

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## The Reader Write

Edited by John W. Robbins

*Editor's note: In the past few months we have received a large volume of mail. Here are some samples.*

Please send me a copy of Dr. Gordon Clark's *Faith and Saving Faith* for \$4.00. The Foreword looks great, and if the book is half as good, it is just what I want to read this spring. I want to keep receiving *The Trinity Review*. I always look at it—sometimes finding little, sometimes finding a lot. Now that I am out of seminary ... I need you more than ever. Keep up the good work.

—D. R. G., Massachusetts

### Evangelical fluff

Thank you for your newsletter. I appreciate the emphases in a day of Evangelical fluff. Keep mine coming please. I am a Dallas Seminary grad ... serving as pastor-teacher ... *The Review* is a healthy stimulus—I appreciate it.

—J. O., Texas

### Gems

We wish to continue in the valuable work with you. Your work is needed and appreciated as I hope our past contributions testify. We intend to continue financial support in the future. Our prayers also include your work and the expansion of it to reach many others. The essays are gems and the books

mind expanding. They feed the spirit and edify; you must persist and continue.

—E. C., California

### Cut glass

Please remove my name from all your mailing lists.

—R. C. M., Ohio

### C. S. Lewis

Please don't feel that you are alone in the "sea of irrationality." The Foundation's works have been a blessing to me. Until a few years ago I had never heard of you. Your unsolicited mailing came as a most pleasant surprise. Gordon Clark is the most refreshing apologetical voice I have seen since C. S. Lewis. In fact, I used some of your materials in a course on Christian apologetics which I taught at my church!

—J. I., New York

### No money here

In response to "Tanstaafn," issue #29: I would like to continue receiving TR, much as I frequently disagree with both its content and tone. I'm not likely to contribute, so you'll have to decide whether it's worth it to keep me on the list.

—J. F., California

*Note to J. F. and all our readers: The Review is free to those who request it. Of course, we hope those who receive it contribute, but such contributions are not necessary. Just the fact that a reader takes the time to write shows us that he is serious*

### **Rationalism**

Please keep me on your mailing list. I do not always agree with *Review* articles, or with the rationalist-evidentialist approach to apologetics, but I share your Reformed perspective and your concern with the anti-intellectual tendency in the modern world. I therefore find your articles consistently challenging and helpful to me in my personal development and in my pastoral ministry. While I'm writing, I especially appreciated Peter Herz's analysis of Boer's *Short History*. Book reviews like that are tremendously helpful to busy pastors. Thanks.

—B. A. R., Washington

*Editor's note: Thank you for the kind words, but we are nonplussed. Neither the editor nor Dr. Clark can be accurately described as a "rationalist-evidentialist." We had hoped that "The Cosmological Argument," one of our early Reviews, had made that clear.*

### **Theological pap**

Yes, I would like to continue receiving *The Trinity Review* because your work is slowly working its way to my intellect—slowly undoing the many years of unadulterated theological pap which I have been fed and unfortunately had become quite accustomed to accepting. Now I feel very uncomfortable because I can no longer remain complacent when confronted with "real truths." You folk at The Trinity Foundation have awakened my intellect. Hence, I am driven to know more and more. Frankly, the reading and understanding of much of your material does not come easy tome. For the first time in years I must apply myself to ardent study. BUT, IT IS WORTH IT, because my understanding increases with every issue of your newsletter. I can see where my Bible is going to become extremely worn over the new few years!

—R. S., Massachusetts

### **Almost arrogant**

I'd like to take a few minutes to say that I receive and enjoy *The Trinity Review* and would like to continue receiving it. I assure you that you are not alone, out there in the sea of irrationality! As an instructor in New Testament Greek, among other things, I take pains to instill in my students an appreciation for the logic of grammar and syntax through which one moves into the logic of correct theology and ethics. Perhaps I am biased, but perhaps one reason there are so many people who fail to appreciate propositional truth is that, not having begun with language, they muddle things up when they attempt to move from a text to the level of theological discussion.

But enough of this; I would like to make one observation in regards to *The Trinity Review*. At times, the tone of discussion approaches arrogance, or at least a "I'm right and those guys are really off" manner. Maybe "no one who trusts in the Christ of Barth etc." will be saved but does that need to be stated? I think a calm, logical discussion showing precisely where an error lies with these theologians, and perhaps a brief indication of the dangers involved, is sufficient. One of the things I've always admired about some of the greats of previous centuries is the humility they brought to their discussions of theology. In contrast, so many believers today are almost unteachable in their "I've already got the truth" attitude. In reality, we stand by grace—not our perfect grasp of truth, and we should be gentle in our dealings with those in error in hopes that they may see the truth in us and not just from us. Well, enough said. Keep up the good work. I would like to see more on neo-orthodoxy; many of my students don't know how to evaluate it.

—D. G. C.

*Editor's note: Paul's injunction to Timothy is to "preach, correct, rebuke, and encourage." I seriously doubt that the late Karl Barth is going to see the truth in us, and Christians and non-Christians alike must be warned that anyone who trusts in his god will not be saved. It does need to be stated. The reluctance to make such statements is one of the primary weaknesses of contemporary*

preaching. There are false shepherds, and the sheep must be warned. See *The Virtue of Name-Calling*.

### A is A

I have greatly appreciated your journal ever since it first began arriving, unheralded, a year or so ago.... It's the only publication of which I can read every word without getting angry. It grinds all my axes. I love it!

Please forgive me for not having written a word of encouragement sooner. As I read the lonely cry in your most recent issue (#29), my heart (the one between my ears) went out to you and all those involved in the thankless task of seeking to convince American Christendom, yea even Evangelicalism, yea even ostensible Calvinism, that "A" will, with stubborn defiance and malicious intent, persist in its refusal to be "non-A."

I have been an admirer of Dr. Clark's since my seminary days, and consider anything he publishes to be worthwhile reading. He has long been a lonely advocate of sane Biblical faith. Hence I have been delighted to hear of a community of voices that have risen in concert with his. Praise the Holy Spirit of God who has brought us to substantial agreement by enabling us to grasp his word. I have come to the point that when I hear euphemistic phrases such as "a rich diversity of opinion" being used to describe Babel, my stomach clutches; and when I hear pejorative phrases such as "slavish conformity" flung at agreement, it shifts into reverse. Praise our High Priest who prayed to the Father that his Church would be one as he and the Father are one. Praise him for providing the substance of this unity by passing on the words given him by the Father, to his disciples, first during his earthly ministry, then through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit! How dare we resist his prayer and scorn his work by disdain to strive for Biblical univocality.

Pursuant to that object, may I submit some observations and questions in response to your foreword to Dr. Clark's forthcoming book?

I was once again refreshed to hear someone take issue with the old head/heart distinction. (My motives in resisting this distinction may not be

entirely exempt from suspicion as to their ulteriority. I am 6'3" and would therefore miss Heaven by at least 18 inches.) Contemporary Christians have been astonishingly successful in their efforts to avoid being infected by this treacherous head knowledge. Unfortunately, since the organ to which they resort can do little else than circulate blood, they end up avoiding knowledge altogether.

I also exult to concur that truth is propositional. Therefore, there is no such thing as a belief that cannot be expressed in words. A belief is an expression in words. However (you knew it was coming, didn't you) propositions, true propositions, do more than display formal validity. They accurately describe reality. Language names God, his actions, his creatures, and their actions.

Therefore I do not share your hesitance to affirm a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Certainly we can believe nothing about him that the Bible does not say; *i.e.*, all we may know of him is either expressly set down in Scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture. But Scripture speaks of a personal relationship between God and His people. It is the very promise of the Covenant (*Jeremiah* 31:1). The Bible describes this relationship as being effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples, not just that his words would come upon them. To be sure, the Holy Spirit's task was to bring the words; and we have no knowledge of God, even of that personal relationship than that which has been disclosed to us in Scripture. But passages like *Ephesians* 2:22 and 3:16 and 17 indicate that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, by which residency he convinces us of the words of Scripture and helps us in our prayers. (*Romans* 8:26, 27.) In fact, the identification between the members of the Trinity is so close that by the agency of the Holy Spirit, both God the Father (*Eph.* 2:22) and God the Son (*Eph.* 3:16, 17; *cf. John* 14:16-18 and *John* 16:7-15) are said to dwell in believers.

While I am at it, I may as well get in a plug for emotions too. I cannot determine whether Dr. Clark views emotions as illusory or as merely

untrustworthy. If the former, I must maintain that emotions do exist, and we must do something with them other than deny them. If the latter, I would observe that "trusting your feelings" is worse than inadvisable. It is impossible. A feeling, that is an emotion, is incapable of making propositions. No one ever acts on his feelings. He acts on his thoughts. And only the intellect can think. When people set their "hearts" in opposition to their "heads," when their "emotions get the better of them," what they are in fact doing is revealing what their intellects really believe, as opposed to what they claim to believe. The intellect is primary, whether anyone admits it or not.

Well then, what do we do with emotions? We admit them as responses to what the intellect apprehends. Emotions cannot be controlled, but thoughts can. Emotions have no cognitive content or ability, so they cannot be blamed for leading us astray. Men go astray because they believe lies. Therefore you do not tell a chronically angry man that he must control his emotions. You recognize his chronic anger as an emotional symptom of his thoughts. Then after finding out the thoughts that are making him angry, you seek to change them.

Exponents of Christian experientialism would be benefited more by a rebuke for their practice of fabricating false doctrine in hopes of pleasing their carnal minds and producing pleasant emotions, than by an injunction to forsake emotion.

I certainly hope my letter has been encouraging and stimulating, if not altogether intelligible. May God bless your work

—Douglas Withington

Pastor, Harrisville, Pennsylvania

*Editor's reply:*

*Dear Mr. Withington,*

*Your letter was greatly appreciated. Your analysis of emotion is right on target; the intellect is always king. Emotions are automatic responses to what one believes.*

*But I must disagree on your implied view of reality. There is no unknowable reality behind our words or to which our words refer. The words themselves are the reality. Not the sounds in the air, of course. Please don't misunderstand. But the propositions, the logoi. Christ is the Logos, the Word, the Proposition, the Reason, the Wisdom of God. And the Logos explicitly says that his words are Spirit and Life (see John 6:63). Life is not deeper than words; life is words. We have the word of the Word on that.*

*I hold this view not merely because I believe it to be Biblical, but because the alternative—that words represent something else—we know not what—makes that something else unknowable. All we know and all we need to know is words, and if God is not propositional, then we never know God. When Christ said, I am the Truth, he was speaking literally, not metaphorically. The Westminster Divines recognized this when they called God "Truth itself." Augustine was accused of reducing God to a proposition, but John "reduced" God the Son to a Word: In the beginning was the Word. As for the pejorative "reduces," what is being reduced?*

*It follows from all this, I believe, that one can have a personal relationship with Christ, providing one makes clear what one means by "personal." Once it is understood that God is his mind and we are ours, the personal relationship becomes the communication of minds. It is not the communication of emotions, or worse, of something ineffable. So I find no difficulty at all in the verses you cite. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, i.e., we have the mind of Christ. (I would add, however, that this is not the meaning of "personal relationship" intended by most contemporary users of the phrase, insofar as I can tell what they mean at all. Nor does anyone, in the New or Old Testaments, urge his listeners to have a personal relationship with Christ. The command is to believe, which is distinctly an intellectual task.)*

*I deeply appreciate your support and kind comments, and I pray that the Review will continue to be a source of encouragement for you.*

**Deadlines**

*The Trinity Review* May, June 1983

Sincere apologies for missing the April 1 deadline for *Review* subscriptions. I also missed the April 15 deadline for the government. Then I can live without. I cannot, however, live without *The Trinity Review*. Please add my name to the mailing list.

*Editor's note: Permission granted. All our readers may reprint the articles that appear in the Review. We ask only that our name and address accompany each reprint.*

—P. B., Illinois

My pastor and I sincerely appreciate your work, and the work of Dr. Gordon Clark. I am at present in school at Louisiana State University and I too often feel like an "island of reason in a sea of irrationality." If the Lord is willing, I will graduate this semester. I will have had about 24 hours of Philosophy, 12 hours of Religious Studies, and 9 hours of Psychology. Needless to say, these hours have all included large amounts of irrationalism. And it is for that reason that Mark and I are encouraged by your efforts and we both use your work here in our own areas of ministry, both on and off campus.

I too print a small paper (extremely small) each month and circulate the paper on campus and via the mail as well. I only have 60 people on my mailing list, yet this gives me just a little taste of what you have to do to keep up with your work. Again, let me emphasize that my papers are small, just one legal size page (front & back), yet I try to engage in short articles that may provoke thought and even dialogue on campus among both Christians and non-Christians. At the present time I am staying with friends in the church, and my dormitory is closed for the Spring Break, so I cannot send copies of the paper with this letter. However, I hope to be able to send you some copies as soon as I return to campus. I hope you will notice the several times I have been able to use quotes from Dr. Clark, as well as for the subjects that I have written about. I call the paper "Two Cents," implying that it is just my two cents worth and opinion on whatever I decide to write about. I would like to have your permission to possibly reprint either portions of articles or entire articles from *The Trinity Review* in the "Two Cents" in the future.

—P. B., Illinois