthropology of the Bible. I am thinking, for instance, of the man Moses and his relationship to his Creator toward the decisive point of his life. To Moses, other-dependence and other-centeredness had finished by becoming so much a part of his God-imparted nature that he finally exclaimed at the moment of ultimate crisis, "Blot out my name from thy book, but save my people."

Page 53

We all know the supreme theocentricity here actually implied. It could perhaps more adequately be translated as follows: "Father, vindicate the glory of thy name among the peoples. If thy cause is satisfactorily cared for, then everybody's cause is satisfactorily cared for." This evidently was the great concern at the bottom of Moses' heart.

Of course it is wrong here to speak onesidedly about this being the spirit of Moses. It is the Spirit of Christ. Christ was the One who forever set the pattern for that self-deletion, as the only sound basis for self-preservation, or rather for being preserved by God.

Anyway, one thing should be particularly noted. It is a really noteworthy thing in our special context: The Christian spirit of supreme self-sacrifice, on the level of *personal*, intelligent beings, was never, never rewarded with the eternal loss of individual identity, literally implied in Moses' formulation: "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." (Ex. 32:32.) No, indeed, that part of the prayer was not granted. It simply could not, God being the One He is. A wiping out of *personalism*, the greatest thing in the world (God's very image in man), as a result of something as great in the household of God as *self-sacrifice*, would have been radically contrary to divine law and divine logic. It simply is not found anywhere in the records of God's dealings with personal creatures, that their acts of sacrificing themselves in any way ever resulted in a reduction of their personalism. On the contrary, self-sacrifice invariably means that the person practicing it becomes *more* personal than ever before. The ones who give up their own lives, their individual security in favor of the other ones, are precisely those who, in the last round, *gain* their lives, retain their individual identities more securely than ever.

In other words, the Guardian of human destinies jealously sees to it that the ultimate fate of those humble self-sacrificing ones on the level of *personal being* should be different, endlessly different, from the visible fate of the *impersonal* amoeba. The amoeba, it can hardly be denied, did lose her identity as an individual being at the moment when she gave herself wholly to those "children" of hers. But this is precisely what does *not* happen to the *human person* who gives his life and his all, gives himself wholeheartedly to his children, his community, his God. That person is *not swallowed up by the great ocean of impersonalism*. No, there is every evidence that his sacrifice of himself confirms his personalism, enriches it infinitely.

Page 54

Moses' willingness to have "his own name blotted out" in order to preserve the "name of his people", or rather the "name of God", in its undiminished glory, did not result in any actual loss to Moses.

Is this a Case of Seeking "Logical Reconciliation" for the Irreconcilable Opposites, Meaning for the Meaningless?

Some observers might suspect me of getting into nothing but sheer paradox doctrine just here. But is it right to qualify this as a flight into paradox theology of the current kind? God forbid that anyone should have valid reasons for thus interpreting my expressions. I have closely watched my steps, avoiding to "restore harmony" by means of sheer magic. It is God Himself who, in His Word, has shown you and me exactly in what way He overrules, thus restoring harmony through absolute straightness in thought and deed. He does this even where man through his own crookedness has jeopardized every chance of being harmonious.

I am too painfully aware, as time passes, of the part played by the magic of spiritualist thinking in what is happening to our churches today in every attack launched against the pristine purity of Biblical realism, and I hope to be able to show you this in more detail by and by.

So rather than falling a victim to that same magic, I would prefer to go on record as a heretic for quite other reasons, for entirely specious reasons, thought up by sworn antagonists of Christian realism. I could hardly expect to avoid being the victim of some kind of heresy hunt, particularly so if I have the intrepidity to launch, for my next chapter a new headline, which might offend a great number of theologians, within and without our own denomination:

The Myth of the "Divine Paradox" Invading Influential Groups, Considered Genuine Members of our Congregations.

This is where I cannot help but drag old Soren into the defendant's dock. Or I should perhaps rather summon all those to appear in court, and defend their cases, who now call themselves the disciples of Kierkegaard and who make him responsible for everything in that absurdity gospel which, to a large extent, is their own invention.

Was Kierkegaard against science and the objective facts of material reality in a contingent world of everyday history?

"Concluding Unscientific Postscript." -- this was the title the now famous philosopher-theologian gave to his last literary work. Today a whole congregation of philosophizing fans, whose eager "cooperation".

Page 55

Kierkegaard hardly ever dreamt of (he had hardships enough without it), keep brooding over every syllable the great master has produced.

Now, why did Kierkegaard avail himself of the word "concluding" ("afsluttende" in Danish)? Evidently because he foresaw that this might be his *punctum finale*, the very end of his hectic activity as a controversial debater. If so, then he certainly proved to be right in his anticipation. He died very soon after having finished that book. And at his death it was even seen that the bank account he had depended on, without bothering one bit about it, had also come to an end. It was exactly at zero. Everything had fitted exactly.

And why "unscientific"? Simply because to Kierkegaard, science, even at its best, was a most dubious value "spiritually speaking." Objective thought and natural research, even on their highest level--in fact, any typically human search for truth, basing its findings on common-sense logic--had no prestige in the mind of the father of the existential leap into the irrational, the basically absurd.

You will, hopefully, understand by now what particular reasons I personally have for not daring to look down, in this way, upon sound human logic. In the name of Christian realism I must fight that trend of irrationality, not only in science proper, but also in matters of a distinctively spiritual knowledge. What helps me to stay firmly in the tradition of that battle, is probably, above all, this: I realize -- and that is a realization basing itself on the plain biblical record of special creation as a literal event -- that man's original capacity for grasping the facts of life, and of the surrounding world, is an intellectual function which is God-given. Therefore it is also a definite blessing, if rightly used. I do trust that reason is always better than unreason. so I can say "scientific" without any feeling of shame or regret. By "scientific" I mean what is *truly learned, in terms of rock-bottom realism*.

Even the Bible student -- or perhaps he more than anybody else-- should base his study on scientifically valid methods of research. He should face the findings of true science with all due respect. And, of course, after he has arrived at the inalienable results of that stern realism in honest and careful research, he should not suddenly be prepared to throw it all overboard in a mood of despondency. He should not yield to any sentimental suggestion, on the part of antirealistic philosophy, to accept the principle of an unworthy barter trade, just exchanging his science for anti-science.

Page 56

You may understand the urgency I felt from the first moment I heard Cottrell's lecture on the "re-interpretation solution" of our "denominational problem": I must get to know, in further detail, what cases of "irreconcilable antithesis" he had found. What were those painful encounters between Old Testament statements and New Testament statements, creating some sort of abysmal gulfs? Is it true that, in order to restore the harmony between them, we have a desperate need of resorting to the magic of that mythical "divine paradox"? Is this the only way we can maintain our faith in an absolutely meaningful Biblical philosophy"? Quite a long time before I had ever heard about this special "re-interpretation business", I had already been forced to take my stand toward the general "paradox charge", raised by some existentialist theologians, against the Bible. Holy Writ was repeatedly said to be *teeming* with cases of paradox. So I had decided to examine one scripture after the other, scrutinizing every text accused of being studded with paradoxical elements. Was it true that the Bible itself tended to encourage -- or in fact necessitate -- the leap into the absurd?

One text frequently referred to in earlier years in order to corroborate the wholesale theory that the Scriptures are "teeming with paradoxes" is Matthew 16:25. By some fancy-mongers its contents are epitomized as "the great paradox of gospel truth". Let us have a frank look at it:

"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

What is this? I think I hear your question, announcing that you too may be right on the point of joining the paradox theologians: "How on earth could we here think that we are still in the realms of the strictly reasonable, the squarely scientific, the properly discussable, considered from an every-day human point of view? Are we not rather in the very abyss of the unreasonable, the anti-scientific, the sacredly absurd?"

As a firm believer in Christian realism, over against the illusionist vanities and empty absurdities of paganism, I cannot at all accept the hollow and dangerously misleading application of the paradox philosophy, presenting itself as "Biblical".

Admittedly, at first glance, it may look *as if* Christ's statement on that occasion was contrary to every reason of the human common-sense type. But what turns out to be the fact as soon as true reason is permitted to penetrate and shed its full light on the passage?

Please tell me: What is so helplessly unreasonable in stating that you cannot have two opposite and mutually exclusive things at the same time?

It is the word "life" that here has to be properly understood in its changing senses. And that does not take the sophisticated brains of an exceptional genius. What *man*, too often, thinks of as "life", is just that disruptive scramble for a super-excited but -- alas -- so tragically ephemeral existence in vain-glorious greed. That is, a mere *breath of nothingness*.

Page 57

It is with a definite purpose I give you a good English translation of the Latin term so pregnant with controversies in the Middle Ages, between would-be philosophical realism on the one hand, and the true realism of Christian thought on the other hand. The empty abstraction which Plato had been exalting as the only reality, was now finally unveiled as "flatus vocis" (a mere breath; we might add a mere breath of *nothingness*, that is, a miserable nothing, which for centuries had been regarded as *something, or rather everything worth-while*. So back to Matthew 16:23 and the illusory "life" Christ first refers to.

Frankly, how could man expect to have a "life" sadly corroded and disrupted, namely this foolish dependence on his own human powers (self-dependence = self-sufficiency = self-centeredness) and then at the same time a safe rest on God's strong and loving arms? That combination of opposites would be absurd indeed. What Jesus proposes is not absurd at all.

So just a simple effort of elementary distinction between two opposite conceptions of "life" is all you need, in this case, in order to find the Saviour's pointed statement intelligent in the highest degree. In your mind there should simply be an open willingness to keep apart two mutually exclusive categories of "life". It ought to go without saying that the life you *save*, if you follow Christ, is an entirely different one than the life described as being *lost*. How could it make any sense to imagine that the *same* life is being both saved and lost simultaneously? That would be the worst imaginable trend of abandoning oneself to the abysmal depths of ultimate absurdity: the paradoxical in the proper sense of the term, just sheer nonsense, a self-contradiction without any chance of being redeemed.

How could the choice be more clear-cut: Either you persist in your mad-man attempt of lifting yourself up, just pulling desperately at your own boot-straps, or you permit yourself to be *raised up by God*.

Where, then, is that allegedly "inevitable" controversy between *God's* reason as it exists in His mind from everlasting, and man's *reason*, the common-sense logic human beings have been equipped with from the beginning? There just is not any such controversy. That spurious notion of an eternal and unescapable fight, between God and His created universe, has its origin in pagan dualism, nowhere else. What a meaningless

tragedy there would be if the thoughts of the Creator and the thoughts of His intelligent creatures were doomed to be at inexorable war with each other.

Page 58

I think we are here facing a crucial question: How easily do I yield to being brainwashed? For one thing seems evident: There is no lack of philosophers in the world who insist on brainwashing me, whenever I permit them to do it. Sometimes they do it under the garb of Bible teaching. And there is another text that seems to serve their purpose right:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9

Does this prove that plain, human understanding is not worth one brass farthing? Does it say that sense is nonsense? Of course not. It simply speaks about the relative excellence of two different levels of reason, God's level and man's level. And if you are in your good senses, would you not assume that there is a certain difference between those two levels? Would it be possible that we have completely lost sight of the fact that God is -- and will always be -- the infinitely superior One, the absolutely incomparable One? Man is the finite creature. His knowledge and wisdom will always remain limited.

It would be equally unintelligent to understand the word of that verse about different levels as a talk about God's superiority exclusively in terms of a "purely moral quality". Why should its application be limited to His moral intentions? Why should it not include His intelligent thoughts, as the literal wording has it? What is said is plain enough: God's reasoning ability distinguishes itself as infinitely more far-reaching than ours will ever manage to be. What else could be expected? Would you like to have a Teacher through the aeons of eternity whose stock of knowledge you could exhaust in the course of a limited period of time? Of course God must be infinitely more knowledgeable than you and I. Otherwise, how could we bear the tedium of eternal discipleship? God forbid that we should cease to be inferior. There is nothing bad in being inferior to God.

But does it follow from this that God must possess one type of truthful logic which He jealously reserves for Himself, and lets us limp behind miserably, endowed with an entirely different type of truth system which the Omniscient One has slovenly dropped into your brains and mine just to keep us at a respectful distance? If we continue to be believers in God as a loving Father, how could we buy such a theory?

Page 59

And then there are the elemental demands of consistency and perfection. We just cannot accept the dark assumption that God is at virtual war with Himself, can we? How could a Creator who hates double measure of any kind, introduce such a principle of doublefacedness as His main gate into the pearly mansion of sacred truth? Would that be a fair way of dealing with His creatures on the highest level?

No, our God is a reasonable God, dealing with you and me on altogether reasonable terms. How else could he appeal to us exactly the way he does:

"Come let us reason together."

What does that mean? What is God saying here? He says: "Come now, dear child. You just gather together all the logical arguments you can think of for questioning

my goodness, my righteousness, and my wisdom. Then I shall pull out all the reasons I know that you are able to grasp, so far, for the fairness of the way I am dealing with you, and with the world at large. After that, just feel free to draw your conclusions, basing yourself, of course, on the normal sense of reasonable thinking with which I have graciously equipped you to make you fully worthy of an intelligent dialogue with me."

A Rustic Brand of Plain Talk

Let me now just take one more of those illustrious "life-and-death paradox" texts people dig out from the gospel writings, namely John 12:24. It is again Jesus Himself who solemnly says:

"Verily verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Here again the great paradox prophets of modern theology will apply their own peculiar interpretation principle to the given text. That is a remarkable *mis-*interpretation. I cannot help taking issue with it. I mean with the interpretation. I am not taking issue with the text itself. A reader must be particularly blind if he fails to observe the special pains Jesus is here taking in order to make His admirable principles of life-spending generosity appear in terms which the most childlike of children ought to be able to grasp. But what happens? Sad to say, those children of His are suddenly heard crying out: "This is paradoxical speech, simply impenetrable to common human logic."

Page 60

Is it? Does Christ here sophisticatedly go to some far-fetched realm, such as Euclidean mathematics, or Einsteinian physics, or Kantian metaphysics, in order to throw light upon His topic? No-no. There is not any ingenious scholarliness implied in those words of His. He is again speaking plainly and understandably about the eternal life graciously placed at man's disposal by a loving Creator and Recreator. For that purpose He goes straightaway to the every-day life of a simple farmer. "Look here, my dear child," He seems to be saying, "if you know anything at all about simple sowing and reaping out there in your own corn fields, then you should be capable of understanding this elementary rule of life which I am trying to teach you."

What the Scripture here candidly points out is the plain fact that one great principle of life is universally valid on all levels of God's biology. What any student of nature can easily establish, as a firm and unfailing rule, also applies to spiritual life: All sowing of vital seeds presupposes some kind of liberal sacrifice. You must submit (surrender, yield up) the *old* in order to reap the *new*.

Now, what would it really mean then to suggest, as we, heirs of a pagan culture, so often do, that the spiritual principle here under discussion is a "paradoxical" one, in the sense of "contrary to reason"? That would amount to saying: "What actually happens in the realms of biological nature, every time when a seed goes down into the soil and sprouts there, this too is a 'paradoxical' happening. It is rather contrary to reason. It is hostile to common sense. It is incompatible with scientific fact."

Is it? Dear friend, you could not make yourself guilty of casting your lot with any such anti-scientific sophistry, could you? At least not without committing real treason against elementary truthfulness in the very core of your life as a sensible human being. Such an attitude would be quite the opposite of what Christ was anxious to convey to anyone among us who cares to listen. What He says is something like this:

"Notice, my dearly beloved ones: Heaven's fundamental principle of survival is not as complicated, or as contrary to sensible logic, as many of you seem prone to think. On the contrary it is an understandable principle, a natural one, an inevitable one." And then he points out to his more or less reluctant hearers what any normal farmer, with a minimum of common alertness, can observe happening right there in that black soil to which he is so intimately close.

Page 61

By the way, that very closeness constitutes the great call from heaven in that plain peasant's every-day life. Every Christian, in fact has obviously been called upon to be, not a sophisticated fool, with thoughts rambling far up in the clouds, but, as far as I can make out, just a lowly child. That means humble; and "humilis", we remember, means literally *bending down* toward HUMUS, that is toward *earth*. Christ Himself was precisely like that. He was the Humble One. His "bias" was down to earth. His heart's inclination was earthward. I am even speaking about *Earth*, the rebellious planet. This was the literal place He was eternally bound for.

Woe to you and me, by the way, miserable earth-worms, if our Lord had not been just that way: *humilis*. See Matthew 11:25:

"I am lowly in heart."

If Jesus Christ's attitude had not been that lowliness, we would have been lost for ever. But if this is essential to His character, how then could His followers fail to manifest the same characteristic? There is no Christlikeness, it would seem to me, without a fundamental lowliness. But remember now: that includes plainness and childlike simplicity in a person's inmost thinking, in his entire life-style. You must be humble in order to be a true realist. You must have both feet safely planted on the firm ground of plain reality.

It is the plainness of intelligent thought that characterizes the Hegelian anti-thesis philosophy or the Kierkegaardian paradox theology? By no means. This is not down-to-earth.

I have cited a few Bible texts which have repeatedly been construed to give "evidence" of "Biblical paradox thinking". Still you should know that those are *not* among the ones whose modern interpretation has been *most* fatal to Christian realism. Today we have to wrestle with matters that are worse, by far. In fact there is a renaissance in this case, a sad rebirth of interpretations, exerting an influence we can only describe as destructive. They unveil themselves to us as audacious cases of open slander against God and the way He has revealed Himself: His intimate character, and His way of thinking, according to the Bible. I have felt duty bound to produce an entire book called ***The Maligned God*** just for the purpose of meeting that audacity in scriptural interpretation.

Alas, there does not seem to be any sudden end to the need of vindicating God and His perfect realism against constantly reoccurring cases of anti-God and anti-Bible accusations. Fortunately God Himself has revealed Himself as the ablest defender of His own cause. Probably that is the reason why I have not been able to lay hands on any evidence, within the Biblical canon, of re-interpretations, implying that one representation simply slaughters the other. I am anxious to be told where other Bible readers find instances of reinterpretation of that kind. They must deserve being examined critically and without delay.

Of course we do find cases where a dual interpretation is applicable to the one and the same prophecy. But do the double or multiple interpretation alternatives in any such case actually exclude each other? Will it not rather be found that they complement each other? One case commonly referred to is that in which Christ avails himself of one single prophecy to describe both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. But who would intelligently contend that there is anything so hopelessly antithetical in Christ's decision to embrace those two considerably related events in one and the same passage (Matthew 24)? Above all, there should be no need of introducing the magic of a paradox *hocus pocus* for the purpose of "reconciling" what is falsely called two "mutually exclusive" positions in a case like that.

The Most Fatal Risk Involved in Paradox Philosophy

What would be so bad about a blunt denial of hopeless opposites that do exist? The inevitable consequence of that would always be a simple collapse of intellectual integrity. We know what was destined to happen in a country right in the heart of Protestant Europe. Germany once was a bulwark *against* the paganism introduced by the Hellenistic tradition. Luther's reformation movement first realized that Europe's pagan education system of Greek origin was destroying true Christianity in European schools, but that educational reform was doomed to shipwreck, due to a relapse into the same paganism. Germany is today a country doomed to become among the most tragic ones in the Western World, thanks to its stubborn adherence to the destructive patterns of thought established by classical Greece with its spiritualistic intellectualism. From Europe the same deleterious trend made its way even to the United States of America, but that is another story.

I want to dwell, so far, upon the seeds of infidelity, as they spread over Teutonic lands. We have already mentioned the two major figures of dialectical humanism: the super-spiritualist Hegel and the super-materialist Marx. But probably the most influential genius in modern Germany for the fostering of speculative philosophy, as a tool for downright unbelief, was Immanuel Kant. And I dare say it is precisely in the field of ethics this trend of infidelity (faithlessness) has taken its heaviest toll, in the last analysis. It has for a long time endeavored to atomize the positive influences of Biblical realism in people's thoughts and actions.

It would hardly be possible for me to show you, intelligently and convincingly, why certain things are happening to you and me today, without paying careful attention to Kant's philosophy -- what it has done to us and to the world.

Kant's Shattering Critique of Childlike Human Thought and of Man's Basic Ability to Perceive Reality.

Kant is, in modern Western philosophy, the most extreme representative of epistemological doubt. Epistemology is the doctrine of knowledge. What it generally has most to do with, however, is this question: How far is man able to arrive at truth? How far is he able to have any contact at all with reality? Kant's views in this respect are terribly pessimistic. British philosophers of extreme skepticism had already paved the road

toward that culmination of epistemological pessimism, it is true. But Kant provides the finishing stroke, the *coup de grace*.

Actually the European country starting that deadly race in modern times toward systematic ("methodological") doubt, was France, another territory of profound sophistication and radical unbelief. Descartes had introduced his "De omnibus dubitandum est". *We should doubt everything*. According to him you run a terrible risk of being led into superstition and error already at the moment when you start assuming -- uncritically -- that you yourself exist. This might prove just as deceptive and stripped of reality, says Descartes, as so many a dream you have at night. In the morning when you wake up, you find the events you felt so absolutely sure about in your dream, to be a terrible illusion. Why then do you feel so absolutely dead certain about the fact of your own existence? That might turn out to be an equally deceptive illusion.

But now back to Kant and the reasons he gives for despairing of man's ability to grasp reality as it is in itself.

Kant's pessimism, in this respect, finds its entire philosophical basis in his desperately *subjectivistic* theory of knowledge. He actually denies that man's reason is able to acquire any objective knowledge about anything whatsoever outside himself.

Page 64

Why? Simply because man -- in the very depth of his original mannishness -- has been equipped with a system of permanent bias. Take one example: When men like you and me perceive things around us, we naturally perceive those things as being in *time and space*. Another peculiarity we have is that we perceive one thing as *causing* another thing. Now, according to Kant, these forms of perception are just categories of man's own constitution. In order for him to be able to perceive things at all, he has to let them pass through those categories of highly subjective mold. An illustration of this can be sought in the simple fact that any liquid which is supposed to enter a bottle, is bound to adopt the very form of the bottle.

In other words the concept of time and space, and also the concept of causality (the idea of cause and effect), these are not properties belonging necessarily to things themselves. It is rather you and I who *impose* those qualities upon the reality we think we observe. We look at our world through some sort of "colored glasses". The "colors" we see, are not in the things seen. They are part and parcel of our own equipment as perceiving subjects.

If you happen to look at a white house through green glasses, you have the illusion that the house is green. That greenness is not of course in the real essence of the house. It is in the equipment you use for the purpose of seeing.

The causal concept is a similar case. It is not necessarily a reality belonging to the world around you. It is an aspect of your own standard equipment as a thinking person. The whole reality around you, of which you are trying to have a good grasp, an *objective* grasp, immediately adopts the "colors" and "shades" that happen to be inherent, not in that reality itself, but in your personal constitution, your "inner spectacles".

So the philosopher distinguishes definitely between two things:

I. First the things as they *appear to me*. Kant calls this "das Ding fur mich" (the thing for me). What I thus "grasp", by means of my senses, and my faculty of human thought, is *pure appearance* (German: Erscheinung; Greek: phenomenon).

II. Second, the thing as it is *in itself*. He calls this "das Ding an sich." Here is a world of objective reality as a theoretical possibility. But that world is envisioned as absolutely independent of the world of mere phenomena (of appearances).

Page 65

Of course an expert doubter might wonder if there really exists any such objective world at all, I mean that assumed world of reality "behind" the world appearing to our human senses. What Kant seems to say, at least, about that imagined world, is that you cannot expect to know anything too definite about it. Man just cannot have any exact idea of what that "reality behind" is like. For the "glasses" he depends on, in order to have any contact at all, here suddenly become absolutely useless. Otherwise expressed: the world of basic "underlying" reality commonly supposed to be there and to provoke in me, in some way or other, the appearance (or mirage) with which I have to content myself, is a world that escapes me pretty completely.

Now you may of course refuse to accept this epistemological pessimism. I almost hope that your homing instinct for truth, a hardcore truth, which you can embrace and hold fast, is strong enough for that. Kant evidently has had too much of sophisticated speculativeness in him to give any such basic intuition a chance. And it certainly is not the first time sophistication has led the speculative thinker astray.

My suspicion in that direction was confirmed when I discovered that Kant had more in common with his Western ancestor Plato than I ever imagined for many years. There was no one around, it seems, who made any attempt at arousing any suspicions of that particular kind.

Phenome ne bizarre! Historians of philosophy seem agreed to overlook the fact that something strikingly similar to Kant's "new" philosophy is to be found at the very dawn of European spiritualism. That similarity applies to both some minute details and the general trend.

Don't let us attribute to Kant an originality of thought he does not really deserve. Why should we modern Western men, in our natural vainglorious pride, fail to recognize that we hardly have anything, in terms of sophisticated intellectualistic thinking, which we have not inherited from the Greeks, our great fathers in all arts of pagan incantation?

Just permit me this little question: What does Kant present to us that was not already to be found in his gigantic predecessor Plato?

You and I should know well enough by now what kind of especially adapted philosophy the devil had machinated and successfully launched very early on European ground, in order to crush the sacred, realistic pattern of thought constituting the only true philosophy of the Omniscient One. I am speaking of course about the giant battle between the false wisdom launched by pagan man and the unadulterated truth as it is in Jesus, the faithful Witness, the only truth that is mighty to save. In other words, I am again referring to platonic idealism as the great anti-reality philosophy of the West, destined to mold the thinking of Occidental men, right down to the time of the end. And now please do not feel so sure that this special pattern of counterfeit wisdom in the West has nothing to do with what is happening to your crisis and mine. It has very much to do with that, even in its farthest ramifications, pertaining to details in that ominous polarization taking place in our denomination today. Imposters in the field of thought are not necessarily as original or unique as our historians of philosophy will tend to described them.

Of course we must heed the nuances varying slightly from one epoch to the other, from one philosopher to the other. Kant may have some novel aspects to his peculiar anti-realism which Plato did *not* have. We should give close attention to those additional features as well, For they might be significant enough for a better understanding of the peculiar onslaught directed against truth, as that is bound to assert itself in the lives of God's people in the endtime.

The differences do not necessarily, as you shall soon see, come out in the modern philosopher's favor. Kant's illusionism is not "better" than Plato's. And our illusionism today is not "better" than that of Kant. The trend is traditionally downward, rather than upward. Did you expect anything else?

Let us now, however, first look at the basic similarities between Kant and Plato. You will recall the frigidly cruel way in which Plato cut to pieces the world of truth and totality which the Bible tells us that God made in the beginning. The two "pieces" of that cruelly lacerated reality, the way platonic idealism indulged in leaving it on the battlefield, were the following:

1. On the one hand, there was the world which *platonists*, with a poorly concealed contempt, call "sublunary" ("under the moon"). That is the world of our physical senses -- what you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, taste with your tongue, feel with your fingertips, and smell with your nose. That is, all the concrete phenomena observed by man in a contingent world.

2. On the other hand, there was the world *Plato* called real: a world of abstract conceptions only, a world of exclusively theoretical "values" and metaphysical delights. That father of ancient spiritualism called in the world of the pure Idea. What you here have to do with is nothing in fact but the vain glory of pure reason, barren intellect.

And now do you see the contours of a striking parallel, provided by *Kant's* personal presentation of the great disruption he has conceived:

1. First, his world of mere appearances, the world of the "Ding fur mich". This is of course a phenomenon rather poorly fit for deep inspiration; I mean the way speculative philosophers are being inspired. It has no promise of permanency or reliableness. It is rather imagined as a sham world, a world hopelessly lost in the shadows of realities which can never be realized.

2. On the other hand, there is of course Kant's special edition of an "ideal world", his peculiar idea of the "reality behind." It is that illustrious "Ding an sich." This is an equally spiritualistic -- I am tempted to say "ghostlike" -- world of the pure idea, "unadulterated" by the literal senses of common-sense men. So it is once more that weird longing for some kind of contourless Nirvana, far beyond the "cheap" coasts of this visible, audible, tangible earth.

The mysterious fascination of that "Ding an sich", the "thing behind", is of course viewed exclusively by the "eye of the spirit". It is an other-worldly reality which we common mortals can only dream about, but never reach in this dreary life of ours "under the moon."

Shall we now draw our conclusions: *What*, if you please, is so sensationally "new" in this? Has anything been added?

Of course, something is new. Something *has* been added.

I think I am logically entitled to observe in Kant, something pathetically tragic at the moment when he begins to despair of ever being able to press forward, as mere man, all the way up to those blessed "realities beyond". We just would not be quite realistic here, if we did not make allowance for some sad reaction of simple resignation. At least this would seem to be the frank reaction of normal people, faced with such a downright impossibility of penetrating, with their present equipment, into the world of absolute truth, absolute reality. Are you not bound to feel somewhat humiliated by such a bill of "No Entry"? Modern man seems doomed to accept the destiny of a miserable Sisyphos. (He is the Greek mythological figure who repeatedly attempted to roll a large stone to the top of a hill, only to have it roll back down just before reaching the top.)

Just compare this to Plato's case. Was there with him, any similar occasion for admitting that his glorious penetration right into the celestial abodes of ultimate reality had suddenly been stopped? Oh no. We just cannot see that Plato perceived any need of "humbling himself" in that categorical way. When did *he* ever admit defeat? On the contrary, that proud idealist (or spiritualist) of old seems to have felt absolutely confident that he *could* reach the land of eternal bliss. In his own power of sublime abstraction and blessed meditation he could manage to climb to the top of the ladder. There, on the roof of reality, his immortal soul could bask in the sun of infinite freedom. Who could prevent that man's superior intellect from grasping any fruit of the tree of knowledge stretching out its branches right beside him?

Page 68

Compared to that buoyant, although absolutely unwarranted, Platonic optimism, Kant's ideology is bound to appear particularly pessimistic, or even defeatistic. According to Kant, a human mind can never, never reach yonder shores of the mysterious "Ding an sich", the land of perfect bliss, where true knowledge is freely attainable.

But here comes an important observation: Just do not imagine that those imposed limitations make Kant either permanently sad or genuinely humble. Far from it. What you should probably know is that Immanuel Kant is a stubborn modern man. He is downright disruptively modern in his peculiar titanism: He just clings to the very baseness of the world he does have within his grasp after all, crying at the top of his voice, as it were: "This is the best, anyway!" (Or as Leibniz says "the best of all possible worlds".)

to me that sounds like a philosophy of sour grapes. What did the fox say about those grapes he could not reach: "I do know that they are too far up to fit my stature. But what does it matter? Let the birds have the grapes. I get along better without them, far better." Long live the pride of absolute self-sufficiency!

This further reminds me of the marxist's stubbornly unintelligent attitude toward the inevitable necessity of death. What he opts for is a mocking affront to all reason. He spends his last forces trying to convince himself that "death is no bad thing, after all."

Poor modern humanists! How could such people be supposed to stand valiantly admitting a fact as disagreeable as the one *they* had to face? Intellectual integrity demands a superhuman courage, that is sure.

What Kant has succumbed to in his peculiar philosophy, and after him all modernist theologians who have followed in his foot-steps, is the not too intelligent trick of making "a merit of necessity".

What Kant arrived at concerning man, was that he just could not help being hopelessly subjective, so despairingly unsuccessful whenever he would undertake to grasp the reality of his surrounding world. But what happens? Instead of accepting the assumed consequences of that sad "fact", man stubbornly wiggles his way right up to the illusory point where he begins to find hidden treasures of infinite value in that very subjectivity. What Kant seems to be saying is something like this: "Entirely subjective attitudes are my only available ones, as a human being in this world. That sounds sad indeed. But why not accept that condition of humanity and rejoice exuberantly over it? Why not make it the outstanding glory of man's inherent mannishness? That subjectivity is evidently the apex of my uniqueness as a man. Why not make as much out of it as ever possible?"

Page 69

In other words, the more firmly man establishes the fact that he is, in himself, a hopelessly self-deceptive being, the more intensively he engages in a campaign of flattering himself that he is uniquely human.

That reminds me of a strange therapy once recommended by Frankl to his psychiatry students in the University of Vienna. I shall never forget the encounter I had with that unique man in that unique city. He used to have the strangest kind of therapeutic advice to those among us who have the awkward habit of blushing, in season and out of season. His recommendation went somewhat like this: "If you feel that the wave of blushing you fear so much is just on the point of making its way to your face, why not make up your mind to simply go in for that unique case of blushing as *the* great thing? Why not say, 'Ladies and gentlemen. Just now I happen to be in a state of panic. I feel that I shall blush terribly at any moment. So be prepared for a great spectacle. You are going to witness, quite free of charge, the exceptional expertise of a champion blusher! Look here, who do you think could manage a similar performance.'"

The famous teacher in psychiatry predicted that this open attitude toward the problem of blushing, if the blusher himself could really manage to adopt it, would be the end of his blushing. His very determination to face his own blushing as something he need not be ashamed of at all, would cause it to vanish. And of course, in a way, this may be an attitude realistic enough. It may, in this particular case be a harmless experiment. I for my part at least can hardly perceive any great harm -- either physically or morally -- in a person's fixed determination to blush. It is those who never blush who could have good reason sometimes to do so. The hardened criminal never blushes. In this case *non*-blushing is the thing he really ought to be deeply ashamed of.

But now what about an ever increasing number of people today who make a rather conscious effort of being *champion subjectivists*, and that without any suspicion of shame. That seems to be a widely different matter. The more we make it a point to excel in that "art," or rather artificial life style, the more we will succeed. I have no doubts about that. Our world today seems to be outdoing itself in having a tremendous success along any lines based on being subjective, totally governed by ephemeral moods and sentimental impulses. But has that openness toward subjectivity enabled us to conquer it? On the contrary.

As long as the expertise we are proud of excelling in, is the art of being champion doubters, champion sooth-sayers, rather than champion believers and champion heralds of a message of judgment and reform, there will be no hope of conquest and salvation.

The Attempts to Spiritualize Away the Concrete Reality of Cause and Effect Has Proved Fatal to Both Human Thought and Human Action

Of course we must be constantly on the alert against the deceptive power of pure appearances. So far, any philosopher having this on his program, is perfectly right. Yielding to sheer sham leads us to erroneous conclusions both in matters of physical perception and in matters of theoretical reasoning.

For instance, too often indeed we introduce erroneously a system of cause and effect where it does not exist in reality. For instance we succumb to the shallow reasoning of a "post hoc ergo propter hoc." That is: because one thing is followed by another thing, we rashly conclude that the former must have "caused" the latter. In a way we are all "dupes" to such appearances in everyday life. Our physical senses tell us: when the lightning has flashed, the thunder will soon follow. So the conclusion is drawn: the lightning *causes* the thunder. The scientific fact is however that the lightning does not cause the thunder any more than the thunder causes the lightning. They are rather two aspects of one and the same reality. What we have to do with is a certain electrical discharge. To the one who is sufficiently near the focus of that terrible explosion the noise and the brightness will be aspects of it, happening simultaneously. There is reason to fear that he will be quite stunned by that simultaneity, that formidable oneness of the physical fact.

But does this mean that no things are ever caused by other things? Take a case more directly connected with our religion: on the one hand the Creator, on the other hand the creature. Is it vain nonsense to state that One causes the other to come into existence? It so happens that Kant has involved himself in the great discussion about whether God exists, and whether His existence can be proven.

Or let us first take some other examples of causal connections, examples on a lower level than that of the divine *fiat*, creation proper. Suppose you have in front of you a baby and its mother. Do you feel that there is any sense whatsoever in which it may be true to state that one of these creatures causes the other one to come into being? Or take a book and its author. Is it just unwarranted bias to imagine that the author has had some part in bringing about that book, causing it to exist, quite realistically, quite objectively speaking? Or what would you think about the mental soundness of a person who might claim that the baby, or the book, has come about all by itself? At least there is no causal relation whatsoever, allegedly, between the parent and the world of "das Ding an sich."

So take away causality as a valid realistic concept altogether. Would this mean something to ethics as a valid, realistic doctrine, having validity and realism *in itself*, absolutely? If causality as a real fact is done away with, what about responsibility? Would any man be responsible for anything whatsoever, if it is simply impossible that he could cause any thing outside himself to happen, realistically?

Again we see how close the tie is between epistemology and ethics. If you are wrong in one, you can hardly avoid being wrong in the other. What realistic foundation would there be at all for a moral code of human conduct if all those causal relations were "just appearances," that is, in reality non-valid? If I do not ever *cause* any wrong thing to happen, how could I be counted guilty for any wrong happening? And still Kant speaks a lot about personal human responsibility. Do you see the inconsistency in which he is getting involved, morally speaking? Strange enough, you see, that philosopher suddenly has an unexpected fit: he does accept the objective validity *in moral life*. At least he pretends to do so. For he expressly infers that our felicity in the *hereafter* depends on our moral actions *here*. Moreover, he does assume the reality of God as a necessary postulate ("a beatifying cause").

And generally speaking, in spite of all his solemn assurances that things in themselves cannot be known by us, he makes the assumption that those things "behind the scene" do exist in some way. He even assumes that they do exert--right in that mysterious "pure state" of theirs -- some definite influence upon our senses. By the way, how otherwise could our senses have any perception of them? But does not this amount to admitting, indirectly, that the *Ding an sich* does have a certain causal relationship with the *Ding fur mich*? Of course. The extrinsic appearances must be caused by the intrinsic reality. But that again is definitely an inconsistency in Kant's basic theory, his elaborated system of philosophy. For the very purpose and the fundamental essence of that speculative system was just to negate that causality is any reality pertaining to things in themselves.

Page 72

The Irrrealism of Spiritualist Philosophy Once More Coincides with the Irrrealism of Evolutionist Philosophy

Anyway, let us rest firmly in one fact: we do know something about that thing "in itself" by which we find ourselves surrounded in our little world, whatever it has been created to look like, and also intrinsically *be*: It definitely has not always existed. Its appearance has not always existed, nor has its basic reality, its proper substance, You and I, who have the present experience of those surrounding things, have not always existed either. About that negative certainty we should not have any reason to waver. We should know for sure this essential fact about created things: they are *not* like the Creator; they have *not* always been. But that very fact, in all its cutting negativity, ought to be evidence enough that they must have received their existence from something else. An intelligent being need not always see the very process of a causal relationship in order to know that such relationship must be there. It is an axiomatic certainty that nothing can be the cause of its own passing from non-existence to existence. This is evident from the very principle of contradiction: a thing cannot be the cause both of its existence and its non-existence.

The time difference is never a sufficient explanation of things passing from non-existence to existence. Obviously evolutionists do have some terrific faith in mere time as an automatic producer of new things. If only time enough is granted, they seem to be saying, the fantastic thing will come about. Then the world may have the incredible experience of something springing out of nothing. You must only have the endless patience of waiting long enough for that ineffable marvel. (And still someone has accused

evolutionists of lacking faith; that is, of being absolutely unable to believe in any miracle.)

Let us be sober-minded, in our religion and in our science. The simple passing of time has never proved capable of causing new things to spring into existence. Even our Almighty Lord Himself would be waiting in vain, I imagine, if He just kept "standing aside", "watching", and otherwise doing nothing. For even eternity is evidently too short to manage that trick of having anything pass from nothing to something, all by itself. Just take zero and multiply it an infinite number of times. What do you get? Zero! there is nothing more consistent with itself than *nothing*. Emptiness faithfully remains emptiness through all eternity. you can rely on emptiness in that respect. To claim that a thing has burst into existence quite *spontaneously*--that is, as a matter of pure chance, or without any definite cause behind it --this is absurd indeed.

Page 73

Notice, we are here speaking about the absurdity of "non-created creatures". We do not say that no Person ever existed without being *called* into existence by somebody else. For God Himself did exist forever in that uncaused way. What we do say is: God Himself is the Self-Existing One. He alone exists without having been created by anyone else. But He certainly does not exist "by pure chance." That would be the last thing you could say about God. He is the only One who exists *of necessity*. That is the opposite of "mere chance." This is what makes it absolutely indispensable that God must have existed from everlasting. Common sense, and the reasonable willingness to submit to the sovereignty of the axioms in all fields of knowledge, is all that is needed in order to grasp that necessity of God. There are remedies for many ills. But for the lack of common sense and of the humble submission to axiomatic facts, there obviously is not any remedy. A German proverb says: "Gegen die Dummheit kämpfen selbst die Gotter vergeblich." "Even the gods fight in vain against foolishness." The only thing I regret in this proverb is its pagan formulation.

Stupidity is an anomaly. More often than we suspect it is a *moral anomaly*. How else could it happen that such a typically religious book as the Bible insists on speaking again and again about fools and foolishness (Psalms 14:1)? But even moral anomalies are bound to come to an end once, -- fortunately.

Irrealism - a Mortal and Deeply MORAL Disease

How can we dare to say that foolishness in this world, more often than not, is a moral anomaly? Now morality always has something to do with the will, or with willlessness, -- evil will, or unwillingness. Does foolishness have so much to do with the will? Yes certainly. The foolishness the Bible speaks about again and again, is precisely the most stubborn unwillingness to choose the ways of God. What does the fool in Biblical terminology stand for? He is, among other things, the one who says in his heart: "*There is no God.*" Notice: it is preferably "in his *heart*" that man says his say. He is a willful atheist. His atheism is not mainly a matter of the brain, a matter of intellectual conclusion. No, it is mainly a matter of hateful determination. He does not want to believe in the existence of a God. That godlessness is the beginning of stupidity in all fields, just as the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, the faith in God, which is inevitably the faithfulness toward God.

Page 74

God is the prime Mover (primus Motor), the first Cause (prima Causa). What does "first" here mean? Does it mean first in time? Yes. But does it *only* signify first in time? Certainly not. It means, above all, *first in terms of Creatorhood*, in origin. In contradistinction to this, created things and created persons are "secondary," they are definitely subsequent, and this precisely in terms of their creatureliness.

What the *First* here stands for, then, is both an anteriority in time, and a superiority in moral value, a superiority so infinitely great that it just cannot be expressed in terms of time at all, nor in terms of degrees of worthiness and glory. For in front of the Eternal Majesty of God, all human comparisons break down like sheer nothingness. However far you were to go back, from the point of time when God first created there would still be an eternity during which no one but the Infinite God could exist, the One by whom the whole vastness of the cosmos was destined to be carried, on the day when He would pronounce his *fiat*. So here the "first cause" means the incomparable primary cause, the One on whom all creation depends.

Kant did not want us to think that he was an atheist. He took pride in being referred to as a man who believed in God. He even figured that his annihilating critique of the traditional "Gottesbeweise" (arguments in favor of God's existence) would permit his faith in God to stand out the more freely and conspicuously. "Ich musste also das Wissen aufheben um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen." This is his famous statement. "I had to suspend knowledge in order to make place for faith." Evidently he is under the common existentialist or idealist illusion that there is an irreconcilable enmity between knowledge and faith, so very much the same anti-rational sophistication to which Kirkegaard was to succumb.

Is Kant an Ancient European and a Modern American at the Same Time?

We have wondered much at Kant's abysmal depths in speculative criticism of man's ability to have any contact with the reality surrounding him. What surprises me still more, however, is another attitude he manages to have at the same time. In a way I am quite impressed to find, in that definitely classical philosopher a certain pragmatism which I am tempted to qualify as almost American. What could be more modern, or even modernistic, than that? So there is *classicism* and *modernism* virtually merging together in one and the same human being.

Page 75

The great question is only: Could this merger in any possible way, make for harmony and wholeness? Does it favor a spirit of Christian realism? Or rather a spirit of pagan illusionism?

We should all know the general element of potential danger contained in pragmatism. *How* dangerous it really is to the survival of true realism, both epistemologically and morally speaking, ought to announce itself through an adage among the toughest and most fateful in modern times: "*What works is right.*" That lightminded saying is an outgrowth of precisely ultra-modern pragmatism. In it, moral perversion and intellectual perversion seem to meet in a most hideous embrace.

Some would say: Calling Kant a "modern American" is too bad indeed. Others might say it is too *good* indeed. I would agree with both parties. I shall tell you why. Sometimes my American students put me (the assumed European) on the spot, asking me what I think about Americans (as compared to Europeans). My most usual answer

on such occasions is: "I think Americans are a hundred times worse, -- and a hundred times better."

Does that make any sense? Or is it just another paradox, a self-contradiction? No, it is quite sensible, the way I think of it. America is the outstanding land of endtime history. But endtime immediately means crisis. And what does crisis mean? You certainly know what your family doctor is speaking about when he says that a certain illness in the life of a family member has come to the point of *crisis*. That means: now it is either life or death, either hope or despair. A time of decision has been reached, for better or for worse. Persons in a state of spiritual crisis also are liable to become either considerably better or considerably worse. Today more than ever I see these phenomena of going down into the "valley of decision" as a destiny-laden event of Endtime America (as well as Endtime Europe).

Now first some simple factual pieces of information about Kant's thinking in regard to pragmatism, generally speaking. Definitely pragmatic in the ultra-modern sense, as far as I can see, was the way he insisted on reducing the concept of causality, which is fundamental to all meaningfulness in man's spiritual life. Kant makes causality appear to be a pitifully narrow thing. He boldly contends that our conventional human thinking, along the habitual "naive" lines of "cause and effect", is nothing more than a practical device on the part of biological nature for the purpose of making our experience of the world around us (the world of the senses) technically possible. To me this is pragmatic philosophy. But philosophy can never be limited to pure epistemology, a set of purely theoretical concepts. No, it is bound to include ethics. And you know already what pragmatism in ethics amounts to: "What works is right."

Page 76

Kant's Attitude toward Modern Science

Here I must call your attention to certain historical details which have been rather neglected. We must know more about the human element, the great incentive triggering Kant's "Copernican Revolution" of modern thought. What is more commonly known about it is the blunt contention it makes about man: He possesses no inherent ability to establish any realistic contact with the "reality behind." That reality may be entirely different from the phenomena presenting themselves to his natural senses.

But why, now, did Kant go into that speculative trend of thought, finally arriving at such amazing conclusions?

Let us go back to the beginnings of that German philosopher's career. There we discover an incident most significant for his development. It has to do with ideas published by a British philosopher of similar scepticism and similar critical trend. In England the famous agnostic - and a most forceful adversary of Christian thought forms -- David Hume has stirred up the contemporary world with his revolutionizing ideas about man's failing ability to acquire reliable knowledge about the world surrounding him. Hume did not only shake people's faith in God, but also their traditional confidence in something as modern and generally admired as natural science. So a veritable crisis seemed to be in the offing for modern mankind's faith even in things they felt immensely proud of, and seemed to depend on in an ever increasing degree.

Even a spirit as well-balanced as that of Immanuel Kant seemed to get upset. His urgent desire was to restore permanently modern man's shattered confidence in a

science so crucially important to every one of us today. With this goal in mind he launches out into speculations ten times *more* destructive to our faith in simple realism as a human possibility. To that speculative genius it is imperative to let us know: "Science, dear friends, will never let us down. You may be perfectly reassured."

Page 77

Here we should know a little more about that other iconoclastic genius whom Kant felt duty-bound to fight. He certainly is not the first or the only one destined to shake man's conventional ideas about reality, but Hume was the British skeptic who awakened Kant of his "dogmatic slumber", as the German philosopher himself likes to express it. Hume had had the unprecedented boldness, you see, to tell the world something most derogatory about human science, and consequently something highly dubious about the whole "naive world" which has staked its one and all on such a science. The new "truth" Hume had discovered -- well, he just flung it out -- unceremoniously -- right into the faces of a humanity dumb with painful surprise: The causal concept, he says, bases itself on nothing more reliable than sheer habit! In other words, it has no function in rational thought. True, man may have observed 999 times that a stone falls to the ground, and so he gets into the habit of feeling sure that it must behave, in exactly the same way, even the 1000th time, which is still in the future. But rationally there is nothing whatsoever making this an absolute necessity. In fact you cannot be positive but that the stone this 1000th time (of which you do not yet have any definite experience) might suddenly jump upwards rather than fall downwards, as you have been accustomed to see it happen. So what right do you have, after those 999 experiments, to formulate a general law of gravitation?

Frankly how much further can human doubt go?

Kant's final answer to that challenge from Hume regarding the rational basis science rests upon, is a definite rejection, an emphatic No. But in order to be able to pronounce that "No", Kant evidently feels obligated to go into a maze of sophisticated speculation which finishes by threatening to shake, not science, but religion -- and man's meaningful life as a whole -- to its very foundations. So the skeptic Hume is completely outdone by the super-skeptic Kant -- that appears indisputable. And the world is left more disrupted than ever. For now it is not just the credibility of the law of causality which is at stake, but concepts of human thinking by and large. And now back to a question we must not permit to fall into oblivion.

How Does this Heroic Effort to be a Thousand Times More Critical of Man's Intellect, Than a Fellow Iconoclast Had Been, Manage the Miracle to "SAVE THE REPUTATION OF MODERN SCIENCE?"

Page 78

I am not leaving you in the lurch. I know the issue you are more eager to raise than ever. One thing here appears more dubious and more shockingly meaningless than anything else. Was is not mentioned that Kant went into all those mazes of philosophical speculation just because he was so heartily worried about the flimsy reputation which would inevitably fall to the lot of modern science, after Hume had introduced his speculations regarding the reliability (or rather the unreliability) of the causal concept? We should realize what a blow on the head this crushing piece of criticism was bound to be. Not only to Kant, but to the entire world of western thought. For the idea of an in-

destructible relationship between cause and effect had so far been one of the holy shrines which no agnostics--even the most daring ones-- had ever ventured to touch. Now it was being boldly challenged by one of the keenest intelligences in the world of modern Western iconoclasm. Was it likely that a still deeper descent into the abyss of critical speculation, on the part of a still keener wit, would "save the situation"?

How could Kant imagine that what his speculative solutions would accomplish was to restore the reputation of human sciences as something one would no longer have to look upon as unreliable?

Your question is a most legitimate one. I shall try to tell you, as briefly and as simply as I can, why Kant feels so comfortingly reassured about this. His point is the following:

To which of the "two worlds" would you immediately presume that human science belongs? You may have taken it for granted that a field of study as concerned about accuracy as that, must belong to the sacred world of absolute reality, in other words the world of "the Ding an sich." Error! Science does not, at all, according to Kant's elaborate theory of knowledge, participate in that serene world of eternal factual realities "behind the veil". No-No! Science has no part whatsoever in that ideal world of perfect objectivity and inherent truthfulness. On the contrary, human science is right in the midst of the world of the human senses, the "Ding fur mich". Some would say, the "all *too* human" *senses*. And who would deny that the scientific researcher of the traditional naturalistic mold depends on his normal senses when he observes facts and draws conclusions about them?

So what kind of laws are our scientists bound to arrive at? Of course laws just having their entire "dignity", their "firm basis", and their reputation as "perfectly valid", right in the core of the world of the "*Ding fur mich*," that is, the world of contingent (and most prosaic) every-day experience! Their "validity" then is indisputably within the limits of that "dubious" field. In the "other world", *transcending* that "narrow" area, such practical scientific laws cannot have any value whatsoever.

Page 79

Does this Kantian viewpoint reassure you? Not if you happen to have aspirations of scientific research dealing with matters you can rely on as *objectively real*, so a reality not arbitrarily created by the bias inherent in the ever-changing waves of subjective human minds.

On the other hand, we can, to a certain extent, understand Kant's theoretical reasoning, can't we? He has, in his battlefield of speculative warfare with Hume, got the better of his adversary. He has, after all, provided evidence for the fact that man need not ever fear that science proper will have any such surprises in store for him as those suggested by Hume. That realistic stone dropped 999 times from the patient researcher's hand would *not* some day take him aback. Never! It would *not* disturb his traditional expectations, suddenly jumping upwards, or to the side. There was no danger whatsoever that the stone would make spite against man's familiar everyday experience. Oh no. There is reassurance in the atmosphere. Science will never fail us. It is one with us. It is, like you and me, a faithful citizen of the world of mere appearances!

But now tell me: what is the real nature of that marvelous "reassurance" Kant thinks he has arrived at? This question is important indeed, both ethically and epistemologically speaking. For we must now speak quite openly about the way a person's

spirit manages actually to be satisfied with the undeniably most narrow limits here forcibly imposed upon us by that arbitrary world of a subjective humanity. It has to be admitted, you see, that it is a distressingly narrow field within which Kant's philosophical speculations have imperatively commanded man to *stay put*.

Frankly, what basis does he have for thinking that he can still rely on science? In what sense can he be absolutely confident, once more, that he will never be exposed to any violent surprises on the part of that strange human mistress to whom he is subjected: his customary expectations?

Well, the only argument Kant makes available is that science, being herself just part and parcel of the "Ding fur mich", may have the nice trick to deceive everyone of us all the time. She is praised as being *perfectly consistent* in the way she plays the "phony one". It is from her our general human senses, in their turn, have learnt to be *perfectly consistent* in the way **they** systematically deceive us.

Here I think you may rightly ask: Is *consistency* in deception something sufficiently great to deserve our admiration and our allegiance?

Page 80

Realistic experience among Christians of all times has taught them that the devil himself, whenever he has to do with people calling themselves by that proud name, generally chooses the way of a most carefully observed consistency. Why does he not rather precipitate us into abysses of a variety of different passions? The reason is obvious: We might be disturbed--in fact wake up in alarm and flee for our lives. The sudden surprises would be too much for us. We just could not go on sleeping peacefully, if the great liar lied in a different way every time he applied that form of warfare to our cases, in order to lead us astray. It is long habit that always tends to make us more or less insensitive.

But here then comes the rational question: Does cheating turn into a virtue and a desirable thing from the moment on when it manages to become perfectly consistent? Is the one important thing for the happiness of man that he avoid being surprised?

Evidently one of the great things about the God of the Bible, in His relationship with His intelligent creatures, is precisely His eager desire, from time to time, to surprise them. Surprise of the positive kind are wonderful sources of meaningfulness as a dependable trend in God's universe. Surprises may be most rational and most realistic. The thing that surprises us in Kant is *not* rationality and realism. By no means! What is it rather?

Kantian Philosophy Turning into the Most Fascinating Abyss of Irrationality Swallowing Up The Elite of Modern Theology

Verily, verily, Kant's modernism does not necessarily impress the student of Christian realism as "good". The epithet "modern" does not necessarily constitute a guarantee of excellency. Sometimes even "classical" may mean an infinitely more positive attribute. We must now courageously examine the modern philosopher Immanuel Kant and the influence his "modernism" has exerted, not only on mainstream Protestant theology as a long-term historic movement, but on you and me, members of the church of God in the endtime. I shall then do my best to remain as plain and incorruptible (that is, impermeable to bribery) as I have had the inspiring experience of seeing some staunch Protestants, *not* of our faith, to be, in *their* attitude toward the inalienable veri-

ties of Christian philosophy. Before I conclude this volume of my critical investigation about what is happening to Seventh-day Adventism today, seen in the light of the history of ideas, I must be outspoken enough to say exactly what I think about certain features of what I have called:

Page 81

A Remarkable Switch in the Approach We Tend to Take toward the Facts of Christian Realism at this Late Hour of the Night, Settling Down over Man's Endtime Culture

Professor Torrance of New College, Edinburgh, one day spoke to us in a most captivating manner in an AU Seminary Chapel talk (May 26, 1971). And the things he spoke about have continued developing with scaring rapidity since that time. He just compared a certain "classical" approach to knowledge (in the best sense of the term) with the "modern" approach. By *classical* approach Torrance here means the positive one in which we seek to know the world, or seek the reality of things, *in accordance with their inherent structure!* So a definitely favorable sense of the term "classicism".

Of course you may seriously wonder how many there were, even among our sternest "classics", who made that consistent effort to really penetrate into the deepest underlying order of things, thus bringing reality out to full articulation. Even among Seventh-day Adventist theologians today that kind of incorruptible Biblical theology may tend to be rarer and rarer.

But ideally we do know that there must be that way of getting to know things *in full accordance with their intrinsic nature*. We simply assume certain rational structures that are already imbedded in nature herself; that is, reality itself! And now you should notice that this age-old realistic way has been simply ousted by a new and "better" way, as modern man thinks of "better".

The opposite way of knowing things -- the "modern" way -- is the one according to which man seeks to know reality by arbitrarily *imposing upon* nature certain intelligible structures, certain patterns of his own. At that moment it is we ourselves who "give to nature the basic patterns and forms through which we think it." In other words, the "knower" here operates with an "extrinsic intelligibility," which he *projects into nature*. He forces it in, as it were, from outside. That is what "extrinsic" here stands for.

Concrete examples from the history of philosophy of this difference between the intrinsic intelligibility of the classical approach to knowledge and the extrinsic intelligibility of the modern approach, may be found in Francis Bacon versus precisely Immanuel Kant.

Are you candidly interested in being more amply informed about the radical difference established between alterocentricity (Christian other-centeredness) and egocentricity (pagan self-centeredness)? I do hope so; for those two great fundamental motifs are at dramatic grips with each other today as never before. If you really are, then this may prove an eye-opener, a mighty revelation to you.

Page 82

I. In our study of old-fashioned ("classical") Seventh-day Adventism, that is, the creed of the pioneers, as compared to a rather modernist type of sham Adventism, it is most enlightening to note the downright alterocentric (other-centered) character of *Ba-*

con's approach to knowledge. According to him, *what* should the true researcher always do? He should put his question to nature, just like a genuine child would do.

The point is clear and all-important: if you want to be at all reasonable in your methodology, you must approach the nature you want to know something about, not as a judge or an intruder, but rather as a humble servant. You should always strive to be without any *preconceived ideas*. To that subjective trend of ideas Bacon gives the name of "idols of the mind". I think his terminology is outstandingly realistic, and outstandingly Biblical, for this is a case of downright idolatry, nothing less, and accordingly an actual pagan threat to the very hope of Christian salvation. Of course it may happen, ever so often, that you do have such dangerous preconceptions in your mind to begin with. But then you should make it a rule to allow time and opportunity for them to be *called into question*. And that question is put to *nature*. For it is nature that is supposed to reveal itself. It is nature, you see (the object of your study) that is supposed to reveal itself and disclose its own truths - to *you*, the teachable one, the receptive one, the open minded and humbly listening one.

This is what I would call the profound *humility* of the truly other-centered type of scientific approach.

II. The very opposite of this is what happens in more typically modern times. And Kant is indeed a most representative exponent of that new approach. According to his basic philosophy, modern man himself, you might say, has the dominant role. Now nature is reduced to the role of a sort of defendant, forced to stand at the bar and answer the "judge's" questions in the way this arbitrary commander thinks appropriate. The answer then, of course, will tend to be rather predetermined. It is bound to harmonize with the stipulations already laid down by the "inquisition master", in the very nature of the question.

Page 83

Where is here the teachability, the receptivity, the humility, on the part of the person who seeks to know? Where is his gentle willingness to listen, to *serve*? In fact, there is no eagerness at all to serve, only to *be served*. What a new theory of knowledge, a new basic attitude toward the search of reality! This is obviously that very "Copernican Revolution" Kant himself referred to as his contribution to the theory of knowledge. After this memorable revolution in modern epistemology, man does not any longer, in an objective and intelligent way, *read laws OUT of nature*. No he reads them *INTO nature*. Man, in his culminating egocentricity, is well pleased to know nature only as he manages to *construct it, for himself*. And where he is not able to construct, he assumes that things are meaningless. For only the humanly constructible is accepted as valid. You notice the brazen haughtiness of humanism in this man-centered world of research, don't you? It is pragmatism at its worst. It is a science without any firm principles, a science conducive to non-ethics, rather than ethics.

Particularly some of our most thriving present-day sciences such as sociology and psychology, are of the man-centered type. They lend themselves admirably to this subjectivistic approach. Notice one remarkable thing by the way: There are certain sciences that tend toward speculative philosophy, rather than natural science. About them it may be observed: They had their most intensive development just *after* his modern approach toward knowledge had become dominant. Many extremely remarkable things have taken place after Hegel, Kant, and Kierkegaard had influenced an entire world with

their peculiar set of self-centered ideas. That influence has been particularly felt in man-centered sciences, such as psychology and sociology.

On this point let us return to Torrance. He thinks that particularly some university campuses in America show signs of being penetrated by this modern way in which we *impose patterns upon nature*. Great masses of people, "largely romantic in outlook," are here "fed by the social sciences, in which they find meaning." Or rather, they *create* meaning "out of their social connections." That "meaning" is something they impose upon society. It is not inherently there.

In this they resemble creative artists. They *express THEMSELVES*. And this self-expression leads man to an entirely *illusory* contract with reality, as I might perhaps put it, in my particular terms of *illusionism versus realism*.

Torrance claims that the social sciences are everywhere in a pitiable state of downright chaos and disarray:

Page 84

"Our problems here are very acute. The more we think in terms of these technological modes of rationalizing, and gear them to society, the more we find ourselves and society alienated from nature so that the tension between pure science and the technological society has resulted, to a large extent, in our ecological chaos. Because we tyrannize nature, we impose our patterns upon it, we misuse it for our own ends, and then we find ourselves in tension with nature, but also we find ourselves in tension with human nature. So we find humanity in tension with itself. We are alienated from each other in a technological society. That is why you have such a quest for identity. People get lost, they are atomized, lost in modern society. There is no way to find identity in the romantic way so wide-spread in the American university campuses by way of romantic self-expression and projection of meaning out of ourselves. That is precisely to carry further and further the very disastrous road upon which we have launched in the modern technological society."

Theology More Vulnerable than Any Other Search of the Full Truth

And now what about the situation of modern *theology*? We may safely say, I think, that what modern theologians are dealing with is also something we could very accurately describe as man-centered science. Here egocentricity may be equated with *anthropocentricity*, just as *alterocentricity* can be correctly equated with *theo-centricity*. What modern theologians are doing is precisely what they keep accusing the NT writers of having done: They impose their own patterns upon Christ. Or, as Torrance says: They make Him and shape Him in a form suitable to themselves. They have made Him into what the Jews with natural intuition reject as a "*Gentile* Messiah."

By the way, how could Gentiles create a Messiah who would not, inevitably, turn out to be a gentile Messiah? That is entirely according to the modern principle of *extrinsic intelligibility*.

"The patterns of thought we use for Christ are not really patterns that have arisen out of Christ Himself, but are rather extrinsic patterns we impose upon Him. Then we find that the real historical Jesus keeps on slipping away from us." (Ibid).

And what does the modern *preacher* say and do? The adage is sufficiently well known: "Our task is to make Christ understandable in the realm of today."

Page 85

So just as the theological researcher finds nothing in the life of the historical Jesus but "pluralism," for the simple reason that his own mind in a culture like ours is "pluralized," I mean disintegrated with the disintegration that is the miserable lot of our whole modern thinking and living, thus the modern preacher, carrying to his contemporaries that Christ whom they "can understand," carries to them what they *have* already -- and far too much of it -- a Christ who can do nothing for them because He is exactly as helpless and confused as they are themselves. And what is the cause of this misery, this wonderfully "relevant" misery of a Christ who Himself is absolutely helpless, a mere symbolic projection of the patterns of life and death in which modern man finds himself immersed right up to the neck? We must not fail to face the causes. We must dare to go back to the place where we went astray.

What then is the cause of our predicament?

It is simply modern theology's erroneous -- nay, deleterious -- approach toward knowledge, the knowledge of the Word of God. What should we rather have done? We should of course all have faced this Word with the honestness and the realism that is elementary to all truth-seeking, to all reasonable search for salvation. We should have had the simple realism of turning courageously *outwards*, since it is outside ourselves we can expect to find any reasonable hope of salvation, if it exists at all. And that realism of all sensible epistemology is the firm determination to stop resolutely perpetuating our misery by means of our traditional trend of imposing our own ignorance upon the structures of our environment. Instead we should begin to turn with humble docility toward the very Source of knowledge. Thus we would have a chance of finding Christ as He is *in Himself*, not a distorted Christ, molded in the image of our own perverse imagination.

"If we are genuinely going to understand Jesus Christ today, we must try and find a way of penetrating into the inner structures and allowing the inner structures to come to view and then to articulate and develop our theology in terms of its own inherent dynamic structures, and not of structures which we have abstractly thought up and then try to clam down upon it and so fragment it and destroy it." (Ibid.)

Page 86

Now what does this general trend in modern epistemology tell us about man's basic leanings? Our previously suggested thesis is that man, as we know him today, is basically *egocentric*. Therefore we are not astonished at such a development in epistemology. In the same degree as man's fallenness becomes more marked, this is exactly what we would have to expect. Nevertheless, considered from the viewpoint of God's original intention and ideal for the human race, every detail in the historic trend is a spectacle baffling enough, of course. Let us reflect and see what man actually seems to be saying at the moment when he consciously adopts that attitude toward knowledge about the world around him. It is quite a remarkable speech the human "I" here addresses to the "Not-I" (by "Not-I" we here mean the whole environmental reality which the "I" is bound to face, including nature and God).

Monologue of the Self-Centered Researcher to All Persons and Things Outside Himself

"Listen, you 'other-ones', I am not *quite* indifferent about you, for in my relationship to you I am the 'one'. You should know, after all, that I am alive, and I am 100 per-

cent Myself. So I am at least interested in you 'other-ones' as possible 'opponents' or 'rivals', if not as partners and fellow beings. In other words, I do want to know about you what seems essential to Me. Of course, I am not particularly enthusiastic about you. The one about whom I am truly enthusiastic is Myself. I can hardly afford, then, to be exaggeratedly enthusiastic about any 'other-- one'. Still, or for that very reason, I should know something about your essence,--as far as that is essential to Me. I should know you as far as you do affect Me. You happen to be there, after all,--or at least, you *appear* to be there. That is enough: I could not, in the long run, entirely ignore you. But, inasmuch as I Myself am probably the only really important one among us, as I look upon the matter, I have definitely decided to get to know you, -- *on My own terms*, that is. What you really are like, in yourselves, this does not affect Me. That would affect only someone who happened to be genuinely interested in *you*,--for your own sake. I am interested in you for *My* sake exclusively. Of course I am theoretically acquainted with all this antiquated stuff about submissiveness, humble receptivity and self-sacrifice. Those nice qualities are supposed to be indispensable for acquiring knowledge of the actual substantial facts, the facts about the objects themselves. In My case all this does not apply. Here it is *I Myself* who am the central one, the interesting one, the commanding one. So it is rather the *facts* that will have to '*submit*'. They must accommodate themselves to the angles I Myself have adopted. My personal organization is the norm, the sovereign pattern. If the 'intrinsic essence' of the things observed does not deign to accommodate itself to that organization of Mine, then just let them remain unknown to Me. Good luck to you, My dear 'other ones', but remember, I am not going to meet you, even half-way. Why should I? The reality about you that really matters to Me is just the way you appear to Me. That subjective kind of truth is the only one worthwhile, -- to Me."

Page 87

What fellowship does Christian realism have with the spirit of an epistemology like that? None whatsoever. It just could not have any. Why? Because Christianity is alterocentric in its very essence. And so is realism. That applies to any genuine realism. For that term is identical with "the love of the truth," to express it in Biblical language. And that is a type of truth-seeking that actually *runs out of its way* to find the truth that is being sought. Realism is an exuberantly living thing. It runs as fast as it can -- out to meet reality. For it is in love with the real, not blindly in love, not erotically in love. No, it is agapeically in love. That is a love which never dies, never tires, never gets "curved into itself."

Are We the Type of Truth-Seeking Realists Who Step Humbly Down to the Facts of Reality?

I have pointed out, as a main characteristic of Agape, the simple willingness to *go down*. That is a genuine desire of keeping both feet securely planted on the earth (humus). That important aspect of rock-bottom humility is the diametrically opposite of what Eros stands for, namely the furious climb toward the stars, the glorious summits of sophisticated speculations.

Now is it the humble going down that has characterized us as a people? Sometimes I fear that there may be, in our every-day organization, a secret principle of just *climbing*. It is almost as if there had been a literal paragraph in our policy manual on

how to avoid letting a worker go *down* again, once he has *gone up*. I know, for instance, so many cases in which administrators have felt the need of simply taking a teacher away from the class room for the obvious reason that his teaching was dangerous to the basic formation of his students. But what was the solution arrived at again and again? Simply raising him to the higher position of a leading administrator in the same school, or another office; for of course, you could not let the poor fellow go down into a position of lower prestige!

Page 88

And what was the practical result of this maneuver? That worker's evil influence increased considerably. Now he might for instance be the one who decisively led the appointments of other teachers. The same secret rule seems to hold sway in the case of ministers: One should always see to it that a worker who has had some "superior position" in administration should not be "forced" to "go down" ("go back") into the position of a "regular pastor". Is this a policy inspired by the Christian Agape? No, it is just the inherent essence of time-honored Eros.

The Strange Phenomenon of Sola Reformatio

The term "sola reformatio" is mine. But the trend I want to express by it is not particularly mine. At least I do not hope so. In fact, it is just another aspect of dualist thinking. By "sola reformatio" I mean: to be perfectly satisfied with the Reformation, desiring nothing beyond that. Being a child brought up in a milieu of Western paganism, I must of course admit that this pattern of pagan dualism had got the better of *me* as well, for a long, long time, in spite of the fact that I was also brought up in the sheltered milieu of an Adventist home.

The serious question I here want to take up is the following: What have you and I got to brag about? Can we truthfully today deny that we are internally disrupted? I mean as individuals, as family groups, and as a people. Where have we gone wrong? How can we come back to normal? Is there any remedy strong enough to make us whole again? Our brokenness, you see, is not that of the Christian *Metanoia*, the contrite heart. It is rather that of the coldest and most hard-hearted *Autarkeia*. That is, self-sufficiency, the great ideal of Plato, but certainly not of Jesus Christ.

It is our philosophy that has gone wrong. Let us take due note of the fact. Our outlook on God and man and the entire world is no longer that of the Biblical philosophy. For that philosophy is a consistent philosophy of harmonious totality. Ours, however, is a tragic disintegration in all essentials. Our theologians today are inclined to call it just "polarization". That may not immediately sound so terribly sinful. But is there any greater sin among men than that of being *poles apart*, just in matters where they ought to be most closely together? Such "apartness" (Apartheid) is nothing less than a tragedy, where true life demands unity, integration, perfect oneness in the faith.

Page 89

How could anything as bad as this happen to us? How in the world of wonders, since our foundation from the beginning was the World of God and the philosophy of *wholeness* and *holiness* (words of the closest etymological connectedness), the only rock-bottom realism any philosophy has ever known? I have applied myself to finding plausible answers for a long time: As children of a hopelessly intellectualistic race we have been simply permeated by pagan thought forms. By and by, our very hearts have

become paganized through and through. I know what I am speaking about. For I am a member of the group. At the same time it so happens that I am becoming increasingly conscious of the hideousness of that paganism which has become part and parcel of our heritage.

None but knavish sadists, or tyrants greedy of power, could find such a condition of the church enjoyable. Still one thing is true: Sometimes a crisis may be the introduction to a change for the better. I am speaking about *KRISIS*, not about *KRIMA*, the other *NT* word for the English "Judgment". *KRIMA* is Doom. *KRISIS*, however still has some blessed hope left in it. The hope is that an ever so drowsy person may finally wake up. It is a question of life or death.

Why a Positive Attitude toward the Spirit of Prophecy Becomes Our Only Safeguard Against Disruptive Interpretations of the Type: "Sola Reformatio"

First, what is the actual nature and the particular seriousness of that disruption tearing us asunder at the present time? In my book **The Maligned God** I have spoken, at sufficient length, about Luther's unfortunate formulation "sola fide" (pp. 160-203). That is part of a larger "solus" theology which we may call the disruption of "solum Novum Testamentum": "the New Testament only". To give you an idea of the stubbornness with which it has maintained its spurious wisdom, let me quote a passage from Anders Nygren, the great ultra-modern prophet of the splitting wedge type of Christian thought, within main-stream Protestantism. Nygren speaks with great emphasis about a Christ who lets "Christianity emerge from Judaism as a completely new religion."

Christian fellowship with God is different in kind from that of Judaism. And therefore Christianity, in spite of its historical connection with Judaism, and in spite of any other bonds and affinities between them, is a *fundamentally different thing from Judaism*. *Agape and Eros*, p. 68.

It is nothing less than the oneness of the Bible that is here in jeopardy. Nygren simply thinks he is justified in "regarding the dependence of Christianity on the Old Testament as a *disaster*" (p. 255). There seems to be no question whatsoever of a harmonious transition from the Old Testament to the New. A necessary "*tension*" between the two is the best he can suggest.

Page 90

Today, more than ever before, it becomes evident that the Spirit of Prophecy was absolutely necessary for you and me in order to protect us from a spurious and disruptive philosophy, such as that of Nygren. How deeply he has drunk from the sources of modern philosophers, such as Kierkegaard and Kant, becomes evident when we consider one of his most persistent ideas, namely that of Agape being first and foremost a fundamental motif of the most extreme *irrationality!* (See my book: **The Part of the Story You Were Never Told About Agape and Eros**, pp. 52 to 59: What is the Essence of Nygren's thesis about Agape as the *Great Unreasonable One?*) To Ethics maybe the most dubious thing is that Nygren's concept of Agape virtually explodes all known barriers of *law* and *justice*:

Strange that it should seem relevant to Nygren to go with visible pleasure even to the super-heretic Marcion of the second century in order to find his great model of a "separatio legis et evangelii".

With regard to that "separation of the law and the gospel" for which Marcion had become so famous, Nygren says with manifest admiration and approval:

"In this respect he (Marcion) displays far keener insight than any of his contemporaries." p. 332.

And here comes his almost incredibly outspoken statement about the need of evaluating *justice* in an entirely new way:

"It is futile to try to eliminate from this Parable (the parable by Jesus about the workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20) that which is offensive from a juridical point of view. The offence only ceases when the principle of justice itself is eliminated as inapplicable to the religious relationship, and this is precisely what happens in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. It is equally futile to try to find a motive for God's love for the lost. The offence of this only ceases when we realize that God's love for the righteous is just as "unmotivated", since it is characteristic of God's love that it is not evoked by its object, it is not motivated." (pp. 88, 89)

How can anyone dare to state in plain words: Agape is a love that **makes mockery of all attempts at rational motivation**. It is modern theologians who are bold enough to make that kind of mockery, not Agape. It is modern theological best-sellers, like Nygren's "*Agape*", containing so many gems of truth right in the midst of its fatal errors, that have led many of our best theologians and ministers astray. They have fallen miserable victims to this spurious idea: "You cannot hope to have the slightest understanding of Agape until it dawns on you that the concept of justice must be kept carefully apart from it." If your philosophy and mine is not better than that antinomianism, then how could we entertain any hopes of coming back to the old paths where our basic philosophy is made truly whole again, and hence truly saving.

Page 91

Personally I know for sure that I have nothing to brag about. The Spirit of Prophecy was my only chance to be led into a living knowledge of Biblical realism. If you think otherwise about your own abilities, I think I have experience enough with SDA students, to entertain highly justified doubts about your special abilities in this respect. Not once have I come across an Adventist Bible student who managed to grasp fully the far-reaching facts of Biblical realism in this endtime era, without a humble faith in the great God-given science of the Spirit of Prophecy.

How the Great Disruption Operates

Could we modern Westerners be at all expected to grasp the fulness of Christian philosophy, the Bible's life-saving and totality-saving realism, by means of the Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*)? My answer would be: Ideally we could. But please remember: *with you and me today it is NOT the ideal that bears sway!* We ought to know that pretty well by now. Our Christ-flavored paganism is the worst brew ever invented. So our hopeless heritage of hellenized Christendom gets the better of us, whenever we are left to that "precious aloneness" of ours. "Alone" here means one thing: without any special intervention of the Spirit.

The reformers may cry "*sola Scriptura*" as much as they like. The historic record is there to testify that *they themselves* never managed to arrive at certain truths that were destined to become absolutely crucial in the drama of the endtime. I am speaking with boldness and full conviction about (1) the *Sabbath* and (2) about the specially

prepared divine Agent of wonder-making service of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Of course those truths were entirely contained in the Bible from the beginning. There is no denying the fact. But history is there to tell us about another fact: They were not to be grasped until the end, and then actually in spite of human perversities culminating in the world as a whole.

Page 92

Praised be the God of perfect providence who had laid such perfect plans for you and me that even we should have a perfect chance to have heaven's matchlessly realistic philosophy come to fruition in our otherwise arch-pagan lives.

Of course the Scriptures are not in any way to blame, then, for the fact that a *special* portion of the divine Spirit was indispensable in order to save us.

What does it benefit you to have a book on your shelves, styled in a vernacular you only understand with great difficulty. You may have grown up in an environment in which that more ancient way of expressing one's ideas has become rather obsolete. What you need desperately is a guide formulating the essential ideas in a language more close to you. Some refuse to accept such a guide for reasons of sheer pride. The fact of the case is that they simply adore almost anything they find rather ambiguous, rather obscure. That leaves more room for individual interpretations. Again we have to do with the intellectualist's strange inclination toward mysticism. I am treating this topic in my booklet: **Mysticism and Charisma** - Tragically Deceiving Moods of Sentimentalism Pervading the Arch-Enemy's Fight Against Old-Fashioned Seventh-day Adventism Today.

The Spirit of Prophecy messages form an indispensable part of the totality making up life itself in the particular case of your destiny and mine at a time like this. Leave it out of your life, and you may be lost. Could you really content yourself with what any main-stream Protestant denomination has acquired in terms of sound Biblical anthropology and advanced theology? Then how could you expect God, the Lord of the end-time, to deem you worthy of the name of a Seventh-day Adventist? With such a faithless attitude you are heaping shame on that peculiar God's glorious name.

Who among us, by the way, can claim that he is guiltless in this respect? Is it not high time God's name be washed clean? It is your sins and mine that have caused it to be covered with filth, in fact so thickly as to become illegible to crowds of people who need desperately to read it, in all the pristine glory of its original characters. The vindication of God's reputation is the most urgent purpose of the great special event of the redemption drama, taking place in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly sanctuary today. God's name is destined to be washed entirely clean, with *or without* your free will contribution. In the latter case your *crisis* will turn into regular *doom*. In the former case there is cleansing and restoration happening to both *your* name and *God's* name.

1 In the next booklet of this series we shall come down to the nitty-gritty of revealing details regarding the drama that is taking place among us. We shall let the Spirit of Prophecy unveil the trends of pagan thought* and pagan action that is trying hard to destroy our denomination. That is, we shall let the Spirit lead us back to the Bible and its simple realism. That Spirit is not a fanciful "reinterpreter", filling our hungry souls with some empty set of mystic reinterpretations. No, the Spirit of Prophecy is the great In-

terpreter. And the Interpreter's job has always been just to give a faithful translation. He will translate into unmistakable, familiar terms that original language which our rebellious hearts, darkened by millennia of pagan infiltration, are now having such incredible difficulties in understanding.

2 -----

*Pagan thought is, with me, an euphemistic expression for what should realistically be called pagan thoughtlessness. That of course is a term coming very close to stupidity, for it has to do with a definite stupor, a certain paralysis of the normal senses.

By Carsten Johnsen
1982
Printed in USA by:
US Business Specialties
Yucaipa, California 92399