

a hint of a similar argument, though in a reversed form, in Norman Malcolm's discussion of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* in the *Philosophical Review*, vol. 63, 1954, on p. 556, lines 13-14. This in effect argues from the incorrigibility of sensation reports to the untenability of Strawson's view about sensations. I think, however, that it can also be turned against Wittgenstein as interpreted by Malcolm. The argument is also closely related to the argument used by A. I. Melden, and discussed by Baier in his article "Pains",⁴ against the view that volitions are causes of actions.)

The argument of the previous paragraph therefore seems to show that not even sincere reports of immediate experience can be absolutely incorrigible. There is something surprising about this conclusion, but it is hard to see how it could be avoided. It could be said, perhaps, as Baier does in his "Pains" article in a different connection, that contingently connected things can be referred to by logically connected terms, as is shown by the example of 'father' and 'son'. Now though the use which Baier has made of this move is, in the context in which it occurs in his paper, a good and defensible one, I do not think that it would help in the present connection. You could adopt the artificial convention of making the correctness of a report a criterion of its sincerity, but then this move would ensure that a man who sincerely reported a bruised toenail had a bruised toenail. I conclude that dualism, and for that matter most forms of behaviourism too, is in as bad a state about incorrigibility, if absolute incorrigibility should indeed be a fact, as is the brain process theory.

Adelaide University.

THE PERFECT GOODNESS OF GOD

By ALVIN PLANTINGA

In *Religious Belief* C. B. Martin taxes Christian theologians with a contradiction:

All seems to be well as long as the goodness of Christ is not really called in question. Theologians admit freely enough that if the goodness of Christ is in doubt then his divinity must be in doubt, and, of course, if the goodness of Christ is denied then it must also be denied that he is God.

⁴ This issue, pp. 19-20.

However they think that there is nothing contradictory remaining if the goodness of Christ is asserted without qualification and he is called God, the Perfect Good. I have been at pains to point out that a contradiction of an irresolvable sort remains still. The contradiction is: Christ can be conceived to have been other (that is, not good) than he was, yet as God it should be not just false but *inconceivable* that he should have been not good.¹

Martin's argument apparently runs like this: theologians hold that (a) it is inconceivable that God be non-good and (b) Christ is God. Now (a) and (b) entail (c) it is inconceivable that Christ be non-good. But (d) it is conceivable that Christ be non-good. Hence the theologian is involved in a contradiction.

Now an obvious point is that more must be said to convict the theologian of inconsistency. For it must be added, obviously, that theologians *believe* or *accept* (d) as well as (a) and (b). And Martin offers no evidence, as far as I can see, for the supposition that theologians ever accept that proposition. Indeed, on page 63 he offers an argument for it; this leads one to suspect that Martin's view is that theologians *ought* to accept (d) (whether they do or not) and *if* they did (and continued to accept (a) and (b)) they would be involved in contradiction. He apparently holds that (d) is obviously and demonstrably true; so his complaint against the theologians is presumably not that they hold self-contradictory beliefs, but that *either* they hold self-contradictory beliefs or one of their beliefs is demonstrably false in that it conflicts with a demonstrably true proposition, namely, (d).

Very many Christian theologians do, of course, accept (b). And doubtless many also accept (a); any theologian, for example, who regards "God" as short for a definite description such as "the all-powerful, all-good creator of the universe" would certainly agree that (a) is true. And it is clear that if (d) is true and the deduction of (c) from (a) and (b) is acceptable, then either (a) or (b) is false. But *is* that deduction valid? What Martin says elsewhere (e.g., pp. 41, 43) suggests that the intended use of "inconceivable" is such that "it is inconceivable that *p*" is equivalent to "it is necessarily false that *p*" and hence to "it is necessarily true that not-*p*". Accordingly, the argument in question may be rewritten as follows:

¹ Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959, p. 40. (Page references in the text are all to this book.) The same charge is repeated in exactly the same words on page 62. Martin makes the same charge in almost the same words in his article "The Perfect Good", this *Journal*, Vol. 33, p. 31, reprinted in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew and A. McIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 225.

- (a1) $N\sim$ (God is non-good)
- (b) Christ is God

therefore

- (c1) $N\sim$ (Christ is non-good).²

And as it stands the argument is *not* valid. That it is not may be seen by comparing it with the following manifestly fallacious inference:

- (1) $N\sim$ (the bachelor in my office is married)
- (2) Jones is the bachelor in my office

therefore

- (3) $N\sim$ (Jones is married).

Martin's argument could be rehabilitated, obviously, if it could be shown either that the proposition "Christ is God" is necessarily true or that at any rate theologians believed that it is. At first glance, however, one would think that to hold that (b) is necessarily true is to hold that the most important tenet of Christianity can be seen to be true from an analysis of meanings alone; next to this claim the Ontological Argument pales into insignificance. Now, of course, Martin does not accept that claim; but neither does he give any evidence for the supposition that Christian theologians are inclined to accept it. Indeed, one might think that belief quite out of keeping with the whole tenor of Christianity; for if it were true the New Testament ought to have been an exercise in logical analysis rather than a Gospel. Hence it is far from clear that Martin has successfully unearthed a difficulty in the beliefs of those theologians who accept both (a) and (b). But perhaps appearances are deceiving, and perhaps it could be shown that the proposition "Christ is God" is in fact necessarily true. I propose to argue that there is indeed a respectable use of "Christ" in which a sentence like "Christ is God" expresses a necessarily true proposition; but I shall argue further that any interpretation of "Christ" which secures its necessity will be such as to render (d) ("It is conceivable that Christ was non-good") *false*.

How could it be argued that "Christ is God" is necessarily true? Martin points out that proper names (or what appear to be proper names) sometimes function "descriptively" (p. 40)—i.e., as abbreviations for definite descriptions. "Christ", for example, might, in the theologians' use, be short for something like "The Second Person of the Divine Trinity";³ then "Christ is God" would be another way of saying "The Second Person of the Divine

²I use the letter "N" to abbreviate "it is necessarily true that . . ."

³I am assuming that the proposition "Anyone who is the Second Person of the Divine Trinity is God" is necessarily true.

Trinity is God". Is that proposition necessarily true? Martin gives a reason for thinking so:

If the term "God" is used descriptively and means something like "the eternal, all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful creator of all things," then the statement "God is good" is true by logical necessity. The statement "God is good" where "God" is used descriptively in the way indicated would come to: "The eternal, *all-good*, all-knowing, all-powerful creator of all things is good." (p. 41.)

And, of course, the same reasoning could be employed to show that "The Second Person of the Divine Trinity is God" is necessarily true. But this reasoning is questionable, to say the least. Presumably the proposition "The infinite, all-good . . . creator of all things is good" either entails (on Russell's account of definite descriptions) or presupposes (on Strawson's account) that there *is* an infinite all-good . . . creator of all things. But if a necessary proposition *p* entails a proposition *q*, then *q*, of course, is also necessary; and the same principle holds, presumably, with respect to presupposition in Strawson's sense. So even if "God" is used descriptively in "God is good" it looks as if that proposition could be necessary only if some form of the Ontological Argument were sound. And, of course, the suggestion that "Christ is God" is necessary is open to precisely the same objection.

In a summary directly following the passage just quoted, however, Martin makes a significantly different claim:

"It is inconceivable that a being truly described as 'God' (good, powerful and so on) should be truly described as 'not-good'." (p. 43.)

Presumably a being truly described as God really *is* God; hence Martin is holding that if "God" is used descriptively, then "It is not true that God is non-good" expresses a necessarily true proposition. And this contention is not open to the objection raised against the previous claim. For "It is not true that God is non-good" is not equivalent to "God is good" if "God" is used descriptively; the former, but not the latter, would be true even if there were no infinite, all-powerful, all-good Creator of the universe. Indeed, "It is not true that God is non-good" is equivalent to "Anyone who is God is good"; and that proposition obviously does not entail that God exists. Hence Martin seems to me to be correct in holding that if "God" is used descriptively, "It is not true that God is non-good" is necessarily true. And by the same token, then, it might be argued that

(b1) It is not true that Christ is non-God
is necessarily true if "Christ" is used descriptively. (On this

interpretation the burden of the New Testament becomes the proclamation, not that Christ is God, but that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ.) But if Martin interprets (b) as (b1), then if he is to avoid equivocation in his argument against the theologians, he must interpret (d) as (d1):

(d1) N(Christ is non-good)

where "Christ" is again short for "The Second Person of the Divine Trinity". Taking "it is not necessary that not-*p*" as equivalent to "it is possible that *p*" we see that (d1) is equivalent to the assertion that it is possible that the Second Person of the Divine Trinity is non-good. And now it is far from clear that (d1) is true. For (a1) and (b1) are clearly *true* (as Martin admits) if "God" and "Christ" are used descriptively; but their conjunction entails the negation of (d1); hence (d1) is false. It is, of course, possible that *Jesus of Nazareth* was non-good; but it is a necessary truth that if he was non-good, then he was not the Second Person of the Divine Trinity. Any interpretation of "Christ" under which (b) is necessary is an interpretation under which (d) is false.

There is a further complication which must be mentioned here. Martin holds the view that certain subject-predicate statements with proper names as subject are necessarily true. This is the case, roughly, when a property forming part of the "naming instruction" (p. 44) connected with a given name is predicated of the individual to which that name applies. If, for example, part of the "naming instructions" associated with the name "Napoleon" (or one of the names "Napoleon"—see pp. 52-54) enjoins that the name in question is to refer to someone who was an Emperor of France, then "Napoleon was an Emperor of France" is necessarily true.⁴

Now I am not at all sure that I understand this doctrine. How does it differ from the point that a proper name (or what appears to be a proper name) may sometimes function as an abbreviation for a description? But I am not here interested in discussing this doctrine in its own right; what is important for my purposes is the fact that it cannot be used to rescue Martin's argument against the theologian. For with respect to that argument this proper name doctrine has the same consequences as the point that such words as "God" and "Christ" can sometimes serve as

⁴ Martin's view must again be amended here: "Napoleon was an Emperor of France" presumably entails that there was at least one Emperor of France; since any proposition entailed by a necessary proposition is itself necessary, "There was at least one Emperor of France" would, on Martin's view, be necessary. But surely it isn't. The proposition for which Martin ought to have claimed necessity is this one: "It is not the case that Napoleon was not an Emperor of France". This proposition, of course, is not equivalent to Martin's candidate, since it does not entail that France ever had an Emperor.

abbreviations for descriptions. Suppose, for example, that part of the "naming instructions" associated with the name "Christ" is the injunction to apply that name only to someone who is in fact God. Then on Martin's view, presumably, "it is not the case that Christ is non-God" will be necessarily true. And, accordingly, if the word "God" is used in such a way that "God is non-good" is necessarily false, "Christ is non-good" is also necessarily false. But, of course, if it is necessarily false that Christ is non-good, it is *not* conceivable that Christ be non-good—i.e., (d) is false. It is indeed conceivable that the son of Mary and Joseph who was born in a stable in Bethlehem in 4 B.C. (and who on the Christian view is identical with Christ) should have been non-good; for it is conceivable that he should have been other than Christ. It is, of course, conceivable that no one at all has ever met the condition laid down by the naming instruction hypothetically associated with the name "Christ". But that *Christ* should have been non-good will now be inconceivable in that the assertion that he was is inconsistent with a necessarily true statement.

The fundamental difficulty with Martin's argument is this: (a) and (b) must both be necessary if (c) is to follow from them. But any interpretation of "Christ" and "God" on which they *are* necessary renders (d) false. And to develop the difficulty for the theologian, Martin must hold both that (c) follows from (a) and (b) and that (d) is true. Martin's argument therefore has not the slightest tendency to show either that theologians are guilty of holding contradictory beliefs or that they hold beliefs from which an obviously false proposition follows.

Wayne State University.

C. B. MARTIN'S CONTRADICTION IN THEOLOGY

By WILLIAM L. ROWE

In an essay entitled "The Perfect Good"¹ C. B. Martin argues that there is an inconsistency between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Christ in orthodox Christian theology. The contradiction, so Martin claims, is contained in the three statements: (i) Christ is God, (ii) It is conceivable that Christ should have been not good, and (iii) It is inconceivable that God should have been not good. The crucial paragraph in his essay is:

¹ Martin's essay was originally published in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 1955. The essay was again published in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (ed. by Flew and Macintyre), 1955. The essay, in an expanded version, appears as chapters 3 and 4 in Martin's book *Religious Belief*, 1959. I shall refer to the essay as it occurs in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.