PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

Stated & Defended

GREG BAHNSEN

EDITED BY JOEL MCDURMON

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

Stated and Defended

GREG L. BAHNSEN

EDITED BY JOEL MCDURMON

PRESUPPOSITIONAL

APOLOGETICS

PRESUPPOSITIONAL

APOLOGETICS

Stated and Defended

GREG L. BAHNSEN

Edited by Joel McDurmon

AMERICAN VISION PRESS

POWDER SPRINGS, GEORGIA

&

COVENANT M E D I A PRESS

NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

P R E S U P P O S I T I O N A L A P O L O G E T I C S

Stated and Defended

GREG L. BAHNSEN

Edited by Joel McDurmon

Copyright © 2008 *The American Vision, Inc*

Published jointly with *Covenant Media Press*

The American Vision, Inc.

3150 Florence Road

Powder Springs, Georgia 30127-5385

www.AmericariVision.org

1-800-6218-9460

Covenant Media Press

8784 FM 226

Nacogdoches, Texas 75961

www.cmfnow.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers, except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles. Such quotations must be in context.

Printed in the United States of America.

Cover design by Adam Stiles

Typesetting by Adam Stiles

ISBN10: 0-915815-55-9

ISBN13: 978-0-915815-55-5

C O N T E N T S

Editor's Preface vii

PART ONE:

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETCS

POSITIVELY STATED

1 Introduction; God In the Dock? 3

2 The Christian Mind and Method 25

3 Neutrality and Autonomy Relinquished 77

PART TWO:

C O N S I S T E N C Y APPLIED: CRITIQUES OF

INCOMPLETE PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

4 Gordon Clark 137

5 Edward J. Carnell 197

6 Francis Schaeffer 241

7 T h e Critical Quintessence 261

APPENDIX 1:

The Necessity of Revelational Epistemology 269

APPENDIX 2:

The Pragmatist's Rejoinder and the Christian Alternative 279

APPENDIX 3:

The Possibility of Argument 287

Subject and Person Index 291

EDITOR'S PREFACE

B Y J O E L M C D U R M O N

Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen (1948-1995) provided perhaps the

clearest, most faithful, and most powerful advancement of Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional apologetics of anyone. This statement holds true both for Bahnsen's written scholarly work as well as his practical applications in both formal and informal debates and exchanges. Those knowledgeable of Van Til's "Copernican Revolution" in Christian apologetical method will understand the enormity of this compliment to Greg Bahnsen. Those not formerly introduced to Van Til or Bahnsen will understand shortly after beginning this volume—for this book presents the most clear, systematic, and rigorous statement and defense of Van Tillian presuppositional apologetics written to date.

This volume presents the *systematic* counterpart to Bahnsen's earlier publication, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis.*[1] While that previous work included a broad and topical overview and explanation of Van Til's contribution—which, though highly organized according to an outline, and much more accessible than Van Til's own massive corpus of writing, still does not fully execute the *task* of a systematic work—this volume gets closer to an apologetical version of "systematic theology," as opposed to, say, "biblical

1. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998).

theology." Both approaches provide vital understanding, and now we have both.

As Morton Smith explains in his *Systematic Theology,* the task of systematic theology involves beginning with revelation, constructing the system, demonstrating and defending the truly biblical nature of the system, and lastly, examining critically all that has gone before.2 If we can understand Bahnsen's former *Analysis* as outlining a general system, we can receive this text as completing the rest of the systematic task. In this volume you will find the biblical and theoretical muscle behind the explanations given in the previous effort, the faithful defense, and the trenchant critical examination of alternative works and methods. Thus this work naturally compliments and expands the earlier *Analysis* (although, as you will see, Bahnsen actually wrote this later work years prior to the earlier published book).

What Was Lost Now Is Found

Besides the importance, rigor, and quality of this work, the book also has an amazing story behind it. Bahnsen originally began this work only to fill two chapters in a collaborative effort, *The Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective,* edited by Gary North in 1976.3 Bahnsen—as by all accounts he was wont to

do—continued adding and revising the work. It outgrew the scope useful for the book, with the side effect of beginning to delay the publication. The publisher gave Greg an ultimatum: either submit his two articles within two weeks, or he would use another author (who had already submitted!) for the chapters. Greg complied, but at the necessary expense of setting aside the much lengthier and more detailed work he had already begun. Within two weeks Bahnsen supplied almost a hundred pages that became chapters 10 and 11—still necessary reading today!—in North's phenomenal display of Van Til's influence and importance.

2. See Morton H. Smith, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1994), 1:22-24.

3. (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Boob, 1976).

Meanwhile, Bahnsen periodically returned to the "chapters" he originally began, which now approached a self-sustaining treatise. Over time he continued adding and revising, and at some point had the work typeset as a preliminary step for publication. When he received the "galley proofs" (20"-long typeset pages used for author's review and editing), Greg continued revising towards what clearly

promised to be his *magnum opus*—a work which contained a clear and thorough positive statement of the presuppositional method as well as a comparison of that method against other allegedly "presuppositional" systems and a defense against other non-presuppositional critics and rivals.

At this point, the most unexpected—and unfortunate—turn of events occurred. For some reason, unknown to everyone close to Bahnsen, the galleys were *lost.* Lost, as in disappeared. I can only imagine, in view of Bahnsen's voluminous and varied output during this time (he taught seminary until 1979, pastored a church and Christian school after that, wrote articles and lessons for various media, generated hundreds of audio tapes, and regularly typed out twenty-page, *single-spaced* letters to critics and inquirers alike, among other things, plus a draining embroilment in controversy at Reformed Theological Seminary), that th *e magnum opus* which took so much valuable time, yet had little direct financial support, gave way to his various other duties necessary to pay the bills. Whatever happened (and my speculation may not come even remotely close), the galleys *vanished* into the mists of a life in transition and remained lost until Bahnsen's untimely passing in 1995. Only by the amazing grace of God did that which was lost

get found. After Bahnsen's death—about sixteen years after his masterpiece-in-progress disappeared—the effort of cleaning out his offices solved the great mystery. The long-lost galleys and attendant materials—which Greg had apparently sealed in an envelope and mailed to his California office from Jackson, MS—had fallen behind one of thirty filing cabinets bulging with Bahnsen's written, received, and clipped materials. Dusting off the cobwebs and inspecting the envelope, Covenant Media Foundation director Randy Booth conferred with Bahnsen's mother, who helped discern the date of the package from the old address written on it. Having long-since heard rumors that Bahnsen had begun this work around the

time she mentioned, Randy put two and two together to get four hundred—over four hundred pages that is, once we would convert the galleys into standard pages.

Having the physical evidence that the publication began, Randy called the original publisher to inquire about the printing plates (essential for continuing the process!). Unfortunately, the original printer had long since destroyed them. Bahnsen had delayed so long, and further circumstances had extenuated that delay, the printer could no

longer wait—he could not keep the valuable resources and materials tied up with an old lagging project when other orders demanded them. So the old plates no longer existed. In the absence of vital resources, the project remained filed away.

Less than a year ago the project arose as a subject of interest at American Vision. Hearing that Covenant Media had something of a "manuscript" unpublished, we began to talk. Upon receiving the galleys for our review, we realized that even though the printer destroyed the original plates, the advance of technology made it possible to convert the text to a digital format. After a quick scanning and conversion effort, I personally spent half of a week pouring over the text correcting scanning errors and other minor problems. Then I began the task of incorporating Bahnsen's hand-written edits into the text from the scanned proofs—revising words, deleting sections, and inserting "new" materials he had prepared in manuscript. After this tedious work, we finally got the text into a modern typesetting program and began final editing.

I am so thankful and proud merely to be included in resurrecting this impressive work. Why our Lord delayed it and preserved it until now for publication He alone knows; but what was lost for thirty years, now is found. To help bring the clearest, most rigorous state-

ment and defense of presuppositional apologetics—from perhaps Van Til's most gifted disciple—brings American Vision and Covenant Media Foundation a great joy and sense of fulfillment.

About the Contents

To begin a few brief explanatory notes about this edition of Bahnsen's *opus* I should note firstly that we have not included the entire contents in this first volume. We have good reasons for this. Bahnsen

appears to have planned the work, as earlier intimated, in three parts: 1) a positive statement, both biblical and philosophical, of the presuppositional method; 2) a critique of three other apologists who use the term "presuppositional," in which Bahnsen shows their methods to fall short of the biblical presuppositional standard set by Van Til; and finally, 3) a critique of fully non-presuppositional proponents. Unfortunately, due to his self-imposed high standard of rigor and detail (and life circumstances), Bahnsen never completed the third section. Despite covering over two hundred manuscript pages, he only appears to have completed the first point in his outline for Part 3—covering three apologists under the heading "Positivists." He left no further information for his outline.

As a result, this edition contains only the first two (completed)

parts, leaving the third part for future editing and publication. We hope to involve other authors from the Van Til-Bahnsen tradition to generate and complete an outline which will encompass more of the major modern apologetical methods and authors and publish such in conjunction with Bahnsen's existing material. The resulting second volume would complete Bahnsen's work in a compilation meaningful for both its content and legacy.

Of the two parts that fill this volume, the reader will see Bahnsen at his most precise, exacting, and faithful in explaining and applying apologetical methodology. Part 1 explains the method and reasons for the method in an in-depth fashion, exegeting vital biblical passages throughout Chapter 2, and analyzing relevant philosophical and ethical ideas in Chapter 3. This section we have titled, "Presuppositional Apologetics Positively Stated," as this appears to approximate Bahnsen's intention.

Part 2 examines three well-known apologists who often used the term, and whom many people identified as "presuppositional." Bahnsen contrasts them against the standard of Van Til's presuppositional method and shows the many ways and instances in which they—despite all of their many positive contributions and aspects—depart from a thoroughly biblical presuppositional pattern. The names

of Gordon Clark, Edward Carnell, and especially Francis Schaeffer, all find ready acknowledgement today for the most part. In critiquing such giants, Bahnsen shows clear awareness that the debate involved takes place between brothers in the faith—that this debate is an in-

tramural debate. Nevertheless, Bahnsen thoroughly and boldly criticizes their departures from biblical methodology and calls readers to recognize and implement a more consistent approach.

The analysis of Schaeffer, in particular, carries great importance here. Among the three, Schaeffer by far had the widest influence, and yet his apologetic has probably endured the least scrutinizing. With the exception of a paper and a letter by Van Til—little-known outside of a few specialists—Schaeffer has received almost no critique from a thoroughly presuppositional perspective. This book provides a needed silence-breaking—and some may conclude ground-breaking—assessment.

During his last wave of editing, Bahnsen removed a few substantial sections from the text. Whether he intended to exclude them permanently or move them to a different place in the work is not clear. Judging the content of these excisions to have some significance, and

in the interest of the greater cause of apologetical learning, I have in determined to include them in this work. The reader will find these in Appendixes 1 thru 3. Keep in mind that Bahnsen may not have desired them to remain in his final edition.

One point of interest comes in the anticipated reaction from some followers of Gordon Clark. Since Bahnsen treated Clark first in the series, that critique appears as the most rigorous, most detailed, longest, and possibly (to some readers) the most merciless of the three. In reality, and as Bahnsen mentions, the three critiques piggy-back on one another so that the author does not repeat himself in dealing with the same issues multiple times. What he explicates at length when dealing with Clark applies also to the same ideas in the others as well, and thus the analyses balance in actuality.

Fans of Clark will remember that Van Til—Bahnsen's mentor—entangled with Dr. Clark in at least one major (and heated) intellectual disagreement, and thus may encounter the temptation to see Bahnsen's detailed critique as a settling of old scores. I do not believe this enters the picture at all here. Considering the amount of criticism that Clark encountered in his lifetime—just review the work which Bahnsen references often, *The Philosophy of Cordon H. Clark,4* and see Clark's interaction with many scholars from various angles—I

4. Ronald H. Nash, ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968).

suspect Bahnsen simply wished to provide a definitive critique from his presuppositional viewpoint, which former works appeared to him not to include. With this in mind, however, it is a shame that the foremost exponent of Dr. Clark's thought, John Robbins, passed away in August, 2008, and thus will not be able to interact with this critique. It might have been helpful to hear his comments.

Nevertheless, for those who succumb to popular images that some promote about Bahnsen, I wish to offer the next paragraphs. Due to his rigorous, machine-like precision in debate, and his relentless pursuit of accuracy in scholarship, some people have painted Bahnsen with the undue image of a merciless critic more bent on tearing down opponents than having a heart for ministry. Perhaps he did both, but the following will help dispel the charge of heartlessness as it shows the importance of Reformed theology, the reliance on the Holy Spirit, and the care for subtle rewording or editing with which Greg operated.

The Editorial Window

Entering the editing process at this stage provides some added bene-

fits to those interested in the personality and character of the author. The perspective of the editor who gets to see the author's mind and heart at work in revising his own words and ideas compares, analogously at least, to that of a pastor hearing private confession. He shares in keen and touching insights that others do not, presides over personal decisions that others do not, and he sees a side of the author that many readers may never know (and would almost certainly not know based on popular lore). The editor coming to a work already self-edited by the author, similarly watches that author reassess, correct, improve himself where others do not. Where these little "confessions" are favorable (and Bahnsen's almost always are), sharing them publically, especially posthumously, can only inspire and encourage other apologists and scholars. Bahnsen would have certainly approved of such openness, especially towards furthering the quality of Christian scholarship.

The process of self-editing requires a tremendous amount of humility, as well as a knowledge sensitive of the intended audience. 1 believe Greg illustrates both in some of the following changes.

A first example involves a paragraph which he removed com-

pletely from Chapter 3, Article 7. It reads,

> Any argument between an intelligent, self-conscious unbeliever and an intelligent, self-conscious Christian must eventually reduce to the appeal of ultimate, but diverse, presuppositions. A critical analysis of their respective language and logic would strip their arguments bare and reveal this fact. But the apologetic appeal will not always end in a deadlocked antithesis between the non-Christian and Christian. The Holy Spirit *does* grant the ability for the unbeliever to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, All that the Father has given to the Son *will* definitely come to Him (John 6:37).

Exactly why Bahnsen wanted this removed I cannot tell. It does seem to introduce too much of a dogmatically theological position into his "philosophical reflections" chapter, and perhaps he wished to avoid the risk of such a criticism, as insignificant as such a risk might be. The passage does show, however, how closely the Van Til-Bahnsen apologetic involves Reformed theology, the work of the Holy Spirit in apologetics, and a belief in predestination. This same focus echoes in another passage Bahnsen excised later from the same article:

> We do not present Christianity as a "hypothesis" to be verified, and we are repulsed by the idea of presenting men with

a "probability" to worship. Our apologetic must presuppose the authority and truth of Christ's Word in Scripture, casting down all reasoning that exalts itself against God. We must use the tools supplied by the Holy Spirit, not the devices of sin. We must seriously recognize that the sinner's problem in rejecting the Bible is *ethical, not intellectual.* Only regeneration can bring a man to belief, and apologetic argument must never presume to preempt or in any way take the place of regeneration.

I would have liked to have seen Bahnsen deal more with the relationship between apologetics and regeneration, or between apologetics and evangelism, within this work.5 Nevertheless, the inclusion of this

5. As he did, for example, in his article, "Apologetics and Evangelism,"

relationship stands out here, and the reliance on the Holy Spirit rather than personal debating ability highlights Bahnsen's presuppositional method. I also believe that the obvious Calvinism of the method presents a big obstacle to many of those who oppose it, but that matter belongs to another discussion.6

While many early on painted Bahnsen with a reputation as a cold logician cutting through opponents' arguments with the razor

of Reformed dogma, this portrayal does not correlate with the self-corrections evident in this project. The process of editing this work finds him correcting his early draft in order to curb and soften some claims that would have come across too harshly. For example, he had originally written in Chapter 3, Article 7, "Since Scripture speaks of God's unmistakable existence as absolutely certain and known to all men, it would be a *denial of biblical faith* to suppose His probable existence or to work toward proving Him to exist as such. Scripture does not present, nor do we worship, a probability." Upon review, however, he realized that the phrase "a denial of biblical faith" states the case too strongly, and thus he revised it to read "a departure from truth." Bahnsen certainly did not wish to argue for the apostasy of his intramural opponents (he in fact considered those apologists who opposed his method as yet part of a "united defense of the faith," as he writes in the last paragraph of Chapter 1), but rather he intended to convey that they simply interpreted the Bible incorrectly. To catch such a comment and to revise it in one's own writing displays no small amount of sensitivity and willing humility.

Bahnsen's excising of the following sentences from the same section reveals the same heart a work:

The very *question* of whether God might exist or Scripture

might be true is tantamount to a denial of what Scripture says

about God's inescapably clear and authoritative revelation.

To attempt an apologetic that takes an (allegedly) impartial

Synapse 3 (Fall, 1974); available online at http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/

PA013.htm (accessed March 3, 2009).

6. For illustrating the coherence and consistency of different theological

commitments versus differing apologetic methods, the best place to start is Van

Til's original *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th Ed., ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Phillipsburg,

NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, [1955] 2008).

starting point and method is to radically deny the existence

of the Christian God as described in His nature and activities

by Scripture.

I don't know if he removed this due to eventually disagreeing with

it, seeing it as unnecessary, judging it too strongly stated, or for

some other reason. I personally tend to believe the statement in

theory, though the inclusion of such in practice might have alienated

many fellow apologists, unnecessarily I think. Once again we have

an argument about apologetical method hinging on a theological

debate, in this case (considering the context from which Bahnsen cut it), the analogous debate about Eve's sin: did she sin when she ate, or already in her heart when she first *desired to eat.* The Reformed view would, by and large, argue that Eve sinned at the very moment she questioned in her heart God's revelation about the tree. The eating just outwardly manifested her sin, and certainly constituted sin in itself as well; but in truth, even before she touched the fruit she had committed the sin. At any rate, I believe Bahnsen wished to avoid the perception of contrasting fellow-believers' positions so antithetically as "a denial of what Scripture says," and, "radically deny the existence of the Christian God," even though these descriptions bear much truth in the context.

In some places Bahnsen softened words for which I actually wish he would have kept the edge. For example, in the same Article 7, he writes that "Argument for argument's sake when one is dealing in the vital matters of salvation and damnation would be *unseemly"* (my emphasis). In the original draft Bahnsen had written "sadistic" rather than "unseemly." The stronger word, I think, really presses the truth for those who may forget (for whatever reason) the mission of apologetics. To allow an apologetical encounter to follow rabbit trails (or "foolish questions," as Paul calls such diversions—Titus

3:9), or not to prosecute the unbeliever's case with the most effective apologetic tools available ignores that eternal torment awaits the unrepentant unbeliever. To present anything less than the fullest truth of God in the name of apologetics is thoroughly sadistic.

In regard to the quality of argument and character contained in this volume, we must remember—and it comes to my amazement—that Bahnsen completed the bulk of this text at the young age

of twenty-five years old. Having completed his Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees simultaneously (unheard of then and now!) at Westminster Theological Seminary, he immediately began teaching alongside veteran professors at RTS in Jackson. To advance such a work as this one as far as he did while handling other duties, while engaging in other major theological debates, and yet maintaining something of a pastoral concern for his own words exhibits the highest of character and composure. One may (although with some reservation) compare the magnitude of this effort so early in life to Calvin's publication of the first edition of his *Institutes* (1536) at the age of twenty-six. We can only hope that readers will still profit from reading Bahnsen five hundred years

later, as we do Calvin today.

Those further interested in Bahnsen's personal life, character, work, and influence will find substantial and encouraging material in *The Standard Bearer: A Festschrift for Greg L Bahnsen7* This important work offers a biography written by Greg's son David, as well as essays contributed by Michael Butler, Robert Booth, Jeffrey Ventrella, and many others, all exhibiting the Van Til-Bahnsen perspective.

About the Format and Editing

Besides headings and subheadings, the reader will notice two typefaces appearing within the main text of this book. With the different fonts we intend to delineate between Bahnsen's contributions (the main purpose of the publication) and any editorial notations. Bahnsen's main text appears in a traditional typeface and rightfully constitutes the vast majority of the text. With the exception of this Preface, my contributions appear only in footnotes, but maintain the font-face you see here.

I have attempted to keep any editorial comments to a minimum. Where I have included such I have done so for the purpose of clarification, elucidation, or adding what I consider to be helpful context. Otherwise, I have limited the editor's role in this project

mainly to the most faithful construction and presentation of the

7. Steve M. Schlissel, ed. (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2002).

text possible, including Bahnsen's last available edits so that the final product appears as closely as he would have intended. Possibly excepting the decision to save the incomplete Part 3 for later publication, I believe we have realized this goal.

P A R T O N E

PRESUPPOSITIONAL

APOLOGETICS POSITIVELY STATED

C H A P T E R 1

INTRODUCTION:

GOD IN THE DOCK?

John Calvin wrote, "Contentious disputes arise from the fact that many think less honorably than they ought of the greatness of divine wisdom, and are carried away by profane audacity." These words were written in his commentary on 1 Peter 3:15, a verse long taken as the charter of Christian apologetics. It commissions and defines how a Christian should defend the faith: "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts,

always being ready to set forth a defense to everyone who asks you for a reasoned account concerning the hope in you, yet with gentleness and respect." A truly Christian defense of the faith must never fail to exalt Christ as Lord over all, including argumentation and reasoning. An apologetic that builds on any other rock than Christ does not honor the greatness of divine wisdom; it is foolishly and audaciously erected on the ruinous sands of human authority.

The task of apologetics must be exercised upon the infallible and presupposed authority of the Word of Christ in Scripture. Apologetics does not first do obeisance to human philosophy and science and then proceed to encompass God in its sphere of reverence. The Christian cannot, indeed must not, take an unattached or neutral stance with respect to his faith in order to win the unbeliever over to Christ's authority. A Christian apologetic grows out of, and is shaped according to, a total dedication to the wisdom of the *Logos* as expressed in His inscripturated Word—not self-

sufficient human "wisdom." "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering, for the one who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23). Since God is faithful to us, our apologetic must not be faithless to Him; in setting forth our defense we must not set aside or waver with respect to the profession of our faith. Christian apologetics must begin and end with Him who

is the alpha and the omega, the one who only and always reigns as Lord. T h e purpose of this treatise is to exhibit presuppositional apologetics as the only faithful and sound method of contending for the Christian hope and biblical message. Resting upon the authority of the living God rather than that of independent human reasoning, the apologist must presuppose the truth of Scripture and lay siege to all apostate presuppositions. This must be his method because the Word of God in the Bible has a unique epistemological status for the Christian: it requires no corroboration and carries its own evidence inherently or self-attestingly. As God makes a total demand upon the lives of His covenant people they recognize that the words of Scripture are logically primitive,1 the most ultimate authority. So if our apologetic is to be a *Christian* apologetic it must be *presuppositional* in character and method.

A U T O N O M Y VS. R E V E L A T I O N A L A U T H O R I T Y

Thinking to maintain neutrality with respect to Scripture, any natural theology that reasons autonomously *from* logical and/or empirical grounds *to* God results in an exclusion of *revelational necessity and authority* endorsing some other imperious philosophy. Knowledge of God must be rooted in His own *self*-disclosure. Because the clear revelation of God in nature's and man's constitution is suppressed in unrighteous-

ness, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation. Faith must necessarily start with the clear, authoritative, self-attesting, special

1. By "primitive" Bahnsen does not intend to conjure up images of cave-dwellers or log cabins. He uses the term to mean "primary" as in "starting point." He makes the same point about Scripture elsewhere using similar phrases: "place to stand," "reference point," and "ultimate standard." See Greg L. Bahnsen, Van *Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburgh, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1998), 127n.113,230, 508-509, as well as 18-20 below.

revelation of God in Scripture coordinated with the Holy Spirit's inner testimony to the regenerated heart.

Historically, when David Hume and Immanuel Kant exposed the invalidity of the theistic proofs, apologists generally balked at returning to revelation as the basis for their certainty of God's existence. They elected, rather, to maintain status in the blinded eyes of the "worldly wise" by attempting to prove Christianity's credibility by means of arguments that hopefully *pointed* toward the *probability* of God's existence and Scripture's truth. They settled for a mere *presumption* (plus pragmatic as-

surance) in favor of a few salvaged items (i.e., "fundamentals") from the Christian system. Refusing to presuppose the sovereign God revealed in the Bible as the source of all material and logical possibility, and hence failing effectively to challenge or internally criticize the very feasibility of knowledge, logic, factuality, interpretation, or predication as based on the boasted autonomy of "free-thinkers," apologists found their defenses razed by those who (likewise) postulated that bare possibility was a principle more ultimate than God. Deterministic science disqualified *miracles,* positivistic sociology relativized *morality,* historical criticism faulted the Bible, and Kant's transcendental dialecticism invalidated cognitive *revelation.* Idealism made God finite, pragmatism made Him irrelevant, and logical analysis made Him *meaningless.* Process thinking limited *God* by pulling Him down from the throne of His sovereignty and pulling everything up into Him for the panentheistic drive to omega point, while phenomenology made the *universe* into a machine for the fabricating of gods, and existentialism made *man* himself the being who strives to become God. By appealing to probability, apologists saw Christianity relegated to the museum of mere religious hypotheses (i.e., "possibilities"), rather than embraced as the actual truth of God.

The present urgency for Christians, then, is to submit to and adopt a revelational epistemology and scriptural apologetic that are honoring

to God and powerful tools against unbelief. The Christian apologist must not trade away the certainty of knowing God for a probability or subjective moral conviction; he must unashamedly presuppose the truth of the Word of Christ in Scripture as congruous with the inescapable self-revelation of God in nature and man's constitution. Then he will be equipped with spiritual weapons that are mighty to the pulling down of every reasoning that exalts itself against God. God's self-attesting revelation must be taken as the firm foundation of all knowledge, the final

test for truth, and the standard for living. We are under obligation to submit every facet of our lives to Scripture—whether it be morals, vocation, emotions, deliberations, reasoning, or even the use of logic.

No attempt should be made to soften our principial and basic antithesis with the unregenerate; by conceding ground to the assumptions of autonomy, the apologist loses his forceful challenge and assured life-source. A non-Christian principle can never genuinely be fruitful within the framework of Christian thought and apologetic. Hence we must avoid embracing Platonism (as did the early apologists), Aristotelianism (as did the scholastics), Rationalism and Empiricism (as did the men of the enlightenment), or Kantianism and existentialism (as

did modern thinkers).

By catering to autonomous assumptions the Christian will see his message absorbed into its diametric opposite as a result of his alien methodology. But by presupposing the sovereign Creator and His Word as the requisite transcendental of any intellectual endeavor, the apologist can expose the fatal defects of all autonomous reasoning, calling unregenerate men back (for the sake of their eternal salvation) to covenantal obedience in terms of God's Word, and praying for the operation of the Holy Spirit to that end. The only proper starting point for an adequate theology and apologetic is God's special revelation; only upon this necessary, sufficient, authoritative, and clear foundation can any fact receive a proper interpretation—God's interpretation. When man will submit to the powerful and meaningful Word of Christ in Scripture his eyes will be opened to recognize God's revelation in every phenomenon of nature, principle of reason, and detail of history—a revelation that constantly exerts its pressure on him even while he struggles to hold it back.

Being confident of these things, a truly Reformed apologetic must begin from the presupposition that the living and true, triune God speaks to him with absolute authority in infallible Scripture. His reasoning then finds its only legitimate function as a *servant* or tool of God's Word, rather than its judge. Following God's Word, the Christian re-

ceptively reconstructs the created facts of the universe about him with a view toward both fulfilling the cultural mandate and being conformed to the image of his Savior by the power of Christ's Spirit; hereby he glorifies God and enjoys Him forever. Thus, the apologetic task will consist, *not* of *externally verifying* the Christian presupposition but, of *applying* it by (1) bringing God's truth and commands to bear upon the lives of unbe-

lievers, appealing to the image of God in them (distinguishing between present remnants of man's original nature and the ever-present nature of fallen man), pointing out that every fact of the world bears witness to God, and (2) doing an internal critique of the non-Christian's system, calling down its idols, and pointing out the absolute necessity of Christian presuppositions if logic, factuality, history, science, and morality are to have any meaning, validity, and application at all. The Christian apologetic will not concede intellectual ground to Christianity's cultured despisers or allow them to exploit theoretical foundations to which they have no legitimate claim without depending on the Christian faith. Thus, part of the Christian's reasoned defense of the faith will be an aggressive offense.

Not like the fool who built his house upon the sand, the Christian apologist must, in love for Christ, found his whole life, including apolo-

getical reasoning, upon the solid rock of *Christ's Word.* In accordance with this the apologist seeks the *repentance* of the sinner and does not encourage his continued use of hostile, autonomous reason in judgment over God's Word. We seek a God-controlled man, not a man-controlled god.

W H O SHALL JUDGE

The circumstance in which we find ourselves defending the Christian faith is aptly described by C. S. Lewis:

> The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock.... The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the bench and God in the dock.2

It is this situation that must be rectified; the sinful attitude portrayed here needs to be redressed. Consequently the infallible Word of God must be presupposed by our apologetic without apologies. We defend a genuine system of authority that cannot be known except by divine revelation; this inscripturated Word from God stands in judgment over all

2. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock• Essays on Theology and Ethics,* ed. W. Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 244.

and is itself to be judged by no one. The submission to this authoritative revelation is caused, not by impudent reasoning, but by the Holy Spirit. God's Word is perfectly rational; however, it is not the autonomous "rational man" who receives it, but the "humble man" who knows better than to subject the sovereign Lord's prerogatives to an independent test for verification at the overriding bar of human intellect. J. I. Packer is right to the point:

> Nor, again, may we present the faith as a philosophy, to be accepted (if at all) on grounds of rational demonstration; we must always declare it as revealed truth, divinely mysterious and transcending reason's power to verify, to be received humbly on the authority of God. Faith involves the renunciation of intellectual self-sufficiency; we must always proclaim the gospel in a way that makes this clear.3

The natural man is in no position to pass judgment upon the reality and reliability of God's special revelation at the tribunal of reason; his powers of appraisal are incompetent, his standards distorted. Our apologetic must never encourage the contrary opinion. The fact that God has delivered redemptive special revelation should itself indicate to us that we

cannot overture the unregenerate to use principles of logic and science rooted in natural revelation (which he suppresses in unrighteousness) to evaluate the Bible.

If special revelation assumes that in consequence of sin the normal activity of the natural principium is disturbed, this implies of itself that the natural principium has lost its competency to judge. He who considers it possessed of this competency declares thereby *eo ipso* that it is still normal, and thus removes all *sufficient reason* for a special revelation. You must either deny it the right of judgment, or, if you grant it this right, the object disappears upon which judgment shall be passed. The psychiater, who treats the maniac, cannot render his method of treatment dependent upon the judgment of his patient.

3. J. I. Packer, 1 *Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1958), 136.

Equally little can you attribute this right of judgment over the special principium to the natural principium... .4

Our defense of the faith accomplishes nothing positive if throughout it we allow the unbeliever to keep God in the dock, thinking that he has every right and capability to stand in judgment over the one whom he has sinned against. August Lecerf rightly points out that our apologetic arguments

> have no persuasive value except from the moment when, at once vanquished and enlightened by grace, the natural man consents, as is his objective duty, to relinquish the autonomy of his reason and submit to the discriminating principle of religious truth. This principle consists in the affirmation of the absolute independence and exclusive sovereignty of God in the noetic order, as in all the orders of reality. It is the *soli Deo gloria*.5

A Christian apologetic does not seek, therefore, autonomously to verify God's Word, having the believer serve as God's defense attorney who attempts to win an acquittal from the tribunal of the unbeliever. The Bible is not externally verified at all, for *it* has absolute authority inherent to itself; its *self*-attesting nature is of utmost apologetical significance. The ground of faith emphatically is not our ability to demonstrate all the teaching of the Bible to be self-consistent and true. This is just saying that rational demonstration

is not the ground of faith.... The nature of faith is accep-

tance on the basis of testimony, and the ground of faith is

therefore testimony or evidence.... This means simply that

the basis of faith in the Bible is the witness the Bible itself

bears to the fact that it is God's Word.... This might seem

to be arguing in a circle.... We should be little disturbed

by this type of criticism. It contains an inherent fallacy.

It is fully admitted that normally it would be absurd and

4. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1898),

381.

5. August Lecerf, *An Introduction to Reformed Dogmatics* (London: Lutterworth Press,

1949), 213.

a miscarriage of justice for a judge to accept testimony of

the accused rather than the verdict required by all the

relevant evidence. But the two cases are not analogous.

There is one sphere where self-testimony must be accepted

as absolute and final. This is the sphere of our relation to

God. God alone is adequate witness to himself.6

Hence our apologetic would not serve to put man in the dock and recognize God as the legitimate judge at the bench if it strove to work into faith from an independently acquired and neutral understanding of logic and facts. Our understanding does not precede and serve to arbitrate with respect to the faith to which God calls us. By contrast, faith precedes and undergirds any and all genuine understanding by the human intellect. Faith is not established upon the groundworkings of reason, but *vice versa*. Human understanding can never be made the verification of faith since without faith there is no proper understanding available to man whereby he might judge. As Augustine well said, "I believe in order to understand."7 Christian apologetics must reckon with this truth by beginning with the self-attesting word of Scripture as an absolutely necessary presupposition, the assurance of which being produced by the Holy Spirit, who opens blinded eyes to see God speaking authoritatively in the Bible and who grants a heart of flesh enabled to bow before the Holy Sovereign.

BY WHAT STANDARD?

Because God's inscripturated Word bears highest epistemic certainty, our defense of the Christian faith begins not with proofs and probabilities, but with the presupposition of the Bible's truth. The conclusion of Calvin is most appropriate here:

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy

Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and

6. John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," *The Infallible Word,* eds. Stone-

house and Woolley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 7fF.

7. This is a paraphrase. See, for example, St. Augustine, "Tractates on the

Gospel of St. John," XXIX.6 (John 7:14-18), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First*

Series, 14 vol., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983 [1888]), 7:184.

that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not

right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty

it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit.

For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it

seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts

through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we

believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment

that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment

we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing

upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us

from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We

seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as a thing far beyond any guesswork!... Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such, finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation.8

The Christian religion is under constant attack by the unregenerate, being pitted against rival religions, logicistic onslaughts, scientific incursions, and the like. Moreover, to complicate the apologetical exigency, the defensive stances that have been advocated throughout the years are manifold and multiform. The central question, then, in the pursuance of the apologetical task is, *what standard should be utilized* for guidance, judgment, and argument? Is the acceptance of that standard based on an arbitrary volition or upon a reasoned case? How can one be sure his standard is right, and to what degree of certainty is he entitled? The Westminster Confession of Faith definitively answers these questions of apologetical criterion for those religious disputes in which the apologist finds himself; if we heed its word, God will no longer be sinfully assigned to the dock to plead for acceptance before the

judgment of self-deified, autonomous men.

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion

8. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* I. VII. 5, from The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XX, ed. J. T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), p. 80.

are to be determined, and all... doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture....

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God....

Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.9

Here we see that the ultimate standard for the Christian must always

be the self-attesting word of God. This standard is accepted because of what it truly claims to be (the word of God) and not on the basis of independent human buttresses. This self-attesting revelation of God is objectively true and authoritative, even though subjective persuasion about it comes only by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. By what *standard,* then, shall Christian apologetics proceed? By the standard of God's self-attesting word. Far too often apologists have failed to recognize the unavoidable and reciprocal relation between one's theological system and his apologetic method. The result has been methodological inconsistency: a different epistemology for expounding the faith than that used in defending the faith. However, we must not defend our *message*—that Christ's word is self-attesting and possessing the ultimate authority of the Lord—with a *method* that works counter to it—by claiming an ultimate epistemological standard outside of Christ's word of truth. The final criterion for the Christian in every department of his thinking (theology and philosophy, proclamation and defense) is the self-attesting word of God.

9. Chapter I, Sections X, IV, and V

12

GOD IN THE DOCK?

The Insufficiency of Traditional Methods

Since this self-attesting word *is* what it claims to be, and thus the divinely-given standard of truth and knowledge, we must not present Christian faith as an unreasonable, voluntaristic, fideistic decision of the heart. We definitely have reasons for submitting to Christ—reasons which can be used to appeal to, and argue with, the unbeliever. Judged by this objectively true standard, all facts and logic must support the truth of Christianity. Because this ultimate standard is correct, those who attempt to use contrary standards can only destroy the very possibility of intelligible experience of the facts, reasonable explanation of the world or history, and meaningful interpretation or communication. Consequently, we must not be satisfied to present Christianity as the most reasonable position to hold among the competing options available to men. Rather, the Christian faith is the only reasonable outlook available to men. Fideism says Christianity is not a matter of reason. The traditional approach to apologetics is somewhat better; it does not throw over the reasoned defense of Christianity. However, by using a standard of knowledge and truth which is independent of God's self-attesting word, and by claiming only a high degree of probability for the Christian hypothesis (as judged autonomously in the light of facts and logic), it does not go far enough in defending the word of the self-attesting Christ. It does not at base present the intellectual

challenge of the gospel, but makes fatal concessions to the unbeliever's desire for intellectual self-sufficiency.

> The traditional method... is based on the assumption that man has some measure of autonomy, that the space-time world is in some measure "contingent" and that man must create for himself his own epistemology in an ultimate sense.
>
> The traditional method was concessive on these basic points on which it should have demanded surrender! As such, it was always self-frustrating. The traditional method had explicitly built into it the right and ability of the natural man, apart from the work of the Spirit of God, to be the judge of the claim of the authoritative Word of

God. It is man who, by means of his self-established intellectual tools, puts his "stamp of approval" on the Word of God and then, only after that grand act, does he listen to it. God's Word must first pass man's tests of good and evil, truth and falsity. But once you tell a non-Christian this, why should he be worried by anything else that you

say. [sic] You have already told him he is quite all right just the way he is! Then Scripture is not correct when it talks of "darkened minds," "wilful ignorance," "dead men," and "blind people"! With this method the correctness of the natural man's problematics is endorsed. That is all he needs to reject the Christian faith.10

What the apologist must endeavor to do is to demonstrate that without Christian presuppositions there is no intelligible use of facts and logic—that human knowledge and interpretation fail instantly. Therefore, to be reasonable at all, men must submit to the ultimate standard of God's self-attesting word; to refuse this is to insist upon intellectual foolishness and eternal damnation.

When the Christian apologist points out that his ultimate standard is God's revealed word, the non-Christian will rightly observe that it is just the truth of this standard that is now in question. The believer has not been requisitely "open-minded." To this we must reply that, on the other hand, the unbeliever has not been uncommitted and neutral from the outset either; he has used an espoused standard for weighing and interpreting the facts which precludes the truth of the Christian position. He has been begging the question. The unavoidable fact is—regardless of how intensely some apologists lament or decry it—that nobody is a

disinterested observer, seeing and interpreting the facts without a set of assumptions and pre-established rules. All men have presuppositional commitments prior to their examination of various hypotheses. In the nature of the case, apologetics requires that we argue with the unbeliever in terms of each other's most basic assumptions. We must challenge each other's final standards. This means that we must contest the grounds on which our opponent stands, showing that only within the context of the Christian worldview could he know anything at all. We

10. Cornelius Van Til, "My Credo," *Jerusalem, and Athens,* ed. E. R. Geehan (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 11.

must show his espoused standard to be self-vitiating, explaining that to see even this fact requires working in terms of the Christian's ultimate standard. Thus Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold—the only outlook which can have an apologetic. That is, we must argue that the non-Christian's epistemology and corresponding metaphysic not only prevent him from coming to faith in Christ, but they prevent him (if held consistently) from coming to any knowledge whatsoever.

Such an argument as this refuses to consign the Lord God Almighty

to the dock, awaiting the rational verdict of the sinful creature who has arrogated to himself abilities and prerogatives in the intellectual realm to which he has no legitimate claim. Such an argument does not settle for the conclusion that Christianity is possibly, perhaps probably, true; it is an appeal to the *necessity* of Christianity's truth. It is the most stringent defense of Christianity as reasonable. It stands in diametric opposition to fideism. Moreover, it does not settle for the leniency of half-way measures of traditional apologetics (which fail to challenge unbelieving epistemology, urging its further use so as to conclude merely that Christianity is probably true).

The Necessity of a Presuppositional Approach

Since neutrality is unattainable for either the unbeliever or believer, and since they have conflicting ultimate standards for judging claims to knowledge, the task of apologetics will ultimately be carried on at the presuppositional level. Contrasting worldviews are being debated. Each worldview has its presuppositions about reality, knowledge, and ethics; these mutually influence and support each other. There are no facts or uses of reason which are available outside of the interpretive system of basic commitments or assumptions which appeals to them; the presuppositions used by Christian and non-Christian determine what they will accept as factual and reasonable, and their respective presup-

positions about fact and logic will determine what they say about reality. Thus there can be no direct proof offered for the truth of either perspective; direct appeals to fact and reason are emptied of argumentative strength by the opponent's presuppositions (with which he understands and accepts facts and logic in a different light altogether). The argument between believer and unbeliever must then be indirect, admitting the impossibility of a neutral approach to reasoning and facts which are

allegedly outside of an interpretive system. The argument must pit the unbeliever's system of thought as a unit over against the believer's system of thought as a unit. Their *overall* perspectives will have to contend with each other, rather than debating isolated points in a piecemeal fashion. When the Christian sets forth his outlook he will stress the kind of God to whom he is committed, the nature of the world in relation to God, and the nature of man as God's creature. The Christian God is totally self-sufficient, and in Him there is an equal ultimacy of unity and diversity (being Triune). Everything outside of Him derives its existence, character, meaning, and purpose in light of Him and His sovereign counsel. There is a categorical distinction to be drawn between this sovereign, self-sufficient, triune God and the created realm; the Creator is absolute, original,

and unconditioned, while the creation is finite, dependent, and derivative. The Creator plans, governs, and controls every event of history. Thus the standard of meaning and truth is always the mind of God. Man was created as the image of God, which in his original condition entailed capability (e.g., intellect, morality) as well as perfection (i.e., ability to use his capacities constructively and to God's glory—obeying His commands, thinking His thoughts after Him). When man rebelled and fell into sin he attempted to replace God's authority with his own self-sufficiency; he would no longer take the standard of meaning and truth to be the mind of God, but rather the mind of man. The fall did not take away his reasoning and moral decision-making; it removed their perfection, giving them a new perverted direction. Refusing to be subject to God's authority and word, the sinner no longer attempts to receptively reconstruct the truth about God and the world, refuses to see the facts as controlled and interpreted by God, and makes himself the ultimate judge of truth. Therefore, the restoration of man to fellowship with God and to constructive use of his capacities requires God's gracious redemption, which is communicated to us by special revelation in Scripture. All of reality (every aspect thereof) must now be seen *correctively* through the instruction of Scripture. To refuse to see things through these gracious spectacles is to destroy the intelligibility of man's experience and to undermine his knowledge; it is to

insist on foolishness and blindness. Because Scripture is inspired of God it is infallible; the word of God cannot fail to be authoritative and true, beyond challenge. Scriptural revelation is necessary for man, authoritative over man, and communicated clearly to man.

Because fallen man cannot escape the knowledge of God he is still

able to acquire knowledge through his contact with general revelation in the world; as a creature of God he retains an irradicable knowledge of his Creator, knowledge of himself always bringing knowledge of his God as well. However, this knowledge which the sinner has and is able to gain only holds him all the more responsible for his intellectual rebellion against the Lord. When God's saving, special revelation comes to the sinner, it comes to correct his commitments and outlook; it comes to save him from sin and its noetic effects.11 Because everything outside the Bible derives its meaning and intelligibility from what is infallibly taught only in the Bible, nothing outside the Bible is in a position to verify it independently and self-sufficiently. The facts and logic surely conform to the teaching of Scripture; however, facts and logic will not be intelligible and used correctly apart from submission to the truth of Scripture. Speculation which is independent of God's word cannot then

lead a rebellious sinner to a proper knowledge of God. For the believer, the Christ of the Scripture is the basis for human knowledge; He is the necessary starting point for knowledge, or else man's intellectual efforts will lead to utter skepticism. Consequently, the word of Christ in Scripture is accepted as self-attesting. There is no higher authority by which it can be judged and accepted. Facts and logic are meaningful and useful to man within the context of Christ's word.

On the other hand, the apologist must work through the nature and implications of the unbeliever's worldview, recognizing that the man to whom he speaks is a *fallen creature* of God. As a creature he can and does use his mind to know things; he is able to do so *despite* of what he thinks about his epistemological situation. As a creature he foremost knows God and is responsible to Him. Indeed, because his acquired knowledge is only made possible because of the unacknowledged knowledge of God which he has, he is especially guilty for rejecting the revelation of God. However, not only is he a creature with inalienable knowledge and noetic abilities, he is a sinful Creature. As fallen he will not—and morally *cannot*—love God, profess knowledge of Him, or reason in a way that is subject to the authority of God's revelation. The sinner must constantly attempt to be what he is not: autonomous and free of God. Thus the

11. "Noetic effects" refer to the effects of the fall on the mind (See Gen. 6:5;

Rom. 1:18, 25; 8:6, 20; 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 4:23, for example). See Bahnsen's

discussion below, page 53-55.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS POSITIVELY STATED

unbeliever looks upon the world as contingent (the diverse facts are what they are by chance), he looks upon the standards of logic as abstract (the unifying principles of reason are not derived from experience but legislatively imposed on it), he looks upon himself as autonomous (his own laws or principles or experience will be the final judge of truth and meaning), and finally he looks upon man, the world, and logic as all religiously neutral (they can be understood totally apart from God and His revelation). The unbeliever will consider his thinking and interpretation to be normal and normative.

But it must be pointed out to him that his "neutrality" is but a token of his desire to be free from the all-embracing revelation of God—his thinking is not indifferent at all to the knowledge of God. Moreover, an insurmountable tension exists between the contingent, diverse, fluctuating, chance character of his experience and history and the necessary, uniform, unchanging, regular character of his reasoning principles. On the one hand he endorses utter freedom, while on the other he insists on restrictive norms. His rational principles

vainly attempt to bring unity to his irrational world of facts. Because his outlook is committed to both uniformity and continual change, he is not able to explain anything at all—whether it be about history, nature, man, ethics, experience, or logic. What he has been able to understand and learn in the past—the knowledge which he has attained—has only been possible because he self-deceivingly relied on borrowed presuppositions (viz., the knowledge of God suppressed in unrighteousness). Pretending to be autonomous, the self-sufficient judge of truth, the unbeliever has in fact been dependent of God and His revelation all along. In his heart he has had to believe what he professed to disbelieve with his mouth.

Christ the Only Foundation for Reasoning

This short discussion has shown the nature of the apologetical situation and the standard by which the apologist's argument should proceed. How should the unbeliever decide whether or not to receive the word of God in Scripture as true? In attempting to decide for himself and on his own standards, he will have already decided against the God who is revealed in Scripture, who makes the unqualified and unchallengeable claim that all thinking must be subordinate to Him. As a covenant-

Breaker the unbeliever will twist everything around him, distorting the truth in the interest of his unrighteous rebellion. He will with futility try various schemes that combine rationality and irrationality (unity and diversity) in order to replace the truths of creation and providence. While (conveniently overlooking facts, becoming inconsistent with his principles, and not being able to give an intelligible account of fact and logic on his espoused presuppositions, the unbeliever will charge Christianity with being unfactual or illogical. Although asserting that nobody can know anything for sure, he will claim to know that Christianity must be false. When the believing apologist encounters the self-conscious unbeliever, there will be an unavoidable conflict between their ultimate standards of knowledge and truth.

Does this mean that Christianity cannot be shown to be reasonable? Does all argumentation and communication then cease? The answer is no. We always have a point of contact even with those who profess to have different ultimate standards. This basis for discussion and argumentation with the unbeliever is not a common ground which is religiously neutral, nor is it facts and logic as he falsely conceives them. The unbeliever's professed interpretation of things is not our common ground, for we do not share that interpretation. Rather, the actual state of affairs—man as God's image, the suppressed knowledge of God, the

world as totally revelatory of God—constitutes a point of contact for the apologist. We know that, despite his different explicit standards, the unbeliever is able to think correctly about our argumentation and is always accessible to the gracious work of God's Spirit. He can be called back to a remembrance of His God, to an acknowledgement of what he knows in his heart of hearts.

By what standard should the conflicting claims made by believers and unbelievers be adjudicated? How should they resolve their difference in perspective? It is futile to appeal to standards which are allegedly intelligible apart from the truth of God's word. No fact can be understood, and no reasoning can be meaningful, apart from Christ as the Creator and Redeemer of men. Scripture provides the interpretive context within which fact and logic can be intelligible and used aright. Thus our standard cannot be autonomous—something independent of God's revelation. What amounts to good reasons and proof should not be determined by the unbeliever's alien, basic assumptions. The standard that we use in apologetics will have to be the self-attesting

breaker the unbeliever will twist everything around him, distorting the truth in the interest of his unrighteous rebellion. He will with futility try

various schemes that combine rationality and irrationality (unity and diversity) in order to replace the truths of creation and providence. While conveniently overlooking facts, becoming inconsistent with his principles, and not being able to give an intelligible account of fact and logic on his espoused presuppositions, the unbeliever will charge Christianity with being unfactual or illogical. Although asserting that nobody can know anything for sure, he will claim to know that Christianity must be false. When the believing apologist encounters the self-conscious unbeliever, there will be an unavoidable conflict between their ultimate standards of knowledge and truth.

Does this mean that Christianity cannot be shown to be reasonable? Does all argumentation and communication then cease? The answer is no. We always have a point of contact even with those who profess to have different ultimate standards. This basis for discussion and argumentation with the unbeliever is not a common ground which is religiously neutral, nor is it facts and logic as he falsely conceives them. The unbeliever's professed interpretation of things is not our common ground, for we do not share that interpretation. Rather, the actual state of affairs—man as God's image, the suppressed knowledge of God, the world as totally revelatory of God—constitutes a point of contact for the apologist. We know that, despite his different explicit standards, the un-

believer is able to think correctly about our argumentation and is always accessible to the gracious work of God's Spirit. He can be called back to a remembrance of His God, to an acknowledgement of what he knows in his heart of hearts.

By what standard should the conflicting claims made by believers and unbelievers be adjudicated? How should they resolve their difference in perspective? It is futile to appeal to standards which are allegedly intelligible apart from the truth of God's word. No fact can be understood, and no reasoning can be meaningful, apart from Christ as the Creator and Redeemer of men. Scripture provides the interpretive context within which fact and logic can be intelligible and used aright. Thus our standard cannot be autonomous—something independent of God's revelation. What amounts to good reasons and proof should not be determined by the unbeliever's alien, basic assumptions. The standard that we use in apologetics will have to be the self-attesting

word of God—a standard which is not verified by anything external to itself. This must be the starting point for everything we say and all of our argumentation. Faith in the self-attesting Christ of Scripture is the beginning, not the end result, of wisdom. In debating with the

unbeliever we will need to show him the irresolvable conflict between his espoused principles and ours, and then argue that apart from the self-attesting Christ of Scripture his thinking—based on his autonomous presuppositions—loses meaning, coherence, and intelligibility. Christianity will be offered to him, not simply because it affords with facts and logic, but because facts and logic could not be meaningful without it. Christianity is not simply *as* reasonable as other options, or even slightly more so; it is the *only* reasonable position for man to hold. Here is the reasoned defense, the standard, by which we can pursue apologetical discussion with any unbeliever. As Van Til clearly proclaims: "the Christian offers the self-attesting Christ to the world as the only foundation upon which a man must stand in order to give any 'reasons' for anything at all."12

DEVELOPING A FAITHFUL APOLOGETIC

The present collection of studies grows out of the preceding convictions. In my own personal judgment, although other twentieth-century evangelical apologists have made contributions which we can utilize and appreciate, the presuppositional approach of Cornelius Van Til has given the best, most consistent, and momentous to the biblical and presuppositional concerns rehearsed above. Van Til's Reformed apologetic attempts to honor the Lordship of Christ over every realm of life, including

philosophy and reasoning. It appreciates the unique epistemological status of God's word, this revelation as necessary, self-attesting, and absolutely authoritative—the rock foundation for all epistemology, and thus not itself autonomously verified. Moreover, Van Til's apologetic does not tone down the principial antithesis between believing and unbelieving philosophies; because the impudence and incompetence of the natural man's alleged autonomous reasoning is taken account of, Van Til urges us to call for the unbeliever's unconditional surrender, humbly submitting to God's redemptive word, which shall be accomplished only in the

12. Van Til, "My Credo *"Jerusalem and Athens,* 18.

power of the Holy Spirit's work.

Likewise, Van Til does not tone down the objective and clear evidence for the truth of Christianity; admitting the inescapable revelation of God in all things, Van Til renounces the claims of neutrality and will not consent that the facts have been properly interpreted unless the certainty of Scripture's truth is our conclusion—not merely its probable truth. His presuppositional apologetic defends Christianity, not in terms of piecemeal truths, but as a unit or complete worldview. His argument is transcendental in character, aiming to demonstrate that the truth of

God's word is the precondition of intelligibility for man's thinking and interpretive efforts; that is, he wishes to show that Christianity is reasonable in virtue of the impossibility of the contrary. Consequently, rather than presuming to act as an autonomous judge over God's revelation, presuppositionalism as taught by Van Til *applies* the truths of that revelation to the unbeliever, by: (1) setting forth the pervasive, positive evidence provided by God of His veracity, and (2) performing an internal critique of the unbeliever's worldview and presuppositions so as to show that they destroy the possibility of human knowledge.

It seems to me that, in this way, Van Til has appreciably advanced Reformed apologetics in our day by building on the strengths of the two outstanding Reformed theologians and philosophers, B.B. Warfield and A. Kuyper; yet he has done so without wandering into the questionable inferences drawn by these two great thinkers with respect to their distinctive contributions. Kuyper's writings vigorously set forth the fact that the believer and the unbeliever use antithetical principles in their respective philosophy and science. The ethical alienation of the natural man from God had to be stressed, and this alienation is operative in the noetic realm. The antithesis between the natural mind and the regenerated mind, Kuyper saw, would produce opposing theories of knowledge. This was Kuyper's distinctive emphasis. From it he drew the illegitimate inference that apolo-

getics was virtually useless; apologetics and communication with the unregenerate were seen as hopeless because of the unbeliever's depravity. Thus apologetics inevitably tends to be accommodationist in character.13 On the other hand, Warfield's distinctive emphasis was on the objective

13. By "accomodationist" Bahnsen means making the apologetic message "palatable and congenial to secular presuppositions," as opposed to "established upon the testimony of God." See page 50 below.

clarity of God's revelation, such that it could not be genuinely rational to reject the Christian faith; the evidence for the truth of the Bible was manifest and could not be overlooked with intellectual justification. However, from this commendable distinctive Warfield drew the illegitimate inference that the natural man, using "right reason," could interpret and judge the revelation of God correctly. As can be readily seen, a disagreement had developed between Kuyper and Warfield. Kuyper's illegitimate inference (viz., apologetics is virtually useless) contradicted Warfield's commendable emphasis (viz., the evidence is so plain that we can show unbelief to be against all reason). Further, Warfield's illegitimate inference (viz., the natural man can use right reason and God's revelation) contradicted Kuyper's commendable distinctive (viz., the antithetical principles of the

natural and regenerate minds produce opposing theories of knowledge). What Van Til has done is to incorporate the emphases of these two Reformed scholars, without following them into their illegitimate inferences (which produced the dispute between them).

Van Til clearly sees the principial antithesis between the believer and unbeliever in epistemology. Because of the unbeliever's espoused presuppositions, his thinking would—if pursued consistently—destroy the very possibility of meaning, intelligible experience, and knowledge; on his most basic assumptions the non-Christian cannot use reason correctly and evaluate the evidence of God's revelation aright. Yet Van Til also sets forth the objective clarity of God's revelation, saying that it is utterly unreasonable to reject Christianity. The evidence for the truth of God's word is so obvious that we can be certain in our Christian convictions and can show the folly of unbelief. The result is Van Til's presuppositional defense of the faith and transcendental argument for the veracity of God's revelation. Apologetics is definitely useful, for the unbeliever is still a creature made in God's image and God has made His revelation manifest to all men. Yet in this apologetic argument the unbeliever should be shown that he is in no position to pass judgment on God's word and that right reason is impossible for him, given his espoused presuppositions. Christianity is thereby presented to the unbeliever as the only reasonable position for

men to hold; the truth of Christianity is advanced as the foundation without which there could not be proof of anything else at all.

Van Til's presuppositionalism, then, is the most stringent defense of the reasonableness of Christianity that is set forth today. Although by no means completely lucid or philosophically flawless, Van Til's published

works on apologetics do not get carried away by the profane audacity | which fails to think less honorably than we ought of divine wisdom (as Calvin put it). Other apologetical systems popularly presented to the church today suffer from major internal flaws, despite the many and fine points which can be learned from them: their arguments either fail to be genuinely presuppositional, or their presuppositions fail to be genuinely biblical. Because they seek neutral common ground with the unbeliever and build their defense on some philosophical authority apart from God's revealed word, their epistemology is less than self-consciously and consistently biblical. As such these non-presuppositional defenses of the faith tend to be too concessive to the unbeliever and aim simply to show Christianity as probably true. They do not leave the unbeliever "without excuse," but suggest implicitly that he has the prerogative and ability to stand in judgment over God's own word. Presuppositionalism does not

require us to consign God to the dock, awaiting the verdict of an autonomous rebel. Instead, it constantly reminds us that sinful man is in the dock before the awesome bar of God's scrutiny and judgment. It encounters him with the intellectual challenge of the gospel.

In the following studies I aim to present biblical and epistemological reflections which point us toward a presuppositional defense of the faith, clarify and defend this apologetic method by responding to certain popular criticisms of it, and then compare it with a few, basic, other kinds of apologetic strategy which are promoted today. Those who do not utilize the transcendental kind of defense found in Van Til's presuppositionalism treat Christianity as a viable hypothesis to be considered by the unbeliever and tested according to certain standards: logical coherence, empirical evidence, personal utility, or a combination of them all. Again I would repeat that such apologetic arguments have valuable insights which, when placed within a better presuppositional context, can be useful to the modern apologist. However, their ultimate standard is misconceived, and accordingly a charitable critique of these procedures is appropriate in order to improve the quality of our united defense of the faith against Christianity's cultured despisers.

C H A P T E R 2

THE CHRISTIAN MIND

& METHOD

A1though a presuppositional approach in apologetics is demanded epistemologically, the ultimate source of strength for such a method of defending the faith must come from the self-attesting, inspired Word of God itself. We should expect this to be the case for a biblical presuppositionalist! Since he claims that his authority must be the Word of God, the presuppositionalist is obligated to "authorize" his apologetic method by that very same *authority.* Although Van Til has been criticized for not being more exegetical in his discussions—for not showing the Biblical underpinnings for his method of defending the faith1—it is quite clear that he views such a scriptural foundation to be a prerequisite for sound apologetics. His students can attest how saturated with biblical allusions his apologetic lectures could be. He has written: "The Christian is not to take the formulation of his problems nor his answers to them from a philosophy which is not itself, in its basic principles, drawn from Scripture."2

1. For example, see G. C. Berkouwer, "The Authority of Scripture (A Responsible Confession)," *Jerusalem and Athens,* ed. E. R. Geehan, Presbyterian and Reformed,

1971), 197-203.

2. C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith,* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed,

1955), 228.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS POSITIVELY STATED

Consequently our present concern will be to learn from Scripture that God has a unique epistemological status, that all men inescapably know their Creator but hinder that knowledge in unrighteousness, that intelligibility and knowledge are impossible outside of submission to revelation from God who is the source of any and all knowledge, that there is an antithesis between the espoused presuppositions of the believer and the unbeliever, that the unbeliever is of himself unable to come to a knowledge of the truth, that "genuine" knowledge (i.e., that which includes conscious conviction and confession of the veracity of Scripture) requires regeneration and faith, and that the Word of God must never be called into question or defended by appeal to some other, more certain authority.

These things being true, an apologetic approach that does not appeal to the principles or notions of the unbeliever to get off the ground, but does appeal to the suppressed knowledge of God all men have as a result of God's clear revelation and does base its argumentation in the self-attesting word of Scripture, an apologetic that refuses to waver as to the truth of Scripture and appeals to man as the responsible image of

God to admit the impossibility of knowledge without the revealed God, an apologetic that looks to the sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit for success in changing men's hearts and minds and sees faith as a moral prerequisite to understanding—in short, a presuppositional apologetic—is demanded by the Bible itself.

C H R I S T - C E N T E R E D A P O L O G E T I C S

Where Peter commands us always to be ready to set forth a defense of the hope in us, he also specifies the condition under which this must be done: "Set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:15). In all our apologetical endeavors we must honor Christ as Lord over our thinking and argumentation. He alone must occupy this unique position of lordship in our minds, for He must be "set apart" to that function. That which dictates what we think and present in defense of the faith must not be the theories, inferences, and assumptions of secular learning. The content and logic of our apologetic comes from the Word of Christ our Lord. This Word of Christ has a unique status among all other words that men may speak, for Christ is metaphysically the Lord (John 1:1—3; Col. l:16f.; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6), ethically the Lord (Ps. 145:17; Rom. 7:12; Matt. 5:17-20;

1 John 5:1-3), and epistemologically the Lord (Col. 2:3; Rom. ll:33f.; Ps.

147:5; Acts 15:18; Ezek. 11:5).

Since Christ is our Lord and we His servants, we recognize that He makes an unqualified, radical demand upon our lives. It is radical because it takes precedence over any and all other claims. Competition is ruled out from the beginning, because Christ demands that we love the Lord with every faculty we possess (Matt. 22:37) and that we never presume to serve two masters (Matt. 6:22ff). The Lord's claim upon His servants is radical also because it covers every facet of our lives; every thought (2 Cor. 10:5), every word and deed (Col. 3:17), and whatever we do must be done for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Thus the Lord's claim upon our living and thinking is radical because it cannot be brought into question. Adam failed on this score in the garden, and Israel did no better in the wilderness. But the true and faithful Son of God, when tempted by Satan, honored the Lord's demand, saying, "You shall not put the Lord your God to a test" (Matt. 4:7). Exclusive loyalty belongs to the Lord, and hence His Word must never be doubted or tried. Consequently, when Peter commands us to defend the faith by honoring the lordship of Christ, this means that we must never assume an uncommitted or neutral stance with respect to the veracity of God's Word. Scripture is not on trial, but must always be presupposed as true. To presume to work up to a recognition of its

truth by independent argumentation would be to honor some other lord than Christ (whether it be empirical discovery, logic, some scholar's opinion, one's own rational abilities, or whatever). Christ alone must govern our thoughts, and His Word must not be brought into question. In setting forth our reasoned account for the Christian hope in us we are obligated by the word of our Lord to do so without casting doubt upon Scripture's veracity. The Lord's word must be *presupposed* and obeyed in everything we do— *even apologetics.* Like faithful Abraham, we must never waver in unbelief (Rom. 4:20). The Word of God should not be treated as a hypothesis to be proved by rational-empirical testing; it must never be reduced to the level of probability. It is the unquestionable Word of Christ our Lord; we *begin* with its veracity and argue accordingly. It is the thinking of the rebel sinner, not the Word of the Lord, that must be brought into question. Our defense of the faith does not work *toward* an honoring of Christ's lordship; it works *under* that lordship!

27

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS POSITIVELY STATED

God's Word vs. Crafty Persuasions

Our apologetic presupposes the Word of Christ rather than the intellectual principles and methods of unbelief. We challenge the unbeliever

as to the validity and intelligibility of knowledge outside of submission to Christ as Lord. In Colossians 2:3-8 Paul infallibly declares that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ." He says this in order that "no one delude you with persuasive speech [craftily plausible argument]," and exhorts us to be steadfast, confirmed, rooted, stablished in the faith as we were taught. Then Paul warns us against any philosophy that does not operate according to the presuppositions of the Christian faith: "Beware lest anyone be robbing you by means of philosophy, even vain deception which is according to the tradition of men, according to the worldly elements of learning [or fundamental principles of the world], and not according to Christ."

Let's examine this passage point by point. Isaiah 11:2 said that the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding and knowledge, would rest upon the messianic Son. This Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26), and this Son is himself called the Truth (John 14:6). Now Paul adds that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ. Christ has all knowledge and is the source of all knowledge. Every treasure of knowledge must be found in Him, for He has them all. There are no exceptions; any intellectual endeavor must begin with the One who has, and is, the truth. These riches of God's wisdom and knowledge have incomprehensible depth according to Romans

11:33. Hence the striking assertion of Paul in Colossians 2:3 would be enough to show us that our apologetic must not call the Word of Christ into question but must challenge the unbeliever to the impossibility of knowledge outside of Christ.

However, Paul does not leave this to our inference, but draws out the implication himself. He explains in verse 4 that he makes this assertion so that the Christian believers would not be *deluded* by those who can use crafty arguments or persuasive speech. Romans 16:17-18 informs us that such people are those teaching contrary to apostolic doctrine. Those who disagree with the scriptural faith of the Christian may give the appearance of persuasive intellect, but it is only a delusion, since it works against the One who has *all* the treasures of knowledge. These words of exhortation against those who would delude believers by argu-

ing against Christ are very similar to Paul's command in Ephesians 4:17 that believers not walk in a way that imitates the way the nations walk—that is, in the vanity of their mind. Christians must not think or reason in accordance with the worldly mind-set, for the intellectual outlook that opposes Christ is *vain.* Indeed, in verse 18 Paul says that the unbeliever is ignorant, having a darkened understanding and a blind heart. Follow

the principles and methods of those who deny Christ (or bring His Word into question) and vain ignorance is the result. By not honoring God as they should, the God whom they cannot escape knowing, their reasoning is made vain (Rom. 1:21). But, as Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:20-24, we have not learned Christ after this manner! Instead, we were taught *by Him,* and the truth is in Jesus. We have put off the old man who thought in a worldly fashion, and we have been renewed in mind. Christians do not follow the methods or logic of unbelief; they now, by the grace of God, have new standards and presuppositions for thinking.

Returning to Colossians 2, Paul says that the crafty ways of thinking which characterize opposition to Christ can do nothing but delude or beguile. Thus in verses 5-7 Paul urges us to be established in the faith that is grounded in apostolic teaching. He urges this because the apostles teach the Word of the Lord, and this Word is the foundation for all truth (cf. John 14:26; 15:26f.; 16:13-15; 17:14-19). In Christ are all the treasures of knowledge. Therefore, Paul puts us on the alert against anyone who would rob us by philosophy. This word "rob" in verse 8 harkens back to the "treasures" mentioned in verse 3. If we want to be deprived of knowledge we can do so by following "philosophy" (such as Paul encountered at Athens; cf. Acts 17:18) rather than the Word of Christ, for only in Him do we find the treasures of knowledge.

Avoid Vain Deceptions

Paul goes on to describe the type of philosophy we must avoid: philosophy that is *vain deception.* Then he delivers three parallel characterizations of this vain, deceptive philosophy: *according to* human tradition, *according to* worldly presuppositions, (that is) *not according to* Christ. What kind of philosophy is vain deception? We can easily infer what it is when we read in Deuteronomy 32:47 (LXX) that the word of the Lord is *not* a "vain" thing, or in Philippians 2:16 that *not* running or laboring in "vain" is dependent upon holding forth the Word of life. Acts 4:25 tells

us that it is the rebellious nations who imagine a "vain" thing. Paul] declares in 1 Corinthians 3:20 that the thoughts of the worldly-wise are "vain"; in 1 Timothy 6:20 he tells Timothy to avoid "vain" utterances, those that are antithetical to the faith; 2 Timothy 2:15—18 makes clear that "vain" utterances err against the Word of God's truth. " Vain-talking" is equated with swerving from the commandment according to 1 Timothy 1:6; vain-talkers do not understand what they say (vs. 7). Paul says in Titus 1:9-10 that because of such vain-talkers we need to hold fast the faithful Word and to convince by sound doctrine those who contradict it; their mouths must be stopped so that they do not continue

to turn away from the truth (vss. 11, 13f.). Hence it is clear what "vain" philosophy is according to God's Word: it is rebellious thinking that opposes the truthful Word of God. Such thinking which works with presuppositions not grounded in Scripture results in an absence of understanding since it will not submit to Him who is the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge.

In Colossians 2:8 Paul uses the word "deception" for this vain philosophy as well. This is an appropriate designation since secular philosophy gives the appearance of intelligibility and knowledge, but it actually could have neither on the basis of its espoused presuppositions which are outside of Christ. Hebrews 3:12-15 says that sin is "deceitful" and causes us to harden our hearts to the voice of God. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, those who do not receive the love of truth bear an unrighteous "deceitfulness," and God sends them strong delusion to believe the lie and not the truth. The old man of sin who is not renewed in the spirit of his mind has "deceitful" lusts (Eph. 4:22), and false teachers with destructive opinions revel in their "deceits" (2 Peter 2:13). Hence "deceptive" philosophy denotes the same basic thing as "vain" philosophy: unregenerate and false opposition to the voice of God speaking in Scripture.

Paul brings the two designations together in Colossians 2:8, warn-

ing us against "philosophy, even vain deception"—that is, philosophy that does not begin by submitting to the truth of Christ in Scripture. This warning corresponds to his injunction in Ephesians 5:6, "Let no man *deceive* you with vain words." Because of such vain words the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience as Paul says in the same verse. We must not reason or think according to their secular premises and principles since (in verse 7) Paul commands us not to be *partakers*

with them. His explanation for the prohibition against cooperating with and using secular presuppositions is that we *were* darkness in the past but now are light in the Lord—and subsequently bear the fruit of truth (vss. 8f.). Again, in verse 11, Paul commands us not to have "fellowship" (i.e., sympathetic interest, cf. Phil. 4:14) with the unfruitful works of darkness—even their thoughts or arguments—but "rather, reprove them." Paul drives home the point (in Col. 2:8) that philosophy that does not follow the presuppositions of Christ's Word must be avoided by means of his further description of that vain, deceptive philosophy which robs us of the treasures of knowledge that can be found only in Christ. Such philosophy is not according to Christ but according to the tradition of men and the elements of learning of the world. That contrast should make

it plain to us that there is an antithesis between the presuppositions of the believer and those of the unbeliever. The standards, methods, and premises of Christian thought are rooted in the Word of Christ, but the presuppositions of the non- Christian are derived from the thinking of men and the principles of the world. The "tradition of men" denotes the sort of philosophy that sets aside the Word of God and eventually makes it void (cf. Mark 7:8f., 13).

The Greek word *stoicheia*, taken in its immediate context (especially the threefold parallel phrases beginning with *kata),* should be translated "elements of learning," "rudiments," or "fundamental principles" rather than "spirits" (as some allege). Reference to the worldly elements of learning fits the context of philosophy, human traditions, and treasures of knowledge much more naturally than does a reference to worldly spirits or demons. Moreover, the same Greek word is used in verse 20 of the same chapter of Colossians where it is said that we are dead with Christ from the *stoicheia* of the world, that is (according to vs. 22) the "injunctions and teachings of men." So the *stoicheia* of verse 8 refer to the elements of learning. This use of the word is parallel to that of Hebrews 5:12 and much extra-biblical literature.3

Now to make sure that he has made himself perfectly clear Paul adds that the philosophy that is vain deception, that is according to

human tradition, that is according to worldly elements of learning, is philosophy that is *not according to Christ.* Such thinking does not begin by

3. For a representative sampling, see Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of*

the New testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1957), 776.

presupposing the truth of Christ's Word, the Scriptures. It does not take its direction and foundational content from the Word of God. That is why it can only *delude* us and *rob* us of knowledge. In 1 Timothy 6:20 Paul urges us to turn away from godless, vain utterances and contradictions (i.e., "antitheses") such as derive from that which goes under the "pseud-onym" of knowledge. Secular philosophy is *falsely named* "knowledge because it does not begin with an acceptance of the Word of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is possible only upon the rock-foundation of divine revelation (cf. Matt. 7:24ff.).

Any line of thinking that does not begin with Christ can end only in foolishness. God has made foolish the wisdom of this world (1 Cor. 1:20). So, if anyone desires to be genuinely wise, he must become fool-

ish in the eyes of the world by submitting to the authoritative truth of Christ (1 Cor. 3:18). Worldly philosophy considers itself wise to begin its thinking independently of Christ, but in point of fact it is apostolic Christianity that is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 2:7) . In Colossians Paul strives to make this point clear: secular philosophy may seem to be wise, but in reality it is the Christian who has genuine knowledge, spiritual understanding, and wisdom (1:9), thereby being able to teach with all wisdom (1:28). This is effected by the Word of Christ dwelling in him by all wisdom (3:16), and *the believer is to walk by such wisdom toward them that are without* (4:6).

In this context the teaching of Colossians 2:3-8 is unambiguous. Our presuppositions must be according to the Word of Christ rather than human, worldly philosophy—especially when we apologetically encounter those who are outside the faith. This is because *all* knowledge (note: not i simply knowledge of "religious" matters) is to be found in Christ. Our firmly established argumentative assumptions must be biblical, not agnostic or apostate. Failure to begin our thinking or arguing with the Word of Christ will set us down the one-way road to foolish ignorance.

R E D E M P T I V E R E V E L A T I O N AND A P O L O G E T I C S

God only is wise (Rom. 16:27), and He has made the world according to His wisdom (Ps. 104:24). Man cannot search out God (Job 11:7), for

God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts (Isa. 55:8f.). Consequently, man cannot know God and, hence, God's world *without revelation*; a

vain man who rejects God's revelation will certainly never get understanding (Job 11:12). The Lord is the one who teaches man knowledge Ps. 94:10). It is He who leads man in the truth and instructs him (Ps. 25:5, 8f., 12; 71:17; Isa. 54:13;John 6:45). Thus God tells us to apply our hearts unto His knowledge if we are to know the certainty of the words of truth (Prov. 22:17-21). "Attend unto my wisdom; incline thine ear to my understanding that thou mayest preserve discretion and that thy lips may keep knowledge" (Prov. 5:lf., KJV).

Man must begin with the revealed truth of God if he is going to have knowledge. Therefore, humble submission to God's Word must precede all of man's intellectual pursuits, and he must renounce the arrogant independence of secular thought. "Talk no more proudly; let not arrogance come from thy mouth, for Jehovah is a God of knowledge" (1 Sam. 2:3). All knowledge is founded in Him and His revealed Word; hence no man dares to challenge God's Word. Man must begin with the truth of God's Word in order to obtain knowledge of any area, for when he attempts to proceed in autonomous fashion he will end up in

the darkness of total ignorance *if he is consistent.* The declaration of the Psalmist is "In thy light shall we see light" (36:9). Man cannot attain to knowledge without a prior knowledge of God and His revelation; he must begin with God in order to find out about anything else at all. Without the light of God's revelation man would be at a loss to self-generate the light of knowledge. Because God is the Lord and source of all knowledge it is necessary for man to presuppose the revealed truth of God before he can meaningfully pursue knowledge of any field and have theoretic grounding or direction for science and philosophy. We can see light only within the prior light of God. It is the Lord who must enlighten our darkness (Ps. 18:28); thus it is the entrance of His words that gives us light and understanding (Ps. 119:130). Scripture must be presupposed if man is to have understanding; consequently he cannot presume to utilize self-wrought understanding to decide if Scripture should be accepted. We can see light only in the light of God, and God gives this light by the entrance of His Word.

While Satan may have blinded the minds of unbelievers, God shines in the hearts of believers for the enlightenment of knowledge in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). It must be God who gives us a Spirit of wisdom in a genuine knowledge of Him and who enlightens our eyes (Eph. l:17fi). Because the apostles represent the risen Christ and speak His

Word their teaching turns us from darkness to light (Acts 26:18), and Paul can boldly tell Timothy to consider what he says as an apostle because "the Lord will give you understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2:7). Enlightenment and knowledge must come from the Lord, who has all knowledge in Himself and declares the end from the beginning, who as the possessor of all wisdom has created the world in wisdom, and who must instruct man in truth if man is to attain to knowledge of any field. The presupposed truth of Scripture is requisite for understanding. How much more is this the case when we consider that man is not only a creature (hence needing revelation to have a foundation for knowledge) but is a sinful and rebellious creature. Man needs not only revelation (of metaphysical and epistemological premises and principles), he needs *redemptive* revelation (that which deals with his ethical rebellion). If man in the garden required special revelation to interpret the world properly, *a fortiori* man who has fallen into sin needs special revelation for his scholarly efforts; however, now the special revelation is *redemptive* revelation. Hence natural theology, autonomous methodology, and probabilistic apologetics will gain nothing of significance when encountering the unbeliever. God can be known (and thereby God's world

can be known) only by a voluntary *revelation* by the Son and Spirit of God (Matt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:10).

Now this Son has come as the Savior, and this Spirit operates as the regenerator. Together they deal with man's ethical hostility to God and His Word and, in this way, make it possible for man to know his Creator and Creator's world aright. Fallen man can approach a genuine (or "saving") knowledge of God, therefore, only by means of the Son and Spirit of God. This in turn should indicate the necessity for our apologetical endeavors to begin with, and be directed by, the special redemptive revelation of God in Scripture. Independent epistemological principles or methods joined with the autonomously interpreted facts of science and history cannot bring fallen man to a *genuine knowledge* of his God (one that *includes* conviction and confession of the truthfulness of Scripture); for that, the revelation of God's saving Son and regenerating Spirit are requisite. Man's sin must be dealt with by the redemptive revelation of Christ and the Holy Spirit in order that a proper understanding of God can be regained. In this case the apologist clearly cannot hope to gain anything by arguing first for a broad, general theism and then progressively up to Christian theism; to know God at all fallen man must come via Christ.

Only Jesus has the epistemological prerogative to reveal the Father, and this revelation can be hidden from the worldly wise and those who are thought to have understanding, while given to babes (Matt. 11:25—27). Consequently, our apologetic should not be foolishly founded upon commonly interpreted notions with the secular thought-world and should not be concerned to appease the thinking of unbelief by allowing its methodological principles or standards to dictate what shall constitute a satisfactory argument. By *starting independently* of submission to the truth and direction of Christ's Word we shall never *end* our arguments anywhere but *independently* of *Christ.* An effective and self-conscious apologetic must presuppose and follow the Word of Christ, for Jesus alone can give the sinner a knowledge of the Father.

Only redemptive revelation can secure genuine knowledge of God for fallen man, and the requisite understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom must be given or granted to him (Luke 8:10); as long as they are kept hidden from him he shall not understand (Luke 18:34). The one who has not believed the Scriptures must have his *mind opened to understand* God's redemptive revelation (e.g., Luke 24:45). The world is not able to receive the Spirit of Truth who regenerates and enlightens us; indeed it is quite unaware of this Spirit who enables one to understand the truth of God. By sharp contrast the followers of Christ have this Spirit dwelling

within them (John 14:17). The Spirit convicts the world (John 16:8) and will "guide" (a word etymologically related to "way" in John 14:6) into all truth. This He does by bearing witness to Christ (John 15:26), who is the Truth (John 14:6) and the Word of God (John 1:1). When Christ is removed from the world it will be the Spirit who continually witnesses concerning Him; it is the Holy Spirit who conducts Christ's case before the world as His legal representative for the defense (i.e., "Advocate"). Therefore, we conclude from the above observations that our apologetic can only bring men to a genuine knowledge of God when it is rooted in the Word and the Spirit. We *must presuppose* the truthful Word of Christ, for *all knowledge comes from God;* and it is the Spirit who now opens the mind of fallen man to understand and accept the needed *redemptive* revelation of God. The Spirit carries on the "apologetic" for Christ before the world and witnesses to the Word. The Spirit can use our apologetical argument when it is shaped according to a scriptural outlook and approach to truth. The fact that the Spirit witnesses to the *word* does not restrict our apologetic to simply preaching the message of the gospel or reciting Scripture,

but it does mean that our argumentative considerations must be functionally equivalent to the *viewpoint* of God's Word or *applications* of its teachings

that bear on knowledge, truth, etc. (e.g., Prov. 26:5).

R E V E L A T I O N A P R E R E Q U I S I T E F O R T H E A P O L O G I S T

So an apologetic that does not presuppose the Word of Christ, but tries to win men over to an acceptance of the truthfulness of Scripture by considerations supposedly built up independently of commitment to the scriptural viewpoint and authority, is doomed to *ineffectiveness.* Knowledge and understanding are impossible aside from revelation from God. The apologist must understand this fact and boldly challenge the intellectual rebel with it. Because the apologist recognizes the necessity of the Spirit's work in the sinner's heart before belief and subsequent understanding are possible, his chief responsibility is faithfully to argue within the presupposition of God's Word. Moreover, a non-presuppositional apologetic, which tries to convince the unbeliever by making use of the presuppositions for knowledge and learning dictated by man, is inherently *without use* for granting man an understanding of God; for with the Holy Spirit's instruction we have *no need* that any *man* teach us (1 John 2:27). Hence our apologetic must not be founded upon the word of man but must depend upon the Word and the Spirit—that is, it must be presuppositional.

So then, if any man is to gain genuine knowledge of God or God's world, and if the apologist for the Christian faith is going to be effective

in his defense, they both must heed the exhortation of Paul in Colossians 3:16: "Let the *word* of Christ *dwell* in you *richly*." When this is done we can partake of the *treasures* of knowledge hidden in Christ. If we remain (continue, dwell) in Christ's Word, then we will know the truth (John 8:31f.). (Note that Christ does not tone down His declaration or reduce its extent by merely saying that it is necessary to remain in His Word in order to know "religious" truth.) If *the truth* (without qualification) is to be known, one must begin with the Word of Christ; Christ is certainly in a position to make this far-reaching claim (cf. Col. 2:3).

The unbeliever cannot of himself hear the Word of Christ, for you must be of God in order to hear God's words (John 8:43, 47). As long as one does not dwell in Christ's teaching he can never have God (2 John 9). Hence the apologist knows that if the unbeliever is to have genuine

truth he must begin with the words of Christ, and only *these* words (not those of autonomous argumentation), empowered by the Holy Spirit so that the man listening can actually hear the Word of God, will bring the unbeliever to God. So instead of founding his apologetic upon truths that are supposedly independent of Christ's Word (a possibility excluded by Christ in John 8:31f.), the Christian must argue upon the presup-

posed Word of Christ. This does not mean that his only argumentative approach is to quote memory verses or repeat the way of salvation, but that his reasoned defense must not appeal to the unbeliever outside of the presupposed truth and direction of Christ's Word. Our case must be an outworking of the viewpoint and teaching of Scripture, and so our formulations and arguments must be founded on the authority of Scripture. The Holy Spirit empowers and witnesses to the *Word* and considerations rooted *therein,* not to the "wise" and clever arguments of the autonomous intellectual. Our apologetical reasoning, no less than our preaching, must be fashioned from the Word of God and according to its authoritative teachings, for it is to the Word that the Holy Spirit bears His powerful witness.

Apologetics is not to be some kind of autonomous intellectual activity that goes before the believer's submission of his mind to the revelation of God. One's epistemology will be influential in every phase of his thinking, including his theology as derived from Scripture, and this epistemology will be made most explicit in apologetics. Thus while we should definitely see a difference in emphasis between the positive statement of biblical teaching and its defense, we must also recognize how indispensable they are to each other. Consequently, the Christian's apologetic ought to expound the theology of Scripture and its *noetic im-*

plications. It ought to be an application of the Word of God.

In performing the task of apologetic argumentation, then, we must see to it that the Word of God dwells in us rather than the wisdom of men. On the basis of God's Word indwelling us, and its outlook being the foundation of our arguments and defense before the unbeliever, our prayer for his conversion can be effective (cf. John 15:7), we can be strong to overcome the rebellious thinking of the evil one (1 John 2:14), and we ourselves will remain in the Son rather than being intellectually trapped behind enemy lines (1 John 2:24). The apologist must have the mind of Christ when encountering the foolishness of the world, for secular thinking is unable to come to a knowledge of spiritual things (1 Cor.

2:14, 16). T h e Word of Christ, rather than the premises and standards of the unbelieving world, must be presupposed in formulating a defense if an apologist is going to be able to bring the unbeliever to a saving knowledge of God. Unbelieving or agnostic apologetical presuppositions will leave the non-Christian in his unbelieving or agnostic inability to receive the things of the Spirit. Some men have an ignorance of G o d (1 Cor. 15:34), and they can come to a knowledge of the True O n e only

when the Son *grants* them an *understanding* (1 J o h n 5:20). Because Christ is the one who makes known the things of the Father (John 15:15), the apologist must presuppose the Word of Christ and have the mind of Christ when encountering unbelief with reasons for accepting the gospel message. A n d a predominant characteristic of the mind of Christ is *humble obedience* (Phil. 2:5ff). T h u s our apologetic must not proudly operate within the unbelieving or agnostic presuppositions of the rebellious thought world, but it must humbly and obediently submit to the Word of Christ, presupposing its truth and arguing accordingly so that we will be able to overthrow reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). Such an effective apologetic requires that we bring *every* thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

T H E UNBELIEVER'S KNOWLEDGE OF G O D AND WILLFUL SUPPRESSION OF IT

T h e last few paragraphs have been given to considerations of the necessity of revelation from G o d the Creator if m a n , as a *creature* of G o d , is to have any knowledge whatsoever. T h e n discussion focused on the necessity of presupposing the *redemptive* Word of G o d if the apologist is going to bring *fallen* m a n to a genuine knowledge of his Lord.

We turn now to see why the unbeliever is not as ignorant as he should be if consistent with his unbelieving attitude and presuppositions (that is,

why the unbeliever *has* a great deal of knowledge about the world *in spite of the fact* that his unbelieving presuppositions are incapable of leading to, or theoretically grounding, knowledge and truth), why the apologist can be certain that the sinner can intellectually apprehend the witness and defense of the gospel, and why the believer has a point of contact with the unbeliever. T h e explanation of these things is to be found in the fact that m a n knows, yet does not know his Creator. This is not to be seen as a logical contradiction, for the unbeliever knows G o d in one sense (a sense

that leaves him entirely *responsible* for his intellectual rebellion) but does not know God in another sense (a sense that would bring him to *salvation).* We might express the situation in this way: The unbeliever knows God but will not acknowledge or self-consciously submit to and use that knowledge properly. Hence he does not have a "genuine knowledge" (i.e., an *unsuppressed* and saving knowledge) of God—he knows God in unrighteousness and judgment, but not in obedience and blessing.4 At base all men know God and cannot escape knowing Him. Nevertheless, they will not admit to that knowledge or use it properly, choosing rather to suppress it with respect to their public lives and espoused philosophies, yet never eradicating it in their private "heart of hearts." The harden-

ing process of sin hinders a "genuine knowledge" of God and may even make the sinner refuse to admit any knowledge of God to himself, but Scripture assures us that no man can escape the clear revelation of God. The world was created by the dynamic and meaningful Word of God (John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2); God spoke and it was so (Gen. 1:3; etc.). Thus the whole created world, both things visible and things invisible, has the express imprint of God's mind, because it was formed in accordance with His Word. Only God's knowledge is comprehensive, and His knowledge eternally precedes all other knowledge; for the knowledge of the creature to be knowledge it must reflect the thinking of God the Creator. When the creature departs from God's thoughts he is doomed to ignorance, for God is the original of knowledge; He is comprehensive knowledge and the source of all derivative knowledge.

God created man as His own image (Gen. l:26f.). So just as man cannot escape himself, he cannot escape the face of his God. Man is not able to isolate himself or be ignorant of God. Self-knowledge and self-awareness unavoidably entail God-knowledge and awareness of one's Creator. In virtue of his creation as a human every man "images" his God. When man works against his inherent knowledge of God, he works against the very possibility of any knowledge at all and moves in the direction of destroying his own humanity. When man looks at the

t

4

. The phrase "genuine knowledge" should not b e taken i n this context t o imply that

the knowledge held in unrighteousness is in any way "inauthentic," spurious, or un-

real; here ingenuine knowledge is not knowledge that "doesn't count." Yet knowledge

held in unrighteousness is not "genuine" in the sense that it is not "sincere"—it is not

loving, pure, and obedient knowledge of God, but knowledge sullied by hypocrisy

and infidelity.)

world created by the word of God he is confronted with a clear revela-

tion of his God again.

There is no environment where man can flee to escape the revela-

tion and presence of God (Ps. 139:8). Man continually lives under the

pressure of God's omnipresent manifestation of Himself. "The heavens

declare His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory" (Ps.

97:6). Men cannot escape this revelation since God himself has made

it known. Psalm 19 is emphatic on the clear and inescapable character

of God's revelation in nature: the heavens declare God's glory, the firmament proclaims His handiwork, day to day pours forth speech while night to night declares knowledge (vss. 1-2). Even though this revelation may be verbally silent (vs. 3), it is universal and inescapable (vs. 4). God's revelation is everywhere and always shouting to man without stuttering.

The universality and inescapability of the knowledge of God is dramatically expressed in the fact that all men, *whatever* their moral and spiritual condition before God, know Him. God has one of two attitudes toward every man: either judgmental wrath or gracious favor. God makes Himself known in curse and disfavor toward men (e.g., Ex. 14:4, 18; Ezek. 35:llf.; 38:23;James 2:19), as well as in blessing and grace (e.g., Ex. 33:13; Isa. 19:20-22; 66:14). And in addition to all this, John 1:9 declares that Christ enlightens every man coming into the world (cf. Isa. 40:5; 52:10; 66:18). There is no man made in the image of God and living in God's world, whatever God's attitude toward him and his own feelings about Christ, who does not know the living and true God, his Creator. All men have the requisite knowledge of God to make them eternally responsible before Him; this was true in the Garden, and it does not cease to be true after the fall. Sin or no sin, special revelation or no special revelation, all men inescapably know their God.

Such is the infallible teaching of God's Word. No apologist dare deny it or work in a manner that assumes this is not the case. Yet just as surely the Word of God says that there is a sense in which men do *not* know the Lord. Jeremiah 31:34 anticipates a day in which all men will finally know Jehovah, and Hosea can speak of the absence of a knowledge of the Lord even in the favored land of Israel (4:1; 6:6). Christ declared both that His *enemies* knew Him (John 7:28), yet that they did *not know* Him (John 8:19). While knowing the truth about Jesus' divine and messianic character, these people refused consciously to submit to it

and, hence, did not have a knowledge of Him in the proper and significant sense. Indeed, by not knowing Christ they in reality did not even know the Father (the knowledge of whom they took great pride in), for Jesus alone has *exegeted* the Father (John 1:18). Scripture asserts that men inescapably know God in their heart of hearts while in their outward thinking and response they do not acknowledge it and thus do not know God in the genuine or proper sense. The apologist is under obligation to keep both of these facts in mind when he defends the faith: the unbeliever's espoused presuppositions are ignorant of God and unsuitable as a foundation for apologetic argumentation; but the unbeliever still

has an unacknowledged knowledge of God to which the apologist can appeal and which he can use to call the sinner back to proper remembrance of his God.

Paul set forth both of these truths about the unbeliever in his writings and missionary activity. He describes the unbeliever in Romans l:18ff., and he encounters unbelievers who do not submit to the authority of Scripture in even a nominal way in Acts 14 and Acts 17; his practice was consistent with his theory. In fact the teaching of Romans is strikingly parallel to his missionary proclamation. In Romans 1 Paul plainly asserts that all men know God: "What can be known about God is plain within them" (vs. 19); "His invisible nature" is "clearly perceived" and "intellectually apprehended" (vs. 20); and man is characterized as "knowing God" (Greek, *gnontes ton theon*, vs. 21)—man knows *the* living and true God, *not* simply a vague deity. The knowledge of God is clear and unavoidable "because *God* made it plain [manifested it] to them" (vs. 19).

The sovereign Lord and Creator has chosen to make Himself known to all men, and nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing His purposes. God has given a universal self-revelation, and there has never been a man, nor will there ever be one, who could escape it. This revelation is not vain as if falling upon deaf ears; Scripture says it *is* plain within man, clearly *perceived,* intellectually *apprehended,* and actually

known. God speaks and *is heard;* He manifests Himself and *is seen.* And the knowledge of God which all men unavoidably possess is not of limited extent or value; even His everlasting power and divine nature are clearly perceived (vs. 20), so that man has everything he needs *properly* to glorify the one true God (vs. 21), and he is without any excuse at all (vs. 20). The sinner is without an "apologetic" for his departure from God

(note the Greek of vs. 20)!5 This revelation of God, which clearly renders all men as " *knowing God."* (vs. 21), confronts men everywhere. It is both "in them" (vs. 19) and "from the created world" (vs. 20). The apostle could hardly have been much more emphatic in his teaching: *all* men *do know* the living and *true* God and are completely *responsible* to Him since His revelation confronts them *everywhere!*

Paul also teaches that these men outwardly exchanged the truth of God (which they inwardly knew) for the lie, worshiping some aspect of creation in the place of the Creator (vss. 25, 23). They do this by hindering, suppressing, or misusing the truth in unrighteousness (vs. 18). As a result they might profess wisdom, but they had actually become foolish (vs. 22) and reached the point of intellectual futility. Their reasoning became vain, and their misguided hearts were darkened (vs. 21). Thus

while man knows full well the truth about God, he nevertheless refuses to acknowledge it or respond properly to it; instead he suppresses it. He tries everything he can to avoid facing the God before whom he is guilty of rebellion. He even manufactures a god to take the place of the living and true God, a god that will perform the various functions of deity in man's own system of thinking yet is under the authority of the rebel sinner. He knows God and cannot escape knowing Him; yet he works as hard as he can in his outward thinking and behavior to shield himself from an admission of that knowledge.

The only thing preventing that knowledge from coming to the surface and being publicly recognized is the sinner's busy activity of suppression—whether he be the boisterous and adamant atheist or the quiet and sophisticated philosopher. A man who holds a basketball under water may deny that he knows anything at all about the truth of basketballs, but the truth keeps exerting its pressure on him! He both possesses the basketball and denies it; yet if he would cease from hindering it, the truth which he possessed all along would surface. So it goes with all intellectual rebels against the truth of God; they inwardly know the truth, but do not have a genuine or proper knowledge since they suppress the truth in unrighteous-

5. Bahnsen in particular alludes to the Greek, *anapologetous,* which most translations render, "without excuse." One could literally translate

the word as "without apologetic," that is, "without a reasoned defense." Bahnsen points out that the unbeliever, having received adequate testimony of the knowledge of God, and yet having suppressed that knowledge of God, stands with no defense for his position. He has no apologetic.

ness. They know enough to be responsible, but they do not know in a way that will secure their salvation. Paul teaches both aspects of man's condition in Romans 1, and our defense of the faith before the unbeliever must take account of, and respond accordingly, to each aspect.

PAUL'S A P O L O G E T I C I N P R A C T I C E

Against those who would oppose presuppositional apologetics by pointing to the activity of Paul, when he confronted unbelievers at Lystra and Athens (Acts 14 and 17 respectively), we need to observe that Paul's missionary and apologetical endeavor in these places corresponded exactly to what he wrote in Romans 1 about the spiritual condition of the unbeliever. Unless we are prepared to attribute inconsistency to the apostle or see Paul as some sort of schizophrenic we should *expect* to find the very definite logical relation holding between the three passages which actually characterizes them. Acts 14 and 17 are practical applications of Romans 1.

The contents of these passages can be summed up in this way: An

affirmation of natural *revelation* and a subsequent denial of the possibility of *natural theology.* We can broaden this a bit: Paul boldly states that God has clearly witnessed to Himself *in* history but cannot be identified *with* anything in history or the world since He is Lord over both. The sinful man rules out this God who created him in His image and reconstructs a god in apostate man's own image. But the rebel sinner is not able autonomously to fashion a correct theology from his understanding of nature. Further, all men are responsible for their rebellion against the truth of God. Based on what we have seen Paul write in Romans 1 we would not expect him to appeal to unbelievers on the basis of some theoretic common ground, for they suppress the truth in unrighteousness, having darkened minds and vain reasoning, being fools who worship some aspect of the created world (vss. 18, 21-23, 25).

Under these conditions natural theology or an apologetic that strives after neutral agreements with the unbeliever's interpretation of the facts in order to ground a defense of the faith is going to be impossible. Consequently when Paul preaches in Lystra and Athens he refuses to establish a common theoretic point of contact in the unbeliever's espoused interpretation of the world or intellectual methodology and then work up to a proof of his gospel message based upon it. One thing should be abundantly clear: Paul's *hearers* did not recognize any common inter-

pretative ground between themselves and Paul! At Lystra the people were scarcely restrained from their idolatrous sin, and Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead (Acts 14:18f). At Athens the people called Paul a babbling doctrine-monger who brought startling and strange things to them, and their foremost response to his Areopagus address was mockery (Acts 17:18-20, 32).

The note of authority that Paul sounds in Athens certainly does not facilitate an effective appeal to a common outlook. In fact Paul's point of contact is actually the *ignorance* of his hearers! He stresses, not their worship, but their ignorance—"that which you worship openly demonstrating your ignorance *I* proclaim unto you" (vs. 23). It is primarily the worshipers who are without genuine knowledge rather than the object of worship being, from Paul's perspective, unknown. At Lystra Paul exhorts the people to turn away from their "vanities" (Acts 14:15); as in Romans 1:21, these unbelievers are characterized as vain and foolish. Just as he described unregenerate men in Romans 1:23, 25, Paul viewed the Athenians as greatly idolatrous (Acts 17:16). In response to both of these situations Paul does not become greatly encouraged with the prospect of an effective apologetic rooted in a common point of view with these

pagans. He does not become hopeful of adding the gospel of Christ to the substratum of Gentile natural theology! Instead he rends his clothing and runs among the people crying out (Acts 14:14), and his spirit is convulsed within him (Acts 17:16).

However, just as strongly as Paul rejects any natural theology or common interpretative outlook on the facts he also affirms boldly the actuality and facts of natural *revelation.* As creatures of God his pagan hearers cannot eradicate the sense of deity within them despite their sinful rebellion; even in their ignorance and suppression of the truth they are not without a certain awareness of God and their creaturehood. Just as in Romans Paul asserts that God is clearly known by all men because of His self-revelation within man and without (l:19f., 32; 2:15), so in his missionary speeches he stresses the same truth. Sinners have not been left without a witness from God in the world (Acts 14:17; cf. Rom. 1:20), and thus they are completely responsible before Him to repent (Acts 14:15; 17:30; cf. Rom. 1:20, *32).* In their intellectual rebellion against the truth of God the Athenians were, nevertheless, very religious by nature, felt a responsibility for devout worship, and *even their* poets had discerned functionally correct truths about God and man (Acts 17:17, 28). Fallen man cannot escape knowing God, not even the Athenian philosophers (cf. Rom. 1:19-21).

Thus we find that Paul emphasized the same motifs in Romans 1 that he did in Acts 14 and 17: creation by God, God's preservation and providence, God's sovereign control over history, and man's dependence upon his Creator. Based on these motifs Paul declares the regular witness of God to men and their full apostasy and guilt. God is sovereign Creator (Rom. 1:20, 25; Acts 14:15; 17:24). He exercises providential oversight on history (Rom. 1:24, 26fif.; Acts 14:16; 17:26)—in this He has turned men over to their sinfulness. Yet men depend upon God metaphysically, ethically, and epistemologically (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:15; Acts 14:17; 17:28). God has constantly witnessed to Himself by means of history, conscience, nature, and creation (common) grace (Rom. 1:18—20, 32; 2:4, 15; Acts 14:15, 17; 17:27-29). Consequently God's judgment awaits all sinners (Rom. 1:18, 28, 32; 2:2-12, 16; Acts 14:15; 17:30f.). Attention should be given to the fact that all three of the passages under consideration parallel each other in these common motifs; the readier will note that every motif has been cited in *each* of the three passages in the above review. Paul's doctrines of man's kinship to God, His clear revelation, and man's apostasy from the truth led the apostle to reject the religion of unregenerate man (Rom. 1:22-25); such does not provide a suitable foundation for the message and defense of the gospel. What Paul theoretically presented in Romans 1 was appropriately worked

out in his missionary activity. He rejected the overlay of mythological folk-faith on his gospel and miracles even when it seemed that it might provide favorable attention for his proclamation (Acts 14:11-18), and he diametrically opposed the Epicurean notion of ateleological6 "chance" (fate) as well as the Stoic notions of exclusive knowledge of God for the elite plus their idolatrous teachings (Acts 17:24-29).7 One can hardly see the apostle standing on Mars Hill with the majestic Greek Parthenon

6. "Ateleological" (from Greek a "no" + telos "end, goal, purpose") simply means "without purpose," or "to no end," and thus "by chance." The word, while helpfully descriptive, is a late academic development, and not used by the Greek philosophers.

7. For Bahnsen's full exposition of Paul's apologetical confrontation in Acts 17, see Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith,* ed. Robert R. Booth (Atlanta, GA: American Vision and Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 235-276.

in the background and proclaiming, "The God who made the world and everything in it, this One who is Lord over heaven and earth, does *not* dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24), and think that Paul was striving to find common interpretative ground between himself and

the unbeliever on which he could build an apologetic for the faith! Acts 14 and 17 are consistent with Romans 1; all men clearly know God but suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Our apologetic appeals to what the sinner knows in his heart of hearts. It does not begin with or build upon what the sinner professes with darkened mind and vain reasoning..

T H E A N T I T H E S I S

Because the unbeliever's knowledge of God is *suppressed* (yet still present) but the believer's knowledge of God is openly *acknowledged* (being used properly), there is a definite antithesis between the thinking or philosophy of the Christian and that of the non-Christian. To some extent this has already been discussed above. The unbeliever does not begin his reasoning with the truth of Christ's Word, while the believer does. Although the sinner can never escape knowing the truth of God's revelation in his heart of hearts, still he does not openly and self-consciously base his public philosophizing upon Scripture. Since the Christian, by contrast, is obligated to presuppose God's Word in his public philosophizing and apologetical argumentation, there is outwardly a clear antithesis between the thinking of the believer and that of the unbeliever (even though both, as creatures of God living in God's creation, know the truth about God). The believer has a genuine and proper knowledge of the Lord, but the unbeliever is lost in foolishness because he misuses

and suppresses the clear revelation of God.

In the apologetical argument that arises between these two there will be a direct clash of espoused presuppositions. Those of the Christian are rooted in Scripture, but those of the unbeliever rebel against Scripture. By observing the antithesis as Scripture presents it the apologist will be shown that he must not depend upon the presuppositions of secular philosophy and science in constructing his defense of the faith. Rather his argumentation must be firmly established on the Word of Christ and must boldly challenge the non-Christian from within that position. When one becomes a Christian *all things* become new and old things pass away (2 Cor. 5:17) and this applies even to our ways of think-

ing and presuppositions. The believer has different standards, assumptions, and authority than the unbeliever; whereas he once walked in the vanity of mind, he now has the mind of Christ. The believer and unbeliever have no agreement in outlook with each other, for those of the light have nothing in common with those walking in darkness. So the believer must separate himself from, and have no part with, the unbeliever's way of thinking (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Because there is a striking contrast between the presuppositions and reasoning of the unbeliever

and those of the believer it requires a dramatic intellectual transition for one to leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of God's beloved Son—indeed, it can be described as nothing less than a *conversiom.* The change from unbelief to belief is not merely a matter of degree or the addition of a few further steps in reasoning, but rather a radical change in mindset.

Because the believer has the mind of Christ he is not of the world just as Christ is not of the world (John 17:16). The Christian has been born of the Spirit from above (John 3:3, 6), but the unbeliever is of the world land of the flesh. Those who follow Christ are distinct from the world and the ways of the flesh. As Christ says in John 17:17, they are consecrated or *set apart* from the world, and the distinctive thing about Christians is that they have the *truth.* Being not of this world, believers are "set apart by the truth." And Jesus asserts in the same verse that *God's Word is truth.* Consequently, Christians are set apart from the world by the Word of God, and having this status they are sent into the world (John 17:18).

As we walk before the unbeliever, then, the thing that makes us different is our submission to the Word of God. Our lives and thinking are founded on Scripture while the essence of the unbeliever's life is rejection of the revelation of God. Our presupposition of Scripture's truth and authority is at diametric odds with that of the world, and because

we have been given the Word of God the world hates us (John 17:14). Thus from the outset the focus of the world's opposition to the faith is the Word of God. The apologist must not surrender his presupposition of the authority of Scripture in order to start on the unbeliever's ground and lead him into the faith, for the Christian who is set apart by the Word of God thereby has the truth (John 17:17; Ps. 119:142, 160). Hence when the Christian uses the presuppositions dictated by the world in his apologetic he has moved over into the realm of *error.* Christian presuppositions are distinctive in virtue of embodying and leading to the

truth; the antithesis of the world to Christianity locks it into error and ignorance. "They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world and the world hears them. We are of God; the one who knows God hears us, the one who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:5f.).

The antithesis between the believer's thinking and speaking and that of the unbeliever could hardly be more bold: truth versus error. We can discern error by observing whether one has presupposed and submitted to the authority of God's Word or not. The Christian apologist certainly will not want to reason within the presuppositions of the

unbeliever after noting what these passages from the Word of God have said about the antithesis between believer and unbeliever. That conviction is reinforced when we read in James 4:4 that "friendship with the world is enmity with God; therefore, whoever resolves to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God." As apologists we must work to insure that we keep our antithesis with the presuppositions of the untruthful world sharp; otherwise we will be betraying our faith and the truth of God.

Wisdom vs. Foolishness

Perhaps no passage of Scripture more plainly sets out the antithesis between Christian thinking and unbelieving philosophy (in addition to the implications of that antithesis) than does 1 Corinthians 1-2. As John's writings characterize the antithesis as that of truth versus error, Paul characterizes it as wisdom versus foolishness. The Christian and the non-Christian see each other's "wisdom" as foolish; in reality, however, worldly wisdom is foolishness. Thus the defender of the faith weakens his case and compromises the antithesis with the world when he sees worldly philosophy with its agnostic and unbelieving presuppositions as wise, and his apologetic will be devastated if he follows the philosophic methods and standards of the world. Paul unambiguously asserts in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that the cross of Christ can be made vain (or of no ef-

fect) by "wise" words (or the wisdom of speech); a pompous intellect will leave man unaffected by the truth of the gospel. The word of the cross is seen by those who perish as foolishness, but by contrast those who are saved see the gospel as the power of God (1:18).

Thus the gospel is not improved upon by the words of human wis-

dom or philosophy. O u r apologetic need not follow the presuppositions of secular thinking, since only the gospel as "the power of G o d unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) will be effective in dealing with those who are dead in sin and who have darkened minds. Verse 19 speaks of "wisdom" which derives from godless thinking; such " p r u d e n t " philosophic schemes do not account for God's truth and power, and G o d brings them to nought (cf. Isa. 29:14; J o b 5:12; Ps. 33:10). So, as verse 20 rhetorically asks, where is the wise? W h e r e are those counselors who pretend wisdom but are actually futile in their reasoning because they do not presuppose or reckon with God's Word (cf. Isa. 19:12)? W h e r e is the disputer of this age with his Greek dialectic subtlety? G o d makes worldly wisdom foolish (Is. 44:25; Rom. 1:22), says Paul in his last rhetorical question. A consideration of the history of philosophy or the lives of Christianity's cultured despisers will bear out Paul's conclusion. Because the gospel contradicts the presupposi-

tions that underlie the reasoning of the unregenerate, the world despises it; the gospel of Christ does not bow to the world's d e m a n d for signs and philosophical proofs (l:22f.).

M e n m a y view the gospel as foolishness. But the gospel is actually wiser t h a n m e n (1:25), since Christ is the very wisdom of G o d (1:24). If one will but consider his own gracious salvation by G o d he will see the utter folly of infatuation with h u m a n wisdom (1:26). God's favor does not lie with the worldly wise but with those w h o humbly submit to His Word. G o d uses these believers w h o are foolish in the eyes of the world to confound and s h a m e those w h o follow the pseudo-wisdom of hu-m a n philosophy a n d presuppositions (1:27). Again Paul stresses that it is Christ w h o is the wisdom of G o d (1:30; cf. Prov. 8:22"31;John 17:3; Col. 2:3). T h i s W i s d o m is eternal and is the key to life eternal. Consequently the apologist presupposes the W o r d of Christ a n d confronts the unbe-liever, not with secular philosophic schemes or theses, but with the genu-ine wisdom of G o d . Without the W o r d of Christ there is no theoretic basis for logic, history, or science; so when the unbeliever fights against the gospel he is working toward r u i n i n g his very tools of destruction! His "wisdom" becomes folly.

T h e apologist will be effective, then, only if he refuses to reason on the basis of the same presuppositions as the unbeliever a n d he begins

as well as ends his intellectual efforts a n d a r g u m e n t s with the W o r d of Christ in w h o m dwells all wisdom a n d knowledge. Intellectual credibility c a n be m a i n t a i n e d only by presupposing the W o r d of G o d . T h e

apologist should follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who did not come to Corinth from Athens with elaborate language or philosophical subtlety (2:1). He did not use Athenian intellectual wares, but his proclamation was founded on the testimony of God. Human philosophy was unnecessary, for Paul needed nothing more than the gospel of Christ (2:2) for his presentation and defense. It was the power of God rather than the persuasiveness of human philosophy that made Paul's ministry effective. The vanity of humanistic presuppositions would actually have hindered the exaltation of God and His Word in the minds of Paul's hearers. Paul shunned the persuasive words of human wisdom and philosophy for a demonstration of the Holy Spirit and God's power (2:4) Worldly philosophy would not be effective or accomplish anything for the gospel of Christ.

Instead of trying to make his message palatable and congenial to secular presuppositions, Paul depended upon the operations of the Holy

Spirit and kept his proclamation and apologetic established upon the testimony of God (cf. Eph. l:17f.). Paul needed to know only Christ crucified and to witness to God's Word of truth (i.e., to present the gospel and use it as the basis and standard for his argumentative approach).

The things the Christian speaks are not taught by human wisdom (or in accord with secular presuppositions) but by sharp contrast are taught by the Holy Spirit (2:13); that is, the Christian is submissive to God's Word from the beginning and throughout. It is of utmost importance that the apologist not have his hearer's faith be by the wisdom of men but rather by the power of God (2:5). Faith is a gift from God (cf. Eph. 2:8) and as such cannot be produced by the intellectual contrivance of the apologist. Human wisdom or secular presuppositions cannot be the ground of faith, but it must be generated in the power of God.

Thus what the Christian speaks is not the wisdom of this age that is brought to nothing, but the wisdom of God (2:6f.). Recognition of Christ as the wisdom of God does not come from reasoning upon presuppositions that deny or ignore this fact. Such recognition can come only when it is revealed by the Holy Spirit (2:10), and man can know the things of God only when God sends him the enabling Spirit of God (2:12). Because only the Spirit knows the things of God (2:11) our apologetic must rely upon His Word rather than autonomous philosophy, science, and

history to bring the unbeliever to a knowledge of God. Our speech must be rooted in the presuppositions taught by the Holy Spirit, not secular

philosophy (2:13). The man who follows the "wisdom" of the world rather than the things of the Holy Spirit rejects the Word of God as foolishness. He is *unable* to know the things of the Spirit (i.e., God's Word) and he cannot have the spiritual discernment to judge for the truth as long as is steeped in unbiblical presuppositions (2:14). By refusing to submit to the authority of Christ's Word at the very beginning of his thinking the sinner's mind is at enmity against God and he is epistemologically incapacitated altogether. By contrast the whole field of knowledge and truth is open to the one who presupposes the *Spirit*-inspired Word of God and is enlightened by that same Spirit (2:15) . Fallen man is incapacitated from seeing things as they really are; he has incapacitated himself by suppressing rather than presupposing the revelation of God. The "unspiritual man" rejects the Word of God as foolish since it does not fit his own apostate frame of reference. Having the spirit of the world manifest in his reasoning, the unregenerate is unable to understand the things of God's Spirit.

The pseudo-wisdom of worldly philosophy would either, as does

the unbeliever, find fault with or, as does the non-presuppositional apologist, attempt intellectually to strengthen the scriptural message that came from the mind of the Lord. But Paul rhetorically asks, *Who* is in a position to do such a thing? (2:16). The answer comes in thundering silence— *no one!* The apologist wastes his time when he attempts to build a defense of Christianity upon the presuppositions of secular thought, for nothing could provide a stronger foundation for philosophy and argument than revelation from God Himself. Nobody knows the mind of the Lord in such a way that he could instruct God! The gospel message and its scriptural defense cannot be improved upon. We can know the truth of God only by having the mind of Christ, a mind that will humbly submit without question to God's Word from the very beginning of all reasoning endeavors; the mind of Christ is the direct antithesis of the mind-set of worldly "wisdom." Because the Word of Christ has supreme authority in the thinking of the Christian the apologist should not present it to the unbeliever in *un* authoritative human foolishness. The unbeliever will be totally unable to accept the message of God's Word until he receives the mind of Christ (i.e., is converted from secular presuppositions). This is the conclusion to Paul's discussion of the antithesis that exists between the thinking of the believer and that of the un-

believer.

C O N F R O N T I N G U N B E L I E V I N G R E A S O N I N G

We have now seen that the unyielding antithesis between secular and Christian thought brings worldly philosophy, history, and science into a position of opposing truth, Wisdom, and the very foundation of correct thinking. By refusing to submit to the truth of God as the authority, standard, and presupposition of proper reasoning and knowledge the unbeliever has incapacitated himself from coming to a genuine knowledge of any field of study and from receiving the revelation of God.

It is through knowledge of Christ that *all* things pertaining to life are granted (2 Peter 1:3). The man who opposes that knowledge throws his reasoning with respect to every area of life into a foolish and ignorant frame of reference.

Consequently the apologist must challenge the very foundation of the unbeliever's thinking when he attacks the faith with supposed knowledge of extra-biblical fields of study, for every field of study and all things pertaining to life can be understood properly only with a presupposed knowledge of Christ. The apologist, therefore, should follow the example of Jesus in John 7:15—17. When Jesus was questioned

as to his competence as a teacher (since he had not been taught in the principles of learning used by his opponents), he countered by calling into question the competence of his opponents as hearers. It is *not the experts*, but any man striving to do God's will who has the requisite spiritual discernment to decide whether the teaching is a revelation from God or not. Because the unbeliever is not doing the will of God he is in no position whatsoever to be interrogating and judging the Christian's proclamation. It is the sinner's intellectual competence that is on trial, not the truth of Christ's Word!

The Need for God's Grace

All men have inherited Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12ff). Thus from the outset of their lives their minds, emotions, and wills are depraved (1 Cor. 2:14; Prov. 2:14; Rom. 6:17, 20; 8:7f), and they are nothing short of spiritually *dead* (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; Rom. 5:15). No one escapes this condition; as Paul says in Romans 3:10-18, 23, *all* men sin and

fall short of God's glory. Because the whole human race is dead in sin, no one has understanding or seeks after God (vss. 10f.). Instead they all have deceitful tongues and lack proper reverence for God (vss. 13, 18). Indeed every one of them has turned aside and become

unprofitable (vs. 12); this is a quote from Psalm 53:1-4, which begins by identifying the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. Sin has incapacitated man's mental ability by making him rebellious in thought against God; as a result he does not speak or know the truth. Lacking understanding his reasoning is unprofitable and deceitful. And according to Ephesians 2:1—10 this incapacitation is total and ultimate; man is *dead* in sin and, thus, can do nothing for himself. Even devoting his life to study of the outstanding philosophies of all time and using every spare moment to analyze, syllogize, and scrutinize all the information of the scholarly publications available to man cannot rescue his vain thinking. He walks according to this world and its spirit of disobedience (vs. 2), thus fulfilling the desires of the sinful flesh and mind as a child of wrath (vs. 3).

Under these circumstances the apologist is not able to do anything of himself for the unbeliever, and the defender of the faith certainly does not move the non-Christian closer to the kingdom by having his argumentation rely on the principles of vain, unprofitable, and deceitful secular thinking. Only the grace of God is able to overcome the sinner's dead and worthless condition (vss. 4—10). Only God's grace will rectify the worthless condition of the sinner's thinking. This is not of our own doing but is a gift from God. Until that gift is granted

the unspiritual man's reasoning will be vain, and he will continually see Christian reasoning as absurd (1 Cor. 2:14). Faith is given in conjunction with hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus this Word of God, not vain philosophy, should be the foundation of our apologetical appeal to the unbeliever. Unless the unbeliever is challenged with God's Word, and unless the unbeliever is graciously given faith from God, he will continue with a darkened mind which is unable to discern the truth. Of himself the rebel against God cannot hear the Word of Christ or receive the Spirit of Truth (John 8:43; 14:17), since he by nature desires not to stand in the truth (John 8:44). Such is the epistemological inability of the one who follows after the disobedient mind-set of the world.

Understanding the Effects of Unbelief on Knowledge

God's revelation is withheld from those who are "wise and understanding" according to the standards of unbelieving thought (Matt. 11:25). The unsaved may have an apparent zeal for God and participate in the motions of worship, but their zeal is *not according to knowledge* and they worship *in ignorance* (Rom. 10:2; Acts 17:23).

Refusing to bow to the Word of Christ leads to epistemological in-

ability, for out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23) and the heart is deceitful above all things and exceedingly corrupt (Jer. 17:9). The man who does not follow the revelation of God is a rebellious person walking after his own thoughts (cf. Isa. 65:2), but that which proceeds from his own heart are evil thoughts, false witness, deceitfulness, and foolishness (Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21f.). This intellectually disobedient thinker cannot understand the things of the Spirit because, as an enemy of Christ's cross, his thinking is earthly (Phil. 3:18f.) and vain. False prophets speak evil of the way of truth (2 Pet. 2: If.), speak evil of that which they do not understand (vs. 12); because they are false teachers who speak vain words they live in error (vs. 18). Those who oppose the Word of Christ have their lives characterized as a whole by vanity and error. The one who departs from the faith speaks falsehood, and his teaching is demonic (1 Tim. 4: If.) since he follows the Satanic lie that beguiled Eve (cf. Rom. 1:25). The unbeliever's tongue is against the righteous, and it is deceitful and sharp (Ps. 57:4; 64:3; 140:3; 5:9f.; Jer. 9:8); however, the wicked eventually are destroyed by their own work and words (Ps. 9:16; Prov. 18:7). By rebelling against the Word of Christ the unbeliever actually undercuts his own thinking and makes it futile.

When the skeptic speaks against the faith the apologist should defend the faith by pointing out the vanity of the skeptic's position—that is, do

an internal, destructive critique of it. Noting all these indications of the sinner's intellectual inabilities from God's Word we can understand why Paul would declare that *all things* aside from knowing Christ are dung; *everything apart from the knowledge of Christ is loss* (Phil. 3:8). Because the unbeliever will not submit to the Word of Christ and presuppose its self-attesting truth the whole of his thinking is misguided into deceitfulness vain reasoning, lack of understanding, unprofitableness, ignorance, evil thoughts, foolishness, error, demonic teaching, lies, and self-destruction. Paul concludes the whole matter by declaring that man, before he is

reconciled to God, is an *enemy in his mind* (Col. 1:21) against the Lord and H i s Word. For this reason the thoughts of the worldly wise are vain (1 Cor. 3:20); this assertion is quoted by Paul from Psalm 94:11-12, where the vain man is placed in contrast to the man whom the Lord teaches out of His law.

The philosophy of the pseudo-wise unbeliever is foolish, but the redeemed abound in true wisdom by God's grace (Eph. 1:7f.). Consequently the rejoicing of the Christian is this, that he does not operate according to the principles of fleshly wisdom, but by diametrical contrast (cf. *alla* in Greek) he operates according to the principles of God's grace

in the world (2 Cor. 1:12). As we defend the faith before the world we are not to use the principles of secular thought but the presupposition of God's truthful Word, for the presuppositions of unbelieving philosophy, science, and history cannot secure genuine knowledge for man in any way. By not bowing to the Word of the Lord the sinner is locked into foolish ignorance. The case is just the opposite for the believer—a fact which the apologist must take account of when encountering unbelief.

Pushing the Antithesis in Practice

Thus far we have observed that the Lord places a radical demand upon even the apologist that he not put God to a test. One of the central reasons for this, from the epistemological standpoint, is that all knowledge for man depends upon the revelation of God. The unbeliever, as was then noted, cannot escape the clear revelation of God in him and around him. However, the sinner does everything he can to suppress that knowledge in unrighteousness. Thus there is a clear antithesis between the thinking and presuppositions of the Christian and those of the non-Christian. By refusing to submit to the Word of Christ in his reasoning endeavors the unbeliever's mind has become alienated from the truth and steeped in foolishness; his intellectual incapacitation, though not recognized by other unbelievers, is dramatic.

It should be clear from these observations, then, that the apologist

must *presuppose* the truth of Scripture and argue from this basis. He would be mistaken to assume the validity of agnostic or unbelieving premises, methods, or standards and use them to forge a defense of God's Word. The apologist must take the Word of Christ to be the necessary foundation for philosophy or argument of any kind; thereby

he can challenge his opponent's very principles and position. If, then, the apologist is required by God's Word to presuppose the authority of Scripture's self-attesting truth, he is obligated not to bring that Word into question in his apologetical approach to the unbeliever. He must not assume that God's Word needs to be proven or shown to be probably correct on the basis of independent scholarly research and autonomous standards of credibility. The defender of the faith must not surrender to the attacks upon God's Word from unbelievers, and so he must not give in to their improper demands that the Christian satisfy their rebellious minds as to the Scripture's veracity. When the believer and unbeliever argue two full-blown world-views clash with each other. In faithful maintenance of his Christian position and commitment the apologist must argue from *within* his own presuppositional outlook. His standards, logic, and premises are given him by the authority of

God. Hence, in obedience to the Lord, the apologist develops his defense upon the incorrigible and logically primitive Word of God.

When Jesus taught he taught with *authority* and not as one who needed to depend upon the opinions of others (Matt. 7:29). So also we who teach the Word of Christ should not be compelled to submit it to the opinions of others in order to win for it credibility or acceptance. Our proclamation and defense come in the authority of God, not the wisdom of men. *Everything* we do in word, even our defense of the faith, should be according to Jesus' name and authority (Col. 3:17); it must be based upon His authoritative Word. Hereby when we are required to give an account for our faith the Lord gives us a mouth and wisdom which all our opposers will not be able to withstand or contradict (Luke 21:15).

Hebrews 4:12 declares that the Word of God judges the thoughts of the heart. We must not surrender to the unbeliever's desire to have things the other way around. Man, especially sinful man, is in no position to call God's Word into question or assume that it needs intellectual bolstering and defense to give it credence. Instead it is the thought of man's heart that is on trial, and the standard of judgment is the Word of God. If anyone does not receive Christ's words, *he* will be judged *by these very words* (John 12:48—50). Hence our standard of judgment when analyzing any teaching must be this presupposed Word of God. We are not

to believe every spirit but to *prove* them by apostolic doctrine (which is received in Scripture) according to 1 John 4:1. Whenever a new prophet arises, even a prophet who advances miracles, he is to be tested by the

verbally revealed Word of God (Deut. 13:1- 4). The Word of God is the test standard—not historical or "objectively sufficient" evidences—and thus is self-attesting (not in need of being itself verified). For the Christian the principle to be used in judging any thought is,0 "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word surely there is no morning for them" (Isa. 8:20). The thoughts of man cannot be allowed to stand in judgment over God's Word, for that is a reversal of proper roles; rather, the Word of God must be the standard by which the thoughts of men are evaluated and judged. Consequently, God's Word must be presupposed rather than proven by independent human criteria; we do not work up to an acceptance of it by putting it through various tests, but we must begin by humble submission to it as unassailable.

G O D ' S VERACITY PRESUPPOSED

It is important for the apologist who desires to be obedient to the Word of God in defending the faith to pay special attention to the fact that throughout Scripture God's veracity is not defended, but accepted from

the outset on His authority. We begin by noting that the very first chapter of God's special revelation *assumes* God's existence and veracity, and it does not argue the point. Unless we have more wisdom than that contained in the revelation of God, we should take the same attitude. God will not give grace to those who arrogantly call Him into judgment. Rather, He gives grace to those who humbly submit to Him (James 4:6f.). While we may demand evidence and proof of men, we never do so with God. His Word is inherently persuasive or carries within itself its own evidence. Thus it is incorrigible or self-attesting, which explains why God demands that we trust Him in our thinking without question. His truth and justice must be presupposed. Thus all His ways are *defined* as justice (Deut. 32:4) and need not be argued. As the Lord He can do and say as He pleases without being subject to interrogation (cf. Matt. 20:15). No one is in a position to challenge Him who says, "I, Jehovah, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isa. 45:19). Isaiah appropriately views man as clay in the hands of God, the potter; it is absurd to hold that the clay can contend against the potter! Hence, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" (Isa. 45:9).

God Is Not to Be Tested

God's veracity is not defended before the bar of human judgment

There can be no doubt but that the Judge of all the earth shall do right (Gen. 18:25). And so the servant of the Lord is required to "sacrifice his intellect" in the sense that he gives up his *autonomous* ways of thinking and submits to God's Word without wavering in unbelief (Gen. 22:1_19; cf. Rom. 4:20). When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice the son of promise, the only channel of fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, we do not see the father of the faithful challenging the rightness of God's Word. Abraham did not sit down and work out an intellectual defense and explanation of God's ways, and he did not stop to take it into his own critical ability to pass judgment as to whether this word could actually be from the Lord or not since it had all the appearance of contradicting the nature of God. No, Abraham did not bring God's word into question. It was Abraham who was on trial, not God (Gen 22:1); and he is rewarded for his faithful *obedience* to the Word of God (Gen. 22:18). Abraham bowed to the Word of God without doubting or proving it; he did not depend upon the authority of his own reasoning, but subordinated his thinking to God's. All those who are genuine children of Abraham must do likewise.

Consider also the case of Job. When Job finally got his hearing with God it was *Job* who was demanded to answer to *God's* interrogation (Job

38:1-3) rather than *vice versa!* When God finished questioning Job it was plain what Job's position and status were; before God Job had no intellectual prerogatives of his own. Give attention to Job's response:

> Jehovah answered Job and said, Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty? He that argueth with God, let him answer. Then Job answered Jehovah and said, Behold I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, and I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further (Job 40:1-5).

Before the Word of God Job must be silent and recognize his place. God rhetorically asks, "Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be justified? Or hast thou an arm like God? And canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (Job 40:8f.). No one is on the same level as God, and no one is like unto Him in strength and

knowledge. So then, His judgments cannot be questioned by man. His Word cannot be found in error to the exaltation of man's independently acquired knowledge. The only proper response to the Lord is humble submission; because Job had not done this he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6); when Job finally spoke rightly of

God he was blessed (Job 42:7ff.).

From Abraham and Job we learn not to question the Word of the Lord. His veracity needs no defense, for His Word is true in virtue of its being His Word. We *define* Scripture as truth, therefore, or presuppose its authority; this is not the *conclusion* of an independent line of thought but the starting point of all our reasoning.

The apologist can also learn much from Paul's methodology in the book of Romans. Throughout the book Paul answers critical objections by *directly appealing* to the unquestionable and indisputable goodness and veracity of God. Paul will not allow his opponent to bring the Lord under human scrutiny. Instead he calls the authority of man into severe question: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9: 20). Paul sets forth the attitude to which the defender of the faith must be committed: "Let God be found true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). The Word of God demands that the apologist *presuppose* the veracity and authority of Scripture. In his apologetical efforts he must not allow the sinner to assume prerogative to bring God's Word into judgment, and he must not defend the truthfulness of God by, first, allowing for the possibility that Scripture is mistaken and then, secondly, verifying or arguing for its truthfulness on the basis of independently established considerations. Instead the apolo-

gist brings the absolute claim of God upon His creature to bear on the unbeliever, judging the believer's thoughts by the Word of God, which is never doubted as to its truthfulness and authority. He is willing to view any man who contradicts *God's* Word as a iiar *rather than ever* beginning to entertain the notion that God could be untrue. Scripture is our absolutely foundational standard of thinking and evaluation. The person who departs from the authoritative Word of God is the one who needs a defense, not the believer who humbly submits to the Word of the Lord as unassailable!

PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS POSITIVELY STATED

No Double-Mindedness

The apologist who fails genuinely to presuppose the Word of God and submits to doubting it is like a sea wave that is driven by the wind and tossed about; he will be unstable in all his ways (cf. James 1:6, 8). All the wisdom that a man needs is available from God upon request (James 1:5), so we have no need to rely upon worldly philosophy in our apologetic. If we mediate between the authority of God and the alleged authority of humanistic scholarship we are "double-minded" and, thereby, unstable in our defense of the faith. When we have come to a knowledge of the Son of God we do not have to be tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery and cunning of men unto the craftiness of error

(Eph. 4:13f.); instead we boldly *speak the truth* in love (vs. 15).

We who follow the Lord cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24): Scripture and humanistic thinking. Exclusive loyalty, even in intellectual matters, belongs to Christ. A double-minded apologetic is an unfaithful apologetic as well as one without stability or power. When the Word of God is doubted rather than presupposed the apologist is driven here and there by every contradictory teaching coming from unbelieving "scholars." When he submits to the authority of both Christ and those who oppose Christ he cannot present a stable defense of the faith or boldly speak the truth, being continually subject to the ever-present craftiness of error. Such an unreliable apologist is driven by every wind of humanistic teaching rather than the "Wind" of God's Spirit! As we give a defense for the hope in us as apologists (1 Pet. 3:15), we must *unyieldingly hold fast* to the confession of that hope (Heb. 10:23). We never bring the Word of God into question or doubt its truthfulness. We do not submit to the assumption of those who oppose Scripture that it needs to be demonstrated as credible or true. We do not surrender the incorrigible authority of God's Word even for a short while in order to convince the unbeliever of its truth by arguing within the framework of secular presuppositions.

The Word of God must be presupposed not only in systematic theology, but in apologetics as well. To *bow* to the Word of Christ as a theo-

logian but assume that it must be *proven* true as an apologist is simply hypocrisy. The Christian must not relent on the lordship of Christ in any area of life or for even the shortest amount of time. As Paul, we must not yield in subjection to those who oppose the truth of the gospel *for even. a moment* (Gal. 2:5). Paul was adamant, even as an apologist in the face of

attack, in maintaining his commitment to the truth of the gospel without wavering for even the shortest time in order that it would continue in his readers.

The Strategy of Rebellion

So then, in looking at what it means to *presuppose* the Word of Christ, we have seen that Scripture teaches us that because we proclaim Christ's Word of authority it does not have to be subjected to the opinions of men, that the Word of Christ judges the thoughts of men rather than *vice versa,* that Scripture is the standard and test for truth, that the veracity of God need not be established by autonomous demonstration, that sinful man is in no position to call God's Word into question, that the believer must humbly submit to Scripture as unassailable and beyond doubt, and that this commitment must not be yielded under any circumstances even for the shortest length of time.

Final confirmation of these things is received by way of negative example taken from the Genesis 3 account of man's fall into sin. Even in the garden man was expected to submit without question to the clear, authoritative, necessary and sufficient Word of the Lord specially revealed to him. Satan's strategy in working toward man's fall was to undermine man's presuppositional submission to the truthfulness and authority of this word from the Lord. First he called the Word of God into question (vs. 1), and then he actually contradicted it (vs. 4). Satan set the epistemological situation into upheaval by suggesting to Eve that she could have a proper understanding and interpretation of reality without presupposing the Word of the Lord; the deceiver told her that knowledge could be gained by not thinking God's thoughts after Him. Specifically, he tempted her with the possibility of making herself equal to God and taking to herself the prerogative to determine good and evil on her own (vs. 5).

Man was rebelling against the Word of his Creator when he took unto himself the right to stand in judgment over the revelation from God. Adam and Eve viewed the Word of God as one hypothesis to be set alongside the word of Satan. They decided that they were in a position to determine which of the hypotheses was actually true. They exalted their own reasoning above the Word of the Lord, and in doing this

they ceased to submit humbly to the authoritative Word of God. They

attempted to usurp the epistemological lordship of God, and the result was their fall into sin and punishment. From this account the believer learns that he must never view Scripture as a mere hypothesis to be verified independently of God's presupposed authority, that he must not call God's veracity into question, that he must never allow that man has the right to stand in judgment over God's Word and determine for himself whether it is right or wrong. To do these things is the essence of sin, for these things represent lawlessness and disobedience to the dictates of the Lord. Such things should never be named among Christian apologists!

G O D ' S K N O W L E D G E AND M A N ' S F A I T H

We can again see the necessity for a presuppositional apologetic if we briefly examine the nature of God's knowledge and the nature of man's faith. God exhaustively knows His own mind and our minds as well (Acts 15:18; Ezek. 11:5). Consequently He is able to search our hearts (Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:13; Rom. 8:27) while for us there is no searching of His understanding, for it is infinite (Ps. 40:28; 147:5). The Lord's greatness is unsearchable (Ps. 145:3; cf. Job 5:9; 9:10), and He cannot be found out unto perfection (Job 11:7). Neither can we attain unto His high and wonderful knowledge of all

our own ways (Ps. 139:6; cf. Job 42:3).

Man's knowledge is not only less than God's in a quantitative sense, but their respective knowledges are epistemologically separated as to Creator and creature (Isa. 55:8f). Indeed, God is incomprehensible. He is not inapprehensible, for Paul preaches the inscrutable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8); yet the creature cannot exhaustively know God or attain unto the quality of God's knowledge. God has a remarkable depth of richness, wisdom, and knowledge which is unsearchable and inscrutable (incomprehensible) in His judgments and ways (Rom. 11:33). As Paul declares, no one has known the mind of the Lord or been able to be His counselor (vs. 34). Because the Lord's mind is incomprehensible we are futile in our endeavors if we try to make His thoughts amenable to man's mind and ways. Because we are simply not able intellectually to schematize or rationally to construct the thought of God, it must be, and can be, accepted only by obedient submission. The Lord's mind is beyond our understanding, in which case we would be foolish to think that we could figure it out and render it into inescapable formulas that any rational man could verify. We endorse the Lord's Word in intellectually humble obedience, not in self-reliant satisfaction of our schol-

arly scrutiny. This must be so in the nature of the case. The apologist cannot forge a proof for that which is inherently incomprehensible to him.

Thus our apologetic must *pre* suppose the truth and authority of Scripture rather than demonstrating it on the basis of independent secular scholarship and logic. We can see this to be the case, moreover, when we examine the nature of man's faith in God as portrayed by Scripture. Faith does not require demonstration and verification of the truth believed, but only trust in the sufficiency of God's Word because it comes from God. Such faith is not "blind" since it rests in the all-seeing God. By trusting in God's indubitable veracity, genuine faith need not trust in one's own ability to intellectually work things out. No word is too hard, too wonderful for Jehovah (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27); hence the very fact that He speaks something is sufficient reason for us to believe it. His Word does not require independent verification or confirming evidence before it is trustworthy.

The type of faith that is reckoned for righteousness is that possessed by Abraham, who believed God's incredible promise that his seed would be innumerable even though he was an old man with no visible heir (Gen. 15:5f.). Indeed, Hebrews 11:1 declares that faith is the conviction of things *not seen.* Take Noah, for example; he obeyed God even though he did not see the unlikely things that God had warned him were coming (Heb. 11:7). By faith Abraham obeyed God's call to go to a new place, *not knowing* where he went (vs. 8). The essence of Sarah's faith

was her *deeming the Promiser* (i.e., *God) faithful* (vs. 11); she trusted that the one who promised her a seed was faithful—even when she was past age for conception. The nature of Abraham's faith is dramatically seen to be submission to the *a priori* dependability of God's Word when we observe that he obeyed God's command to sacrifice his only son, the son of promise whom he finally had received (vss. 17-19); this he did, simply *accounting the ability of God* even to raise the dead.

Such is the kind of faith the apologist strives to engender in the unbeliever, not a faith that walks by self-satisfying sight and demonstrable verification, but a faith that trusts in the ability and faithfulness of God. That which in human ability is unseeable is seen by *faith* (Heb. 11:27) which submits to the self-attesting Word of the Lord. We work for faith like that of Abraham, who is our father (Rom. 4:16), who "in hope believed *against hope* .. . (but) *according to that which had been spoken* (by God)," says Romans 4:18. Abraham did not trust what the horizon of human

hopes dictated as credible, but he believed rather the Word of God on its own merits. "Looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform

(Rom. 4:20f.). Faith is humble submission to the self-attesting Word of God. Faith accounts God truthful, faithful, and powerful on the basis of His own Word, not requiring to see demonstrable proof or evidence outside of God's Word that could confirm it as trustworthy.

Not seeing, not knowing, and not understanding, the patriarchs still trusted that no word was too hard for Jehovah; thus they believed what God spoke on the simple basis that God Himself had declared it. Nothing outside of God's Word is required for one to have genuine faith, for God's Word is self-attestingly true and authoritative. Hence the apologist need not work toward independent verification of the truth of Scripture. Instead he urges the unbeliever to submit humbly to it as self-attestingly true, since it is the Word of God. The apologist *presupposes* the Word of God in genuine faith, and he desires to have the non-Christian do the same, because aside from such faith no one can be saved. Therefore, having noted that God's mind is incomprehensible and that biblical faith is submission to God's Word as self-attesting, the obligation of the Christian to assume a presuppositional apologetic is further reinforced.

R E G E N E R A T I O N , F A I T H , AND R E P E N T A N C E

Finally, it remains for us to see that according to the Bible a man cannot come to an understanding of God's Word or a knowledge of God without regeneration and faith. Hence the apologist cannot give the unbeliever

convincing understanding, rational demonstration, probable verification, or knowledgeable proof and expect these to bring him to faith in God's Word. All the argumentation in the world, all the scholarly explanation that we can set forth cannot effect saving knowledge in the unbeliever, for as dead in his vanity of mind he needs regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Thus the apologist presupposes the Scripture and focuses on the unbe-, liever's intellectual rebellion or sinfulness, witnesses to the Word of Christ, and argues upon its self-attesting authority, looking to God rather than secular "wisdom" to give success to his words of proclamation and de-fense. The apologist does not expect the unbeliever to be able properly to understand and thereby be convinced of the truth of the gospel as long as

he remains unrepentant for his guilty rebellion against God and does not begin by faith in his approach to God's Word.

The Necessary Precedence of Faith

Hence, again, we see that the defender of the faith needs to *pre* sup-pose the authority and veracity of Scripture rather than introducing more primary and independent reasoning which makes the authority and veracity of God's Word the *conclusion* of a line of thought. Because faith and regeneration precede conviction, understanding, and genuine

knowledge the apologist squanders his efforts if he attempts to utilize autonomous argumentation that does not begin with humble submission to the unquestionable, self-attesting Word of the Lord. A non-presuppositional defense of the faith squelches the Christian's effective challenge to unbelieving thought and substitutes an approach that fails to take account of the need for regeneration and faith before understanding and knowledge. By reversing the proper order of things the non-presuppositional apologist sees submission to God's Word as secondary rather than primary, sees demonstration as the basis for faith, sees independent argumentation rather than the Holy Spirit as the source of conviction, and therefore advances the destruction of his own defense of the faith. The necessary precedence of faith is indicated by Hebrews 11:6. Before the sinner can approach God with a saving knowledge of Him it is requisite first that the sinner believe the truth about God's existence and character. Coming near to God and having a knowledge of Him does not lead to faith, but faith enables one to draw near: "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Jesus declared that the man who does God's will shall be the one who has the necessary spiritual discernment to know that Christ's Word is from God (John 7:17), and doing the will of God certainly involves having faith in God's Son (e.g., John

6:29). From this Augustine rightly concluded, "Understanding is the reward of faith; therefore, do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."8 Faith is the founda-

8. See St. Augustine, "Tractates on the Gospel of St. John" XXIX.6 (John 7:14-18), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series,* 14 vol., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983 [1888]), 7:184.

tion for understanding and knowledge rather than the superstructure built up from underlying rational prowess.

That faith underlies knowledge is also indicated in 2 Peter 1:5: "To your faith add virtue, and to your virtue [add] knowledge" (alternatively, "by your faith support virtue, and by your virtue support knowledge"). It is clear that faith precedes knowledge and is a condition thereof. So if anyone desires to know God he must first believe God, doing God's will, by having faith in Christ, and making faith the foundation of knowledge. When a man has faith, then he can understand. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and hence He will not grant understanding or

knowledge to the unbeliever. "The beginning of knowledge is the fear of Jehovah" (Prov. 1:7). "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). Faithful submission to God is the ground of knowledge and understanding; we must begin all our reasoning with reverence for Him. Proverbs 15:32f. is an appropriate conclusion: "He that refuses instruction despises his own soul, but he that hearkens to reproof receives understanding. The fear of Jehovah is the instruction of wisdom, and before [such] honor goes humility." Surely a vain man will never get understanding (Job 11:12).

The Need for Repentance

Not only is faith a requisite condition for knowledge, but moreover *repentance is unto belief or faith* (Matt. 21:32). Man must have a converted mind and be willing to confess his sin if he is to have faith. And because faith is the foundation of knowledge, repentance which is unto faith is a prerequisite of saving *knowledge*. Consequently, Paul declares that those who live in *ignorance must repent* (Acts 17:30). The sinful rebel is obligated to repent, be converted, and turn back to God (Acts 3:19; 26:20), and concomitant to repentance is faith (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21). Repentant faith necessarily precedes knowledge, and hence Scripture declares that man's *mind* must be *renewed* (Eph. 4:23). The new man which is put on is created according

to God in righteousness and holiness *of the truth* (Eph. 4:24). This condition is contrasted with that of those who are not regenerate and hence walk with vanity of mind, darkened understanding, ignorance, and blinded heart (vss. 17f.). The believer is taught by Jesus, and the truth is in Him (vs. 21); therefore, those who have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27) are renewed unto a knowledge of the truth. In an allusion to Adam (Gen. 1:27), a man

who was required never to call God's Word into question, Paul says that believers "have put on the new man who is *renewed unto genuine knowledge a* ccording to the image of his Creator" (Col. 3:10). Before conversion and regeneration man's mind is distorted and misled, but under the operation of the Holy Spirit man can come to genuine knowledge. The knowledge that the believer has images (mirrors) the knowledge of God. Thus we are to live out of God's revelation, submitting to it without question, since all genuine knowledge reflects its truth. We who have put on Christ, the new Adam, must live as He did—never calling God's Word into question or subjecting it to testing (cf. Matt. 4:7). Returning to our main point, we see then that if man is to have truth and knowledge he must be recreated, renewed, *regenerated* by God.

The fact that repentance is required for knowledge and the fact that

regeneration is a necessary condition for knowledge appropriately go together, for the Holy Spirit who regenerates the sinner's dead mind must be the agent who also grants repentance thereby. Just as a leopard cannot change his spots (Jer. 13:23), so also the rebellious unbeliever cannot bring himself to repentance (Rom. 8:7f.; Matt. 7:17f.). Therefore, the unbeliever is unable to know the things of the Spirit (2 Cor. 2:14). The unbeliever needs to be born again with a new heart and mind, and this heart is given to him by God (Ezek. ll:19f.; 36:26f). So rebirth is not by the will of man but by the will and mercy of God (John 1:13; Rom. 9:16). The unbeliever cannot come to Christ unless it is given to him by the Father and the Father draws him (John 6:44, 65); he is made willing only in the day of God's power (cf. Ps. 110:3). Both faith and repentance are requisite for knowledge, and just as faith must be granted to the unbeliever from God (Eph. 2:8) and is not of himself or his scholarly abilities, so also *repentance* must be *granted* from God (Acts 5:31; 11:18). In order for anyone to have *faith* (which is a condition of genuine knowledge) he must be *born of God* (1 John 5:1) who *gives* the *repentance* which is *unto a genuine knowledge* of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25).

The implication of this for Christian apologetics is unambiguously laid out by Paul in Colossians 4:2-6, where he teaches that prayer is necessary that *God may open a door for the Word.* In our apologetical endeavors

God must give the success in getting men to open their minds to the Scriptures. Thus Paul commands us to "walk in wisdom toward them on the outside" (vs. 5). In confronting the unbeliever we need to use the presupposed authority, truth, and wisdom of Christ's gospel and not the

foolishness of unbelieving presuppositions. When we do this, God can open the door for our words to be accepted. Our speech has got to be by God's grace (not secular rationality) so that we may know how to answer every man (vs. 6). Depending upon the power of prayer, the apologist does not let *corrupt* communication proceed from his mouth (such as that which *characterizes* corrupt humanistic thought, cf. Matt. 7:17f.). Instead, he speaks forth *good* words (such as represent the mind of God, cf. Matt. 19:17, in contrast to the words of evil men, cf. Matt. 12:34). Thus he can minister grace to his hearers (Eph. 4:29), knowing that by prayer God grants wisdom, genuine knowledge, and enlightenment (Eph. l:16f.). Thus, as apologists, we *pre* suppose the Word of Christ, depend upon prayer, and recognize that God must open the door for our word (cf. Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12).

The repentant believer who has been converted from his old manner of life and has been regenerated unto new life by the sovereign grace

of God's Holy Spirit is the one who, according to the declaration of God's Word, gains and possesses wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Right thinking is the result of right living, and hence the apologist cannot expect to convince the unbeliever who continues in his rebellion and intellectual sinfulness of the truth by mere rational evidences and arguments. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments" (Ps. 111:10); wisdom is found in beginning, in presupposing the authority of God, and a submissive, obedient attitude begets understanding. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). Thus our wisdom and understanding are found in obeying the law of God (Deut. 4:6), and we know God only if we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3—5). Genuine knowledge and stability against false opinion are correlated with spiritual maturity in the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13f.); so then, a moral life and fruitful, pleasing walk which is worthy of the Lord leads to genuine knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9—11). One cannot argue from within the unbeliever's form of life (with its style of thinking and behaving) into the knowledge of God's truth, which stems from the antithetical form of life that submits at the outset to God's self-attesting truth and obeys without question His Word.

The apologist is wrong to give the opposite impression to the unbeliever by letting him assume that knowledge is possible on the basis

of his secular presuppositions a n d that God's W o r d should be verified thereby. In his attempt to bring about the good situation of acceptance of Scripture by the unbeliever, the apologist makes use of an unjustified lie if he assumes or gives the impression that the n o n - C h r i s t i a n can have u n d e r s t a n d i n g a n d knowledge while persisting in his rebellious ways of living a n d thought, that faith a n d repentance are not requisite for a knowledge of the truth, or that the unbeliever needs n o t h i n g m o r e than the expected intellectual verification of God's veracity according to standards that worldly philosophy or science dictates, a n d not his complete regeneration a n d conversion by the sovereign Holy Spirit. T h e end does not justify m a k i n g use of an apologetical m e a n s that operates in disagreement with, or independence of, the teaching of Scripture. "If the t r u t h of G o d a b o u n d e d by my lie unto His glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? A n d not r a t h e r (as we are blasphemed a n d some say that we say), Let us do evil in order that good m a y come? T h e d a m n a tion of w h o m is j u s t " (Rom. 3:7f.). T h e apologist is prohibited f r o m using a non-presuppositional apologetic u n d e r the excuse that t r u t h could

thereby a b o u n d . In *all* our a r g u i n g a n d speaking we must be in submissive agreement with the outlook of God's W o r d . T h u s we must presuppose its self-attesting authority a n d truthfulness as the only foundation on which m a n can by repentant faith find wisdom, understanding, a n d knowledge. A Christian apologetic never sets aside the presupposition of Christ's W o r d in order to a r g u e u p o n the basis of secular scholarship and logic. A scripturally rooted defense of the faith is the only valid a n d effective challenge to unbelief.

PURE WORDS VS. FOOLISH QUESTIONS

W h e n the Christian a n d n o n - C h r i s t i a n speak with each other about the faith, a n d the believer is called u p o n to defend the hope in h i m , he should in the ensuing verbiage keep in m i n d that God's W o r d is that which powerfully stops the opponent a n d brings the foolishness of the unbeliever's thinking to light. Evil m e n c a n n o t speak good things (Matt. 12:34), for the m o u t h reflects the attitude of the heart. W h e r e a man's treasure is, there shall his h e a r t be also (Matt. 6:21), a n d it is evil treasure that the unbeliever has in his h e a r t (Luke 6:45). T h u s his heart gives forth evil thoughts, deceitfulness, a n d foolishness (Matt. 15:18ff.; M a r k 7:2Iff.); his h e a r t is darkened a n d foolish (R o m . 1:21), desperately wick-

ed, and deceitful above everything (Jer. 17:9). Consequently his tongue is a world of iniquity, untamable and full of deadly poison; indeed it is an unruly evil (James 3:5-8). His throat is an open grave; with his tongue he uses deceit, and poison is under his lip while his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (Rom. 3:13ff.). W h e n the unbeliever speaks against the faith, the apologist should remember these things. T h e fool's mouth is his own destruction (Prov. 18:7). He thinks that he will prevail with his tongue and that he alone is lord over the use of his lips (Ps. 12:4). His autonomous attitude leads him to speak falsehood (vs. 2), but Jehovah will severely judge his sinful lips and his tongue which pretended to speak great things (vs. 3). T h e unbeliever wrongly supposes that he need submit in the things that he says to no Lord; subsequently he thinks foolish, vain thoughts and speaks evil, erroneous things which render him damnable before God.

Guarding Pure Speech

By contrast, the Lord's words are pure words (Ps. 12:6); they are as purified, highly valuable silver and will be preserved by G o d for all generations (vs. 7). It is this Word of G o d that stops every mouth (Rom. 3:19), so that m a n is left speechless (as was J o b , cf. J o b 40:4). T h e Christian, then, must avoid profane babbling and word-strife such as charac-

terize those who teach contrary to God's Word. Instead he should be an approved workman who properly handles and rightly divides the Word of truth (2 T i m . 2:14-18). Any m a n who teaches a different doctrine than that godly teaching found in the words of Jesus (i.e., Scripture is puffed-up, knowing nothing, and diseased with respect to questions and word-disputes, because he has a corrupted mind that is bereft of the truth (1 T i m . 6:3-5). In response, we must do as Timothy was com-m a n d e d to do: guard the apostolic deposit (i.e., Scripture) and turn away from the godless, vain utterances and contradictions that come from what is falsely called "knowledge" (1 T i m . 6:20). T h e apologist does not base his replies to the unbeliever on the vain thinking and secular presuppositions characterizing antagonism to Scripture, for although he might be viewed as a babbler and unskilled in oration, it is the Christian who possesses the irrefutable knowledge of G o d (Acts 17:18; 2 Cor. 11:6). God's covenant grace has confounded and closed our rebellious, foolish mouths (Ezek. 16:63), and the Word of Christ silences those who are

antagonistic to Him (Matt. 22:34; Luke 14:6).

We, then, who are defenders of the Christian faith must show forth good works, uncorrupt teaching, and sound speech that cannot be con-

demned in order that he who is contrary to it may be put to shame and the ignorance of foolish men may be silenced (Tit. 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:15). Proud and arrogant talk is stifled because Jehovah is a God of knowledge (1 Sam. 2:3). Thus before God and His Word all men must be silent (Isa. 6:5; Dan. 10:15; Zeph. l:7;Job 40:4f.). "Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Hab. 2:20). "Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah" (Zech. 2:13). If we are going to be effective apologists for the faith we will have to use, not the foolish ignorance of worldly thought, but the presupposed Word of God in its self-attesting authority and power. Our own human words will not convince the rebel with vain mind, but the Word of Jehovah can stop him in his sinful tracks. If our voice is that of the Lord's servant when we speak to those who walk in darkness and have no light, our appeal must be for the sinner to *rely upon God* and not his own "wisdom" (Isa. 50:10). God opened our ears and made us to be not rebellious, and He gives us a learned tongue and helps us so that we are not confounded and none will be able to contend with our message (Isa. 50:4-9). If God be for us, who can be against us? Who can condemn us? (Rom. 8:31, 34). Such must be the outlook of the apologist; he must be bold to challenge unbelief with the thoughts of God, not the weakness of humanistic "wisdom." Being transformed by a renewed mind that does *not fashion itself according to this world* (Rom. 12:2), the apologist defends the

faith with the wisdom supplied by Christ so that no one who opposes his message will be able to withstand or contradict it (Luke 21:15).

As we have learned from God's Word that the apologist must submit to Christ as Lord over his thoughts and not allow the Lord to be questioned or put to a test, that God is the source of all knowledge and man can only find truth based on His revelation, that all the treasures of knowledge are hid in Christ but the worldly elements of learning delude and rob us of truth, that all men inescapably know their Creator yet suppress the truth in unrighteousness, that there is a sharp antithesis between the thinking of the foolish world and the wise believer, that the unbelieving rebel is epistemologically incapacitated and so unable to know the truth or receive God's Word, that no man is in a position to bring the Word of God into question or doubt, that faith is humble submission to God's Word as self-attestingly true, that faith and regenera-

tion are necessary conditions of knowledge and understanding, and that it is the Lord's Word that effectively stops the mouth of antagonists—as we have observed all these things to be taught by Scripture—we can see that God's Word *demands* that we use an apologetic which is *presuppositional* in nature.

Avoid Foolish Questions

Paul summarizes the whole matter for us in 2 Timothy 2:23-25:

Avoid foolish and undisciplined questions, knowing that
they produce quarrels, and a servant of the Lord must
not quarrel, but must be gentle toward all, skillful in
teaching, patient, one who courteously instructs those
who oppose themselves if perhaps God may grant to
them conversion unto a genuine knowledge of truth.

When we are challenged to defend the faith we must never consent to answer in terms of foolish unbelief, for we are commanded to reject foolish questions.

Foolish questions are those characteristic of a fool or given from a fool's viewpoint. A fool proclaims foolishness (Prov. 12:23) and flaunts his folly (Prov. 13:16). He has perverse lips (Prov. 19:1) and does not depart from evil (Prov. 13:19). The fool does not have knowledgeable lips (Prov. 14:7) and hence he dares to reproach God (Ps. 74:22). The fool's lips enter into contention and are the snare of his soul (Prov. 18:6f.); he will not endure God's judgment (Ps. 5:5). The thought of foolishness is sin (Prov. 24:9), and so the follower of a fool is a twofold child of hell (Matt. 23:16f., 13, 15). A fool hears Christ's Words and does not live by them, but builds his life on a rejection of them (Matt. 7:26). The fool de-

spises the instruction of genuine authority (Prov. 15:5) and rejects God's commandments (Prov. 10:8). The fool has said in his heart that there is no God (Ps. 53:1; 14:1). The fool does not understand that the Lord's works are great and that His thoughts are very deep (Ps. 92:6), and so the fool walks in darkness (Eccl. 2:14). The people described in Jeremiah 4-5 are called foolish because they do not know God, His ways or His judgments. The fool's doing is to level a charge against God (Job 1:22). The fool trusts in his own heart (Prov. 28:26) and his way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 12:15). Thus the fool is insolent and takes confidence in

himself (Prov. 14:16); he utters his own mind (Prov. 29:11) and has lying lips (Prov. 10:18). The fool's vision is earth-bound (Prov. 17:24) rather than spiritually directed. A fool delights in having his heart discover itself (Prov. 18:2); he returns to his folly as does a dog to his vomit (Prov. 26:11). A fool despises wisdom and instruction, refusing to begin with a fear for Jehovah (Prov. 1:7). He despises the preaching of the cross, refuses to know God, cannot receive God's Word, glories in man and has vain, shameful thinking (1 Cor. 1—3). According to Romans 1:22, a fool professes self-wisdom and he suppresses God's revelation (vs. 18), has a darkened heart and vain mind (vs. 21), and serves the creature rather

than the Creator (vs. 25).

From all this we can see that a foolish question is one asked from the perspective of the self-proclaimed autonomous man who does not submit to the Word of God. A similar study would show that an undisciplined question is, like a foolish question, asked from the perspective of one who is ungodly and irreverent, not a son of God, and not instructed by the Lord and Scripture (cf. Tit. 2:12; Heb. 12:9; Rev. 3:20; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Our avoiding of such foolish and undisciplined questions does not take the form of silence. Although we should simply refrain from answering in cases of stupid and rude questions, which give birth to quarrelsome disputes and emotionally pitched contentions, yet because the passage indicates a response being given, our avoidance of foolish questions takes the form of refusing to answer in terms of the critic's tacit assumptions and erroneously presupposed authority. Instead we educate (vs. 25) and correct the thinking of the unbeliever based on divine truth and authority. The reason we must avoid foolish questions by refusing to answer in terms of the unbeliever's presuppositions is that such questions lead to unchristian attitude and behavior (vs. 23). Moreover, answering from a rationalistic or agnostic foundation denies that conversion takes place by sovereign grace (vs. 25b). Also, because we have the genuine

truth to which the unbeliever must be converted, and because the non-Christian is intellectually schizophrenic (i.e., he "opposes himself' by suppressing and denying the clear revelation of God which is the necessary foundation for all the knowledge any man possesses), we must not answer him in terms of his rebellious and unfruitful presuppositions.

Courteous Faithful Instruction

Our Christian apologetical obligation is to instruct in and toward genuine knowledge, honoring God's authority and truth. As just observed, this must be done because the non-Christian "opposes himself' by not submitting to God's Word. In suppressing the truth of God the unbeliever lives a lie (pretending he can theoretically ground knowledge in his secular assumptions). While depending on divine revelation for the knowledge he has, the unbeliever denies that revelation. The apologist must bring the suppressed truth to bear on him by using argumentation grounded in the presupposed and self-attesting Word of Christ, thereby calling the sinner back to a remembrance of his God. It is the responsibility of the apologist in all this to make courteous instruction his goal (vss. 24f.). The wise man shows his wisdom by good conduct and meekness, not descending to rivalry and bitterness since he is peaceable,

gentle, and merciful in his approach (James 3:13—17). Still, he is *sincere* (i.e., without hypocrisy) and *unwavering* (James 3:17) in his stand; he recognizes that his wisdom is *from above*, so he does not glory in himself and lie against the truth (James 3:14f., 17).

If the apologist does not assume this attitude (courtesy and uncontentiousness, yet unyielding submission to the presupposition of God's truth), his undertaking will be worthless and will only engender confusion (James 3:16). Returning to the 2 Timothy 2 passage, we now see that the apologist must not be obsessed with a desire to dominate his opponent, take pleasure in rivalry, or bring attention to his own intellectual glories. Also, the apologist must not be sidetracked from his major responsibility. He must avoid speculation and clever scholarship rooted in secular assumptions and pay attention to a straightforward presentation of, and instruction in, the truth.

Finally, Paul points out in 2 Timothy 2:25 that the apologist must recognize and live by the fact that foolish inquirers can be won over only if *God* grants them a change of mind. The unbeliever's mind is blinded as he stubbornly holds out against submission to God; until he receives gracious illumination from God the non-Christian is captive to Satan (vs. 26). Thus we sow the unadulterated seed of God's Word, trusting and looking to His power to give the increase (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Cor.

3:6f.). God must be the One who liberates the sinner from servitude to Satan and gives him the ability to change his mind. The repentance

which God grants produces a genuine knowledge of the truth (vs. 25); what had been previously suppressed and rebelled against is *now* known in blessing and grace and given the proper response. So Paul here teaches the necessity of regeneration and repentance for genuine knowledge. So then, taking the passage as a whole, Paul teaches us our need of a presuppositional apologetic in 2 Timothy 2:23—25.

The two basic elements of presuppositional apologetics are dictated to us in Proverbs 26:4-5. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own conceit." In the first place the apologist does not defend the faith against the unbeliever by answering in terms of the unbeliever's presuppositions. If he surrenders to those presuppositions he has lost the case from the outset and will end up in the same position as the fool. The apologist must work within his presupposition of the authority and truthfulness of God's Word. If he surrenders to secular assumptions he will be trapped behind enemy lines. On the other hand, he should put himself in his opponent's position so that he might show the unbeliever the outcome of his apostate presuppositions. He answers in terms of the

foolishness of unbelief in order to manifest its ridiculous and ignorant outcome, thereby preventing the unbeliever from being wise in his own conceit. So then, positively the Christian apologist presupposes the self-attesting authority and truth of Scripture, refusing to answer criticism in terms of secular premises, standards, and method; negatively, he performs an internal critique of the unbeliever's system of thought in order to demonstrate its vanity. By following this kind of apologetic procedure, which demands that every thought be made captive to the obedience of Christ and which does not use the intellectual weapons of the flesh or walk according to secular ways of thought, the apologist will be mighty before God and able to overthrow reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

C H A P T E R 3

NEUTRALITY & AUTONOMY

RELINQUISHED

1. T H E NECESSITY OF COORDINATING

EPISTEMOLOGY WITH METAPHYSICS

R. M. Chisholm distinguishes between two different questions in *Theory of Knowledge1* with reference to "The Problem of the Criterion" (chapter 4):

(A) What do we know? (or what is the extent of our

knowledge?)

(B) How are we to decide in any particular case whether we know? (or what are the criteria of knowing?)

He then goes on to note that "if we know the answer to either one of these questions, then, perhaps we may devise a procedure that will enable us to answer the other." The question naturally arises for him which of these two questions should be answered first and act as a key to answering the other. The contention of this article is that, contrary to most non-Christian and autonomous philosophies and even to the method of many Christian apologetical systems, the epistemological

1. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hail, 1966).

and metaphysical questions cannot be divorced in the way Chisholm proposes. Neither one of these questions is more primary than the other, for an answer to one assumes an answer to the other.

However, it is common today to view the methodological concern of epistemology as prior to deriving answers in the area of metaphysics. Thus when a Christian and non-Christian argue with one another it is assumed that they must arrive at some common epistemological ground before going on to discuss the substance of their disagreement (e.g., God's existence, etc.). This article will attempt to exhibit the im-

possibility of such a procedure. It is interesting to notice that Chisholm proceeds to consider question (B) as if it were primary to (A) but concludes his investigation by saying, "It may not be surprising, then, that the general problem of criterion has created impasses in almost every branch of knowledge." Such impasses can be removed only by coordinating the tasks of metaphysics and epistemology, not by subordinating the former to the latter.

Presuppositions Involved in the Question

It follows from the traditional formulation of "knowledge" as "justified true belief" that question (A) above is in effect asking:

(A2) What is justifiably believed and true?

and that question **(B)** is asking:

(B2) How do we decide whether a proposition, k, is justifiably believed and true?

In chapter 7 of his book,2 Chisholm maintains that a true proposition asserts a certain state of affairs to be the case when in fact that is the state of affairs. Based on this (A2) would be asking:

(A3) What do we justifiably believe to be, and is, an existing state of affairs?

and (B2) would be asking:

(B3) How do we decide whether we have justification for

2. The chapter entitled "What Is Truth?"

78

believing a proposition, k, and that k accurately states
the existing state of affairs?

It is clear, then, that (A3) and (B3) are two-part questions, their components being rendered as follows:

(A3a) What do we have justification for believing?

(A3b) What is the existing state of affairs?

(B3a) What will count as justification for believing some
proposition, k?

(B3b) By what means do we determine whether k states
the existing state of affairs?

The reason for unpacking (A) and (B) in the above way is to demonstrate that (A) is not strictly an epistemological question, for it involves the metaphysical question (A3b). This feature of (A) sets it in sharpest contrast to B); the distinctive feature of the former is true belief, while the distinctive emphasis of the latter is justified belief. Answers to (B3a) and (B3b), as epistemological questions, will not be formulated without recourse to, and dependence upon, an answer to (A3b), a metaphysical question.

The kinds of reasons that will be sanctioned as offering "justification"

for a belief (in answer to (B3a)) will be so selected because these lead to beliefs accounted as true in a satisfactory number of cases. Justification is not to be found for a belief in that it is true, for that would collapse "justification" into "truth" (leaving "knowledge" as simply "true belief"). Rather, justification is conferred on certain types of reasons (or warrants) because of the relatively high degree of success they have in engendering true belief. Hence the notion of justified belief is related to that of true belief in that justifying reasons for a belief are those that will most always lead a person to hold beliefs that are true.

Now, if types of reasons are to be sanctioned in this fashion, it is obvious that knowledge of the existing state of affairs is essential. One could not estimate the success factor for particular kinds of reasons unless he possessed some knowledge of the truth (propositions corresponding to the existing state of affairs) with which to make comparison. So answers to (A3b) are essential to answering (B3) altogether. The require-

ment of justification for a person's allegedly knowledgeable belief is laid down in order that a person who builds up his case according to proped procedure and with appropriate content (i.e., follows the "justifying" guidelines) will have good reason to suppose that he has accurately rep-

resented the existing state of affairs. The criteria of justification will the need to be established in accordance with what is indeed the existing state of affairs." Hence it is an inescapable requirement that one have at least an elementary knowledge of the existing state of affairs if he is going to lay down sensible, valid, workable and promising criteria for justification. In short, the justifiableness of a justification for belief must itself be counted worthy *according to* the presumably known state of affairs. If a man is to answer (B3a), then he must already know something about the world.

It turns out that we *cannot* begin purely and simply with an epistemological method—a procedure and criterion for distinguishing knowledgeable beliefs from those which are otherwise—and then proceed to find out the extent of our knowledge. To *begin* with such an epistemological method and standard would be to start one's thinking with a *generalization* (about the success of an epistemological procedure in various cases) and an arbitrary criterion which is given *no warrant* or reason. In actual practice we know how to decide which epistemological methods are to be over others on the basis of their success in leading to knowledgeable beliefs. But this already assumes that we have certain recognized items of knowledge which can serve as paradigms and test cases. We would already need to know something about the extent of

our knowledge before we could settle philosophically on a criterion of knowledge. Our thus epistemological rules will thus be adapted to our accepted cases of knowledge.3 The epistemological question cannot be answered in isolation.

The very nature of questions (B3a) and (B3b) indicates that the one asking them believes there are extramental states of affairs, that it is possible to have true knowledge of them, that error is possible yet avoidable, that it is appropriate to seek after reliable standards, etc. Yet a solipsist, or radical monist, or person who considers human thinking (or at least his own thinking) infallible, etc., would not ask such a question as (B3).

3. See Chisholm's later study, *The Problem of Criterion* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973).

Knowledge as such involves the notions of known object and knowing object, but a consistent monist would be averse to such a dualism. A solipsist would not be concerned with knowledge in this sense either, since he as the subject is the imaginating source of all "objects" anyway. The idea of judging propositions against standards of truth and justification is senseless unless the possibility of error is recognized, for comparison

with the standard is supposed to be capable of yielding at least two answers (e.g., correct, incorrect). The endeavor to find reliable standards is meaningful only if error is avoidable, and if it is not the case that everything is in ultimate flux. So again, the very posing of questions (B3a) and (B3b) presupposes a metaphysical commitment, some answer to (A3b). The establishing of conditions for "knowledge" both requires and entails some degree of knowledge already. When a criterion is propounded for "knowledge," the statement of that criterion falls within that set of propositions known to be representative of the existing state of affairs; that is, an epistemological belief is informative of the metaphysical situation. Further, a number of other things are apparently known i.e., fall within the extent of *what*, rather than how, we know) prior to the espousing of this criterion. The rendering of an epistemological criterion presumes knowledge of the fact that man's mental capacities are sufficient for gaining true beliefs (i.e., a knowledge of anthropology), that extramental states of affairs are amenable to man's epistemological apparatus (i.e., a knowledge of cosmology), that this criterion is somehow appropriate and applicable (i.e., a knowledge of axiology), etc. So then, to some degree *what* is known is coordinated with *how* we determine whether we know; one cannot proceed to answer the epistemological question without simultaneously rendering decisions on the metaphysi-

cal question. One cannot gain an epistemological position untainted by metaphysical commitment.

A Classic Impasse in Philosophy

The interdependence of metaphysical and epistemological commitments within a particular worldview is illustrated from the history of philosophy. Some philosophers have favored a permanence and atomistic orientation to the world; they tended to focus on the enduring aspects of experience and to view the world as made up of diverse, separate, discontinuous entities. For them the real world is characterized by sta-

bility, and change is the philosophical problem needing an explanation. However, other philosophers, who have favored a process and monistic orientation to the world, have tended to focus on the changing aspects of experience and to view everything in the world as united and continuous with everything else. For this second group of thinkers reality is characterized by dynamic instability, change being so obvious a feature of experience that any belief in stability or fixity needs an explanation. With these two different orientations toward reality it is no surprise that there are correspondingly diverse attitudes toward truth and logic. The permanence-atomistic perspective favors a correspondence theory

of truth: the epistemological problem is to get independent minds into correspondence with independently existing objects. The process-monistic perspective, however, tends toward a coherence theory of truth minds and objects are already in a relationship with each other, but the problem is now how finite minds could know isolated, finite truths. To know anything, one should have to know everything. With respect to logic the former school thinks that there are two quite discrete, separate, unchanging categories of propositions: the consistent and the contradictory. Proper philosophical analysis and advance requires that every statement be classified into one or the other of these discrete categories. But the latter school feels that such categories are merely tentative and provisional; between these two categories there is a dynamic tension which, when resolved, only results in a new conflict within man's understanding and analysis.

One can imagine how unfruitful arguments between these two philosophical orientations or schools could be. The permanence-atomistic perspective would accuse the process-monistic perspective of failing to draw sharp distinctions and thus falling into muddled reasoning about reality and knowledge. Yet the second perspective would accuse the first of being simplistic and reductionistic, thereby falsifying the whole truth When one outlook uses an epistemological method or standard to argue

with the metaphysical beliefs of the other, the second school will counter with its own epistemological method which refutes the metaphysical beliefs of the first. If they attempt to argue over each other's epistemology, it will be in terms of their correspondingly different metaphysics. That is, their arguments will not simply be over how *well* each other has developed his philosophy, but over what *kind* of philosophy should be developed. What take to be problems, what kind of analysis they say is

acquired, and what methods and standards they use will all be viewed differently. What each school sees as amounting to "making a good case" for a basic position—what each will count as plausible or not—debends on their own initial perspectives or presuppositions. Their views of reality have suggested certain epistemological attitudes, and their epistemological standards have supported certain views of reality. For example, because Plato believed in abstract entities (the Forms) he was a rationalist in epistemology, but because Hume thought that only perceivable individuals existed he was an empiricist in epistemology. Yet on the other hand, both philosophers felt that their metaphysical conclusions were demanded by their epistemological criteria. The inescapable fact is that one's views of reality and knowledge mutually influence and

support each other.

The fact that reasons can be, and are, offered in support of an answer to (B3) above suggests that an insight into an answer to (A3b) is possessed. A person usually will offer considerations that he feels will compel others to take the same epistemological position as his own. Something is known about the existing state of affairs that leads to the criteria of knowledge proposed. Not many philosophers will say that they, while devoid of any knowledge about the existing state of affairs, struck upon the "lucky" formula that became their key to knowledge. Epistemological considerations are not capricious guesses; they are given because someone feels that they are appropriate for the reality in which he lives. Epistemology is not a subjectivist guessing game; reasons are put forward for epistemological positions, and this strongly indicates that (B3) is answered in conjunction with (A3b).

There is another way to demonstrate that a thinker cannot begin an examination of epistemology free from metaphysical knowledge to some degree. For consider: Certain theologians expound the scriptural position that an absolute and authoritative God demands that every single thought be brought into subjection to His Word. They explain that since God alone is all comprehensive in His interpretation of reality, nothing can qualify as "knowledge" that does not correspond to His thoughts. Their

claim is that *all* reasoning, even epistemology, must be brought under God's authority or else reason itself collapses as inoperative. Now when a person holds that philosophy need not take a metaphysical position but can start from a neutral epistemological ground and work toward a metaphysic this person *excludes* (indeed, precludes) the theological epistemology

expounded by that group of thinkers just mentioned. So a person must at least know that the God and system of interpretation of these Christian theologians are untrue to the existing state of affairs if he is going to assert epistemology's precedence to, and independence of, metaphysics. But this is only to say that even the person who adamantly asserts that epistemology must be considered separately from questions of metaphysics must himself have some metaphysical knowledge prior to his pronouncement (enough to discredit the theological position just outlined)! One cannot escape making his study of epistemology concomitant with his study of metaphysics; the two inform and direct each other.

Epistemology and Metaphysics Interdependent

The preceding considerations lead us to reject the mistaken attempt to settle matters concerning epistemology and method prior to, and in abstraction from, questions of metaphysics. The questions "What

do we know?" and "How do we decide in any particular case whether we know?" should not be, indeed cannot be, subordinated one to the other. One's view of knowledge is itself necessarily conditioned by his understanding of what constitutes ultimate reality (his view of man, the world, and God). Common epistemological ground between disputants of different metaphysical positions cannot in *principle* be found, for answers to the questions of epistemology assume answers to the questions of metaphysics. Common metaphysical commitments cannot be arrived at by proponents of different epistemological schools, for methodology dictates the type of conclusion one can reach. The task of epistemology, therefore, must be coordinated with that of metaphysics.

In his later discussion of "the problem of criterion," Chisholm came to this conclusion: "What few philosophers have had the courage to recognize is this: we can deal with the problem only by begging the question. It seems to me that, if we do recognise this fact, as we should, then it is unseemly for us to try to pretend that it isn't so."4

4. Chisholm, *The Problem of Criterion,* 37.

2 . U L T I M A C Y I N A U T H O R I T Y

At this point the dogged neutralist might reply that if metaphysics and

epistemology are interdependent, then indeed we are left with a subjectivist guessing game, and all philosophy begins with a "leap." Now we could respond by pointing out that the fact someone does not like the outcome of a line of argumentation is no refutation of that argument. Epistemology and metaphysics do seem to be circularly related; if that leaves us with a "leap," then we may not like the circumstances in which we find ourselves, but in all honesty we would have to face up to them. However it is far more important for us to ask whether the fact that we cannot incontestably begin solely in epistemology or metaphysics when we philosophize really does leave us with skepticism. Does the fact that ultimate principles are strictly incapable of external verification (since to have a standard above these assumptions by which to judge them is simply to push the question of verification back to this ultimate standard) leave us with a guessing game at the beginning of our thinking?

Knowledge and Ethical Authority

Only if Christianity were untrue (which it is not) would this dire conclusion follow. Because God has clearly revealed Himself to all men by means of nature, man's own constitution, and Scripture, men do *not* begin with a mere guess about reality. All men as creatures of God have the same true metaphysical information and moorings, as

well as justification for them (i.e., revelation from God Himself). So their intellectual endeavors do not begin with a "leap," but rather they begin either in submissive obedience or rebellious disobedience. That men suppress and mishandle the revelation of God, thereby denying to themselves in one stroke the true metaphysic (beginning with the God of creation) and valid epistemology (resting upon divine revelation), fails to alter the fact that intellectual endeavors do *not* begin from a blank position of neutrality and make their first move by means of a guess. All men *begin* with genuine *knowledge*—true belief about the state of affairs and justification for that belief—and then proceed to use or misuse it. The beginning of philosophy is not a subjectivist guessing game but a matter of ethics.

To get to the real heart of the matter in the neutralist's objection against the circular dependence of metaphysics and epistemology we must recognize that most philosophers do not want intellectual matters to reduce to a question of morality (obedience or rebellion to God's Word). They want to hold the intellect or reason to be above matters of moral volition. They hold that truth is obtainable and testable no matter what ethical condition the thinker is in. Hence they maintain

that all disputes must be *rationally* resolvable, and a rational case for a philosophic position relies upon a valid chain of discursive argumentation that takes us back to incontestable first principles or facts. However, if the situation described above pertaining to God's clear revelation of Himself to all men actually obtains as the only alternative to skepticism, then epistemology and metaphysics are so intertwined that an appeal to authority is inevitable at basic levels of philosophy. So if, when it comes to the fundamental question of Christian faith, arguments are ultimately circular (since metaphysics and epistemology depend on one another), then the matter reduces to one of submission or rebellion to the authority of the revealed God.

Whether most philosophers like it or not, Scripture assuredly tells us that the way a man uses his intellect *is* an ethical matter (e.g., rebellion against God leads to a darkened mind). Irrespective of the way in which men respond to it, God's clear revelation is the only escape we have from the skepticism that would otherwise result from the necessity of coordinating metaphysics and epistemology, and it is this revelation that provides *both* the epistemic ground and metaphysical content for the foundation of all of man's intellectual endeavors. Hence a Christian's apologetical argument (working on a transcendental level) will finally be circular; what he knows and how he knows are both tied up with God's

revelation. At the base of every man's knowledge is the coordination of metaphysics and epistemology that is expressed in God's clear revelation to all men, a revelation that saves men from ultimate skepticism. In being thus saved from skepticism, however, philosophers are faced with the authority of God and the fact that reasoning is a matter of morality.

Uncovering Presupposed Authorities

Because men will suppress or misuse the clear revelation of God and continue to exalt the primacy of their reason, disagreement between the

Christian and the unbeliever will understandably involve reasoned argumentation. This raises a crucial question. Because both men will of necessity be involved in arguing matters of epistemology and metaphysics (since the two are interdependent) without first establishing primal agreement in one area and then discursively moving on to answers in the other, the practical question arises: where do all philosophical justifications come to an end? Every system must have some unproven assumptions, a starting point not antecedently established, with which reasoning begins and according to which it proceeds to conclusions. Therefore, all argumentation over ultimate issues of truth and reality will come down to an appeal to authorities which, in the nature of the case, are ultimate authorities.

Circularity at this level of argumentation is unavoidable. If the alleged authority is not taken to be authoritative *in itself,* but justification is offered for that authority, then this is not really the ultimate authority after all—rather, those justifying considerations are the final authority. When that ultimate authority is challenged, the argument must necessarily become circular, for nothing is "more authoritative" or carries greater warranting power than the "ultimate" authority.

The unbeliever, as much as the believer, has a final authority to which he appeals in order to defend the world-view that embraces his interdependent metaphysic and epistemology. When two people, Christian and unbeliever, are arguing, their ultimate authorities will be distinguishable by what they refuse to impugn or contradict in the long run. They may be moved to abandon secondary authorities along the way, but that which is the last "fortress" to fall, that consideration whose veracity they will assert to the dire end, that which governs and qualifies all higher movements of thought and argumentation, constitutes their authority. For a trivial disagreement in logic homework two students may appeal to a commonly recognized authority in the non-personal laws of inference; for a disagreement between two philosophers appeal might be made to the authority of their respective views of truth (e.g., coherence vs. pragmatic). But at base, when one is giving reasons for

his fundamental outlook on reality and knowledge he will appeal to some personal authority: his own mind, an esteemed scholar, a group of thinkers, the majority opinion, or God. Providing that no mistakes have been made in logical calculus or observation, a difference in personal authority will always lie behind an argument that is at an impasse. Disagreements in world-view (the axis of metaphysics-epistemology-ethics)

will finally reduce to an absolute antithesis in personal authority. Until one's authority structure changes, his ultimate philosophic position will remain unaltered. Therefore, all argumentation between non-Christian and believer must inevitably become circular, beginning and ending with some personal authority (and not a question of epistemology or metaphysics abstracted from the other). Since this is the case the Christian should not be ashamed of his admittedly dogmatical apologetic, a system of interpretation which starts "from above," from the authoritative Word of the self-contained, triune God who speaks in self-attesting Scripture. The necessity, clarity, sufficiency, and *authority* of Scripture are correlative to that revelation of God in nature and man's constitution. This forms the solid basis for our apologetical effort, an endeavor to bring the ultimate authority of God

to bear on every area of life. The suggestion of authoritarianism is no onus, no scandal, to the *servant* of God. In the nature of the case the best witness to God's existence, the truth of His revelation, and the basis of a genuinely sound defense of the Christian faith would be God Himself. To require proof of Him or His Word would be to misunderstand who He is or the argumentative procedure. The beginning of an argument is a personal authority not previously argued for, and there can be no higher or more reliable source of truth and validation than God, The truth of Scripture, then, is not established by the apologist's use of external tests; rather the Word of God is *self*-attesting. The Bible is accepted on God's own authority.

3. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NEUTRALITY

The patent corollary of all the foregoing discussion is the impossibility of neutrality in an argument dealing with wide-scope and fundamental issues. It should be recognized that the claim to be, or the attempt to be, completely objective and value-free in deciding an issue of truth is ridiculous; the very fact that evidence is collected, arranged, and evaluated by each man's own mind and in response to his personality and past experience indicates the strong element of subjectivity that is involved in settling issues of truth. If a man's mind really could be free of interpretative principles so that he could

treat all "facts" as though they had no pre-interpretation inherent in them, then his interpretative activity could never get started or make

contact with the "facts." He would have a blank mind working on blank impressions.

Furthermore, the place where a man goes to secure or look for evidence indicates a certain prejudice toward the answer expected to a question on his part from the very outset. Also, what a man even considers "factual" will be determined by his outlook or philosophy (e.g., the materialist and Buddhist will disagree from the *start* of an argument). Moreover we note that the very formulation and styling of an argument require that a man have his final conclusion in sight even from the outset in order that the argument be structured to move to the proper end; the predetermination of conclusion significantly governs the formulation of premises. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,5 Thomas Kuhn clearly exhibits the non-objective character of science when it comes to foundational questions. He says that the scientist views the world through a model or arranging-picture; he has a paradigm that defines the scope and methodology of the science using it. The world becomes a totally new place when the paradigm is altered; even sense data and its in-

terpretation are governed, qualified, and determined by the model. In 1931 Kurt Godel pulled the rug out from under the supposed neutrality of logic in the same way that Kuhn later made scientific or factual neutrality look suspicious. Godel developed a theorem that demonstrated the impossibility of formulating a consistency proof for any system of logical calculus (with its signs and rules of inference) *within* that system.6 Hence different systems of logic are selected for reasons other than objective logical argument.

Against this background it should come as no surprise that the Christian and unbeliever do not and cannot approach their differences with argumentative or philosophic neutrality. Even though the Christian and the non-Christian have the facts of the objective world in common, they have radically divergent interpretations of them. For the Christian

5. (Chicago University Press, [1962] 1970).

6. Bahnsen here refers to the two famous "incompleteness theorems" as published by Godel in 1931. See Kurt Godel, "On formally undecidable propositions of *Principia Mathematica* and related systems," in *A Source-book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931*, trans, and ed. Jean van Heijenoort (Harvard University Press, 1967), 596-616. Within that paper the relevant selections are "Theorem VI" and "Theorem XI."

all facts are pre-interpreted by God, created by God, and revelatory of God; they must be handled in such a way that glory is brought to God. But the non-Christian views these facts as meaningfully interpreted only by his own mind, as uncreated and free from God's control, as ambiguous and contingent; he uses them to bring glory to man. Hence the Christian and non-Christian have different interpretative schemes. Even when the believer and unbeliever share the same rules of logical inference, they nevertheless can be said to have different "logics." For the believer and unbeliever differ as to the use, significance, ground, and authority of these rules; basically one subordinates logic to God while the other does not. One views logic as rules of thought implanted in man's mind by the Creator; the other sees logic as the self-sufficient, self-authenticating tool of autonomous man's reason. One founds logic in God; the other founds it in itself. The Christian places God's authority above considerations of logical possibility or his own human use of logic; the unbeliever places abstract possibility above God. Since the fall of man was ethical in character (not metaphysical), the unregenerate and regenerate share the facts of the world and the rules of thought, but their interpretation and use of them are far from neutral. The Christian obediently submits all thoughts to the word of Scripture, but the non-Christian autonomously treats "logic" and "fact" as the final reference

point of all truth. The believer accepts God's interpretation of everything without question; the rebel unbeliever imposes his own interpretation on all things in order to challenge the interpretation of the Creator.

Fundamentals of the Disagreement

Given the interdependence of metaphysics and epistemology, the difference in personal authorities, and the unavoidable lack of neutrality between Christian and non-Christian, the debate between the two cannot proceed objectively and on agreed-to principles. From the first J move of argument the truth or falsity of the Christian Scripture has been assumed (not "proven"). The Christian and non-Christian will take different minds as the final reference point in their own thinking; the believer will use patterns of thought and interpretation provided by God while the unbeliever will derive them from the created world itself (e.g., his own mind).

The two will disagree as to whether God is enveloped within, and

subject to, the same laws of logic and science and history as any other (created) object or not. The Christian takes God as an absolute, comprehensive, incorrigible authority, while the non-Christian absolutizes some aspect of his finite, temporal experience. The non-Christian be-

gins by assuming that God *cannot* clearly reveal himself in history or by means of human words, that He cannot demand every thought to be made subject to Christ; the Christian presupposes the very opposite. Self-consciousness and knowledge of facts and laws are impossible without God-consciousness according to the believer, but the unbeliever assumes the non-createdness of the facts as well as man's mind and rejects the need to refer to God in any interpretative scheme. There is not one fact or law which is "neutral" to the Christian and non-Christian. Their respective views of anthropology, cosmology, and axiology are *in principle* totally conflicting.

While they both *stand* on common ground, this common ground is distinctively *Christian* ground (for all creation is revelatory of God). But the non-Christian refuses to admit this and to build his reasoning and life upon the Word of God. So while both stand upon common Christian ground, the believer and unbeliever are nevertheless *not neutral* in their outlook and convictions. Given the antithetical mindset of the regenerate and unregenerate, the hope of a "neutral" apologetic which appeals to commonly understood and accepted "facts" and "logic" is futile. Neutrality is impossible.

How then can one ever hope to salvage the apolgetical effort? How can there be any meaningful discussion between believer and unbeliever?

Are we not reduced to having the two disputants sit in separate philosophic towers and mutually loathe one another? All of these questions would carry a powerful sting if one did not follow a presuppositional apologetic rooted in the truth of God's Word. Scripture tells us that the non-Christian must always live in God's world (i.e., upon Christian ground) and continually be confronted by God's revelation within and without him. The non-Christian is not and cannot be consistent with his boasted autonomy and self-authority. It is the unbeliever's inconsistency, wherein he knows the truth about God and depends upon it in his intellectual efforts (even while he denies it), that makes communication and argument with him by the Christian possible. Christian language and discussion are not hermetically sealed off from all non-Christian discourse. The sinner can still understand the words used by the Christian, for they are both made

in the image of God. Satan has not defeated the Word. The burden of the following article is to demonstrate that the unbeliever can be said to know that something is the case while being ignorant of his knowledge to that effect and even denying it. Hence, to some degree the unbeliever is inconsistent with his rejection of Christianity; in denying certain Christian presuppositions he, nevertheless, makes use of them. This inconsistency

on his part makes apologetic argument possible.

4. IGNORANCE OF O N E ' S O W N KNOWLEDGE.

One of the curious things about the activity of human knowing it that it is not self-certifying; that is, psychological conviction is not invariably associated with all instances of genuine knowledge.7 A person who knows that something is the case does not automatically feel certain or have psychological surety about his knowledge, and a person who is more than confident of knowing something does not thereby have a guarantee of possessing genuine knowledge. People often know more than they might have supposed, and many times are wrong in thinking that they know something that they in reality do not know (e.g., Smith claims to know a short cut yet gets lost; Jones is surprised to find that he can work the problems on his calculus test). Although the autobiographical statement, "I know that p, although I am not sure of it," is rather strange, it is not self-contradictory. Confidence is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of knowing. The psychological states of certainty and uncertainty function neither to verify nor to falsify a person's possession of actual knowledge.

Hence it would be well if we were to keep separate a man's *claims* to know and his actual *knowing*; the presence of one is no guarantee of the presence of the other. The man who claims to know that p may be mis-

taken, while the man who genuinely knows p might never utter a claim to that effect. This latter condition can obtain for a number of reasons: (1) the knower may never have occasion or interest to report his knowledge; (2) he may not be confident that the reasons for his belief constitute justification for it (while in fact they do); or (3) he may not personally *realize* that he knows such and such. The first case is simply a matter of

7. See A. D. Woozley, "Knowing and Not Knowing," in *Knowledge and Belief,* ed. A. P. Griffiths (London: Oxford, 1967).

circumstance. The second case is often attended by odd construction, "I think I know that ..." and calls the *claim* to knowledge into doubt (this construction should be distinguished from "I think I know how, when, where, etc.," which is a cautious assertion of having the right answer or ability; in this case the test is simply in the performance of the correct action or delivering the correct answer). The third case goes a step further and in fact always precludes a *claim* to knowledge, no matter how [cautious it might be. However, we must not suppose that a man does not know something because he refrains from *claiming* to know it.

Because confidence is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition

of knowing, and since claiming to know and knowing can be mutually exclusive of each other, the following observations are appropriate.

1. "I am not at all sure that p" does not entail that the speaker does not know that p.

2. "I would not claim (I know) that p" does not entail lack of knowledge either.

3. "I am sure that p" does not imply the truth of p or falsity of non-p.

4. "I know that p" is also susceptible to error.

5. "I think I know that p," being a weaker form of 3 and 4, emphasizes the definite possibility of error.

The interesting thing, then, is that a person's knowing p or knowing not-p is not incompatible with any of these previous five autobiographical statements. Knowing p, a person might still not be sure or claim it; knowing not-p is not contrary to thinking that one knows p or even being confident that one knows p. Therefore, a person can genuinely know something even if he lacks assurance or claims the very opposite.

The reason why this observation may seem somewhat strange (and might seem totally unacceptable if made out of context) is that we tend to construe it in terms of autobiographical affirmations. We realize how odd an autobiographical rendition of such a state of affairs would be. Indeed

the statement, "I am not certain that p, but I know that p" or even more,

"I know that p, but claim to know the opposite" would strike us as inane or absurd. However, one's own psychological consistency does not concern us here; even when the state of affairs would warrant it, we will rarely hear such incongruent assertions. Smith's uncertainty or denial of p, while knowing that p, is not a contradictory state of affairs; his reporting of that state of affairs may be odd, but that is not a good reason for Jones to refrain from asserting the state of affairs to be such that Smith knows what he is unsure of or even denies.

Self-Deception in Common Practice

Therefore, a man can be ignorant of his knowledge; that is, he can know something and not *know that* he knows it. This ignorance can take very strange or ironic forms-even the denying of what one genuinely knows. The possibility of being ignorant of your knowledge applies to knowledge-that as much as to knowledge-how. It is easier for us to see the latter than the former case (e.g., a man can turn out to know how to use chop-sticks despite his hesitation to employ them). This is because examples of the former situation are rarely related to us, and those instances that come to mind are all of a more or less irrational or schizo-

phrenic type. This is not surprising, however; to say of a man that he knows that p although he is not sure of it or claims the opposite is to criticize him for being somehow unreasonable (i.e., he does not admit or have confidence of something he ought to be sure of). Common and numerous examples of self-deception show that it is possible for a man to be ignorant of his knowledge that something is the case. It would be true that a man "knows" p if he fulfills the requirements of knowledge: justified, true, belief. If Smith believed p, had justification for p, and p is true, then Smith could be said to know that p—even if Smith did not know that he knew p or failed to admit his knowledge of p. It is even conceivable that Smith could deny that he knows that p when p is the case, and Smith has justification for p and believes that p. To make this point we turn to a few brief observations.

To some degree it is possible for a person to be mistaken about his beliefs; he can fool himself about what he genuinely believes yet denies. This can be seen to be so because a disposition to behave consistently with a belief is a mark of its genuineness. If a person professes to believe something (say, that this apple is poisoned) and does not act in accord

with that belief (say, by eating this apple without any suicidal intentions),

we tend to judge that he does not *really* believe what he professes. Belief is more than mental assent or the recitation of a formula.

Consistent behavior is expected if a person is to be credited with believing something; actions are often the most accurate pointer to what a person actually believes in his "heart of hearts." Numerous examples could be cited where we see in others (and not often enough in ourselves) behavior inconsistent with professed belief. In such cases (depending upon the nature of what is believed) inconsistent behavior can serve to falsify profession and indicate an alternative belief. (Since people often do what they believe to be wrong I refrain from saying that *any* inconsistent act falsifies any respective belief; each case must be judged according to its own peculiar character and circumstance. While one transgression does not falsify a genuine commitment to the Decalogue, eating *this* apple at *this* time while professing to believe that it is poisonous would automatically discredit the belief. Moreover, since the public profession of a belief is itself an action to be taken into account I draw back from a completely behavioristic understanding of "belief." The Christian must especially take account of the complications in judging a man's beliefs, for the old nature still resides in believers while common grace operates in unbelievers.) So it is possible for a man to be mistaken about his beliefs; "a tree is known by its fruits." A man can believe some-

thing without acknowledging or admitting that he believes it.

Moreover, a person can have strong evidence or adequate justification for a proposition while refusing to accept it. This often takes place when the proposition to be believed carries with it a great deal of adverse emotional force; when such an emotional factor is present it can often lead a person to reject a justification or argument which would satisfy him intellectually under normal conditions. For example: a father who has accidentally run over his child when backing the car out the driveway can encounter more than sufficient evidence of that fact and still painfully refuse to see that the evidence proves the point—-it would be too much for him to bear to face the fact that he killed his own child. Many "reasonable" men will reject arguments that are sound if those arguments would require major changes in their life-styles. If a proposition poses a possible threat or anxious situation for someone, he can refuse to grant the validity or sufficiency of the justification for that proposition. One's psychological disposition can compel him to "close

his eyes to the facts."8

Apologetical Implications of Self-Deception

We conclude, then, that it is possible for a man to meet the condi-

tions of knowledge and yet refuse to admit it. A man can be mistaken about his beliefs. He can have justifying reasons for a belief to which he will not submit. Hence he could be in error as to the extent of his knowledge; he can be ignorant of his knowledge. An application of this principle would be the case where someone who denies God's existence behaves (epistemologically or ethically) as though there were a God and who would suffer loss of pride or self-esteem if he "opened his eyes" to the clear evidence of God's existence around him; such a person would be denying what he "knows" to be true (i.e., that God exists). This theological illustration is particularly fitting since belief in God has a negative and positive side for the individual who believes; it requires humility (negatively) while (positively) guaranteeing the possibility of knowledge and grounding human values.

Thus we can see how a man would behave as though he believed God existed (e.g., maintaining that he can "know" objective truth, depending on the uniformity of nature, applying moral norms, fearing death, etc.) while not wanting to acknowledge it (i.e., because of his guilt before the Creator-Judge). He can have justification for believing that God exists (i.e., Scripture says that the revelational evidence is clear and inescapable, the impress of God's plan being found in the facts of science and the laws of thought; God's existence and character are made known

to every man in the creation around him and in his own constitution; and the nonexistence of God is epistemologically impossible) while refusing to admit it (because of the emotional factor involved).

A non-Christian can claim that God does not exist then, and nevertheless be said to *know that* God indeed does exist. Because this is the case one can employ an effective apologetical argument. Yet the apologist need not fall back upon false and impossible claims to neutrality nor utilize the hostile presuppositions of the unbeliever in order to do so.

8. For a further detailed study of self-deception, see Greg L. Bahnsen, *A Conditional Resolution of the Apparent Paradox of Self-Deception* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1978).

Rather he drives home the Word of God, forcing the rebel to see that he is living "on borrowed capital" (i.e., Christian presuppositions), and calling him back to a "remembrance" of his God.

5 . T H E HOPELESSNESS O F AUTONOMOUS REASONING

By epistemological autonomy is meant the ability to attain to knowledge independent of God's revelation and existence. The person who rejects the Word of God feels that he can find truth with his own powers of exploration, examination, and explanation. He thinks that personal

knowledge of the world is attainable irrespective of God's existence. For the self-styled autonomous man personal understanding need not make reference to the God-situation in order to justify or explain itself. It is assumed from the outset that the human mind is epistemologically self-sufficient. He purports to start simply with himself, his native abilities, the facts of experience, and the principles of logic in order to establish an interpretation of the world built up without reference to God or divine revelation. He takes it that his thinking is straightforwardly original and relies upon no *a priori* judgments as to fact. This epistemological stance needs to be unmasked.

The autonomous man would obviously have to determine the nature and possibility of knowledge without God. For the free-thinker a disclaimer of any knowledge whatsoever or the legislation of the impossibility of knowing anything is self-vitiating; even if one is without certainty in his beliefs he still *knows* a particular state of affairs (i.e., his own agnosticism). Utter skepticism is not a legitimate option for the man who is epistemologically self-sufficient; he must know *something* if he knows that he should reject revelational epistemology and dependence upon God—he thinks himself in a position to reject the absolute demand God makes upon his life and intellect. A person knows to reject an optical illusion only if he already knows the actual

state of affairs; he can make a negative judgment only if he is also prepared to assert something positively. To reject revelational epistemology, then, is to commit yourself to defending the truth of autonomous epistemology.

Relativism in Knowledge

Since the knower who claims independence of God cannot escape asserting that he knows something, we can inquire from him, "What constitutes knowledge?" The first self-generated perplexity arises at this point, for his criteria will fluctuate back and forth between being too lenient to exclude obvious faults and being too stringent to be met. If knowledge is simply belief, then wild fantasies are competent to contradict well-reasoned, scientific views, and furthermore two people could have "knowledge" of contradictory states of affairs as a result of their conflicting beliefs. There is a self-evident absurdity in holding that anything I choose to believe thereby becomes a known state of affairs; if "knowledge" collapses into "belief' utter relativism results (necessitating skepticism). When someone purports to "know" something we expect that he is reporting more than his own personal perspective or feelings. Knowledge must be constituted by a *particular kind* of belief.

Psychological conviction will not qualify as the distinguishing mark of knowledgeable belief, for then we are right back into the same problems as noted above. Knowledge must correlate one's personal belief and the state of affairs objective to him. Yet "true belief' is still too weak a definition of "knowledge" since men have been known to make "lucky guesses" where their beliefs so happened to be true. Wild-eyed hunches are not excluded by such a view of knowledge, yet these hunches do not square with the ordinary usage of the word "knowledge." A man may turn out to be correct in his beliefs while *not* being granted that he had any *right* to think that he "knew" a state of affairs. If a man falls asleep at his desk with pen in hand and because of biological twitches he scrawls on a piece of paper and then awakens to find a somewhat coherent (yet accidental) sentence written on his paper, he might take this sentence as a personal belief; however, such a belief is too arbitrary for anyone to grant that he has genuine "knowledge," even if his accidental sentence turns out to be factual. If knowledge were taken to be simply "true belief," then outside of possessing the truth itself all beliefs would be of equal worth—thinkers having no reason to choose any belief over another.

Moreover, even this weakened definition has besetting problems.

What constitutes "truth" according to the autonomous thinker? By excluding revelation as that which sets the criteria, he runs into the fore-

boding threat of relativism (skepticism) again. If every man has his own

standards, then every man is a law unto himself. Also we observe that autonomous thinkers operate on the basis that the less a m a n knows the less certain he should be about his judgments; the inference is that outside of omniscience no man can have unqualified truth. So what might the autonomous man substitute for infinite knowledge as grounds for claiming truthfulness in any of his predications? Is there any safeguard against delusion? Can even the simplest thing be known for sure? Being dialectically strewn between haphazard guesses and the demand for omniscience, the autonomous m a n must push beyond "true belief' as his standard of "knowledge" and introduce the notion *of justification* as that which eliminates arbitrariness and provides a ground for asserting truthfulness in a belief. If someone has a *good reason* for his belief, then another person might have incentive to take that belief as true. However, different people are convinced by different kinds of reasons; what satisfies Jones may be completely inadequate according to Smith. A good case for a belief might *persuade* another to endorse it, but that does not come all the way up to "knowledge" (and relativism continues to threaten). At this point the autonomous m a n might be

willing to lower his sights: after all, he says, no one can demand more than can be given.

So we settle for these criteria of knowledge: assenting to a proposition, the correctness of that judgment, and having a good reason to assent to. A person will be said "to know" something if it is actually the case, if he believes it, and if reasons can be offered for his belief. However, E. L. Gettier has leveled a serious attack on the traditional formulation of "knowledge" as "justified, true belief."9 He maintains that it is possible for a person to be justified in believing a proposition that is true, but this person does not actually have knowledge. For example: having spoken to the company president and having counted the coins in Jones's pocket, Smith has strong evidence for the conjunctive proposition, "Jones is the m a n who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket." This proposition entails the further proposition, "The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket." But it turns out that Smith, who *also* has ten coins in his pocket, lands the job. Hence Smith justifiably believed the entailed proposition above and that proposition

9. See his article in the volume mentioned earlier, *Knowledge and Belief,* ed. A. P.

Griffiths (London: Oxford, 1967).

was true. Yet we realize that Smith did not genuinely have knowledge of the state of affairs, was misinformed, and had an erroneous understanding of the entailed proposition in the sense that it turned out to be true. Hence, even the weakened sense of "knowledge" offered by the autonomous thinker (weak since it does not specify what constitutes anything more than a relativistic notion of "truth" and "justification") is burdened with problems.

The autonomous thinker might salvage his credibility in epistemology by urging two criticisms against Gettier: (1) his example involves an equivocation, and (2) Gettier fails to recognize that *appropriateness* is a necessary attribute for justification. By its vagueness the entailed proposition from the example allows for an equivocation: "The man who will get the job" means "Whoever gets the job" at one point and "The particular man, Jones" at another. It is clear that what is justified ("... Jones") is not what is true ("Whoever..."). Moreover, a person has justifying reasons for his belief only if those reasons are relevant to the truth of that belief. Strong evidence would not be considered such if it were inappropriate evidence. Irrelevant reasons are not reasons at all. In Gettier's example the entailed proposition is *justified,* with reference to Jones but *true* with reference to Smith; hence his justifying reasons are

irrelevant to his true belief.

Failure in Relevance and Justification

But now the autonomous thinker has generated another set of perplexities for himself: What constitutes relevance? What should be accepted as justification? If Smith is in the business of selling audio equipment to educators and delivers his sales pitch to Jones, a teacher, and Jones interrupts Smith, saying, "The mothers of my students had German measles during their pregnancy," Smith could consider this remark totally irrelevant to the business at hand. But Jones explains (to Smith's embarrassment) that the comment was not lacking in pertinence since exposure to German measles during pregnancy often causes the baby to be born deaf, and (hence) his deaf students could not use the offered audio equipment! It was Smith's lack of knowledge that led him to think that Jones's remark was irrelevant and inappropriate. Further examples could be multiplied wherein a man's limited understanding of a field leads him to miss the significance of a judgment made by one more fully informed on the topic

at hand. Outside of being omniscient, the autonomous thinker might easily assess justifying reasons for a belief as irrelevant when in fact they were directly relevant to the belief under consideration

The self-proclaimed independent thinker fares no better when addressed with the question, "What constitutes justification?" Some men favor certain kinds of arguments, while others are partial to a different kind of consideration. And it will not work to have two disputants in this area argue with each other in order to arrive at a common standard for evaluating justifying reasons for a belief, for in their attempts to justify their respective justification-criteria they will each have to assume their own standards and evaluate the other's on that basis. That is, the question would have to be answered before the two opponents could seek to answer it! The very point at issue would be illustrated in the way each disputant proceeded to debate. No man can demand a neutral set of considerations by which all men are to be convinced of what constitutes proper justification for a belief; at this primal level each man is a law unto himself. To argue for a justifying standard is to assume that very standard. Relativism again threatens the possibility of knowledge.

It should be clear by this time that a self-styled autonomous thinker becomes an authority unto himself. Since the question of justifying conditions for a belief cannot be argued, the personal view of the autonomous man must simply be posited as the standard. Instead of advancing a good rational, scientific case for his position, the autonomous thinker must simply assume his own authority and assert his position. His mind

is taken as the arbitrator and final point of reference; the justification-criteria, relevance-criteria, truth-criteria, and verification-criteria are what they are simply because the autonomous man says so. An argument must begin somewhere, and so the autonomous man begins it with *himself.* The interesting thing here is that it is just such a dogmatic appeal to authority that often leads unbelievers to reject revelational-epistemology and its insistence on beginning with the Word of an absolute and authoritative God. Not tolerating an appeal to sheer authority, the autonomous thinker turns out also to make final appeal to sheer authority—his own! When the Christian claims to justify his beliefs by reference to God's authoritative revelation the autonomous man demands proof of God's Word, in essence demanding that God's authority be subjected to the authority of the rational man. Obviously if the Christian's appeal to authority was illegitimate, so also is the autonomous man's

appeal to authority. He falls beneath his own criticism.

Summing up the preceding considerations we note that the self-proclaimed autonomous thinker must make some claim to knowledge; yet he cannot specify what the nature and possibility of knowledge are. He fails to settle the issues of truth, verification, relevance, an

justification. The pitfalls of relativism and skepticism and the requirement of omniscience are all too much for him. And finally, his only alternative, an appeal to authority, is illegitimate according to his own ground rules. We need hardly go beyond this point, for the farce of autonomy is apparent. The knower who claims to be epistemologically independent of God must lay claim to that-which-he-knows-not-what; he must be sure of having something he is not sure of. In the long run the autonomous thinker must pit his own epistemological credentials against, and covet, those of God.

Chaos and Subjectivism in History

There are further perplexities that the autonomous thinker faces.

By rejecting the God of scriptural revelation there is no one great plan and direction for history, there is no exhaustive interpretation of reality as a whole, there is no explanation of what exists and for what happens in history. Hence the autonomous thinker seeks to find truth in an ultimately mysterious environment, an inexplicable time-space continuum. However, there are two problematic implicates that attach to this view implicit in autonomy. First, if the historical universe is *ultimately* mysterious then anything that appears to be understandable or true for the present is actually a delusion, a mirage along the way to final agnosticism and ignorance. This would render the autonomous man's "knowledge" a

comfortable deception. Secondly, in an ultimately uninterpreted universe the autonomous man would be generating *original* interpretations of the state of affairs. So under the guise of finding out about reality and exploring its characteristics the autonomous man would actually be *legislating for* reality; his interpretation would be projected upon the world. So then, by rejecting revelational epistemology the autonomous man renders his own knowledge illusory and subjective at best. His own reason determines what shall be possible and impossible even though it has no control over history and is itself circumscribed by the system of logic in which it functions. The facts discovered by the autonomous man will be fitted to the

mold of the arbitrary mind and interpretative scheme of the autonomous man. Epistemological distortion becomes an inherent difficulty.

An Irrational Universe

And the problems of autonomous thinking do not end here. Let us now turn our attention to the two most common and fundamental assumptions of independent thinkers: the law of non-contradiction and the uniformity of nature. If the autonomous man has no justification for holding to these two principles, then the very foundations of his science and philosophy will have crumbled. Without God there is no warrant to

assume these principles. If the triune God, the world, and man are not what Scripture says that they are, we have no rationality or meaningful factuality to expect in our intellectual pursuits.

What justification has the autonomous man for assuming the law of non-contradiction to be a reliable principle? The independent thinker is quick to respond that the critic himself must assume the law of non-contradiction in order to argue against him; of course this is true since all discourse requires logical distinctions (or else every utterance would mean anything and everything else). But it does not follow from this fact that the function of logic is its own foundation! Furthermore, noting that the critic of the autonomous man must also assume the law of non-contradiction is a moot point; the critic may very well *have* a foundation for *his* use of logic within his worldview.

Moreover, for the autonomous man to appeal to the law of non-contradiction in order to support his use of that law is to reason in a vicious circle; he proves his conclusion by appealing to his conclusion. This is illegitimate for him elsewhere, so it must be prohibited here also—or else we have a deplorable case of special pleading and inconsistency simply because the autonomous man wants to be arbitrarily granted the right to get his intellectual endeavor off the ground. At this point the autonomous thinker may make note of the fact that we

all think according to the law of non-contradiction. Strictly speaking, this is only an indication that we are bound to think in certain patterns; this does not tell us anything about the truthfulness or appropriateness of those patterns! Perhaps we are locked into a distorted mind-set.

The autonomous man must be pressed to explain the *necessity* of the

laws of logic. What is the source of this necessity? What constitutes a logical truth and how is it that this truth is necessary? Most characterizations offered for logical truths tend to be circular (assuming that one already knows and can identify logical notions, such as possibility and necessity, logical constant, entailment, etc.) and are thus of little explanatory value. Further, the necessity of logical truths does not seem completely plausible in light of the history of logical development and debate. For instance, the law of excluded middle has been questioned by Epicurean logicians, some medieval scholastics, quantum physics, the intuitionist school of modern logic, as well as systems of many-valued logic; aspects of some metaphysical systems (e.g., Aristotle's potentialities, Hegel's characterization of things by negation) also draw it into question. Disputes and disagreements continue to be found among "ra-

tional men" with respect to the philosophical foundations of logic—for instance, as to what basic kind of entity is mentioned when the logician speaks of the truths of logic (is it psychological-inferential judgment, linguistic-sentential proof, or a combination of both-propositional argument?). The definitions of logic and specifications of its subject matter are varied indeed. It is hard to decide what *kind* of evidence the logician is supposed to have for his claims (e.g., "disjunctive syllogism is a valid form of argument") when the various approaches to logic are speaking of categorically different types of objects, which in turn call for fundamentally distinct modes of cognition. The alleged "science" of logic is actually a field in disarray and confusion at the present time—as many of the leading writers in the area would confess.

Logic is not a philosophically neutral and unproblematic tool. For instance it makes unmistakable demands on one's metaphysic. The laws of logic are abstract, nontemporal relations, and therefore seem to presuppose a non-sensory world—which will prove an uncomfortable assumption for the materialistic unbeliever. Moreover, they assume both metaphysical diversity (there are discrete propositions which bear logical relations with each other) and metaphysical unity (the principles of logic are regular or unchangeable, and are all consistent with each other—comprise a unified system)—a combination which the

unbeliever will find hard to justify and maintain. Furthermore, logic makes unmistakable demands on one's epistemology. How does one justify confidence in truths of logic? If one's justification is *a priori*, then why should we think that repeated instances of logical truths will

be experienced in the contingent world of history, and why do these *a priori* truths create insurmountable paradoxes (e.g., the set of all sets which are not members of themselves). If the justification of logical truths is *a posteriori*, then where does one go to experience an argument form by itself, and why should it be thought that inductively validated argument forms are valid and applicable in situations which we have not yet experienced (e.g., arguments we have not yet encountered)? If logical truths are justified by conventional agreement, then they are arbitrary and not necessary after all. Therefore, the unbeliever's understanding and justification of logic have not been made clear or evident; his autonomous appeal to the laws of logic has not been made intelligible, and this realm of knowledge has not been shown to be certain. His standards can be critically questioned.

Going even deeper we should note that the autonomous man, by rejecting God and thereby His sovereign control over history, has no

assurance of order in the world or that the historical facts will fit a coherent pattern. How can he make any sense of *distinctions* in an utterly lawless and chance universe? Identity and distinction become blurred when all "order" is contingent. No *system* of truth could be possible in a chance universe. Therefore, connections and relations between particular states of affairs or between particular thoughts would be simply impossible. Hence no intelligible use of logic could develop. If fate lies behind all historical eventuation, the structure of the world and our mental functions as well as all occurrences, changes, and continuities would be irrational and never necessarily connected. The autonomous man is at a loss to generate rationality in an irrational world.

On the other hand the autonomous thinker assumes that the laws of being are one with the laws of thought in his mind; reality could not be beyond the logical comprehension of his own mind. Since his mind always operates in terms of the law of non-contradiction it should follow that reality as a whole is rational to the core for the autonomous man. Yet by placing irrationality behind everything (i.e.,

denying that there is a determinate mind and purpose controlling

everything) the autonomous thinker comes into direct contradiction

with himself: he simultaneously affirms the rationality of all reality

(it must be so since his mind must be able to think through the facts)

and its ultimate irrationality (there is no sovereign God according to

whose plan history proceeds).

We might also ask what intelligible materials the autonomous man

has to use his logic upon. Even if the formal principle of non-contradic-

tion were granted, what would he apply it to? According to his own posi-

tion there could be no connection between the individual states of affairs

brought about by irrational history. The particulars would be unrelated

since there is no plan or interpretation preceding them. How could a

fact be understood without a context? If the mind of the autonomous

thinker relates all the facts together and builds up the contextual sys-

tem,thenheisonlyunderstandingwhathehasbeforehanddetermined

tounderstandanyway;theinterpretationofafacthasbeencompletely

readintotheworldbeforetheautonomousmangoestoexploreit.

Theproblemofsubjectivismistheconstantthorninthe autono-

mousman'sepistemologicalflesh.Ifhisinterpretation isprefabricated,

whybothertogototheworldoffactsinsearchoftruth?And ifthefacts

bearnoinherentrelationtoeachotherandthereby cannot beintelligi-

blyinterpreted,howcantheautonomousmanplugthemi ntohissys-

temoflogic?"I-know-not-what"cannotbelogicallyma nipulated.Facts

canbeconnectedonlybymeansofthelawsofinference when thefacts

areintelligible,whichtheyarenotifhistoryisirrationa l.Whatdoes

logicprofitapersonwhorejectsGod?Heiscaughtbetwe ensubjective

solipsism(thefactsarerelatedonlybyhisactivemind)a ndskepticism

(theparticularsareunrelated).Contingencycannotprov

ideasuitable

foundationforthelawsoflogic.Withintheconceptualframeworkof

autonomousthoughtthefortuitousandbaselesslawsofthoughtcannot

haveanygenuineapplicationtothefactsofexperience.

An Unpredictable Universe

Thesecondprinciplevitaltoindependentthinkersistheuniformity

ofnature.Iftheycouldnotbeassuredthatthefuturewillbelikethe

past,thatsubsequenteventswillsustainacausalrelationtoprevious

statesofaffairs,thebasisforanysciencewouldbelost.Evendescriptive

historywouldbeimpossible(e.g.:IsmypresentthoughtabouttheFrench

RevolutionidenticalwithpreviousthoughtsIstherecontinuityinmy

memory?).10Allthediscoveriesofsciencewouldbetotallyirrelevantfor

10. What Dr. Bahnsen here describes sounds like a hypothetical absurdity,

yet there are schools of thought, not only in philosophy but notably currently in

the future, and knowledge in any significant sense would be dissolved. Now how can the self-styled independent thinker justify his assumption of uniformity? Initially he would appeal to past uniformity; yet this fails to answer the question. W h a t right have we to read the past into the future? T h e n the autonomous thinker might observe that we all assume this uniformity and even his critic relies on such a crucial axiom; however, this observation simply fails to justify the autonomous man's axiom and only reiterates his uncritical dependence on it. Moreover, the *critic* may have good reason to assume uniformity, but this does not bolster the legitimacy of the autonomous man's appeal to it. T h e universal uniformity of nature cannot be verified from the *experience* of the independent thinker in any final sense since that principle exceeds the bounds of his experience. A n d the principle of uniformity is not an *a priori* necessary truth (to deny uniformity is not self-contradictory).

So the most fundamental premise of all autonomous science, the uniformity of nature, is neither empirically nor rationally justifiable! Years ago David H u m e demonstrated that the scientist proceeds on a scientifically unfounded, yet critically essential, belief in the uniformity of nature. T h e r e is no reason beyond *psychological habit* for the naturalistic scientist to expect the future to resemble the past. Since history has no plan and coherence behind it and moves according to the whimsical

force of an irrational fate (according to the autonomous man's implicit outlook), we should *not expect* nature to be anything but totally discontinuous at any future time. By assuming that there is no G o d in control of history the naturalistic scientist cannot *assume* a regulated universe. At this j u n c t u r e the autonomous m a n may attempt to defend uniformity by trying to build a causal bridge between past a n d future events. But what grounds could he have for believing that a causal principle operates in reality? If history has no coherence in itself, then economics, which argue that each individual quantum of time represents a distinct break from the moment before it, thus denying continuity at the most radical level. Thus economic (or scientific) prediction is an illusion. Paralleling the work of G. L. S. Shackle, Ludwig Lachmann has popularized this theory of "kaleidic society" beginning in 1974 with his lectures at the South Royalton Conference. These are found in Edwin G. Dolan, ed., *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1976), as well as in numerous books. All this is to say that what Dr. Bahnsen describes is highly relevant and important for both epistemology and life.

no particular can be related to any other particular in any way what-

soever, much less causally. As the naturalist looks at the world he may note succession of events, but he does not observe any *necessary connections',* cause and effect are arbitrary categories he forces upon the facts. Even if we arbitrarily grant the assumption that the brute facts are causally related, the autonomous man would require omniscience if he were to be sure that an occurrence is actually caused by what *appears* to be causing it and not something apparently unrelated. The appeal to causality is not only rootless, it is also unhelpful.

The scientist evidently believes that there is a world of things and processes which can be known, and that he sustains a relationship to this world that allows him to know these objects and events. The question then arises, what good impartial reasons can the scientist adduce for his belief that the state of affairs is actually conducive to science? Why are things not otherwise? At this point the scientist who has depended on the self-sufficiency of his logico-empirical testing procedures is in a predicament. The scientific methodology is not capable of verifying hypotheses about the state of affairs necessary for science and is impotent to generate explanations for that state of affairs altogether. So the scientist's response is usually to the effect that "it is necessary to assume the world's amenability to scientific endeavor as a working hypothesis; there is no particular reason for it, *it just is."* But this fails to be good science.

It is useful to think that the world can be scientifically examined, but why is it the case that the world is such as it is? If it is for no particular reason, as the scientist is wont to suggest, then the case might just as well be completely otherwise again, for no particular reason! If the world is amenable to science *just because it is* (perhaps by chance?) then it could as *well just not* be the case that the world is conductive to science (again by chance) and the scientist is deceived.

In other words, the consistent naturalistic scientist entertains an irrational belief so that his "rational" endeavor can get started. In this prescientific realm of metaphysics and epistemology we must depend on either speculation or revelation, and only an authoritative revelation can deliver us from the subjective relativism of human opinion and unimportant logical tautologies. Yet the rejection of revelational epistemology constitutes the core of autonomous thinking. If science proceeds autonomously, then the only thing that can be discovered in the world is man's own interpretative and ordering activity; nature

merely echoes back the thoughts of the autonomous man. Hence he ends up accepting his own revelation, based on his own authority. Despite the facade of proceeding without any *a priori* synthetic

commitments, the activity of science is not carried on impartially, nor can it ever be. It is always founded on a substructure of metaphysical belief to which it is committed. If it did not, its work would be futile. The conclusions a scientist arrives at will always be within the bounds of and actually directed by the metaphysical moorings sustained by the particular scientific community within which he works. Even the non-Christian philosopher of science and physicist, Thomas Kuhn,11 recognizes the completely non-objective character of science when it comes to foundational questions. Kuhn speaks of paradigms as models by means of which the scientist views the world. The paradigm (accepted pattern or picture) defines the very science using it, its proper problems, and the legitimate area in which answers can be found. Consequently, when the paradigm changes, the world itself (understood by the scientist) changes with it. Even the sense data and their interpretation are altered by a modification in the gestalt-like paradigm. So, "facts" are only facts *for a system* (i.e., a particular paradigm). The Occidental naturalist disagrees with the Eastern mystic as to what the "facts" are precisely because their metaphysical underpinnings are different.

The Autonomous Self-Trap

Now what metaphysical presupposition can account for factual-

ity itself, what assumption can make the scientific enterprise a meaningful endeavor? Certainly not agnostic solipsism; yet how can the autonomous scientist consider that position any less relevant or true than what he now proceeds upon? What guidelines does he have to discredit agnostic solipsism? What source of information refutes this equally viable position? The autonomous man cannot appeal to any revelational authority to deliver him from his dilemma. He is locked into skepticism or an arbitrary legislation for what reality "has to be." But it is this sort of thing that the independent thinker has prohibited from the outset!

11. Mentioned earlier; see page 89 above.

Looking back, we have seen that the autonomous man must claim knowledge while failing to know what "knowledge" is, must constantly appeal to his personal authority while rejecting all appeals to authority, must generate knowledge in an ultimately unknowable universe, must seek and find truth while legislating what the truth has to be, cannot justify his own dependence on the principles of non-contradiction and natural uniformity, must believe in a rational yet irrational world, must relate unrelatable facts, must be ultimately skeptical and omniscient at

the same time. By rejecting revelational authority the self-styled autonomous man has no order in nature to expect and is stranded between his personal laws of reason and the pure irrationality of historical potentiality. He cannot escape the necessary patterns of his own reasoning but must maintain that historical eventuation is beyond reason (the world of actuality is an accident).

The intellectual dead-end of autonomous thinking is more than obvious when we stop to take note of the dialectical conclusions resulting from it. By clutching after God's epistemological prerogatives the allegedly autonomous thinker ascribes to himself the right to assign interpretation to the flow of experience, the flux of reality. All facts are taken as random and uninterpreted until rationalized, organized, related, and explained by the autonomous thinker. Man is thought to give the world whatever meaning it is to have. The world shall declare no glory and handiwork save that of the "rational man." Whatever gods there may be must be enveloped in the same conditions as hold for the autonomous man. Everything reduces to a fortuitous compilation of time, matter, and chance. The mind of the autonomous thinker is taken as ultimate in epistemological matters. A clear revelation of God in every fact, and the need to assume the exhaustive knowledge and control of God in every reasoning endeavor are both denied. The world is then interpreted in

terms, not of God's Word, but the speculations of the autonomous man.

What results is absurdity and despair.

Knowing himself not to be omniscient and therefore impotent to

provide a complete rational system of interpretation for the world, the

self-proclaimed autonomous man ultimately posits a set of mutually ex-

clusive limiting concepts12 in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology,

12. Bahnsen uses the Kantian phrase "limiting concepts" to mean

ideas which balance, check, or expose the practical extents of human

and ethics. His scientific efforts require nature to be viewed as uniform

and the cosmic process to be inevitably predictable (given enough data);

hence he is a metaphysical *determinist.* Even man's behavior must be a

predictable part of the cosmic machinery. If his own mind is to be the

ultimate interpreter of reality, the final epistemic authority, then the au-

tonomous man must be a *rationalist.* And since he cannot escape feeling

that some kinds of behavior are disturbing, wrong and ought not to be

done, he is an ethical *absolutist*; without ethical norms communal stabil-

ity would be impossible.

However, this same autonomous man has a driving need for per-

sonal dignity and freedom, so he cannot view the world as uniformly

and completely determined after all. There must be metaphysical *inde-*

terminism, thus guaranteeing the freedom of his own volitions. It follows

that the world is not susceptible to exhaustive interpretation; mystery

surrounds everything. Soman's mind cannot be absolute; it is finite and

subject to error. It is swallowed up by the unknown, the anomalous,

the radically new, the unforeseeable future, the movement of fate. Epis-

temological *irrationalism* must be admitted and welcomed. Since he is

the "freeman," the autonomous thinker cannot be bound by authorita-

tively imposed moral strictures. Each man must spontaneously choose

the "good" for himself, and such choice differs from man to man (based

onhisownconscience,needs,training,environment, etc.). Theautono-

mousmanhastheprerogativetochooseadifferent"good ,"adifferent

moralaxiomfromthatofothers;heisamoral*relativist.*

Sothen,wemustrecognizetheinnercontradiction,thed ialectical

tension,thatistheinevitableresultofautonomousthin king:determin-

ism/indeterminism,rationalism/irrationalism,absol utism/relativism.

Byrefusingto"thinkGod'sthoughtsafterHim"onthecr eaturely level,

knowledge.Inthecontextoftheunbeliever'sthought,suc hconcepts

prove"mutuallyexclusive"andendin"innercontradict ion,"asBahnsen

argues,becausetheunbelieverhasnowaytoreconcile the resultant

ideaswithinhisownworldview.InaChristiancontext,"l imitingcon-

cepts"alsohaveasupplementivecharactertoother aspect sofrevelation,

maintainingvitaltensionbutnotcontradictionwithinhum anknowledge

andundertherealmofthe incomprehensible but coherentT rinitarian

G o d ' s p r o v i d e n c e . S e e the h e l p f u l d i s c u s s i o n i n J o h n F r a m e , *Cornelius*

Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought (P h i l l i p s b u r g , NJ: P r e s b y t e r i a n a n d

R e f o r m e d , 1 9 9 5) , 1 2 2 n . 2 8 , 1 6 5 - 1 6 9 .

by making himself (rather than the Creator) the ultimate interpreter and arbitrator of truth, by not acknowledging himself and the world around him to be created, dependent, and revelatory of God, the autonomous man must end up pitting nature against freedom, science against personal dignity. In the end, these contrary demands that his autonomous thinking imposes will leave his intellectual endeavors embarrassingly divided or despairingly shattered. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain which build it."13 Only upon the solid rock of Christ's authoritative Word can one build a life and intellectual endeavor that can stand strong.

6 . INTELLECTUAL S C H I Z O P H R E N I A

Based on the previous articles a person may wonder whether the believer and skeptic could even argue with each other. After all, neutrality is impossible and two different authorities would be appealed to in such a debate over ultimate issues. Because the Christian and non-Christian

have, in principle, nothing epistemologically or ethically in common, they do not agree upon the ultimate interpretation of any fact. For the Christian every fact is created, pre-interpreted, and divinely revelatory; the unbeliever holds just the opposite. Even their respective methodologies are divergent: one begins with the Creator and approaches the world thinking God's thoughts after Him, while the other attempts to interpret experience by imposing abstract, formal, unifying principles on concrete, contingent, diverse facts. For the non-Christian the laws of logic are self-sufficient and ultimate, but the Christian sees them as dependent upon the mind of God. The skeptic and believer disagree, at base, over the very philosophy of factuality and logic—not just this or that fact. What is involved is two world-and-life views; hence *in principle* there is complete antithesis. So what use is there in reasoning together? If epistemological method cannot be established without metaphysical considerations and the argument is precisely over *metaphysics*, how could an argument get off the ground?

13. Ps. 127:1.

The Unbeliever's Unconscious Agreement

The answer here is that the non-Christian is not consistent with his

professed autonomy from God (indeed, *could* not be) and therefore argument *is* possible. If both disputants were completely consistent and adamant in their professed beliefs, then indeed they could do nothing but stand in separate towers and mutually disagree. However, the non-Christian is something of an intellectual schizophrenic: he professes to believe one thing, but in his "heart of hearts" believes something else. Being created as God's image and being surrounded by a world and history that clearly reveal God, the unbeliever cannot avoid depending upon God and His revelation in order to reason at all. Two kinds of belief work side by side in the non-Christian: that which is outwardly professed (and that which he attempts to live by), and that which he genuinely believes but refuses to acknowledge. An earlier article explained how a person can genuinely know something and yet deny knowing it; this is the case for the "unbeliever." He lives in a constant tension between what he is (and cannot avoid knowing) and what he tries to be (and makes claim to know).

Because the non-Christian is not consistent with his claims to autonomy (thanks to God's restraining common grace), because he *is* a creature made in God's image, and because he does not live in a vacuum but an atmosphere that surrounds him with a clear revelation of God, the Christian is *able* to reason with him. The believer appeals to,

and is understood based upon, the image of God and suppressed beliefs in the non-Christian. The Christian and non-Christian do have certain ultimate beliefs in common; both are made in God's image and have the metaphysical situation in common, living in the same world created by God. It is this commonality which makes apologetics worthwhile, while it is the disparity between their kinds of belief (acknowledged, unacknowledged) that makes apologetics necessary.

It is on the conscious level of interpretation that the disagreement between believer and skeptic becomes apparent. The non-Christian has ethically responded to his knowledge of God and God's world in an improper and rebellious manner. Hence he thinks that his knowledge of the world came independent of any reliance on a divine revelation. He proceeds to reason and interpret independently of God, not realizing that the formal activity of scientific investigation and use of logic take

place only in terms of his suppressed knowledge of God. The unbeliever could not reason at all unless he schizophrenically believed other than his outward profession of autonomy would indicate. Since he constantly makes use of his suppressed knowledge of God, the non-Christian can understand the arguments of the Christian apologist since they enun-

ciate, elaborate, and presuppose those beliefs. Being epistemologically schizophrenic, the unbeliever can gain knowledge *in spite of* his outwardly espoused position and he can apprehend the Christian polemic.

The Christian apologist must realize that the non-Christian self-deceivingly knows that the metaphysical situation and his own person are exactly as Scripture describes. Yet the non-Christian will attempt to argue on terms not consistent with what he knows to be true. He will play at autonomy and expect the Christian to do so also. The Christian must then point out that the non-Christian could not reason at all in terms of his propounded beliefs. The Christian knows that only one metaphysic is suitable for rational-scientific epistemology and that the non-Christian has no foundation for any argumentation unless he admits to his suppressed belief in God. Hence the Christian apologist confronts two kinds of belief in the non-Christian; he argues *against* the professed beliefs by showing them impossible, and he *appeals to* the suppressed beliefs. The Christian cannot appeal to commonly interpreted facts on the conscious level and use a neutral methodology to move the non-Christian over to the Christian position, for the Christian and non-Christian do not have conscious interpretations in common since the unbeliever views everything as independent of God. A neutral methodology, more-

over, has already been shown to be impossible; the Christian must either reason as a believer or must disobediently behave and think as an unbeliever. The unbeliever must be urged to become a self-conscious believer or else be forced to see the farce of his epistemological position; the non-Christian must be *challenged* to give an *account* of anything he knows of his espoused autonomous outlook.

There will be no conscious agreement on ultimate points between Christian and non-Christian. So, there can be no agreed-to "neutral" approach to the dispute, no agreement on "possibility" or "probability," no agreement on the proper use and foundation for induction and logic, etc. Hence it is futile for the Christian apologist to begin in the neutral area of nature and work up to the believing area of grace. The

realm of thought is not to be studied under two aspects, the natural and supernatural. Since God is Creator and Controller over all, no area of life can be understood apart from His revelation. Man is no more "on his own" when it comes to science than he is when it comes to religion. The sovereign God of redemption is Creator and Sustainer of the existent material world as well. Hence a religious orientation must, and does, precede *work* in any field of human endeavor. Any fact

that is known must be known for what it truly is: created by God and functioning within His plan. The realm of the earthly, material, or scientific cannot be set over against the heavenly, spiritual, supernatural sphere of special revelation in some dualistic fashion.

Attacking the Unbeliever's Inconsistency

So when the Christian apologist approaches the unbeliever it must be "all or nothing" as far as what the non-Christian can properly understand on his own basis. If the world were self-explanatory and could be interpreted in terms of principles inherent in the world, then a non-Christian would gladly wield the law of parsimony and point out that Christians multiply entities (for instance, God) beyond need and justification. But the fact of the matter is that nothing could be understood on the basis of autonomous principles. Therefore, the Christian must use a dogmatic (not neutral) apologetic, incisively challenging the non-Christian on every point of knowledge and interpretation. God either rules as sovereign in interpretation over *all* areas or none. Our message must be that Christianity alone has the true and only adequate interpretation of nature and history *as well as* the God-situation.

Summing up, the Christian should reason with the non-Christian because the unbeliever is not autonomous as he professes to be. He is not able to account for any knowledge that God has permitted him to

gain. Being epistemologically schizophrenic, the unbeliever knows that the God of the Bible exists but refuses to admit it. This inconsistency renders him susceptible to the Christian polemic at all times. In this polemic the Christian should challenge the unbeliever on the entire field of knowledge rather than trying to establish pseudo-agreements in the interpretation of some facts that hopefully can lead up, by neutral methodology, to full Christian faith. The common ground between believer and skeptic is metaphysical.

The Christian summons the unbeliever to epistemological consistency by challenging his theoretical autonomy and appealing to the image of God in which he exists. The Christian does not feel that there are j two systems of truth just because the believer and skeptic have different professed presuppositions. If there were two separate systems of truth, we would be led either (1) not to reason at all, or (2) to present something less than Christianity and accommodate the presuppositions of the non-Christian. The first fails to see that the non-Christian can have knowledge based only on Christian premises and that the non-Christian's problem is that he ethically refuses to face up to this fact. The second fails to see that there would be no way to bridge the gap between the

mutually exclusive systems, and there would be no possibility of conversion without an irrational leap.

Although the believer and skeptic have different professed presuppositions, the non-Christian cannot live up to his but must ultimately fall back upon those of the Christian. Because God is one, truth is one—even when those who possess the same truth have differences in outwardly espoused presuppositions. Thus it is the Christian's duty to present the whole truth and nothing but the truth to the unbeliever.

His argument must not compromise the truth or assume that the non-Christian can in any way escape it. Thus the Christian does an internal critique of the non-Christian's system and brings to bear every evidence of Scripture's truth. Realizing the necessity of regeneration and illumination by the Holy Spirit, the believer will refrain from compromises and all attempts to maneuver the unbeliever into the faith without the need to relinquish his autonomy.

When the case has been boldly made that the unbeliever must repent and admit to his suppressed knowledge of God if he is to have theoretical grounding for any knowledge whatsoever, then the Holy Spirit either opens his eyes at present or will do so at a coming day. In this present life God's common grace restrains the apostate from utter intellectual self-destruction. While not positing neutral ground between the Christian

and non-Christian interpretative systems, common grace nevertheless prevents the non-Christian from being consistent with his futile boast of autonomy. But in that coming day the unbeliever will cease to be schizophrenic and will fully become what he continually *strived* to be, but as yet could not be—completely independent of God. This will be hell.

7. LANGUAGE AND LOGIC

Cornelius Van Til had noted the significance of certain features of language usage and informal logic for argumentation and apologetics even before these areas of discussion became widely popular in academic circles. For instance, in speaking of the traditional type of apologetic that compromised with the non-Christian philosophic outlook or method in order to win the unbeliever over to Christ, Van Til said,

> The basic falseness of this apologetics appears in the virtual if not actual denial of the fact that the natural man makes false assumptions.... Anyone who says "I believe in God," is formally correct in his statement, but the question is what does he mean by the word *God?* The traditional view assumes that the natural man has a certain measure of correct thought content when he uses the

word God. In reality the natural man's "God" is always a finite God. It is his most effective tool for suppressing the **sense** of ***the*** **true** G o d **that he** ***cannot fully efface from*** **the** fibres of his heart.... [The traditional apologist] must tie on to some small area of thought content that the believer and the unbeliever have in common without qualification when both are self-conscious with respect to their principle. This is tantamount to saying that those who interpret a fact as dependent upon God and those who interpret the same fact as not dependent upon God have yet said something identical about that fact.14

When the Christian believer speaks with the unregenerate skeptic there are certain things about the use of language and logic that he should be aware of if his apologetic is not to be muddled. Different people use words and language in different ways. They can often have different intentions and be performing different tasks with what appears to be similar language. Thus it is important to know just how the non-Christian is using his theological language if we are going to be working toward genuine repentance on his part. When the former skeptic begins to *con-*

14. C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed,

1955), 262.

117

fess Christ, *declare* His praise, *witness* to the propositions of Scripture, and *speak* of God in a favorable light, it is imperative that the apologist ascertain whether or not this is a Christian use of language. That is, what lies behind these utterances, what motivates and controls them, how do they affect the speaker, what jobs are being performed by them, how does the speaker ring the logical changes on them, etc?

Indeed it is also important for the Christian to understand the skeptic's theological language *before* alleged conversion as well—or else their argument could be sheer confusion with a deceptive appearance of meaningfulness. That is, it is not sufficient for the apologist to get the unbeliever to say, "Yes, God raised Jesus from the dead," and neglect to correct the unbeliever's notions and language-usage about "God." Should the unbeliever mean "karma" or "fate" when he speaks of "God," then the above confession will in no way save him! Thus the apologetical argument must cover the entire field of knowledge, including use of language, and not work merely at isolated and particular facts. Nothing is gained in an apologetical argument if the opponents mean different things, perform different tasks, and understand different ap-

plications of their superficially similar utterances.

Language and Ethics

The uniqueness of man over the animals is tied up with the fact that God spoke to man in the garden and man could answer. Also, the task that God laid upon the original man was to be accomplished by means of man's linguistic abilities. Man heard the spoken command of God and proceeded to subdue the earth by naming the animals. Dominance over the earth is exercised by means of language (the vehicle of learning, recording, studying, etc.). Man's righteous character did, and still must today, consist in obedience to the law of God verbally revealed in Scripture. Man's social nature is characterized and dependent upon lingual communication. Man's freedom resides in an ability to surpass the here and now by means of lingual symbols, calculated planning, remembering, reading, writing. Even the religious nature of man is intimately connected with the linguistic abilities to pray and praise.

Thus the way a man uses language reflects what he is, his heart attitudes, his relation to God. Man's fall into sin centered on language—the verbal temptation, the lies, the rebellion against the Word of God.

Resulting from the fall man is born speaking lies, he has a poisonous

tongue, he blasphemes with his mouth; Scripture says that this evil tongue controls his whole behavior as a sinner. Indeed, for the most part, man's heart and lip are consistent with each other. Consequently, the one bearing the marred image of God and the one renewed after the image of God's Son will be using their language differently.

When the believer argues with the unbeliever he should take this difference into account. The only reason there is not absolute antithesis in their use of language (and hence, hopeless confusion) is because of God's common grace. Since the unbeliever is not completely epistemo-logically self-conscious, he can still hear and understand the word of the gospel. Yet in principle their respective outlooks and language would be absolutely divergent. This means that the believer should not try to gain a starting point for his argument in merely the unbeliever's utter-ances or his (apparently agreeable) expressions. From the unregenerate viewpoint these are not *used* in such a way that he can move consistently (without conceptual, logical snags) into a Christian profession of faith. Because the unregenerate does not mean what the Christian means by certain assertions (i.e., they react differently to them, infer differently from them, etc.), the believing apologist should refrain from arguing on the basis of what the skeptic will outwardly and formally grant to him.

In addition to this there is a real sense in which a man's language de-

termines the scope and contours of his world. This explains why a non-Christian can often be baffled by Christian language. To the unregenerate's way of speaking Christian theology is beyond him and therefore labeled as confused or meaningless. The Christian has a new disposition that is willing to purify his language in accordance with God's Word, to speak the truth as God reveals it, to glorify God with his language. The unregenerate does not have this ethical power. By means of regeneration and sanctification the believer uses his language properly and hence gains the ability to see more of the truth and with more clarity; he can understand situations and see the relevance of God's Word beyond the blinded unbeliever's ability to do so. When the two argue with each other, then, the unbeliever will linguistically rebel against the witness from God's Word by refusing to admit the relevance of interpretation or even the truth of the facts, by disqualifying Christian language as meaningless because of a procrustean view of language, or by refusing to engage himself in the "Christian language game." The Christian must understand why this is and adjust his apologetical stance accordingly.

Language and Logical Meaning

By in large the explanation is found in the different types of

informal logic the believer and unbeliever use. Even when common and agreed upon terms are used (i.e., what is vocally expressed) different assertions, inferences, conceptual moves, and conclusions result. This stems from divergent outlooks or "worldviews" or paradigms; the believer and unbeliever ring different logical changes on their expression because they have different concepts of the world, man, etc. The Christian "way of seeing" certain facts makes corresponding conclusions inevitable, while the unregenerate "way of seeing" finds these conclusions unfounded or irrelevant. A man's paradigm or model will determine what kinds of data, warrants, and backing are appropriate in various situations. This paradigm will also determine what constitutes a fact, proper method, and the range of possible and allowable conclusions. When the believer speaks of God, man, the world, sin, salvation, etc., he has directions from God as to how he should think and behave as a result of certain assertions. Failing to submit to the direction of God's Word, the unregenerate will not react or think the same way as the Christian. A different informal logic governs what the unbeliever will think and do; he has different standards, desires, and behavior patterns from those of the Christian. Both the Christian and the non-Christian will be on the lookout for fallacies in the other

person's argument; yet what is seen as an equivocation, a complex question, an improper appeal to emotion or authority, false cause, irrelevancy, etc., will differ according to one's standpoint. The variant presuppositions with which the believer and skeptic approach their debate will govern what shall be taken as legitimate evidence, valid warrants, and convincing backing.

Thus with the variety of "language games" and informal logics available to man, and with the present day criticism of a watertight compartmentalizing of analytic and synthetic judgments, the apologist should be taking account of the fact that "meaning" is more than words. The meaning of the non-Christian argument and the meaning of the Christian's witness goes beyond the outwardly vocalized

sentences utilized. We must understand people, social customs, ways of thinking, value systems, hierarchical systems of basic beliefs, practical usage of language, etc., if we are going to understand the meaning of a man's words. Variant definitions, differing applications, and divergent contexts for a man's language will control the meaning of his arguments. And it should be noted that it is not self-contradictory to reject one use of language or one informal logic over another. Dif-

ferent uses of language and different logics stem from different forms or styles of life. A man's ethical condition, his training and attitudes, his persistent behavior will dictate his way of speaking and reasoning. That is, life style and basic commitment govern one's language and logic.

Consequently, when one becomes a Christian he takes on a new understanding and correspondingly new definitions and concepts; he refuses to use terms and reason in the way that he had previously. A new life style (effected by the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit) brings with it a new way of seeing life, the world, God, and man; thus there is the ability to confess Christ, agree with Scripture, praise God. This new life with its corresponding insights and abilities is not an advanced stage of the unregenerate form of life (obviously!). One does not arrive at it, therefore, by a step by step logical progression from within the presuppositions and outlook of the unbeliever. There is no way to use non-Christian language and logic to arrive at Christian utterances, conclusions, and behavior.

Consistent Language and Logic

If the unbeliever is going to be approached with an effective apologetic by the Christian, the believer must reason and argue consistently from within his form of life and presuppositions—not those of

the unregenerate. The apologist cannot take a neutral approach to the facts or an impartial approach to God's Word in order to reason the unbeliever into faith from his unregenerate outlook on reality and truth. The Christian must challenge the presuppositions espoused by the unbeliever, basing his argument and witness on the presuppositions of God's Word. The two outlooks, the two life styles with their different language and logic, must meet each other head-on, for the unbeliever will not be able to come to a new worldview by degrees. He

must be confronted across the entire field of knowledge and behavior, challenged at the very roots of his form of life (with its language and logic) by the opposing and correct form of life—rather than reasoned with on the basis of commonly interpreted facts and expressions.

Only a presuppositional apologetic avoids a piecemeal, compromising apologetic that does not take account of the false assumptions, form of life, language, and logic of the unbeliever. A non-presuppositional apologetic mistakenly assumes that common implications attend the similar utterances of believer and skeptic. It fails to see that the unregenerate cannot be logically maneuvered into Christian faith but requires a complete change of paradigm and life style. Such can be effected only

by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. This does not render our apologetic argument arbitrary, unnecessary, or useless, for the Spirit bears witness to the Word of God, giving the ability to understand and believe the Scripture-based apologetic and message of the Christian. Without our apologetic the Holy Spirit's influence would be blind power; without the Holy Spirit our apologetic would be meaningful but impotent. We need the Word and the Spirit, meaning and power, light as well as new sight. Only an apologetic that presupposes the truth of God's Word and depends on the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit can induce an unbeliever to embrace the Christian form of life, use of language, way of reasoning.

Therefore, the apologist must seek to argue with the unbeliever from the firm standpoint of the Christian form of life and obedience to the Word of Christ, not depending upon the unbeliever's use of language or logic as a theoretical starting point for implicating him by degrees into the faith. An apologetic that challenges the skeptic presuppositionally with the truth of God's Word can be used by the Holy Spirit to *convert* the skeptic away from that form of life, use of language, and informal logic that hold him under the wrath of God. Only such an apologetic that refuses to depend upon the allegedly common notions of the unbeliever and his way of reasoning, that is, only a pre-

suppositional apologetic, can avoid having the apologist get trapped behind enemy lines—forced to the skeptic's conclusions because of an initial acceptance of his language and logic.

8 . T H E E T H I C S O F T H E I N T E L L E C T ' S B E H A V I O R

Surveying the previous articles we can discern and summarize those features that are most basic to a presuppositional apologetic. Since all men have certain unproved presuppositions about knowledge and reality, and since these presuppositions differ radically between the Christian and non-Christian, the apologist must be aware of this fact so that he does not mistakenly try to build his defense of the faith upon pseudo-neutral ground, notions that are apparently (but not actually) common, or anti-biblical assumptions provided by the skeptic. The starting point, method, and conclusion of a man's outlook or argument are dependent upon each other, which means that the apologist will have lost the battle with an intelligent unbeliever from the outset if he does not confront him and challenge him at the presuppositional level.

Presupposing an epistemology controlled and informed by God's revelation, the truth of Scripture, and the existence of the triune, sovereign God, the apologist will find the unbeliever presupposing a dia-

lectic between indeterminism (chance) and determinism (regularity), irrationality (nobody knows) and autonomous rationalism ("I can tell you without the aid of revelation"), and presupposing that man must legislate the interpretation that shall attach to any brute fact (rather than understanding the world in subjection to God's self-attesting Word). The espoused or consciously used presuppositions of the non-Christian cannot account for or theoretically ground factuality or knowledge, explain the amenability of unifying logical principles and diversifying factual particulars, or do anything but inevitably destroy reason and human personality and the very possibility of meaningful predication. On the other hand the presuppositions of the Christian (taken from the Word of God) salvage the scientific endeavor, account for the fruitful connection of logic and facts, ground human personality, provide a theoretical basis for knowledge, and guard the meaningfulness of predication and the usefulness of reason.

However, the unbeliever is still the image of God, living on metaphysical common ground with the Christian, and being restrained in his rebellion against God's clear, necessary, sufficient, and authoritative revelation in nature and Scripture by common grace.

Hence he can attain to formal knowledge *in spite of his* espoused presuppositions. In this day of God's patience before the Final Judg-

ment (when all rebels shall be made completely independent of God, as they had striven to be), the Christian apologist appeals to the unbeliever as God's image (contrary to what he says about himself) and to the metaphysical and revelational ground which they share (contrary to what the skeptic says about the world), and the Christian bases his propagation and defense of the faith on the self-attesting truth of God's verbal revelation. In this process the presuppositional apologist makes an internal critique of the non-Christian's espoused presuppositions, showing that they destroy the very possibility of knowledge or "proof." He maintains that only Christianity is a reasonable position to hold and that unless its truth is presupposed there is no foundation for an argument that can prove anything whatsoever. Thus it is irrational to hold to anything but the truth of Scripture. The truth of Christianity is proved from the impossibility of the contrary.

Not only does the presuppositionalist besiege the presuppositions of his opponent's position, he also presents the inescapably clear evidence for the gospel, depending upon the Holy Spirit to open the sinner's blinded eyes, soften his hardened heart, and enlighten his darkened understanding. Outside of God's regenerating grace, the sinner will still flee the face

of his Creator as he confronts it in the self-attesting Word of Christ. With the understanding, and in the power of God's Spirit, the presuppositionalist presents his defense of the faith with all the clarity he can, knowing his hearer has suppressed a clear knowledge of God and has been "secretly" drawing upon Christian presuppositions in his epistemological and moral experience and thereby can intellectually understand the matters at hand. In this way the presuppositionalist calls the sinner back to a *remembrance* of his God, preaching his need for repentance (moral and intellectual), saving faith (rather than suppressed belief), and obedience to the inscripturated good news of Christ Jesus, the Lord.

The foregoing articles have been given to demonstrating this presuppositional position from epistemological considerations. We have noted the unavoidable interdependence of metaphysics and epistemology (or method), the fact that all argumentation appeals to an ultimate (and unproved) authority, and the impossibility of neutrality. We have discussed the possibility of a man being ignorant of items of which he really has knowledge (but will not acknowledge). We have contrasted the necessity of revelational epistemology with the hopelessness of autonomous epistemology. It has been observed that the unbeliever's intellectual schizophrenia makes a presup-

positional approach to him legitimate, just as the possibility of a meaningful argument makes a presuppositional approach necessary. Moreover, an analysis of language usage and informal logics shows presuppositional apologetics to be the only workable and promising approach to the non-Christian. As has been stated, these articles dealt mainly with epistemological matters in order to present a case for presuppositionalism.

9. ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES OF REASONING

An *ethical* consideration, however, gives us a further reason why a Christian ought to use a presuppositional apologetic rather than attempting an uncommitted methodology that uses alleged commonly interpreted "facts" in order to build up a "proof' that any self-respecting, "rational man" can recognize as "very probably" pointing to the possibility of Christianity's reasonableness (if not its truth).

In Scripture, God requires Christian believers to subject *every* thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is not done if the apologist attempts to use to use unbiased premises and non-committed logic to persuade his opponent. Such an argument would be set forth as "neutral" in hopes that from an agreed-upon interpretation of something an unbeliever can be rationally maneuvered into obeying Christ by submitting his *every* thought to Scripture! Apparently, then, the Christian apologist would violate the imperative in order to have others observe

it! This is obviously unacceptable. If every thought is to be subjected to Christ's authority, then we must not attempt to set forth thoughts that are free from that authority or not committed to the truth of Scripture. Neutrality and dedication to Christ are incompatible, even in the field of apologetical argument.

Secondly, by attempting to reason with the non-Christian by means of commonly interpreted "facts" and "logic" that are divorced from Christian commitment the apologist would be bowing to the unbeliever's sinful demands on God. Who has the right to demand proof of God? Can the clay bring the potter into judgment? The non-Christian continually asserts his arrogant independence and personal authority by requiring any gods that be to verify themselves to him by adducing evidence and argumentation that he will certify as admissible. Yet the unregenerate rebel is in no position to exact justification from God. The Christian apologist must not give in to the unbeliever's sinful arrogance by attempting to

reason with him impartially and by giving him what he demands in the way of self-certified proof built up from unbiased premises, interpretation, and method. A presuppositional apologetic makes argumentation possible without accepting the apostate's demands upon God (who, in reality, is the

One that makes an absolute demand upon the rebel).

Third, to reason with the non-Christian in a fashion purporting to be independent of God or independent of reliance upon revelation is to honor the unregenerate's notions of "evidence" and "verification" as legitimate and correct. However, for the Christian it is Scripture that governs *every* area of his life, even his concept of "evidence" and the way he reasons; with skeptics. The Christian must live by every word that comes from the mouth of God, thereby letting God style his standards of verification—just as God styles the proper pattern for his personal behavior. To bow to unbelieving standards would be to renounce those directed by God. Hence the Christian cannot let the non-Christian dictate the terms on argumentation. The Christian accepts as "verification" and "admissible evidence" what God's Word, not the sinner, tells him. He always works according to the presupposed truth of God's Word; this excludes his working from any other foundation, even if it is for the sake and short time of convincing the unbeliever. For the Christian nothing *can* qualify as evidence that goes contrary to the faith. (When something appears to contradict Scripture, further examination and corrected understanding are called for.) Yet according to the self-authoritative unregenerate man, everything can and probably does dictate against Christianity.

Further, to reason neutrally with an unbeliever is to endorse his idea

of possibility. To begin without a commitment to a position and examine "facts" as evidence that can go either way is to admit that God *possibly* exists. However, for the Christian his scriptural presuppositions determine what shall be taken as "possible." It is *not* possible, on this basis, that God should not exist. The true Christian cannot conceive of God's nonexistence, absence, or death. Indeed his own self-consciousness is coordinate with God-consciousness. Hence the Christian must not even "pretend" to reason with an unbeliever as though the Christian God might not exist. It would be immoral for the genuine believer to say to the skeptic, "Maybe God exists, and perhaps not; let's look and see. The apologist ought not reason as though the conclusion "God exists *might* warrant acceptance if evidence can be found supporting it. Since Scripture speaks of God's unmistakable existence as absolutely certain

land known to all men, it would be a departure from truth to suppose His probable existence or to work toward proving Him to exist as such. Scripture does not present, nor do we worship, nor should we present in our apologetic, a probable god or a Scripture that is probably true, but rather the living and true, triune God of certain existence and cosmic authority. A neutral apologetic would make possibility more ulti-

mate than God, allowing the assumed possibility of His non-existence. A presuppositional apologetic will not conceive of God's existence as epistemologically contingent as the skeptic demands. If the believer did not look upon God's existence as in some sense necessary, then God's *demand* upon his thinking and living would not be *absolute* (unqualified and beyond question). Since this consequent is false, the antecedent must be denied. God's existence is necessary.

If the Christian were to start with some commonly interpreted "facts" and use a neutral, abstract "logic" to "prove" the probable truth of Christianity, he would demonstrate that he considers these facts and the validity of his logic as more certain and trustworthy than the God whose Word he attempts to establish. What depends on man and his reason or testimony in order to be acknowledged is less than man in authority and epistemic certainty, and thereby, in existential necessity and surety. If God relies on the facts of the universe and the reasoning mind of man in order to have His existence or the truth of His Word conceded, then He is less than the universe and inferior to the mind of man in epistemic certitude. When an apologist attempts to be autonomous in his reasoned argumentation he indicates that he considers God to be less certain than his own existence and that he places greater credence in his independent reasoning than in God's revealed Word. Clearly, any

such god or revelation proven by this method fails to match up to the God and revelation described in the Bible. According to it everything in creation is contingent upon God's existence and is what it is as it functions within God's sovereign plan. The creature is *less than* the Creator in epistemic certainty, authority, and existential surety. The apologist should argue accordingly by using a presuppositional method.

If the neutralist in apologetics responds that he is not claiming that God's existence is dependent on man but that man's *knowledge* of God and the truth of His Word rests upon reason and evidence collected in the universe, he is forgetting that metaphysics must be correlative to epistemology and is implying that the investigating activity of man's mind is more

dependable than the Word of God. It would appear that God's revelation would not be necessary for the expert scientist and logician who could theoretically arrive at the same truths if given enough data and time. If the truths of Scripture are to be autonomously proved, they might just as well have been worked out independently of revelation—thus Scripture is simply a short cut for the less intelligent, common people. Or if this is not the implication, then perhaps it is that God's uncertain Word can be bolstered in its credibility by man's intellectual activities. Since neither of

these implications is acceptable to the Christian, a non-presuppositional apologetic should be unacceptable as well.

Theological Implications

According to Scripture everything in God's creation is dependent upon and subject to its Creator. Hence it is a denial of the Scripture to hold that man's knowledge, reasoning, science, or apologetical argumentation can function independently of God and His Word. The neutralist in apologetics who claims that, given initial faith, God's existence or Word could be impartially proven (going back and reconstructing a reasoned path into the faith), fails to grasp the real character of faith as resting for its truth and sufficiency on God Himself only and produced by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. He further fails to see that impartial reasoning proceeds in an *agnostic* manner (i.e., as dressed up atheism). Agnosticism, and reasoning which proceeds from an agnostic theoretical foundation, are in direct antithesis to the Christian view of God as self-revealing in man and nature. According to Scripture man *cannot* escape *knowing* God or recognizing the revelation of God inherent in himself and nature around him. Man, according to the Bible, is constantly confronting God's revelation and continually responding to his knowledge of God in obedient faith or sinful rebellion. An "agnostic apologetic" denies this in practice if not word.

A god or revelation capable of proof or rational verification by an *autonomous* man would be worthless. Such a being or book would always be acceptable to the non-Christian, only if they did not challenge his autonomous authority or "rational" interpretation of the world and life. A neutral apologetic, even one that attempts autonomous argumentation on the most trivial and short-range point of the Christian faith, ultimately works at proving such a god. That Christianity is true means

that there is evidence for it, but to approach this evidence unfaithfully (i.e., agnostically or impartially) is to distort and deny it. Because the believer and unbeliever do not stand on epistemological common ground (e.g., they disagree as to the nature, possibility, and actual location of relevant evidence) they cannot together approach evidence impartially and autonomously. To attempt a proof by neutral logic and impartially interpreted facts would be to work at *disproving* the God of Scripture (in terms of whom depends the validity of reason and factuality in the first place). We *cannot* be neutral with respect to God's Word, and we *ought not* to reason as if we were uncommitted to His truthful Word. According to agnostic argumentation or a neutral apologetic God would be allowed into the universe of recognition only by making Him less than God.

Obedience in Apologetics

A neutral apologetic, as opposed to presuppositional argument, moves in a wrong direction: from the totally unsure, relative, and contingent to the perfectly sure, undeniable, and absolute. If the non-Christian's autonomy is to be challenged, the apologist must show him that he cannot interpret any area of experience on his autonomous terms without thereby making it unintelligible. To argue with him otherwise is to grant him more than he honestly deserves. If the non-Christian has no place to stand, the Christian cannot help him along in his unbelief by allowing him an illegitimate and illusory foundation. To do so would not be honest and straightforward in our dealings. The apologist must not grant the unbeliever what he cannot have on his unfaithful and disobedient terms, for that would be yielding to a lie. People may be convinced by flimsy evidence and faulty reasoning based on the hopeless foundation of autonomy, but to argue autonomously when *that* is beset with insuperable difficulties reduces our evangelism to sophistry (looking to practical results irrespective of the truth). Furthermore, an apologist must demand noetic conversion in his argumentation and, with it, new canons of evidence, truth, inference, etc. A neutral apologetic fails to do this. When a Christian replies to the attacks of his non-Christian opponent he must not be unfaithful to his Lord but must obediently

presuppose Scripture's truth and rely on the Holy Spirit for conversion. When the Christian speaks apologetically to the skeptic he does so with one view in mind: accurately and fully to set before him the truth of

God with hope of seeing the unbeliever converted. Argument for argument's sake when one is dealing in the vital matters of salvation and damnation would be unseemly. When so much is at stake in our witness and defense we must be deeply concerned to use tools shaped to proper ends and honoring to the God whom we desire the non-Christian to worship. Only God can change the unbeliever's profession and behavior. The non-Christian must be renewed unto knowledge, righteousness, and holiness of truth. He must be saved from his epistemological folly induced by his ethical rebellion against God's clear revelation in nature around him, his own constitution, and Scripture. When the heart is cleansed from sin, only then can the eyes see clearly, the ears hear plainly, and the mind reason properly. Out of the most intense concern for the sinner's salvation, and in full recognition of his true condition, we must use an apologetic that does not compromise the authority or truth of God's Word or give any ground to rebellion. We must challenge the unbeliever at every point with the presupposed authority of Christ over his life and

thinking, praying the Holy Spirit to work regeneration along with the sure witness of the Word.

So then, we must not be disobedient to Christ in either thought or reasoning. We must not bow to apostate and God-insulting demands or standards of possibility, verification, etc. We cannot play at agnosticism or question God's Word. We cannot prove a god which is acceptable in terms of the sinner's suicidal philosophy of fact and logic. We cannot grant the unbeliever more than he has coming in the debate. And we must require of him no less than Christ requires—full surrender.

Our apologetical method must be consistent with our message; indeed, it ought to be derived from that message. If we misrepresent the message of Scripture by arguing in a way unfitting for a Christian, and yet gain the unbeliever's assent, we just may have confirmed him in his rebellion against God's authority. We must challenge the sinner's self-assumed prerogative to determine what is and is not reasonable, what can and cannot exist, what is right and what is wrong. By our argumentative method we must not treat autonomous thought as the ultimate authority. A neutral apologetic concedes the very point we wish to refute: the sinner's autonomy. We who have learned to think God's thoughts after Him, that is, to think biblically (submitting every thought to the clear and authoritative Word of Christ) must call covenant-breaking sinners

to repent from their God-defying ways of thinking. By reasoning impar-

tially with the skeptic and appealing to the ability of his mind to acquire the truth on his own principles and to reason meaningfully, that is, by not taking a firm presuppositional stance and challenging the sinner's autonomy (but rather catering to it), we would allow the unregenerate to believe a lie in order that he come to acknowledge the *truth!*

Therefore, we conclude that the Christian apologist requires a presuppositional apologetic. Such an apologetic is necessitated epistemologically as well as ethically.

PART T W O

CONSISTENCY APPLIED:

CRITIQUES OF INCOMPLETE

PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

I N T R O D U C T I O N TO PART 2

The second half of this book grows out of the convictions stated in Part 1; in particular Part 1 sought to present a case in favor of presuppositional apologetics, specifically the apologetical writings of Dr. Cornelius Van Til, for in his system is found the most

consistently biblical presuppositional defense of Christianity.

In saying that consistent presuppositional apologetics is to be defended herein it is requisite that specification be made of Dr. Van Til's writings in order to avoid confusion, for in recent years three other writers have come to be generally considered as "presuppositionalists": Gordon H. Clark, Edward J. Carnell, and Francis Schaeffer. These three have all made contributions to the cause of reformational apologetics; the present writer is appreciative of their labors. Their thinking has been with insight and their writings are lucid. With all due respect for these three men, their sincerity, Christian commitment, and hard work, we must press on to see why their apologetical systems are not fully satisfactory. Although many fine points of presuppositional character can be found scattered throughout their writings, we regretfully note that their positions as a whole are inconsistent with these points. This inconsistency might make it appear that criticisms offered below could be rebutted by retreating to the better points of the writer under scrutiny; however, after trying to harmonize the conflicting assertions and to read them in a sympathetic spirit, I am simply unable to reconcile the major differences or eliminate the tension among them. When the full examination has been completed, the apologetical systems of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer all suffer from major internal flaws; their arguments either fail to be

genuinely presuppositional, or their presuppositions fail to be genuinely biblical. The following critical notes are recorded to indicate why this

treatise will not seek to present a case for, and defense of, Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer as presuppositional apologists.

Procedural Note: In a few cases the author who is under scrutiny has offered a reply to a type of criticism that will be presented below; in those cases where I have not pursued these published replies, let the reader understand that it is because, as far as I can evaluate, these replies have begged questions, unduly pontificated, merely argued *ad hominem*, fallaciously imputed guilt and merit by association, skirted the main issue, misunderstood the criticism, and just generally failed to meet the point at hand and so are inadequate (e.g., Clark replies to a probing criticism of him by G. Mavrodes by simply saying that it "clanks"). In such cases a response to the author's definitive rebuttal is unnecessary. Should the reader feel that any of my criticisms fail to take account of what an author had to say about such arguments, I encourage him to reexamine the alleged rebuttal. I have attempted to read all the major publications of these men in the best possible light; still, I find their positions defective. In choosing what material to include in this treatise I had to weed out the weak replies without taking up space to elaborate

what the author said and how it fails to shore up his position. As always, the reader can and must judge for himself.

136

C H A P T E R 4

GORDON CLARK

Gordon Clark can and has expressed points of genuine and accurate presuppositional analysis in his many writings. A sampling of them can serve to indicate where this treatise is in full agreement with him and where Clark parallels the thrust of Van Til's position.

In a war a general does not willingly abandon half of his position to the enemy in order to protect a few central points. And in the battle of ideas it is not only safer, but it is actually easier, not to say absolutely necessary, to defend the complete position.1

Because God is sovereign, God's authority can be taken only on God's authority.2

There is no proposition on which a consistent believer and a consistent unbeliever can agree. Therefore the doctrine of inspiration, like every other Christian doctrine, cannot

1. Gordon Clark, "Miracles, History, and Natural Law," *The Evangelical*

Quarterly,

XII, 1940, 23.

2. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?* (Chicago:

Moody, 1963), 28.

be demonstrated to the satisfaction of a clear thinking un-

believer.. .. A conviction that the Bible is really the Word

of God cannot be the conclusion of a valid argument

based on more clearly evident premises. This conviction is

produced by the Holy Spirit Himself.3

A philosophy that is based on the existence of God will dif-

fer throughout from a philosophy that has no place for God;

and similarly two systems that do not agree as to what sort

of Being God is, will also differ in all their details.4

The precise question ... is merely, What must be true if

history and humanity are to be meaningful? What is the

presupposition of significance?5

All historical writing in fact depends on presupposi-

tions.... Norms of possibility must be accepted from

naturalistic scientism, existential hunch, or the Biblical

revelation with its miraculous supernaturalism.6

Christianity ... should develop its epistemology and the-
ory of language from the information contained in the
Scriptures.7

A man either lives with the fear of God before his eyes,
attempting to make his whole life a song of praise to his
Creator or he does not. If he does, he is a theist; if he does
not, his life shows that, far from being neutral, his serious
belief is that God will not judge him and his actions, that
is, that there is no God who rules the universe with him in
it.... The atheist who asserts that there is no God, asserts
by the same words that he holds the universe in his mind;
he asserts that no fact, past, present, future, near, or far,
escapes his attention, that no power, however great, can

3. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?*, 24, 32.

4. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 85.

5. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, 77.

6. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig, 1971), 371.

7. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed,

1963), 150; see also A *Christian View of Men and Things,* 267.

baffle or deceive him. In rejecting God, he claims omniscience and omnipotence. In other words an atheist is one who claims that he himself is God.8

Now, methodology is never neutral Therefore, the use of a method presupposes epistemological and metaphysical positions.9

A theory may precede the choice of facts.... The most deceiving and the most deceived author is the one who thinks he is simply describing what is there. The there itself cannot be selected without presuppositions.10

The non-christian arguments regularly assume the point in dispute before they start. The questions are so framed as to exclude the Christian answer from the beginning.11

Presuppositionless experience is an impossible philosophy.12

The historian must first choose his concept and only then begin to select his facts.... There is no simple fact.... In addition to the connectedness of history, which makes

simple, discrete facts impossible, another embarrassment for objectivity is the historian's need of selection and the principles on which that selection is made A judgment of what event is important, involving as it must the larger whole for which it is important, depends on the concept of that larger whole. It is this concept that determines the selection of the allegedly simple facts.13

[There is] need of revelation if the laws of history are to be understood.... The study of these subjects cannot

8. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 45, 48.

9. Clark, "Reply to Arthur F. Holmes," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* ed. R. H.

Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 434.

10. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Nudey, N. J.: Craig, 1961), 14.

11. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 27.

12. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 371.

13. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 136f.

be carried on without a prior appeal to the more fundamental problems of the nature of God and the reality of

revelation.14

We neither abandon reason nor use it unaided; but on pain of skepticism acknowledge a verbal, propositional revelation of fixed truth from God. Only by accepting rationally comprehensible [read: "apprehensible"] information on God's authority can we hope to have a sound philosophy and a true religion.... Revelation is needed as the basis of a rational world-view.... Constructive thought must presuppose information that has been divinely given.... A rational life is impossible without being based upon a divine revelation.15

Sin has so vitiated human powers that man can read neither the heavens nor his own heart aright.... The doctrine of total depravity teaches that no part of human nature escapes the devastation of sin.... It must be asserted that sin has also affected their intellect.... The intellect became depraved as well as the will. This is the doctrine of total depravity: no part or function of man is free from the effect of sin.16

Strong emphasis needs to be put on the work of the Holy Spirit. Man is dead in sin, an enemy of God, opposed to

all righteousness and truth. He needs to be changed....

These verses, which refer primarily to regeneration, are

applicable to our acceptance of the Bible as the very

Word of God.17

14. Clark, "Apologetics," *Contemporary Evangelical Thought,* ed. C. F. H. Henry (New

York: Channel, 1957), 143.

15. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 87, 111, 152.

16. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 251; "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca*

Sacra, no. 454, April (1957), 159f.; "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II),"

The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark, ed. R. H. Nash, 75. See also, *What Do Presbyterians*

Believe? (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1965), 76; *Religion, Reason, and Rev-*

elation, 9, 106.

17. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 31
.

Reasons or premises by which to prove the authority of

Scripture cannot be used because the consistent unbe-

liever will not accept any Christian premise.18

If apologetics is subject to the axioms of the Christian system, it will not deceive an opponent by alleging that it uses axioms which it has in common with secular thought. A point of connection in the sense of a common principle is a logical impossibility.... But Reformed theology, while denying a common epistemological ground, has always asserted a common psychological or ontological ground. Believer and unbeliever alike, though their philosophic axioms and theorems are totally incompatible, bear in their persons the image of God from creation. This image consists of or at least includes their ordinary rational ability ... [and] theological and moral principles. These beliefs, dimly and inconsistently held, often submerged and repressed, can be thought of as a point of contact for the Gospel.... Based as they are on separate sets of axioms, they can have no proposition in common; and if one system is true, the other must be false. However, living people are not so thoroughly consistent as ideal systems. People are inconsistent; they believe contradictories without noticing the fact. Hence it is psychologically possible for an unbeliever and a believer to agree on a

given proposition. And this point of agreement may be

used as a point of contact for the Gospel.19

The witness or testimony of the Holy Spirit is a witness to

something. The Spirit witnesses to the authority of Scrip-

ture The production of belief is the work of the Spirit,

for faith is the gift of God.20

When Clark says these things, he is truly reflecting a biblically pre-

suppositional position. But he disappoints us when we take into account-

18. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?*, 25f.

19. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method,* 89, 100, 103; *Historiography: Secular and*

Religious, 369f.

20. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?*, 29f.

what he says elsewhere. We could only wish that he had conformed his

entire apologetic to the above points. However, there are a number of

problems in his apologetical writings that sully and set aside these posi-

tive statements. An audit of those difficulties leads us to draw back from

adopting Clark's apologetic.

STARTING POINTS AND CERTAINTY

As we canvass Clark's writings it soon becomes evident that the truth of Scripture is not his firm starting point. While Clark never gives any indication that he doubts the Bible's veracity, his apologetical system does not take Scripture as its unreserved, unconditional, and absolute presupposition. A notion of "possibility" still surrounds and lies behind Clark's acceptance of Scripture as his supposition (and, as we shall see, surrounds God as well), leading to an insufficient challenge to his non-Christian opponents (being merely immanent), a regarding of Christianity as a "hypothesis" needing verification (so that its truth status is reduced to probability), and a logicistic separation of epistemology from metaphysical commitments.

Instead of laying down a stringent demand that the truth of God's revealed Word be accepted as the precondition for all intellectual endeavor and the indispensable stipulation for even the activity of academic evaluation, Clark treats Christianity as a possibility. He writes,

> That religion or Christianity in particular furnishes a better method than secularism is a possibility not to be dismissed without discussion.21

The truth of the Christian world-view provides, not a "better" or "possible" method, but the necessary method, of all academic tasks. On

Clark's basis, however, the atheist's position leads to human despair rather than (stronger) sheer meaninglessness.22 Such an argument is simply not a telling one against a rugged and enduring individual who can grit through the bleak experience of living.23 The ground needs to be

21. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 232.

22. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), 11.

23. For example, see Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," *Why I Am Not a Christian,* ed. P. Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 104ff.

pulled out from under the atheist's very ability to argue, not simply his ability to live with his conclusions.

Clark fails to get to the very bottom of the difficulty in his opponents' positions and settles for arguments against them that a perceptive non-Christian critic could just as well formulate.24 (My point is not that these criticisms are not good, but that they are not sufficient for a Christian.) It is unsatisfactory to render truncated polemics, such as "examining the possibility of formulating positivistic laws," by simply pointing to practical problems and not relating the whole endeavor to

Christianity's bearing on the issue of possibility in science; or to suppose that (without reducing it to utter absurdity) in dealing with naturalism it is "sufficient to show the futility of trying to discover universal laws by observation," such as asserting that "teleology escapes some of the difficulties inherent in mechanism" without at all distinguishing between Christian and non-Christian notions of teleology, or saying that the main difficulty in the problem of historical causation is that of defining "cause" thereby failing to force home the challenge of a distinctively Christian historiography.25

Clark comes to the very conclusion of his book on the philosophy of science and declares, "The value of science depends on the value of life; but the value of life ... must be determined by *some sort* of general philosophy" and then goes on to state his personal testimony that Christian theism is the best option.26 In actuality *only Christianity* can give science, as well as all of life, its necessary grounding and value.

Clark's treatment of R. G. Collingwood serves as a good example of the problem we are discussing. Instead of distancing himself from Collingwood by drawing attention to a fundamental antithesis, Clark notes his general excellence and adds simply that *"some* corrections will be needed."27 In Clark's evaluation, Collingwood's outlook almost makes history impossible.28 Yet having credited Collingwood (instead of God's

providence and sovereign plan for historical eventuation) with solving

24. For example, see his treatment of Kant in *Historiography: Secular and Religious,*

36ff. 25. Clark, Historiography: Secular and Religious, 113, 126, 149, 142.

26. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God* (Nudey, N. J.: Craig, 1964), 95;

emphasis Bahnsen's.

27. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 203; emphasis Bahnsen's.

28. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 213.

the problem of materialistic epistemology, Clark holds that, despite the need to reconstruct some points, Collingwood could perhaps have the final theme that can save history.29 In all this Clark has not made the truth of Scripture an absolute and necessary presupposition, a genuine transcendental of meaningfulness for all science, history, etc.

Indeed, by contrast, one could easily be led to believe that logic *per se* is his transcendental rather than Scripture. Instead of the attempt to be independent of God's Word, "the denial of the law of contradiction, or even the failure to establish it as a universal truth, was the downfall of secular philosophy."30 For the absolute presuppositionalist, God and His revelation guarantee the possibility of epistemological fruitfulness,

for He who is the truth has deigned to give us a revelation of knowledge.

Clark, on the other hand, concludes his chapter on epistemology in *A Christian View of Men and Things* by saying that it "has tried to show by an application of the law of contradiction—a law that is not merely formal but is itself an integral part of the system of truth—that truth exists and that knowledge is possible."31 The impression that the truth of Scripture is not the grounding for logic, but that the law of contradiction is methodologically more primitive than Scripture for Clark, is apparently confirmed when he says,

> Just how it could be possible to formulate *reasons* prior to any logic remains unexplained. It seems evident to me that any set of reasons or any argument for creation ought to make use of and therefore presuppose logic.32

The issue here is not whether, *de facto*, one makes instrumental use of the law of contradiction in all his thinking (that is readily granted), but whether, *in principium*, logic or the truth of Scripture is your absolute presupposition. Clark's comment either makes an illegitimate separation of epistemology from metaphysics or posits logic as prior to the presupposition of Scripture. (Both errors will be treated *infra)*

29. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 214, 220.

30. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of*

Gordon H. Clark, ed. R. H. Nash, 64.

31. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 323.

32. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* ed. R.

H. Nash, 460.

Possibility vs. Necessity

The observations made above are really nothing but the expected corollaries to Clark's handling of the notion of "possibility." God should be taken by the Christian as the source and standard of all material, as well as logical, possibility; He is the one who determines all things (even the operations of the human mind and its limits). But for Clark the possibilities of human imagination and the bare possibilities dictated by formal logic have precedence to God (at least in Clark's writings). God too seems to be drawn into an environment of "possibility" (i.e., made subject to the conditions thereof); of course, then, this must also be the case for God's Word. Instead of demanding that Barth, for example, must recognize the subordination of all thinking to God's Word because it is our absolute, transcendental presupposition that makes intelligibility, thinking, evaluating, and meaning possible, Clark wants Barth, in considering such a

subordination, not to "bluntly rule out this possibility."

A more skeptical view of the amount of truth obtainable by experimentation, with the help of operationalism, *might* bring the idea of subordination back again within the limits of *possibility.* The Scripture is a *better* source than experimentation is for the norms of ethics and politics; *perhaps* there is some way to bring physics and zoology also under this authority.33

Because Clark, thus, does not take the truth of God's Word as an absolutely *essential* presupposition to which all thought must (not merely possibly) be subordinated, it is not surprising that he should write,

> From a logical standpoint it is equal whether one's assumptions are philosophical or theological, Christian or not.34

This is not the case! Christianity and unbelief are not on an equal footing, for unbelief has no footing whatsoever. And even logical possibility cannot be a common background to Christian and pagan systems of thought, for Christianity alone makes logic possible. With this quote, whatever absolute character Clark's presupposition of God's Word may

33. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 68; emphasis Bahnsen's.

34. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 8.

have had is completely dissolved. Even God comes to be conceptually manipulated by Clark's notion of possibility.

Speaking of the power displayed in the heavens, Clark states,

> [T]his amount of power, great as it is, cannot be omnipotence. Beyond the amount we observe, there can always be more.35

Yet Paul tells us that God's attributes are clearly revealed in the created order (Rom. 1), and David says that the very glory of God is declared in the heavens (Ps. 19). If the sinner's eyes were not blinded by his sin, he would conclude from general revelation that God is omnipotent. Whatever God does witnesses to His omnipotence. It is hard to know how we should take Clark's comment; either he means that God could display His power in a different way (which would fail to lead to Clark's conclusion that *more* omnipotence would be revealed), or he means that the deity revealed in nature cannot clearly be identified with the true God (a conclusion Clark obviously would reject as a Christian), or he means that it is *possible* for God to be more omnipotent than He is.

In taking Scripture as an absolute presupposition and standard for thought, the Christian apologist ought to maintain that there are no possibilities outside of what God is and decrees to be. It is never *possible*

for God to be other than the type of being He is portrayed to be in His self-revelation. Because he does not presuppose the certain truth of the Bible at the very start of his apologetic *{de facto* and *in principiurri)* Clark (a self-professed Calvinist) is willing to reduce the whole system of Christian truth revealed by God therein to a *possible accident!*

Strange accidents do indeed occur, and no proof is forthcoming that the Bible is not such an accident. Unlikely perhaps, but still possible.36

With this background we can understand why Clark would assert that as his essay "Revealed Religion" removes objections, his argument will have an indirect bearing on "the *possibility* of a divine revelation" (p. 3; emphasis added). Later in the same essay he says,

35. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 15.

36. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 24.

Again, let us insist, *if we* have some source of information other than observation of nature, if God has revealed some parts of a philosophy of history, we can handle these unpleasant facts. Candid opponents of Christianity

admit *this possibility?37*

Because Clark has this illegitimate notion of possibility in his apologetical system, a notion which lies behind even his beliefs about God and God's Word, it is inevitable that he should cease to be a genuine presuppositionalist. By not viewing the truth of Scripture as a presupposition that is absolutely necessary, Clark reduces the status of the Bible to a *hypothesis.* Therefore, it would be more accurate to designate Clark's apologetic as "suppositionalism," rather than *pr* esuppositionalism.

Clark begins by taking Christianity as his supposition or hypothesis, not the certain truth by which all else is to be judged. The truth of Scripture is not taken to be the case at the outset, so that only later are a man's thoughts to submit to it. The Christian alternative is one of many possibilities to be explored and evaluated. As in the scientific method, every possibility is at first only hypothetically true, so also in apologetics, Christianity cannot be a definite assumption but only a hypothesis.. .."38 "If there is such [an omniscient] God.... [I]f God is a person interested in human beings.... [I]f Christian theism is true";39 "if, on the contrary, the idea of God is an innate endowment by the Creator,"40 and he can speak of "the hypothesis of divine omniscience."41

The Word of God is not presented in such an apologetical approach as something that makes an absolute demand upon a person's life; the intel-

lectual challenge of the gospel is diluted to, "Either the Bible is a worthless fraud and Jesus was a deluded martyr, or the Bible is in truth the Word of God written."42 The Christian apologist should hold that the Bible *must* be true, not that it merely *may* be true. It sounds almost patronizing when Clark says "a more sympathetic consideration ought to be given to divine

37. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 15;

emphasis Bahnsen's.

38. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* ed. C. F.

H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 41.

39. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 24, 251, 318.

40. Clark , *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 134.

41. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 25.

42. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 2 If.

revelation than is customary in the universities of our land."43 And in harmony with that weak note is Clark's admission that he contrasts Kantianism to Christianity, not to show Christianity to be *right,* but in order to indicate that "the Christian position is not so implausible."44

Apparently, even broad theism would be more "plausible" than *Christian* theism:

If theism is indeed necessary to the intelligibility of history, possibly Mohammedan theism or some other form

would function as well as or even better than Christian theism. There has not been much argument so far to rule out such a possibility.45

The first sentence of this quotation surrenders the strength of the Christian's challenge by its hypothetical mood, and the reference to possibility again betrays Clark's failure to take God's Word as his absolute presupposition. Surely a presuppositionalist would have more to offer than that "the postulate of verbal revelation is at least worth trying."46 Clark himself admits that the axiom of God's revelation functions as a hypothesis rather than an absolutely necessary presupposition: "[A]n hypothesis for consideration may be proposed. It is that revelation should be accepted as our axiom."47 However, on a genuinely presuppositional basis, a consideration or evaluation of such an axiom could not be made without standards of judgment, and those very standards must be derived from revelation. Hence one must *begin* with Scripture and use it as his canon for comparison. But with regret we note that Clark nullifies even this premise of presuppositionalism by means of his fatal "possibilism":

If there is a God, the Calvinists may possibly be right in saying that the knowledge of God is fundamental and by it one must judge worldviews and their details.48

43. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 183.

44. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 43.

45. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 231.

46. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 87.

47. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 59.

48. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 259; emphasis Bahnsen's.

T H E PRIORITY OF LOGIC AND T H E TESTING OF G O D ' S W O R D

Since it is the case that Clark does not absolutely presuppose the truth of God's revealed Word, it is only natural that his apologetic should turn aside to test the veracity of God and His Word. Clark needs to put the Bible to the *test* in order that his supposition of its truth can be verified by independent standards. And this can be accomplished only by elevating some principle above Scripture and holding that it has greater epistemic certainty than does the Bible. Thus we discern that not only does Clark fall short of being an apologetical presuppositionalist, but in addition his suppositions are *not biblical.* Some form of autonomy has infected his system.

Verifying God's Word

Clark makes it clear that the issue of the Bible's *truth* must be settled generally before he can go on to consider its own self-testimony as to its nature and source. Referring his readers to *evidence* that they can consider for establishing the Bible's truth and passing on to assume the general trustworthiness of Scripture, *then* Clark feels it legitimate to pass on to the question of the Bible's *inspiration* and self-testimony. The question of truth is prior, says Clark, for "unless the Bible is true, there is not much use in discussing inspiration."49 Here Clark commits himself to the traditional non-presuppositional apologetic which attempts to work up to an acceptance of the nature of Scripture by proving it to the unregenerate man, who, it is wrongly assumed, can correctly interpret nature on his own unbelieving principles.

Approached from this vantage point, the question of the Bible's veracity is (for Clark) an open one; it is *not* precluded that Scripture might be refuted. Also consider:

[T]he theistic proofs are destructive of Christianity;...
but fortunately they are invalid, so that Christianity es-
capes this danger.50

The first statement is certainly true (although, as we shall see shortly, Clark may say this for the wrong reason); but the second one is telling as

49. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 9f.

50. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 13.

a criticism of Clark. We are led to believe that Christianity would be undermined if certain proofs could be validly formulated. However, Clark should have maintained that *Christianity* salvages *logic,* not *vice versa.*

The verificationalism implicit in the conjunction of Clark's view of possibility and his view of Christianity as supposition or hypothesis surfaces at many points in his writings.

> Our belief is a voluntary choice. But if one must choose without a strict proof, none the less it is possible to have sane reasons of some sort to justify the choice. Ultimately these reasons reduce to the principle of consistency. A postulate must be chosen such that it makes possible a harmony or a system in all our thoughts, words and actions.51

Clark would have us appeal to certain *a priori* principles independent of revelation in order to choose between competing religious hypotheses. Reason can pass judgment upon the validity of a revelation from God.

Clark is candid about the fact that, in his apologetic, "revelation will be tested," and openly speaks of "the test of revelation as a postulate."52

> Axioms ... are always tested in another way [i.e., *verified*, rather than demonstrated].... So too it should be with Christian revelation as an axiom.... We can judge the acceptability of an axiom only by its success in producing a system.53

Those familiar with Clark's writings will recall that he is fond of the model of geometric axioms and theorems for his apologetical system and delineation of the nature of truth.54 The strange thing, given this model, is that he should designate the Bible as an axiom for him, for he clearly *treats* it like a *theorem* subject to critical testing against the standard of the axioms (i.e., *self-evident* truths of reason, rather than *self-attesting* Scripture!).

51. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education,* 49.

52. Clark, "Several Implications (Wheaton Lecture III)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 107, 94.

53. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 59f.

54. For example, see *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 25.

GORDON CLARK

Logic and Verification

A central question for Clark is, "Can the Christian ... meet the objection that revelation is unreasonable?"—a question that launches him into a defense of revelation *as rational*,55 Having discussed the inadequacy of natural theology in the essay, "Revealed Religion," Clark goes on to note that we need "some other source of knowledge, a bona fide revelation";56 in proceeding to examine the claim of the neo-orthodox theologians to an encounter as this bona fide revelation, Clark concludes, "The great difficulty, as should now be clear, is the refusal to accept the law of contradiction."57 It is evident that what Clark takes as the criterion of bona fide revelation is meeting the ultimate demands of logic.

> If the Biblical doctrines are self-consistent, they have met the only legitimate test of reason. This test of logic is precisely the requirement that a set of propositions be meaningful, whether spoken by God or man.58

The regulative demands of logic provide an atmosphere that envelops both Creator and creature. Hence if God should wish to speak to man, His revelation should be testable by the fourth book of Aristotle's metaphysics. He should be able to pass the test honorably in man's estimation. As Clark sees it, the sinner is not furthering his hostility against

God and His Word by calling His revelation into question and subjecting it to the criterion of logic, but rather has the right (and obligation) to scrutinize any claim to revelation.59 The job of the apologist is to help him in this task: "The apologist must exhibit the internal consistency of the Christian system ... [and] urge the believer to repudiate the axioms of secularism and accept God's revelation."60 This is what Clark conceives as being his own purpose in writing: "This chapter, in fact the

55. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 1959,

29ff.

56. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 15.

57. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 23.

58. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 1959,

37.

59. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 464f.;

see also Weaver's criticism itself, "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist," *The Philosophy*

of Gordon H. Clark, 306.

60. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method,* 96.

volume as a whole, has also tried to show that Christian theism is self-consistent and that several other philosophies are inconsistent, skeptical, and therefore erroneous."61

We really must query, however, why it is necessary to test the Bible for consistency rather than *presupposing* it, since the revelation is from the God of truth Himself. Scripture should be used as the canon of consistency for all thoughts of men rather than being itself at the mercy of the creature's critical faculty. However, such an authoritarian position would not sit well with Clark's emphasis on the rational intellect of man as the clearinghouse for all hypotheses.

Christianity includes the primacy of the intellect and the sovereign claims of truth.62

Historic Christianity with its acceptance of a written revelation is more in accord with intellectualism than either of the rival theories.63

It should not go unnoticed that the primacy of the intellect Clark advocates is one with the ancient Greek doctrine that the reason should rule over the passions and will; the Platonists and Aristotelians were also like Clark in their exalting of the test of rationality.

Having observed Clark's commitment to test and verify the sup-

posed revelation of God in Scripture by means of logic, it would seem that F. N. Lee's comment about Clark is quite appropriate:

> Like Buswell, Clark too is a strong adherent of the Old Princetonian school of rationalistic Christian apologetics, holding that reason is common to all men by virtue of all men being created in the image of God, so that reason may lead to faith—a basically scholastic position 64

Although a bit surprising at first glance, this comparison with Buswell

61. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 324.

62. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 107.

63. Clark, "On the Primacy of the Intellect," *Westminster Theological Journal,* V (May, 1943), 195.

64. Francis Nigel Lee, *A Christian Introduction to the History of Philosophy* (Nutley, N. J.: Craig, 1969), 228.

is accurate in that both he and Clark treat possibility as if it surrounded God, treat Christianity as if it were a mere hypothesis, and strive to verify the Bible in one way or another. Although Clark is a stringent deductivist, and Buswell a dedicated inductivist, the abstract logic of

Clark and the factual contingency of Buswell need each other in a system that does not begin with the self-attesting truth of God's special revelation. However, this is not our main concern here. Lee's indication of Clark's latent scholasticism is right to the point. When self-evident rational principles are elevated to sit in judgment over God's revelation, that revelation is bound to lose its authoritative character in deference to man's unquestionable use of logic. Instead of faith in God's Word leading to understanding of reason and science, understanding is taken to lead to faith (thereby abandoning the Augustinian dictum).

Clark and Rationalism

The prime example of Clark's scholasticism (faith placed upon the foundation of rationality) is his argument, or "proof" of God's existence, "a thoroughly rationalistic argument that begins with an analysis of truth and proceeds to man's knowledge of God."65 This can be found in *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 318-321. Basically it asserts the necessity that truth exist, that truth always exists, that truth is mental or spiritual and is universal, and it concludes: "Is all this any more than the assertion that there is an eternal, immutable Mind, a Supreme Reason, a personal, living God?"66

Now beyond the fact that the conclusion exceeds the warrant of the premises, that the argument is as poor as reasoning that hearing ears must

exist because trees fall in forests, and that the argument proves something less than the Triune God of Scripture, the really notorious thing about this is the confidence in self-sufficient reason to work up from self-evident premises to the living, the true, the self-contained God, the God who in His self-disclosure has delivered a *self*-attesting, clear, sufficient, necessary, and authoritative revelation of Himself! We are reminded of the statement by Jacobi that a "God" capable of proof would be no God at all.67

65. Ronald H. Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 158.

66. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 321.

67. Bahnsen refers to the statement of Friedrich Jacobi (1743-1819),

Clark's argument betrays that logic, rather than God, has more epistemic certainty than any other principle and hence is the ultimate authority for him. Because belief in God has been built up from reason alone, God is made to be less trustworthy and less authoritative than human reason. "What depends on man and his reason or testimony is less than man, and what depends on God is less than God."68

The very notion of proving God's existence is inherently misguided; God alone is adequate to witness to Himself. All of man's

interpretative and discursive reasoning must be self-consciously subordinated to God and the authoritative direction of His Word. If the truth of God's Word were Clark's absolute presupposition, he would not consider it needing verification, or God's existence needing proof. Sinful man does not understand himself, his world, or even his reasoning *properly* until he submits to God's authority and obeys His Word; how then could he argue from autonomous considerations up to the truth and sovereign prerogatives of God! Without holding that the sinner must abandon his autonomy, without attacking the very idea of truth, reason, demonstration, and the like if conceived of as independent of God, the apologist, by the time he arrives at the end of his argumentative conclusion, would be *too late* to bring in Christianity—to do so would amount to sheer tokenism, an admission that the sinner was only slightly mistaken and so in need of adding a few religious beliefs to his thinking.

Having said these things about Clark and theistic proofs, however, one must pause, for does not Clark carry on an extensive and intensive tirade against the traditional theistic proofs himself? Yes, he does; and his polemic can be found in numerous of his writings. Has our previous criticism been fair to him then? Again, the answer is yes. If one will peruse his putative disagreements with the standard

proofs for God's existence he will find that Clark's disavowal of them is not based on their pretensions to autonomy but on their empirical foundations and logical invalidity. Now, empiricism is certainly beset

"Ein Gott, der gewuftt werden konnte, ware gar kein Gott" (A God, who could come to be proven, were no God at all). See Jacobi, "An Fichte," *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Werke*, 6 Vols. (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1812-1820 [1816]), 3:7.

68. R.J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), 15.

with problems and invalid arguments deserve to be criticized, but these are not the central defects of the theistic proofs; the root sin of trying to prove God's existence in an autonomous manner is the failure to take His Word as the standard of truth and instead subjecting it to autonomous canons for judgment.

The fact that it is empiricism, not autonomy, which Clark censures in the theistic proofs is exemplified in an interesting passage. Clark quotes from E. S. Brightman's book, *Religious Values:* "Revelation must be tested by reasonableness, not reasonableness by revelation.... It is not a criterion

of truth, but presupposes a criterion by which it is judged."69 Now it is *this very attitude* that we have been opposing and regrettably finding in Clark's apologetic. Yet on the following pages this same book Clark also takes exception to Brightman—but not over his standing in judgment upon God's Word! Clark's complaint has to do with Brightman's *notion of reason as empirically founded principles:*

> In opposition to this, Christianity should refuse to define reason as a body of general principles empirically obtained.... No such body of principles can be obtained....
>
> This revelation [from God] need not be tested, in fact cannot be tested by reasonableness *in Brightman's sense of the word,* for Brightman's reasonableness does not exist....
>
> Nonetheless reason may well be defined as logic. It should not be identified with experience (emphasis added).70

And that is the sum total of Clark's objection! It is woefully deficient and baldly exposes the core weakness of Clark's own apologetic. The presuppositionalist should maintain that without revelation from God there *is no reason* available to man by which he could judge *anything.* In principle, a testing of God's revelation by *rationalistic* reasonableness is no better than testing it by an *empiricalistic* reasonableness. The same sinful attitude underlies both attempts.

69. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 109. See E. S. Brightman, *Religious Values*

(New York: The Abington Press, 1925).

70. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 109—110.

Response to God's Word

Given Clark's view of revelation as a hypothesis subject to the need for verification, his apologetic encourages the sinner to accept God's Word, not on the basis of God's objective, rightful *authority* as expressed in the self-attesting words of Scripture, but on the basis of rationalistic *demonstration* (not syllogistic thought) of its worthiness. When God can make His credentials good in the eyes of the reasonable investigator, when the supposition of Scripture has been tested successfully, *then* God's authority can start to be exercised.

It should be clear, however, that our reaction to God's Word is a reaction to God Himself. The Bible is not *mere human* words that happen to be true and consistent; rather, it is *God's own* words conveyed in human speech. The Bible does not point or witness to God, it is the *very Word* of God. Hence one does not test Scripture as to its reliability as a human word and then pass on to the judgment that God must be behind it;

the human and divine character of the Bible cannot be separated. There is a christological parallel here; one can never consider the humanity of Christ in abstraction from His divinity. So our response to the carpenter of Nazareth should be our response to God Himself. And our response to the *words* on the ink-printed paper pages of the Bible should always be our response to a direct address of God to us; in reacting to God's speech we are reacting to the very person of God.

Note how the word or voice of God is central to the very person of God. God rules all of creation by His voice; He names (i.e., characterizes and exercises sovereignty over) everything of the creation. A chief contrast between God and the idols is that He *speaks* while they are dumb, and so the *words* of God are instrumental in identifying His works and His person (cf. Ps. 29; 147:4; Isa. 140:26; Eph. 3:14; Hab. 2:18 if.; 1 Cor. 12:2; Ps. 115; 135; John 14:9). Scripture points out that God's word is the means of creation, providence, judgment, and grace (cf. Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6,9; 148:8; Matt. 8:26 fi; Heb. 1:3; 2 Peter 3:5 f.; Gen. 3:17; Hos. 6:5;Joel 2:11; Heb. 4:12 f.; Luke 7:7; Isa. 55:1 Iff.; Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 19; plus many more). While God the Father accomplishes all His acts by speaking, God the Holy Spirit is the breath of God which carries the Word to its destined goal (Isa. 34:16; John 6:63; etc.), and God the Son *is* the *veiy Word of God* (Rev. 19:13; John 1:1-4,14; 1 John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3). Christ is called the "Logos" not against

the background of pagan Greek philosophy, but on the model of God's

speaking and wisdom in the Old Testament. Therefore, in an important sense we can actually say that the Word of God is God Himself.

Our response to the Scripture, then, is the measure of our response to God (e.g., John 14:23 f.; 8:47; 10:27). When we call the Bible into question, we call *God* into question. When we subject Scripture to a test for verification, we presume to subject God to verification. If God's Word is subjected to a criterion of reasonableness, then God is being barred from the universe of man until He meets the creature's requirements. This is a terrible mistake, a reversing of the proper order of things. Who can presume to rise in daring manner in judgment of God? Christ declared, "You shall not subject the Lord your God to testing" (Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12); to do so is a sign of disapprobatory unbelief, such as characterized the Israelites at Massah (Deut. 6:16; cf. Ex. 17). A consistently biblical apologetic cannot capitulate to such unbelief by venturing out to verify the truth of God's Word taken as a hypothesis; to do so would be to suppress God's rightful authority in all areas and over all men. Clark should have maintained that man's reasoning must be defined, circumscribed, and judged by the inscripturated Word of God, and not that this self-attestingly authoritative

revelation can be verified by the independent jurisdiction of reason.

Abstraction of Epistemology from Metaphysics

When Scripture ceases to control every facet of our thinking, even its evaluative and scrutinizing functions, then our policy and norms concerning *justification* for beliefs are disconnected from the *content* of our beliefs; that is, epistemology is abstracted from metaphysics. In such a case one's personal authority and autonomous criterion of judgment are used to screen all possible intellectual commitments. Where epistemology is elevated or made primary, metaphysical convictions are subordinated. This amounts to what we have examined above: God is put to the test of an autonomous method of verification.

Clark makes it clear in his writings that his apologetic *does* take epistemology as foundational and metaphysics as the superstructure. Before one decides whether to believe the gospel or not, to commit himself to God or not, Clark would have him face the question of justification for such a belief; the standards of credibility would be determined independently of God's direction and authority—since it is the very question of God that is at issue. So then, Clark would allow a measure of autonomy

to be exercised in order that a sinner would submit to God; world-views

would be judged by some universal criterion found in a self-evident principle (e.g., the law of contradiction or coherence) rather than the Word of God, and the epistemological policy would be formulated and evaluated independently of Scripture alltogether.

This indicates two things about Clark's apologetic: as seen above, Scripture is not his absolute presupposition but is itself subject to verification, and his genuine presupposition is not biblical (i.e., rooted in a metaphysical commitment) but rationalistic (i.e., solely epistemological).

> The important question is not whether or not the Bible is true, but whether or not all knowledge is deducible by reason, i.e., by logic alone.71

> The first and most crucial matter in any philosophy of religion, as indeed it is in all phases of philosophy, is the method chosen.72

Clark recognizes that all statements presuppose an epistemology, that epistemology is an underlying problem, and that a system that ignores it must fail.73 However, because he fails to see that metaphysics must be coordinated with epistemology and *vice versa* (see *infra),* he does not give proper attention to the underlying importance of metaphysics. Instead he maintains that it is *epistemology* that controls the whole system of philosophy,74 whereas metaphysics also controls the whole system (e.g., an atheist's

metaphysic and his naturalistic epistemology aid and abet one another). Undoubtedly one factor that has caused Clark to go astray on this point is his erroneous belief that most people do not have a world-view.75 If this were true, then maybe a neutral epistemology would be a theoretical possibility (although I have grave doubts even about this). But the fact of the matter is that all men entertain an outlook on the world and life that guides their actions and thoughts. So we cannot agree with Clark when he says,

71. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 53.

72. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 232.

73. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 55, 201, 179.

74. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 285.

75. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 466.

> But before any type of metaphysics can be accepted, another and far more crucial question must be asked and answered.... A theory that tries to explain how knowledge is possible is called an epistemological theory. This is where we must begin.... Metaphysics can be established only on an epistemological basis.76

R. Nash has noted that

> Clark has avoided the question of metaphysics. This is due chiefly to his belief that one must first settle the problems of epistemology and then note the implications of one's answers for metaphysics.... Too many philosophers err, he believes, by making epistemology subordinate to metaphysics or other concerns.77

In holding that metaphysics must be subordinate to epistemology Clark does not allow his Christian commitment to control every facet of his thinking; the living and true God whom he seeks to serve makes an *absolute* demand on the lives of all men, a demand that extends *even to epistemological concerns.*

LOGICAL CONSISTENCY AS AN ULTIMATE CRITERION

Having brought attention to factors that prevent a recognition of Clark as a biblical presuppositionalist, factors such as his possibilism, suppositionalism, verificationalism, and abstraction of epistemology from metaphysical commitment, we are ready to observe the type of test to which Clark would subject Scripture. His logicistic rationalism and the problems attending it must be noted.

There are many religious options that clamor for men's devotion; Clark sees Christianity as one hypothesis among them. Now as in the case of the

scientific method, the verification of a hypothesis depends on its fitting the evidence. While others may seek verifying evidence for the Christian hypothesis in empirical or historical considerations, Clark pursues ratio-

76. Clark, "Secular Philosophy (Wheaton Lecture I)" *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 27; and "Reply to Arthur F. Holmes," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 435.

77. Ronald H. Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 170, 125.

nalistic evidence that will prove the supposition of the Bible. "Logical consistency therefore is evidence of inspiration; but it is not demonstration."78 Formal logic by itself cannot be used to generate a conclusion in favor of the Bible; there is no strict demonstration from self-evident principles of its compelling truth. Yet if Scripture, like other religious options, be taken hypothetically, then it can be placed side by side with its competitors in order to evaluate their various and relative consistencies.

The evidence that will verify one of these alternative religions will be found in logical consistency. This experiment in logic constitutes the apologetical task for Clark. "The attempt to show the Bible's logical consistency is, I believe, the best method of defending inspiration."79 Clark

takes logical consistency as the test of all religious theories because, as he sees it, truth is defined as a rationally coherent system logically ordered (this view will be criticized later); if the Bible presents a set of propositions that are logically consistent, then Clark would want to declare that it is true. The test by coherence is the ultimate trial of truth;80 by it Clark would show that Christianity hangs together,81 that it is self-consistent,82 that it is a coherent system and completely logical.83 As well, Clark would argue that theism *gives* coherence to life;84 "The 'proof of God's existence ... results from showing that consistency is maintained by viewing all things as dependent on God."85 Clark wants to show that "acceptance of divine revelation ... gives a more consistent view than any other."86 The supreme defense against attacks on the Christian faith is that these opposing positions are incoherent or do not pay enough attention to logic.87 Encounter theology is "cured" by logic, for its great problem is the rejection of logic.88 The central question Clark has for

78. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?*, 24.

79. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?*, 23.

80. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 31 .

81. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 92.

82. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 147, 273, 324.

83. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 27, 194.

84. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 197, 264, 324.

85. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 318.

86. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 371.

87. See Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 281, 293; *Religion, Reason, and*

Revelation, 222; "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 14, 16.

88. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 2If.,

23.

Barth is, "Is his Logos logical?"89 Throughout this book it seems that Clark is more concerned to have Barth bow to the requirements of logic than to give proper place to the self-attesting Christ of Scripture. He holds that the problem with existentialism and neo-orthodoxy is their repudiation of logic.90

In all this we should have expected that the main problem with neo-orthodoxy and with all attacks on orthodox Christianity is the rejection of the self-attestingly authoritative Word of God in one form or another. However, *logic* is Clark's apologetical weapon rather than the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God).

First the apologist must show that the axioms of secularism result in self-contradiction.... Then, second, the apologist must exhibit the internal consistency of the Christian system.91

Clark's conception of apologetics would lay "an emphasis on the ideal of axiomatization,"92 and "axiomatization is simply the perfecting and exhibiting of the logical consistency of a system of thought."93 Clark confirms our analysis of his apologetical scheme as one in which the Word of God is taken (not as an absolute presupposition) as a hypothesis to be verified in light of the ultimate test of logic when he states that "the apagogic method must remain the basic apologetical procedure."94 In Aristotelian logic the *apagoge* is a method of indirect demonstration wherein it is shown that *impossible* consequences follow from the contradictory of a thesis under discussion, which thesis can (nevertheless) only attain to *probable* truth when it is the conclusion of a syllogism. Thus Clark would admit that he cannot demonstrate the truth of Scripture but can verify it as a hypothesis by reducing his opponents' positions to incoherence and demonstrating the logical consistency of the Bible, and thereby pointing to its probable veracity. In this Clark gives practical evidence that logic, not the revelation of God, is his ultimate authority. Instead of taking the Word of God and using it as the standard by which all experience

89. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 13.

90. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 36f.

91. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theobgical Method,* 96.

92. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 80.

93. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 95.

94. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 85.

is organized and interpreted, Clark declares that "there is no method of understanding superior to deduction."95

DIFFICULTIES WITH RELIANCE ON LOGICAL COHERENCE

In addition to disappointing us for failing to advocate a biblical presuppositionalism, and in addition to advocating an unmodified Cartesian method which is far short of a distinctive Christian apologetic, Clark has espoused an apologetic fraught with far-reaching immanent difficulties. Somehow Clark has simply overlooked the fact that deduction does not insure truth, or even significance, in a set of propositions. It is logically valid (though ridiculous) to argue for the Augustinian authorship of the Bible thus:

1. Mohammed composed the Koran (A), and Moham-

med is the prophet of Allah (B). —axiom

2. If [Mohammed composed the Koran (A) or the Bible is an abridgment of *The City of God* (C)], then Augustine authored the Bible (D). —axiom

3. A—simplification of No. 1

4. A or C —addition based on No. 3

5. D —modus ponens from Nos. 2 and 4

6. Therefore, A and D—conjunction of Nos. 3 and 5 (i.e., Mohammed composed the Koran, and Augustine authored the Bible)

A *valid* entailment can be constructed for any proposition (e.g., D in the above syllogism) without telling us anything at all about the *truth* status ; of that proposition; in the above example the conclusion is valid but false. And if this construction of a valid deduction can be performed for any proposition, then valid deduction cannot even serve us to distinguish worthwhile options from unworthwhile ones. Taking this a step further, we note that since one conclusion can be shown valid and yet

95. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 89.

| be false, and since this can be done for any number of conclusions, then
I we must see that any *collection* of propositions can be axiomatized with
I coherence and still remain a false system.

As G. Mavrodes points out,96 one can take as his axiom (therefore, not subject to demonstration) the conjunction of a chain of material implications, the *apodosis97* of the last one being identical with the *protasis* of the first one, with the asserted weak inclusion of the first *protasis* or the last *protasis* in the chain; thereby one would be able to entail all the separate links of the axiomatic chain.98 Just that easily any set of propositions

96. George I. Mavrodes, "Revelation and Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 237.

97. Bahnsen here employs the technical vocabulary of logic: apodosis is the consequent in a formal conditional statement, and the following term protasis refers to the antecedent. For example, in the statement, "If P, then Q," the protasis is P and the apodosis is Q.

98. Bahnsen's condensing of Mavrodes' comments here will be clarified by including the entire quotation. Mavrodes writes, "Suppose that we assemble a motley list of propositions, A, B, C... N, as random as we can find. Can we now axiomatize this random list? Certainly. A method of doing it can easily be taught to a child or programmed for a computer. Simply form a list of axioms

which repeats the original list of propositions, A, B, C ... N. Since every proposition entails itself the original list will follow deductively from this set of axioms. Presto! Axiomatization has been accomplished. But perhaps we are not satisfied. Why not? Is it desired to form a system which has fewer axioms than theorems, indeed only a single axiom? It is easy. Simply construct a single proposition which is the conjunction of the original set, A • B • C • • • N, and take this as the single axiom. It validly implies each of the originals.... Are there more complicated deductions from axiom to theorems desired? They can be supplied. For example, form the propositions A ⊃ B, B ⊃ C, C ⊃ D, ..., M ⊃ N, N ⊃ A. Conjoin all these (in any order) along with A v N, and make this conjunction as the axiom. It entails all of the original set" (Mavrodes, "Revelation and Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Cordon H. Clark*, 237). Mavrodes' point here is that any statements can be assumed as self-evident "axioms" and then postulated collectively, especially as symbols, as a single axiom, to be the deductive basis of a system. The critique is of the inherent arbitrariness in the selection of these axioms, and the ease of presenting them as axiomatic. Clark responds to this overall critique in the same volume (442-446). I do not believe that Bahnsen requires us to follow Mavrodes' argument in its entirety, but only so far as to show that deduction in itself does not and cannot ensure the truth of the axioms postulated. In fairness, Clark seems to agree with this point—that axioms postulated arbitrarily can "become absurd" if construed as implications of each other,

or made into a "conjunction" (to use Mavrodes' logical term)—although Clark

can be axiomatized into a coherent system—without respect of their special features (e.g., truth or falsity). If you have a vivid enough imagination and proficiency with elementary logical principles and rules of inference, then you can make any position look plausible from a merely deductive standpoint.

So any hypothesis can be "verified" in Clark's sense of that term by construing it as a coherent system, i.e., by beginning with the desired conclusion and working backwards by means of "syllogistic ornamentation" until the requisite axiom is built up, and then taking this axiom as your "unproven assumption." We must conclude, therefore, that even *if* Clark could successfully carry out his apologetical task of axiomatization and demonstration of Christianity's logical coherence, he would only have given us a *trivial* truth (i.e., Christianity can be seen as a coherent system of propositions): "the collection consisting of the thirty-second indicative sentence from each book in the Library of Congress constitutes a system in exactly the same sense."99 Although in many contexts the task of systematizing is useful to us, it would not seem that from an apologetical viewpoint axiomatization has any advantage at all (at least

Clark has failed to show what it might be); Clark's view of axiomatization would not appear to serve aesthetic, didactic, epistemological, or explanatory ends in its present unqualified condition.100

Biblical Propositions as an Ultimate Deductive System

We must question Clark's assumption that the Bible contains a satisfactory number of axioms to form a complete deductive system as well as the geometric ideal that Clark extols. I simply cannot imagine what scriptural statements could be used in a syllogism to deduce the assertion: "And the Lord said to Gideon, 'You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue'" (Judges 7: 5). In agreement with Arthur Holmes we wonder whether Clark can adopt the methods of Spinoza without expresses this agreement in the name of disagreeing with the argument.

99. Mavrodes, "Revelation and Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 238.

100. See the fuller discussion by Mavrodes of this point, "Revelation and Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 239-244.

modification and differ only as to the axioms with which he begins.101

Christian philosophy is much more than a pure logical science. It involves a proper recognition of the full authority of the Bible (i.e., it extends to everything written, not simply the indicative assertions) and seeks the proper application of the various functions, and proper understanding of the contemporary relevance of the various contexts, of the biblical language. It involves living obedience to God as well as spiritual vision and continuing sanctification. It involves an ability to ascertain the obstacles to belief in a particular society or era and the proper way in which to search out the biblical answers to the questions of men's hearts. It involves the ability to integrate the whole revelation of God to man (i.e., what the entire Bible says to man and its bearing on general revelation plus its role in guiding the execution of the cultural mandate). It involves induction and adduction as well as deduction, etc. Christian philosophy cannot be performed by a computer which has been fed with the axioms from Scripture; it must be done by a Christian concerned to drive the whole Word of God home to the hearts of men.

The deductive ideal falls short of the mark. It involves the view that knowledge is exclusively of propositions and that the authoritative portion of Scripture is its declarations. Both points are mistaken.102 Although knowledge may be expressed only in propositions, one *knows* himself, or certain states of affairs, or how to perform certain tasks, or other persons,

etc. The Christian actually knows *God* (i.e., the *personal* Creator and Redeemer), not simply a *proposition* about God. And the authority of Scripture attaches to *all* the functions of the biblical language; the Westminster Confession of Faith expresses this principle well: "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come" (XIV. 2).

Moreover, Clark's view of apologetics and his extolling of the geometric ideal involve a formal view of logic in its syllogistic sense that is inappropriate for ordinary language such as is found in Scripture.

101. Arthur F. Holmes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark, 219.*

102. See Arthur F. Holmes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 221-224.

We dare to say that Clark could hardly deduce Aristotelian logic from Scripture itself or even its form. With a Christian apologetic we would have hoped that Scripture could support the method and principles be-

ing employed by the apologist. Yet the axiomatizational goal of Clark's apologetic and the rules that govern development toward that end are independent of Scripture. The conclusion to which Holmes comes is accurate yet regrettable: "Clark has incorporated into revelational theism a logic deduced from the geometric ideal and propositional demand of his rationalistic idealism.'"103

Practical Problems with the Test of Coherence

Even overlooking the above flaws in Clark's coherence approach we still would have an immense practical problem to cope with when the time comes to *apply* the test of coherence. Two disputants can agree on the ground rules of coherence (e.g., the law of contradiction) and still not come to grant their opponent's position. Different people have different ways of *evaluating* evidence and coherence; the law of contradiction can be shared by the disputants while neither one admits an inconsistency in his position for the simple reason that they define their initial terms, understand their common assertions, allow their words to function in different ways. Who should ultimately be allowed to decide which system is more coherent and less tending to skepticism? The analytic philosopher? The idealist? The existentialist? The empiricist? The Christian? We would expect, if the coherence test were as simple as Clark portrays it and if only the rules of logic need be granted in order to discharge it,

that philosophers would have come to agreement years ago (how much more in this age of the computer?). Logic can be a helpful tool among men of like mind and spirit, but adamant opponents of different world-views can be indifferent—and usually are—to the charge of incoherence mutually leveled at one another. The significance of some kinds of data, the proper application of principles, the right understanding of fundamental assertions will all be colored by the world-view of the person entertaining them.

G. Weaver makes this same point against Clark by saying,

103. Arthur F. Holmes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 226.

> Coherence is always relative to assumptions. The natural man with his God-given reason has an amazing power to "exchange the truth of God for a lie," and yet keep his system consistent. He may have to deny some "facts" to do so, but it seems he does not mind denying as "meaningless" whatever does not fit his logic.104

It is plainly the case that non-Christians have a different notion of what constitutes consistency than the biblical Christian. They might both

agree in distinguishing truth from falsehood (i.e., in avoiding violation of the law of contradiction) while they are diametrically opposed on whether or not it is consistent for God to love only some unto salvation and not effect universal salvation. The Christian and non-Christian will react differently to the position that the all-glorious God has allowed glory to be brought to His name in the historical process; while the believer glorifies God and enjoys Him forever, the unbeliever mocks that very possibility. They also differ in their reactions to the fact that all non-Christian epistemologies are hybrids of rationalism and irrationalism; the unbeliever seems insouciant about the incongruity, for example, of his opinion that in religious matters "nobody can know for certain," yet "Christianity is false." The naturalist would consider a supernatural revelation incoherent to a rational system, but the supernaturalist would consider the absence of such revelation incoherent. Yet in all these cases the disputants can agree to the formal law of non-contradiction as a guiding *principle.* This does not point to any inconsequential nature in logical consistency, nor does it amount to a recommendation of irrationality; but it does demonstrate why Clark's emphasis on the apologetical value of coherence is misplaced. The law of contradiction does not preclude the possibility of *many logics!*

Insufficiency of Coherence

Even if Clark's apologetical recommendation of logical coherence as a defensive and offensive measure to be utilized in debate with unbelief were not afflicted with triviality, inapplicability to Scripture, and impracticality, there would be reasons for rejecting it. When Clark is

104. Gilbert B. Weaver, "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 306f.

pushed about the practical value of logical coherence as a test for truth he himself admits that it is negative only and in need of supplementation.105 So in spite of his dislike for "facts,"106 his view that historical investigation can give absolutely no fixed and unalterable truth107 just as science cannot deliver genuine truth,108 and in spite of his insistence that revelation delivers to man the only knowledge obtainable,109 Clark nevertheless (and inconsistently) appeals to non-revelational and non-logical evidence to argue against his opponents. In discussing the inspiration of Scripture he appeals to both coherence *and* the facts of archaeology and history.110 In choosing between world-views one is told to consider the implications his choice has in *many* fields of study.111 Consider these quotations:

Methodology or historiography must do justice to the

narrative of events, and the attempt must be made to satisfy the historical researcher.... How Marxists might reply to these criticisms is hard to say. They rather ignore embarrassing details.... This all sounds very grandiose. But the essential evidence is missing.... It must be repeated that Marxism fails to explain history concretely and in detail.... When it comes to the details of history, their vaunted scientific methods leave them silent.... A theory that has made and still makes claim to scientific prediction must be judged by the events.... Therefore this principle must be successfully applied to a large number of historical sequences before it appears plausible.... Nevertheless, the basic criticism is uncontestable: his scheme is a deduction from his metaphysics and is not derived strictly by scientific observation....

105. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 306,

459.

106. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 460.

107. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 134f., 177.

108. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and the Belief in God* (Nutley, NJ: Craig

Press,

1964).

109. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," The *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 90-92.

110. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 9f.

111. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 34.

The first view ... is free from the logical difficulties of the other two views. It reduces to a question of fact.112

For all his boasted rationalism and refutation of empirical procedures Clark must finally appeal beyond logic to "facts" after all. Indeed we get the impression that Clark might consider the facts as *brute* facts that need to be interpreted by the organizing mind of man. He clearly draws a distinction between *description* of facts and the *significance* (as well as implications) of facts, and he goes as far as to say that *interpretation is imposed* on description.113 We conclude, then, that Clark is inconsistent with his own criterion of logical consistency as *the* test for truth, and that when all things are taken into consideration he presents us with the same impossible task of all non-Christian epistemologies: bringing the brute facts of

history into fruitful union with the abstract laws of logic. (Yet, save on a biblical presuppositional basis, man can neither juggle nor harmonize the ultimate unity and diversity of the world.) It is an interesting commentary on Clark to note that, when it comes to the question of providence and history, he *abandons* his proffered method of exhibiting logical coherence in apogogic fashion and argues that one must *presuppose* providence in accordance with a method that depends upon *revelational* principles.114 He seems to have had an unconscious realization of the insurmountable problems in his apologetical system as he expounded it (wherein coherence was taken as the most important principle and ultimate standard of philosophical thinking).

Christianity Fails Clark's Test

The most telling criticism of Clark's apologetic has yet to be given. It points out that, subjected to the coherence test as Clark has outlined it, the Christian faith does not really pass the examination after all. There are a number of observations, which the "reasonable man" can make, that divest Clark's case for Christianity of any compelling force—most of them being based on Clark's own statements!

First there are methodological difficulties. Clark's manner of argument is basically to fault the non-Christian alternatives and, thereby, leave

112. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 56, 97, 104, 105, 90, 96, 111,

123.

113. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 75.

114. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 245.

Now, outside of the fact that the weakness or invalidity of rival theses tells us nothing about the genuine strength of that alternative we have left at the end of our examination, Clark's use of the disjunctive syllogism—i.e., (1) Either A, B, or C; (2) Not A or B; (3) Therefore, C—is non-impressive because his disjunction fails to do justice to the viable options.115 There are many major schools of non-Christian philosophical thought that Clark never stops to analyze or criticize; I am not thinking of some old, dust-ridden ideas tucked away in an obscure corner of the tedious history of philosophy, but of modern movements of which Clark must surely have been aware: *inter alia,* absolute idealism (e.g., F. H. Bradley, Josiah Royce, B. Blanshard); neo-idealism (e.g., B. Croce); neo-realism (e.g., B. Russell, C. D. Broad, A. C. Ewing, R. B. Perry, W. P. Montague); critical realism (e.g., G. Santayana, A. Lovejoy); common sense philosophy (G. E. Moore); vitalism (H. Bergson); voluntarism (e.g., Schopenhauer, von Hartmann); process philosophy (e.g., A. N. Whitehead); phenomenology (e.g., E. Hus-

serl, M. Scheler, M. Merleau-Ponty); language analysis (e.g., Wittgenstein, J. Austin, G. Ryle). If the Clarkian type of apologetic is going to be convincing it will (at least) have to meet the requirements it lays down for itself, and at this point Christianity has not been shown to be the last rational choice for the philosopher because Clark has failed to discredit modern theories (or to indicate how his criticisms of older positions are relevant as refutations of contemporary options).

Then again, if the test of coherence is going to be effectively applied to various philosophic alternatives one must be certain as to the proper standards of logical axiomatization and the categories of a priori judgments; without a yardstick one cannot measure the length of his lumber. However, Clark states that the list of *a priori* categories is still unsettled and awaiting the unanimous results of symbolic logic.116 So we must wonder just how moved we should be by Clark's apologetic when both the objects and standards of his critical analysis are incomplete. Still the most perplexing thing about Clark's apologetical test for coherence is that it is bound to be ineffective as a justification for Christian belief and a challenge to unbelief. As seen above, Clark's goal is to demonstrate the inconsistency of the non-Christian philosophic position and the logi-

115. As Arthur Holmes also notes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 203ff.

116. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 313.

cal coherence of the Christian system by contrast; once this is done the reasonable thinker would be under obligation to adopt the Bible as true. However, Clark admits that a secular system might be so consistent that we could not crack it; "I do not deny that secular philosophies often attain a degree of consistency.... Even beyond this, I admit that there might be a secular system so carefully constructed that I could not discover the inconsistency."117

And not only might the secular system survive our logical scrutiny, the Christian system has obvious problems which hinder us from adjudging it as coherent. "Admittedly the theistic view of the world faces difficulties. There are questions to which Christianity seems to give an inadequate answer or none at all."118 And to worsen matters, when we come to evaluate the coherence of the Christian system as a system we must concede that "the arrangement of true propositions into a system of axioms and theorems has never been accomplished in theology."119 Clark wants to put forth Christianity as systematically coherent, but the non-Christian can be given no system to evaluate as such. How could one tell whether a set of assertions were in fact systematic if they were, as yet, unsystematized? We

might revert to guesswork or wishful thinking, but we could never be certain or *could* never demonstrate that some future *factor would not throw* a monkey-wrench into the machinery of *the* developing system. Clark *admits that revelation does not provide us with a complete system;120 yet* systematic coherence is what he intends to exhibit in Christianity. It would seem his effort is doomed from the outset.

Now of course Clark has a reply to this problem, and it can be found in the very contexts of the above citations. He seeks to encourage us by saying that, after all, no discipline or philosophy (e.g., zoology or Spinoza) is completely axiomatized anyway. However, given the exposition on apologetics as axiomatization and on the test for truth as coherence by Clark elsewhere, I really cannot see what comfort it affords us as Christians to be told that we are on a sinking ship, but we are sinking with a lot of company! Just how does the failure of others exonerate the failure of the Christian system? Rationalization is no substitute for

117. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 464.

118. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 34.

119. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 69.

120. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 89.

apologetics. If Clark wants to make coherence his test for truth, and if he wants others to decide that Christianity is true, then he simply must set forth Christianity in a coherent system open to investigation; otherwise he really should back off his overextended claim that the Christian system is logically coherent while others are not. While he may hold forth logic and the law of contradiction as principles that should move the reasonable man to reject secularism and adopt the good news of Christ, Clark finally must admit that on his basis "there is no compelling logical reason to believe any particular piece of evidence. This is true of the Gospels."121 In the face of this test of logical coherence to point up the truth of Christianity Clark has to confess (to our consternation) that the Bible contains some contradictions.122 Surely our excitement over the prospect of showing Christianity to be logical (to the utter embarrassment of those illogical secular philosophies) must now begin to wane. Indeed we must begin to waver with timidity when we see Clark, the rationalistic apologist, attempt to avoid the fatality of admitting to inconsistency in his "most coherent system" by reminding us that we can still fall back on guessing as a methodology. He says that because the number of instances of incoherence are small we are still free "to guess

that they will not ultimately prove insoluble."123 We now have second thoughts about Clark's apologetic when, having been told that logical coherence should guide our rational choices, he turns out to counsel us to choose Christianity on the basis of *promised and hoped* for consistency rather than the present and real thing.124 Having been geared-up for a good, solid, logical testing of religious hypotheses, we are not a little disappointed to hear the same "eschatological cop-out" that characterizes the non-Christian philosophies (e.g.: "Sure, our system does not fit the facts, or does not have sufficient evidence, or is logically invalid, or seems ridiculous in light of certain commonsense considerations, but give us time—we're working on it!"). On Clark's basis the reasonable man might express sympathy for the Christian position, but he could not render his assent until the test has actually been passed.

To this point we have noted that Clark's apologetic does not exam-

121. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 368.

122. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 10.

123. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 10.

124. Clark, "Response to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,*

460.

ine enough viable options from non-Christian philosophy, expects a test to be conducted without the standards for examination being decided upon, presumes to show the inconsistency of a non-Christian thought while admitting that this might not always be possible, wants to have the unbeliever pass judgment upon the systematic coherence of a religious hypothesis that is not yet a system, hopes to exhibit the coherence of the Bible while noting its apparent incoherence, and desires the reasonable man to grade the Bible favorably and accept it before it has passed the requisite logical tests. This is all very unacceptable. The perceptive unbeliever is bound to demur. How *effective* can it be to announce that you will disqualify secularism and display the merits of Christianity when you concede that secularism can come across as consistent and Christianity can appear lacking in merit? This kind of apologetical thrust is easily foiled by the non-Christian, and he foils it using the very principles Clark has taught him.

Coherence Test Requires Omniscience

The final blow to Clark's apologetical use of the test for coherence resides in the fact that "the coherence theory cannot be applied with final satisfaction unless one is omniscient";125 even to fault the non-Christian

system as contradictory is the work of omniscience.126 So how can Clark imagine that the coherence test is suitable as an apologetical tool for those persons who are not omniscient? Clark holds that truth is the coherent wholeness of knowledge; but if man never attains to omniscience (as Clark admits), then he never can have the truth (in Clark's sense). Although Clark certainly wants to avoid the implications of his position, I cannot see how he escapes giving the impression that his apologetical system reduces to skepticism. God may be able to apply the coherence test effectively, but it is certain that the human apologist cannot.

Clark's coherence view of truth leads him into manifold difficulties. Since he holds that man cannot understand the infinite number of implications and relations attaching to any assertion he makes, the conclusion implied is that Clark should hold that man cannot understand any of his assertions. We are thankful that Clark himself is a better apologist than his system would lead us to believe, for his verificationalism by means of a test for coherence unwarrantedly exalts logic instead of God's Word, does not insure truth, reduces to triviality, carries with

125. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, 32.

126. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 370.

it a deductive ideal inappropriate for Scripture and the fullness of the theological task, is not a telling method when used by proponents of different world-views, needs as its complement the brute facts of history, requires exhaustion of the live alternatives and settled logical standards, does not always work out to disqualify secularism or reward Christianity (on Clark's basis, remember), eventually abandons its rigorous rational testing, is ineffective, and implies a skepticism wherein the apologist can neither understand his own assertions nor criticize those of others. We need to maintain a more sober evaluation of the prowess of Clark's apologetical method than his writings usually expound; when we are careful to weed through the enthusiasm, Clark himself gives occasional indication (though sometimes without intention) of the real difficulties endemic to his rationalistic apologetic.

CLARK'S PROBABILISM

Flowing from Clark's previously noted suppositionalism and verificationalism is the next objectionable element in his apologetic scheme: probabilism. Because Christianity does not completely pass his rational-coherence test for truth, Clark retreats to the position that the Christian faith (while not fully certified as true) has *fewer* difficulties than the rival hypotheses. The believer may have full persuasion or moral certainty of the truth of the Bible, but from an apologetical viewpoint he cannot

have *complete rational* certainty or intellectual justification.

Again, rather than viewing the Bible as an absolutely necessary presupposition, the *only* possible grounding for intellectual endeavor, Clark speaks of the Christian faith as "the *best* general philosophy,"127 of its formulation of answers to questions of philosophic theory as "a *better* solution,"128 of the Christian outlook as "a *more* consistent view than any other,"129 of the Bible as " *more likely*" the work of God's mind than an accident,130 and Clark offers the Christian revelation (not as an absolute

127. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 95; emphasis Bahnsen's.

128. See Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 142; emphasis Bahnsen's.

129. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 371; emphasis Bahnsen's.

130. Clark, "How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?," *Can I Trust My Bible?,* 24;

demand but) as a "strong *recommendation."131* Since Clark has been unable to demonstrate the truth of the Bible with rational certainty and thereby lay down an unassailable challenge to unbelieving philosophy, he is willing to settle for an evaluation of high probability in the Christian system. Christianity, then, ceases to be the only reasonable position a man can choose and one that must be true if anything else is to be known at

all, and it becomes in Clark's apologetic merely the *most* promising and *least* irrational. The unbeliever *still* has a leg to stand on.

> But if one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life, if one worldview is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle?... Theism is not the only philosophy that faces difficulties. All arguments seem doubtful.... The argument requires a particular type of religion, best exemplified in Christianity. The argument does not aim to *prove* or *demonstrate* that Christianity is true and that Russell is wrong. The aim is to compare.... Which assumption is true is another matter.... Anyone who for some personal motive desires this type of life would, if impressed by the argument, be inclined to adopt a theistic worldview.132

Christianity is probably true, on this basis, but still possibly false. Probabilities *might* suit a person when making decisions in a grocery store, but they are totally inadequate when it comes to a matter of one's personal destiny for eternity. And given the unbeliever's outlook, the problem of

pain and evil, the scarcity of trustworthy reports of an after-life, the alluring force of present indulgence and pleasure, and the religiously negative reports of impressive modern science, all mount up to a high probability against the Christian faith. Moreover, probability offers no firm foundation for intellectual endeavor; if Christianity is the only alternative to skepticism (as Clark maintains) but we must have a degree of skepticism emphasis Bahnsen's.

131. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 110; emphasis Bahnsen's.

132. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 34, 29, 80, 197.

as to *its* truth, then skepticism has engulfed us and won the day anyway. A defense of the faith that, in the long run, must make appeal to probability is simply an inadequate and ineffective apologetic. Just consider the plight of the Clarkian apologetic: Clark completely disqualifies *empirical* evidence;133 says that no *historical* judgment can be certain;134 admits that there is no *logical* reason to accept the Gospels;135 and concedes that his standards of possibility are chosen (not indispensable).136 So why should the unbeliever accept the Bible on Clark's autonomous basis for judgment? The strong impression is that the rational man is left with no alternative except to "leap.'"

KEY CRITICISMS OF CLARK'S APOLOGETIC

Before leaving Clark's apologetic for a consideration of the writings of E.J. Carnell, four critical aspects of Clark's thought should be mentioned. They are his overweening rationalism, doctrinal imperfections, misguided answer to science, and inherent skepticism. These will be examined in order.

Clark's Rationalism

Clark takes pride in calling himself a rationalistic Calvinist137 and confesses great respect for rationality.138 He goes so far as to say that "a Christian must commit himself to rationalism or rationality ... and he must be logical."139 Although we would say that a Christian should strive for consistency, it is going too far to commit oneself to rationalism as a school of thought; this, no more than empiricism, has been a tool forged by the unregenerate for attack upon God's revelation. It was an unhappy oversight for Clark to fail to distinguish between a Christian and non-Christian conception of reason (but in terms of his own thought, Clark probably could not do so). Given Clark's commitment to rationalism, it is no surprise that he should exalt the intellect: "The supreme value in

133. See Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God.*

134. See Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious.*

135. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 368; Clark, *A Christian View of Men*

and Things, 80.

136. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 371.

137. Clark, "Reply to Roger Nicole," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 484.

138. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 59.

139. Clark, "Reply to Roger Nicole," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 479.

the life of man is to be sought in the activity of the intellect as it grasps truth."140 Clark maintains (using an incredibly fallacious argument) that the preponderance of intellectual references for the word "heart" in Scripture "shows the preponderance of the intellect in the personality."141 As he sees it, "Christianity includes the primacy of the intellect."142

However, Clark again fails to note that the Christian and non-Christian do not have the same view of the intellect's function and authority. Furthermore, the Greek notion of the intellect's primacy (which Clark has adopted) simply does not save the non-Christian from the skepticism that Clark seeks to avoid. Clark's deepest theoretical commitment would indeed seem to be an unqualified rationalism. "A satisfactory theory of epistemology must be some sort of apriorism,"143 rather than the requisite Christian presuppositionalism. Clark's outlook would "require a great trust in the law of contradiction."144 Indeed for him *logic* is the transcen-

dental of all meaning and intelligibility;145 further, "language is capable of conveying literal truths because the *laws of logic* are necessary."146 And the refutation and rejection of empiricism rests on the fact that it cannot establish the law of contradiction.147 These are but a few examples of the practical ways in which Nash's (sympathetic) interpretation of Clark's system is substantiated: for Clark "the law of contradiction is the most certain of all principles."148 According to Nash (and uncorrected by Clark in reply), Clark holds that the rational is the real, and the real is the rational.149 In doing so, Clark falls prey to the same fault of non-Christian

140. Gordon Clark, "On the Primacy of the Intellect," *Westminster Theological Journal,* 5.2 (May, 1943): 193.

141. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 93.

142. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 107; see also Clark, "On the Primacy of

the Intellect," *Westminster Theological Journal,* 5.2: 182—195.

143. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 312.

144. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 75.

145. See Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,*

1959, 36; *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 59. See also *Nash's assessment,* "Gordon Clark's

Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 128f.

146. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bibb,* 1959,

41; emphasis Bahnsen's.

147. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 308.

148. Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H.*

Clark, 126.

149. Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H.*

Clark, 171; see also Clark, "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 114(April, 1957): 168.

rationalism: annihilating the individual existence of the particulars of

historical eventuation. "Only the rational is capable of being understood;

and to understand is to reduce multiplicity to unity."150

Everything in an intellectual system must be *logically* connected, says

Clark;151 however, it is clear to most people that *history* is not deducible.

Hence it would appear that Clark is forced to hold either that history does

not constitute an intellectual system, or that absolute logical necessity

(while not observable to finite minds) characterizes the counsel of God.

The first alternative is unacceptable because Christianity is a historical

religion staked on the truth of a calendar fall of man, actual historical

dealings of God with Israel, the incarnation of the Second Person of the eternal Trinity, His death and resurrection in the space-time continuum, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the victorious march of the church into the world until the final *parousia* of Christ. The second alternative has nothing to support it, least of all scriptural considerations.

Another unfortunate trait of Clark's rationalism is his willingness to accept autonomous argumentation. While the philosophical method of Descartes is a perfect example of non-Christian procedure (identifying man in terms of one's own self and without reference to the revelation of God, and then proceeding to identify the world and God in terms of this self-interpreted man), Clark has great compliments for it. According to Clark, the *cogito* argument of Descartes is indubitable152—whereas in fact, if one does not begin with the presupposition of Scripture even his own existence is subject to grave doubt. By beginning with your own existence as certain and the existence of God as problematic, atheism is inevitable. Cornelio Fabro is quite accurate in tracing the roots of modem atheism to the Cartesian cogito.153 Noting Clark's unhealthy respect for rationalism, it gives us pause when we see him bind God to the laws of logic; it is not that we think God inconsistent or a liar, but the *standard* of consistency should be *God's* word, not man's. It seems a bit inconsistent of Clark to criticize Carnell for binding God by human moral expectations

and standards, but then to object to those who say God is not bound by

150. Clark, *Thates to Dewey* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1957), 7.

151. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious,* 179.

152. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 5 If.

153. Cornelio Fabro, *God in Exile: Modern Atheism,* ed. and trans. Arthur Gibson

(Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1968).

human logical expectations or standards.154 On a non-revelational basis the autonomous logician could well find it inconsistent for an immutable God to have a transition from wrath to grace; Abraham could have followed Clark's method and concluded that the supernatural guidance he received with respect to sacrificing Isaac could not logically have been from the true God, who hates human sacrifice. In the spirit of true rationalism Clark declares that theology cannot violate the *norm of logic*;155 he should have taken the theology of Scripture as normative instead. Even when Clark *claims* that logic is not an external test over revelation, in the same paragraph he demonstrates that it actually is a test for revelation in his way of thinking; for he says that anything that does not match up to the law of contradiction "could not constitute a revelation."156

No doubt the most incredible manifestation of Clark's overweening rationalism is his identification of God with logic.157 Clark translates John 1:1, 4: "In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God, and Logic was God.... In logic was life.'"58 Clark goes on to make the impression clear:

Logic is God The law is God thinking.... Hence logic is to be considered as the activity of God's willing.... The Aristotelian definition of God as "thought-thinking-thought" may help us to understand that logic, the law of contradiction, is neither prior to nor subsequent to God's activity-God and logic are one and the same first principle.159

By this bold move Clark thinks he avoids being subject to criticism for subordinating God to logic. However, the artificiality of his position should be plain. He wants logic to determine what "constitutes" genuine revelation, and he wants to avoid the charge of autonomy. But if God

154. Clark , *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 190f.; see Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 167ff.

155. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 59.

156. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 1959, 39.

157. See Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Christianity Today,* December 17, 1965, 24;

Christian View of Men and Things, 268.

158. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 67.

159. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 67f.

Himself *is* the logic by which revelations are tested, how does Clark know this? If he refers to Scriptures, he can no longer make logic a test of revelation; and if he does not refer to Scripture, he proves that at base his philosophy is indeed autonomous. It is clear that Clark is trying to straddle competing positions: rationalism and Christian revelation. Attempting to perform this impossible feat has led to his distorted and dogmatically controlled translation of John 1:1, 4. Clark has reduced God to an abstract epistemological principle, such as might be "revealed" on a certain page of Copi's *Introduction to Logic* (or would it be Carney and Scheer's *Fundamentals of Logic* instead?). God is not a principle of man's reasoning, however, but is the personal Creator who declares the scope, nature, principles, and content of the creature's knowledge. Rational-

ism has always sought to create God in man's image; the error is not alleviated in this procedure simply because one does it in the interest of a rationalistic apologetic.

Furthermore, Clark's exegesis of the prologue to John's Gospel *a la* Aristotle offers no relief from the error of autonomy. The determinative background to this prologue is the Old Testament (in particular, God's word, speaking, and voice), not pagan philosophy of a Greek rationalistic bent. In fact, John's notion of the Logos is antithetical to the Logos speculation of the Greeks. But even a Greek background to the term cannot be identified with what is generally meant by the English term "logic." The only explanation for Clark's abnormal translation of John 1:1, 4 is found in the fact that his system demands it, not in sound exegetical considerations. The repudiation, furthermore, of Clark's identification of God with logic does not commit one to an irrational sort of theology (as Clark is wont to imply). The Logos of God is certainly self-consistent, but that does not make God into a deductive, axiomatized, and propositional *system* or a necessary *principle* of thought!

Having identified God with logic, Clark creates an unfortunate impression when he goes on to identify the image of God in man as logic.160, 161 Th e Logos of Go d is certainly self-consistent, but it is the "image" of

160. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith*, ed. Carl E Henry,

32.

161. For the sake of clarity the editor has removed the following sentence fragment from this point in the original text: "Since logic is the same thing for God and man (a position Clark is wont to imply)." It remains unclear whether Bahnsen had begun to elucidate or critique Clark's position with this fragment. For elucidation the reader should refer to the sources in notes 160 and 162.

God in man. According to Clark, the image of God is that which distinguishes man from the animals, and this must be logic.162 Yet we are hesitant to adopt this line of thought, for although animals may not have linguistic and discursive abilities for writing propositional syllogisms, nevertheless they do draw non-contradictory distinctions and engage in a shallow form of reasoning and drawing conclusions (examine the behavior of your pet dog!). Furthermore, not even all human thinking is cast (or *can* be cast) into syllogistic, logical form. For a more basic and scriptural understanding of the antithesis between man and animal I think one would have to look to the area of personal morality and the ability to make ethical decisions.

Be this as it may, the unfortunate impression that Clark creates in

making logic identical with God Himself and a constituent aspect of man is that of semi-pantheism. Although as a theologian Clark would certainly disavow any hint of pantheism, as a rationalistic apologist he does not disperse the impression of semi-pantheism when he says that "the Divine Mind that encloses or surrounds all others penetrates them completely,"163 or that "there is an area of coincidence between God's mind and our mind,"164 or finally that "this so-called 'human reason' is not so much human as divine."165

The adamant rationalism which has been noted in the above observations could have been avoided with a slightly different view of logic on Clark's part. In the first place, even granting that all meaningful discourse involves a drawing of distinctions, the fact remains that the use of logic is sensible only in a certain metaphysical environment. Logic is not its own foundation, but depends upon the consistency of truth, personal identity, and a fixed ontological frame of reference if it is going to be utilized.166 Since Clark sees man's innate logical ability as due to his creation in God's image, there is all the more reason to expect that Clark should not divorce logic from its metaphysical assumptions. He should use logic in a biblical

162. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 72fF.

163. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things, 322.*

164. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 77.

165. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark, 76.*

166. As Weaver correctly notes, "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 307.

presuppositional framework at all times and not rationalistically abstract it so as to test the coherence of the Bible.

Next, Clark might have shown that in practice the law of contradiction in itself is of trivial value; formal logic is a tool of scholarship and not a final truth.167 The science of logic, after all, is a second-order discipline which argues *about argumentation*; it does not give us the facts of the world, but guides our discovery thereof. Although logic requires ontological grounding, it itself is not some metaphysical machinery of the universe. Strictly speaking, it is *not* the *world* that is logical, but *arguments* that are logical or illogical. Logic presupposes a world where arguments are possible and meaningful; but the laws of logic govern the use of arguments and do not tell us about the world as a whole. When logic is thus conceived as a tool, it becomes clear that the issue is not the law

of contradiction *per se* but the *use* made of it—in which case rationalism would be avoided by the Christian, not embraced.

Next, it should have been reflected in Clark's writings that logic is a *developing* science, not something partaking of academic finality. Aristotle summarized the best rules of argumentation observed by him in his day; Russell felt the need to refine and correct them. Not only is logic a developing science, there are *many* logics; Clark should explain why he thinks a logic patterned after Euclidean geometry has ultimate authority. Yet, noting the work of Kurt Godel,168 we should not stake our apologetic on the superiority of any logical system, it would seem.

Another point that Clark should have recognized is that logic has its limits. Some things, though not unreasonable, are beyond our human ability to reason (e.g., an eternally all-glorious God being glorified in history). God's understanding transcends our logical abilities (Isa. 55:8 f.),169 and while remaining self-consistent God may not even need to use logical rules of inference—much less those that secular philosophy has

167. See Arthur Holmes, *Christian Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Nutley, N. J.:

Craig, 1969) 27.

168. Mentioned earlier; see page 89, and 89 footnote 6 above.

169. Clark does address this passage, but appears to limit its ap-

plication to the quantitative nature of man's knowledge versus God's, while remaining silent as to its qualitative nature which forms the crux of Bahnsen's comment. See Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Cordon H. Clark*, 76-77. Bahnsen further pursues the quantitative/qualitative critique below, pages 187-188.

appropriated throughout history. It should be quite clear that a Christian cannot push his logic to a conclusion that is contrary to the statements of Scripture. So logic indeed has its limitations.

As a consequence of his failure to make the preceding qualifications with respect to the authority of logic, Clark has generated difficulties for himself in his notion of truth as well. According to him truth must be a rational system of logically related propositions;170 his idealistic epistemology suggests an identification of truth and reality.171 Even God's knowledge must be propositional, says Clark.172 Such a notion of truth leads Clark to distort the straightforward assertion of Christ in John 14:6 to the effect that Christ is said to be only the *source* of truth rather than the truth itself.173

In addition to not doing justice to this verse of Scripture, Clark's notion of truth denies the omniscience of God and nullifies general revela-

tion. If God knows only propositions, then He cannot know people and things—in which case He does not know everything. It is also the case that the general revelation of God in nature and in man's constitution is not propositional (if it were, it would be *special* revelation), and on Clark's basis this could not qualify, then, as a revelation of truth. The Bible exhibits a number of uses for "truth." There is the common sense notion of truth (e.g., Deut. 17:4; Eph. 4:25), but there is also the sense in which truth is a way of life to be practiced (e.g., John 3:21; Gal. 5:7; Ps. 26:3). Even more uncommon, however, is the fact that there is such a thing as true bread or true vine (John 6:32; 15:1), and the clearest revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ who Himself *is* the truth (Heb. 1:1—3; John 14:6). So as an alternative to Clark's rationalistic notion of truth one could suggest that truth is conformity to the mind of God in thought, word, or deed, and is founded upon (i.e., presupposes and is guided by) the word of Christ's gospel as illumined by the Holy Spirit.

170. See Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* pp. 24f.; "The Bible as Truth,"

Bibliotheca Sacra, 114 (April, 1957): 158, 168.

171. See Clark, "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra,* 114 (April, 1957): 168;

Arthur Holmes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of*

Gordon H. Clark, 221.

172. Clark, "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra,* 114 (April, 1957): 167.

173. Clark, "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra,* 114 (April, 1957): 169.

Doctrinal Difficulties

A number of doctrinal aberrations accompany Clark's rationalistic apologetic. Some of them have been mentioned already, but others deserve our attention as well. In the first place Clark's apologetic suggests that he has failed to take account of fallen man's total depravity. Although he would theologically assent to the doctrine of total depravity, Clark does not take sufficient account of it in apologetical practice. He holds that reason is a common element between believer and unbeliever174 and that reason enables the sinner to choose "the most plausible solution" that "tends less toward skepticism." Clark would appeal to the image of God in m a n (i.e., logical ability) to test religious hypotheses for their coherence; apparently he has forgotten that the image of God in fallen m a n is no longer normal—it cannot operate properly on its own. Following the apologetical method Clark proposes would imply that m a n is able to choose correctly among rival world-views without the aid of revelation (in fact, he would pass judgment upon what constitutes revelation and what does not in terms of logical con-

sistency). Throughout Clark's writings m a n seems to be encouraged to choose Christianity on purely *intellectual* grounds; the basis of his choice would be its ascertained coherence rather than his repentance. Not only does Clark grant the unregenerate the ability to judge among religious hypotheses by means of a common (unfallen) reason, he also says that the unbeliever has the right to test God and that it is a good thing for the sinner to wield his logic in the process.175

A second point of doctrinal weakness in Clark's apologetic is his view of the value of general revelation. We must disagree when he says that it is dim, restricted, and minimal; and when he asserts that observation of nature is a very unsatisfactory method of obtaining knowledge of God we again demur.176 Apparently overlooking the direct, personal awareness of God that is given all men in the created world, Clark goes so far as to deny that there is any empirical evidence for creation.177 He

174. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theobgical Method,* **102.**

175. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Phibsophy of Gordon H. Clark,* **464f.;**

see also Weaver's relevant criticism, "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist," *The Phi-*

bsophy of Gordon H. Clark, **306.**

176. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* **ed. Carl F. Henry, 15.**

177. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* **ed. Carl F. Henry, 14.**

claims that general revelation is inadequate to show God's full wisdom and power and to provide ethical norms.178 Yet Romans 1 tells us that creation clearly manifests God's attributes, even His power and divinity, and that this revelation is sufficient to guide men into a proper worship of God. So when Clark rhetorically asks, "Who can deny that the savage tribes of the jungles know very little about God?"179 the answer that should be forthcoming is: the apostle Paul! The situation is not that of ignorance but unwillingness to face the knowledge all men have of God by nature. It is because Clark fails to maintain the clarity, sufficiency, necessity, and authority of general revelation that he is able to speak of God as possibly inconveniencing the atheist by hiding on some planet;180 Paul teaches the very opposite. Instead of speaking of an insignificant God who can escape the atheist's search, he says the revelation of God's divinity and power are *everywhere* present and clearly seen; thus God confronts man, even the self-proclaimed atheist, in every fact.

Accompanying Clark's unsatisfactory view of general revelation is an unsatisfactory element in his view of special revelation. He claims

that special revelation needs to be systematized,181 that axiomatization is the ideal of theology but not the form of the Bible,182 and that "the aim of the theologian is to deduce the doctrines from their Scriptural matrix and arrange them in systematic, logical form."183 Furthermore, he claims that the literal statements of theological truth are more adequate than other types of expression.184 In all this Clark impugns the *formal* adequacy of Scripture. The Bible is *both* materially and formally adequate; it has no need for someone to come after it and "systematize" it.

Scripture has an order and arrangement and progression all its own; it was planned this way by God and is completely satisfactory for the task it is intended to perform. The poetic sections cannot be improved upon by reducing them to "literal" indicatives (whatever Clark means by "literal"). Moreover, there are *many* kinds of system; Clark is overextending himself to presume that a logical system is the only kind a systematic

178. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 28f.

179. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 15.

180. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education,* 44.

181. Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational," *Revelation and the Bible,* 41.

182. Clark, *KarlBarth's Theological Method,* 217.

183. Clark, "Several Implications (Wheaton Lecture III)," *The Philosophy of Gordon*

H. Clark, 122.

184. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation,* 143, 146.

theologian would properly be interested in.

The final point of doctrine we need to comment upon in Clark's writ-

ings pertains to the epistemological attributes of God, in particular His incomprehensibility. Since Clark was a leading figure in a theological controversy between 1944 and 1948 which had as its main focus the incomprehensibility of God and which was triggered by Clark's own conception thereof, it might seem that we could get to the root of the matter by examining the documents involved; in particular we might want to analyze the paper entitled "The Answer to a Complaint against Several Actions and Decisions of the Presbytery of Philadelphia taken in a Special Meeting held on July 7, 1944" (the "Complaint" mentioned in this title contained objections to certain theological views of Clark). However, since the formulation of the reply found in "The Answer" is not Clark's own, it would be methodologically faulty and a sign of poor scholarship if anyone used this document as the basis for criticism of *Clark himself.* Only what Clark actually authored can serve as a solid foundation for criticism of *his* views. So we must overlook "The Answer" with the simple indication to the reader that, to the degree that this document faithfully reflects Clark's own position, appropriate consultation could be made of the critical reviews of "The Answer" in the *Minutes* of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth General Assemblies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1946 and 1948) as well as in F. H. Klooster's *The Incomprehensibility of God in the Orthodox Presbyterian Conflict*;185 in these writings the issues are fully discussed.

Clark's own view of the incomprehensibility of God is easily ascertained in his article, "The Bible as Truth," and his book, *What Do Presbyterians Believe?186* It is quite simply the position that God's knowledge must be a logical system of propositions, and we do not know all of them. Outside of the fact that God may come to know by an eternal intuition and man depends on a discursive process, the difference in their knowledge is *quantitative.* However, this doctrine of Clark's is insufficient. It is not enough to affirm that, even with all the logical relations and implications, God simply knows *more* than man. Nor is it enough to distinguish between *ways* of knowing, for this is only to say that God *receives* information differently from the way we *receive* information. God should be viewed as the "original of truth"; that is, He *is* the original truth, He

185. (Franeker, NL: T. Wever, 1951).

186. See especially p. 30.

originates all truths, and He is the *standard* of all truth. God's mind alone is self-attesting and originally creative. All our thinking must be brought in line with His; we must think His thoughts after Him in a receptive and re-creative manner. He, on the other hand, need not compare His thoughts with anything, for His knowledge is receptive only in that it is

creative knowledge. God does not come to knowledge—even by an eternal intuition—but creates knowledge; being perfectly self-conscious of his creative activity and plan, God can anthropomorphically be said to receive knowledge.

Hence a qualitative distinction must be maintained between the knowledge of the Creator and of the creature; the former is originally creative, but the latter is receptively re-creative. God's *knowing* can never be man's *knowing*, for man's thought is dependent and uncreative. This in no way implies that the standard or referent point of God's knowledge and man's knowledge are different; it is *God's mind* for *both* God and man. Nor is this to say that our language does not literally apply to God; there is continuity between the meaning of terms as applied to God and as applied to the creature. God, after all, *truthfully* speaks of Himself to us in *our language.* And finally, *what* God knows (e.g., a state of affairs in the world) is *not* different from *what* man knows when he [man] is thinking correctly (i.e., thinking God's thoughts after Him in obedience to His revelation). It has already been noted above that there are grave difficulties in maintaining that God's knowledge is propositional only; not even man's knowledge is restricted to propositions (e.g., he "knows" his wife, or "knows" how to play the piano) or can always be expressed in propositions. By placing his view of knowledge as propositional at the base of

his doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, Clark would seem to limit God beyond the limits upon *man's* knowledge! The incomprehensibility of God has more packed into it than a mathematical difference of propositions. No description by the creature can accurately describe God's thinking, for the qualitative aspect of being the Creator is crucial at every point in His thought. In saying that God's thought is always original and creative, we affirm that God's knowledge has a different logical and metaphysical status from man's.

Furthermore, in contrast to God's thought, human thinking must always have a quality of wonder about it; while God is never in awe about things, we can never know a truth the way God knows it. Hence a quality of surprise characterizes our knowledge. In turning from our

rationalistic reliance u p o n o u r own thoughts a n d ways to God's revelation we learn to wonder at the world; in doing so we w o n d e r at the incomprehensible G o d who m a d e and directs it. In a f f i r m i n g God's incomprehensibility we submit to His thoughts a n d learn that the creature must never covet His epistemological prerogatives a n d attributes. T h e difference between God's knowledge a n d man's knowledge is *qualitative;* G o d is not only omniscient, He is incomprehensible.

Clark's Answer to the Attacks of Science

We come now to a discussion of Clark's apologetic against the attacks of science on the Christian faith a n d the weakness of his method. As Clark sees it, if Christianity is going to safeguard itself against the types of criticisms raised by science it needs a philosophy that c a n call into question the finality of scientific conclusions.187 T h i s Clark finds in w h a t he calls the best available philosophy of science: operationalism.188 Clark's position can be s u m m a r i z e d with a few quotations f r o m his article, " T h e N a t u r e of the Physical Universe."189

> Now, in view of the absence of basic definitions, in view of the chaos of our time, a n d in view of the constant replacement of one scientific theory by another, it should be quite evident that science can provide no firm g r o u n d for denying the possibility of miracles or for m a k i n g any confident declaration r e g a r d i n g spiritual realities....
>
> O p e r a t i o n a l i s m asserts philosophically...that science provides no knowledge of n a t u r e itself.... W h a t twentieth-century science has come to is the view t h a t science will never, c a n never describe how n a t u r e works. Science does not a i m at truth; it aims at invention.... Scientific concepts...are plans for action.... But science now has

n o t h i n g to do with describing or explaining nature. Its

a i m is invention, that is, control of nature.... But now

187. Clark, "Revealed Religion," *Fundamentals of the Faith,* ed. Carl F. Henry, 29-30.

188. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*, 92.

189. In C. F. H. Henry, ed., *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (New York: Channel,

1964), 129-143. T h e ideas expressed are also found in Clark's longer work, *Philosophy*

of Science and Belief in God.

the present chaos in science itself, and the operational

philosophy, enforcing the double lesson that science is not

stable and is not a transcript of nature, form a propitious

situation in which to show the futility of scientific objec-

tions to Christianity.190

Since science cannot be true, holds Clark, it cannot challenge Christi-

anity.191 He declares that "All the laws of physics are false,"192 and that

"the most certain truth of physics is that physics is not true—not true

as an account of what nature is and how nature works. T h e concepts of

physics are the operations of the physicist."193 So Clark sees science as

having an instrumental value (e.g., building bridges) but as not supplying us with "truths" about the world that could contradict theological propositions. There is an odd inconsistency in Clark's view of science. Having said that physics cannot be *true,* he also says that science cannot be *cognitive.* Science is non-cognitive operationalism, he maintains.194 However, if something is non-cognitive it is not subject to the predicates of truth or falsity; yet Clark calls science *both* non-cognitive and false.195 He goes so far as to say that perhaps science is non-sense;196 but an analysis of Clark's twofold assertion about science seems closer to being nonsensical! Clark makes it clear that he is embracing the most recent philosophy of science in his operationalism; he feels that the Christian must take advantage of the skeptical attitudes that are currently in vogue.197 This Clark does to defend the faith. However, we really must question the wisdom of such apologetical methodology. C. S. Lewis well expresses the point we would make against Clark:

Science is in continual change.... We must be very cau-

190. Clark, "The Nature of the Physical Universe," *Christian Faith and Modern Theology,* 140, 142f.

191. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things,* 209, 216, 228.

192. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 64, 74.

193. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 80.

194. Clark, "Secular Philosophy (Wheaton Lecture I)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H.*

Clark, 42f.; *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 92.

195. See Clark, *The Phihsophy of Science and Belief in God,* 64, 92.

196. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 27.

197. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God,* 82, 91; "The Nature of the

Physical Universe," *Christian Faith and Modern Theology,* 143; *Karl Barth's Theological*

Method, 65.

consistentpresuppositionalism

tiousofsnatchingatanyscientifictheorywhich,forthe

moment,seemstobeinourfavour.Wemay *mention* such

things;butwemustmentionthemlightlyandwithout

claimingthattheyaremorethan"interesting."...Ifwe

trytobaseourapologeticonsomerecentdevelopmentin

science,weshallusuallyfindthatjustaswehaveputthe

finishingtouchestoourargumentsciencehaschanged

its mind and quietly withdrawn the theory we have been

using as our foundation stone. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*

["IfeartheGreeksevenwhentheybeargifts"—from

Virgil's *Aeneid]* isasoundprinciple.198

Thetypeofapologeticagainstscience Clarksuggestsdoesnotdemand

thatthescientistacceptChristianitybutsimplygetsscienceoffthe

Christian'sbacktemporarily—andatthecostofadepreciatingviewof

scienceatthat.

Althoughthepresentauthorfavorsaviewofsciencethat sees that dis-

ciplineutilizing *models* for operationalpurposes—rather than Baconian

"facts"-Idonotconcludethatsciencehasnorighttomake *truth* claims.

Onemuststopandwonderwhatkindofdescription Clark wouldbe will-

ingtodesignateas"true"!Eventhesimpleeyeballobservationthat"the

tableisgreen"couldberenderedsubjecttonon-cognitiveevaluationofan

operation in Clark's sense. Infactmany, ifnotall, statementscanbeviewed

ashavingoperationalmeaning. EvenClark'scherishedlawsoflogic do

not *describe* theworldbutdirectusinargumentative

operations', t h e r u l e s

o f i n f e r e n c e s t a t e t h e p r o p e r w a y s o f d e d u c i n g c o n c l u s i o n s (an o p e r a t i o n) .

W h e n I say t h a t " t h e t a b l e i s g r e e n " I c a n b e u n d e r s t o o d a s s a y i n g t h a t i f

s o m e o n e w a l k e d i n t o t h e r o o m h e w o u l d e x p e r i e n c e a c e r t a i n s e n s a t i o n

(an o p e r a t i o n o f e m p i r i c a l n a t u r e i n v o l v i n g light, c o l o r f r e q u e n c y , r e t i n a

r e a c t i o n , etc.) a n d w o u l d b e i n a p o s i t i o n t o a s s e n t t o m y v e r a c i t y (a g a i n ,

a n o p e r a t i o n) . B y s a y i n g t h a t s c i e n c e o n l y r e n d e r s o p e r a t i o n a l t r u t h s a n d

n o t d e s c r i p t i v e t r u t h s C l a r k m a y h a v e s a i d s o m e t h i n g t r u e , b u t o n l y trivi-

ally t r u e . H e m a k e s t h e s a m e m i s t a k e t h a t T h o m a s K u h n m a k e s a t t h e

e n d of h i s b o o k , *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* i.e., t h i n k i n g t h a t an

o p e r a t i o n a l f r a m e w o r k m a k e s all t a l k o f scientific " t r u t h " m e a n i n g l e s s a n d

u n i m p o r t a n t . S c i e n c e c o u l d r e c a s t all of its l a w s or c o n c l u s i o n s *into predic-*

tive a s s e r t i o n s (e.g., i f y o u d r o p t h e b a l l f r o m s o h i g h o f f t h e g r o u n d i t will

198. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics,* 92.

hit the ground in such and such a time, given the measuring devices and their degrees of accuracy, which are specified), and no one would deny that these assertions can be true or false (to find out, simply follow the instructions and watch!). A "fact" simply states what is the case when the mentioned state of affairs actually obtains. Given this framework, why should science be deprived of giving us "facts"?

The way to defend Christianity against science is not to be found in trying to pull the rug out from under all science. The real problem arises when scientists do not recognize that they are working with *models* and the normal-science problems that these models set up for answering; when a model is expanded into a metaphysical creed or naturalistic interpretation of reality, then the scientist has to be reminded of what his limits and tools really are. Furthermore, he should be shown how operational models in science need the wider, theological model provided by revelation. The kinds of faith that science still uses, even under an operational understanding of that discipline, need to be undergirded with Christian faith. The Christian did not need to wait for this current operational analysis of science to arise before he could say with Clark that science has no ground for denying miracles; it has always been the

case that science was rootless without Christian presuppositions, and so science could repudiate a miraculous Christianity only at the expense of its own life and practice. ,An immanent critique of science's procedures and calling into question the metaphysical finality of its conclusions is fine as a "debris clearing" tactic (it would function to get the scientist's mind off his "idol"); but the kind of criticism that Clark goes into is misguided, seeing that it undercuts science altogether.

Moreover, it does not go *far enough* in the *right* direction, since it does not show the scientist the absolute necessity of embracing the Christian faith. Clark's ploy is only defensive—and defensive with only the best tools of pagan science! A transcendent, dogmatic criticism is necessary, one that urges the repentance of the scientist. Clark's view of science as non-cognitive surrenders the revelational character of all facts and all research into God's world; thus there can be no forceful, positive approach or challenge to the scientist by the Christian apologist. Science must not be allowed to be pragmatically free from matters of "truth" or else God's rights in the area of science will be surrendered. Instead of denying science any right to statements of "truth," Clark should have suggested something to the effect that a true statement is one that does not mislead its hearer as to what

is the case; in this way both theology and science would be concerned with "truth" and could work together. Then the non-Christian scientist could be challenged with respect to the metaphysical level of interpretation of his scientific work. But Clark's view of science leaves the scientist not responsible to God and His truthful, clear revelation in nature. It is insufficient merely to "make room" for the Christian faith by setting science free to its autonomy and recasting its cognitive status. By contrast, a presuppositional apologetic holds that all men, including scientists, must find God's truth revealed to them *everywhere*; all facts are what they are because of God's sovereign scheme and direction, and as such the scientist is clearly confronted by God, His power and divine nature, continually. The scientist cannot escape the necessity of basing all his interpretative efforts on God's revelation as explicated in Scripture.

Clark's Implicit Skepticism

Finally we must mention the fact that Clark's apologetic, because of its contrived method of having Christianity escape criticism, itself reduces to skepticism. According to Clark there is *no knowledge* to be obtained except in God's revelation and deductions therefrom.199 This position is built upon the foundation of Clark's refutation of empiricism in his many writings. Since nothing except Scripture can be true, or known to be true, then Scripture is of course safe from criticism.

However, Clark also holds that the *coherence* of the Bible recommends it over competing hypotheses of a religious nature. This reliance on coherence joined with a repudiation of empiricism can be used against Clark's own apologetic, thus invalidating it. Clark, as a genuine Christian, would undoubtedly object to the following conclusion:

1. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:16).
2. There is none righteous, not even one (Rom. 3: 10).
3. Therefore, no prayer accomplishes anything.

Yet to refute this conclusion Clark must retreat to exegesis of the passag-

199. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 90-92.

es involved (thereby showing that it is improper to combine them in this manner), and exegesis depends upon things like lexicography, comparative linguistics, archeology and cultural studies, etc. These disciplines are dependent to various extents, of course, upon empirical methodology and study. T h u s Clark, with his repudiation of empiricism, must avoid exegesis; thereby we see that Clark must accept the conclusion of the above argument. But Clark, knowing that his own prayer of repen-

tance and faith must have accomplished something if he is to be saved from the wrath of G o d due to sinners, would certainly lay claim to the promises of Scripture that G o d will heed our prayers.

T h u s a fourth proposition must be introduced; for instance,

4. A n d everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive (Matt. 21:22).

But proposition 3 contradicts proposition 4, and this means that the Bible is logically inconsistent with itself. Failing to be a rationally coherent system of propositions and deductions, the Bible (on Clark's basis) would have to be false. Such is the inherent skepticism of Clark's apologetic. If we accept it, we must reject biblical Christianity!

Further examples of the difficulties Clark gets into by his immoderate rejection of all empiricism and affirmation that there is no knowledge outside of the Bible can be given. George Mavrodes points out that the same hyper-skeptical reasoning that Clark uses against the person who thinks he can certainly *know* who his wife is may effectively be used against Clark's own feeling that he can *know* what the Bible is and says—the possibility of substitution by an evil demon is always there, in the case of one's wife or one's Bible.200 Both Mavrodes and R. Nash have pointed out that Clark's rejection of empirical experience implies that he cannot even know what the Bible teaches.201 Nash indicates that such

an implication reduces Clark's apologetic to skepticism and hence, on

Clark's own standards, to falsity:

A R G U M E N T I — Clark contends:

P I . Any position that leads to skepticism is false.

200. George I. Mavrodes, "Revelation a n d Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Gordon*

H. Clark, 247.

201. *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 247f., 174.

P 2 . Empiricism leads to skepticism.

C1. Empiricism is false.

A R G U M E N T II — Furthermore, Clark argues:

P3. Man cannot know anything through his senses

(from C1).

P4. Human knowledge is limited to the contents of di-

vine revelation (The Bible).

P5. But man cannot know the content of the Bible save

through his senses.

C2. Therefore, man cannot know the truths God has

revealed in the Bible.

A R G U M E N T III

P6. The only knowledge available to man is contained

in the Bible (from P4).

P7. But, for Clark, man cannot attain this knowledge

(from C2).

C3. It follows that Clark's view reduces to skepticism.

C4. It follows further that Clark's view is false

(from P1).202

Clark's reply to the above criticism of his position is simply unsatisfactory. First he claims that his critics are obligated to refute his own argument against empiricism before their criticisms can be meaningful.203 This is mere question-begging. It is perfectly acceptable to refute an opponent's position by a reduction of it to absurdity, and this is what Nash has done. Under this circumstance Nash is under no obligation to answer Clark's (absurd) repudiation of empiricism. From a Christian viewpoint Nash's argument against Clark is even more telling-and should be reckoned with by Clark. Consider:

202. Ronald H. Nash, "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophy of*

Gordon H. Clark, 174f.

203. Clark, "Reply to Ronald H. Nash," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* 414f.

1. God makes an absolute demand upon our lives.

2. Hence, in obedience to God we must reject anything which hinders obedience to God's demand.

3. Clark's repudiation of empiricism prevents us from knowing God's Word (from Nash's Argument II).

4. If we cannot know what God's Word says, we cannot obey His demand.

5. Therefore, Clark's repudiation of empiricism hinders obedience to God's demand (from 3 and 4).

6. Consequently, Clark's repudiation of empiricism must be rejected (from 5 and 2).

Clark's second reply to Nash's criticism seems hard to believe. I can only hope that I have misread him, but each rereading gives the same impression. Clark holds that written words (which, we remember, have to do with the Bible in this context) do *not* communicate truth after all; everything signified by these words was already in our knowledge, and the words serve to remind us of that fact. God, after all, is the One who does the teaching through direct revelation or illumination although by means of written words.204 Such a view does great damage to the doc-

trine of the necessity of revelation; the Bible no longer informs us, but only brings an innate knowledge to consciousness (like heat applied to invisible ink). Furthermore, this position could easily be pushed toward the death of a thousand qualifications: What is the difference between being "reminded" of something that I have never been conscious of and simply being consciously *informed* for the first time? Moreover, if all people have this knowledge innately but only need to be reminded of it, why should there be any differences in biblical interpretation? Did different interpreters have different innate knowledge? Or does the Bible remind some people better than others? As to Clark's idea that God is the real teacher, we must note that Clark here denies the reality and necessity of secondary causes. God is the real cause of a windmill turning its blades, but this does not reduce the wind to a pseudo-cause! At its best (which is still uncommendable) Clark's reply means that the Holy Spirit grants a form of inspiration to all men (not just prophets and apostles)

204. See Clark, "Reply to Ronald H. Nash," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 415f.

whereby they ascertain the truths of God's word directly—in which case the Bible's indications of a special influence of the Holy Spirit upon the

authors of Scripture is trivial. Clark's reply to Nash's criticism just cannot be accepted by a Christian or even a clear-thinking unbeliever. It is self-refuting and at odds with basic Christian beliefs.

Clark's view that no knowledge is possible outside of revelation must be rejected also because it prevents us from drawing any ethical conclusions. We can know that it is forbidden to take any property which is not our own (because the Bible so), but we cannot know what property is ours and what is our neighbor's (because the Bible does not tell us this). So we could never conclude that taking any particular piece of merchandise was stealing, or that it was not. Ethical chaos would result—as well as the collapse of civilization. On Clark's principles he could never confess, "I know that the Bible is God's true Word," for while Scripture claims to be God's Word, it neither asserts nor implies that *Gordon Clark* knows this to be the case! For all these reasons, then, we see that Clark's apologetic actually reduces to skepticism and so is unacceptable.

C O N C L U S I O N

Gordon Clark has made good points of presuppositional analysis in his writings from place to place, but we have found that as a whole his system is *not* genuinely *presuppositional* and his presuppositions are not *biblical.* Furthermore we have noted that numerous difficulties attach to his apologetic *method* and that it is *ineffective* on many counts. Clark's

rationalism is basically incompatible with presuppositionalism and with Reformed theology, and his rationalistic apologetic is not an adequate challenge to unregenerate thought.

C H A P T E R 5

EDWARD J. CARNELL

As was the case with Gordon Clark, the writings of E.J. Carnell reflect accurate presuppositional analysis in places; a sampling of the mis reproduced below. In these observations Carnell concurs with the position espoused by Van Til.

> God is truth because He is the Author of all facts and all meaning . . . Since the mind of God perfectly knows reality, truth is a property of that judgment which coincides with the mind of God. If man, thus, fails to say about reality what God says about it, he has made an error.1

When one begins his philosophy apart from the assumption of the existence of a rational God, he has thrown himself into a sea of objectively unrelated facts. Even in infinity a finite man could not succeed in uniting the endless facts which are sired out of the womb of chance.

A n d e v e n i f h e d i d , h i s i n t e r p r e t a t i o n w o u l d b e s u b j e c t t o c h a n g e w i t h o u t n o t i c e , f o r t h e f l u x o f r e a l i t y m i g h t s h i f t a t a n y m o m e n t . 2

1. E . J . Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1948), 46f.

2. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 123.

C O N S I S T E N T PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

Christianity assumes the existence of the God W h o has

revealed Himself in Scripture to solve both metaphysical

and epistemological problems.3

Since God is the definition of consistency ... the law of

contradiction has final meaning only in relation to God.4

I have no interest in proving the existence of God.... His

existence is the *sine qua non* for all demonstration.5

The creature-Creator relationship is inviolable.6

Just as time and eternity are two orders of being, so the mind

of man and the mind of God are two orders of thought.7

The universe is ordered by [God's] personal interests, not

logic.... In history, then, there is no surd, inexplicable,

or antinomy. History is as rational at every point as the

rational God Who decrees its movement.8

Being contingent upon God's will, it is this Will, and not

an antecedent system of logic, which gives meaning to

the movement of the space-time world.9

God is God, not man. Two orders of being are being jux-

taposed, and we must not force on the other conditions

which define normalcy in the one.10

To subject God to abstract standards is a proof that God

is not man's highest ultimate.11

3. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 96.

4. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 60.

5. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 109;

An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, 159.

6. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 185.

7. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic*, 278.

8. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic*, 247; *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*,

296.

9. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 40.

10. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952),

336 f.

11. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 248.

God's sovereignty is the metaphysical foundation of the Christian world-view.... God gives critical account of himself to no one; there is no supreme court above him.... God is the final criterion of goodness; what he does is good because he does it.12

Without revelation, there is no truth; for revelation is the light in which we see light.13

The power by which the heart is enabled to see that the word of God is true is the Holy Spirit. T h e word of God is thus self-authenticating. It bears its own testimony to truth; it seals its own validity. If the word required something more certain than itself to give it validity, it would no longer be God's word.... It would be a derogation to the efficiency of revelation to suppose that anything more than God's Spirit is needed to seal the word to the hearts of believers.14

The surest proof one can have that his faith in God's

word is valid is the internal witness of the Spirit of God in his heart.15

It is my conviction that man's difficulty is not lack of knowledge, but lack of moral courage to act on the knowledge he already has.... Only a refusal to be spiritually honest prevents one from consciously recognizing the place of God in his life.16

If we try to come to the Bible with a principle of selectivity found outside of the Bible, we render the Bible needless, since we can accept of it only what coincides with the truth which we had before we ever came to Scripture in the first place.17

12. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 270.

13. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 156.

14. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 66.

15. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 68.

16. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 27.

17. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 198.

The Christian, having chosen as his logical starting

point the existence of the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture, is admonished, as an implication of this starting point, to hew to the implications of this decision in every phase of life.18

Rational self-sufficiency is a sign of ignorance, not learning.... The Christian denies the competency of man's mind to know reality without revelation, while the non-Christian confesses it.19

But, being in defection by their sins, what they see is vitiated. Thus, they are not able to see and appreciate that one of the peculiar characteristics of this God is that He is the Creator of the world and the Savior of men.20

Technically speaking, whenever a man talks and expects something to be meant by it, he is resorting to a prerogative which belongs to the Christian alone.21

Without Christianity, science has no metaphysical, epistemological, or ethical frames of reference within which to give world-view meaning to the facts it colligates.22

What a man thinks of Jesus Christ, therefore, determines his entire view of God and man.23

The very nature of Christianity demands that there be

no common ground between the system of the godly and

the system of the ungodly, for a man's attitude toward

what he considers to be the highest logical ultimate in

reality determines the validity of his ... starting point, his

method, and his conclusion.24

18. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 212.

19. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* p. 279; *An Introduction to Christian*

Apologetics, 201.

20. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 171.

21. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 212.

22. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 232.

23. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 212.

114. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 103, Bahnsen's emphasis.

T h e C h r i s t i a n b e l i e v e s t h a t s t a r t i n g p o i n t c o n t r o l s b o t h

m e t h o d a n d c o n c l u s i o n . 2 5

H o w e v e r , a s w a s t h e c a s e w i t h C l a r k , C a r n e l l d o e s n o t b u i l d h i s e n t i r e

a p o l o g e t i c a l s y s t e m o n t h i s b o l d C h r i s t i a n c h a l l e n g e . T h e s o l i d p r e s u p p o -

sitionalismreflectedinthesequotesisnotmaintainedbyCarnellthrough-

outhiswritings,anditisnotmadetocountasbasicargumentation.In

fact,itisplainlycontravened.Withdisappointmentwenotethatthelarger

portionofCarnell'swritingisgivenovertoatypeofapologeticthatabro-

gatesthecommendableassertionsabove.Hecommitsmanyofthesame

errorsasdoesClark;wherethisisthecaseweshallindicatetheposition

ofCarnellthatisnotapprovedofandrelyuponthelongerdiscussionof

Clarktoexplainthereasonforourdisapprobation.

CARNELL'SAUTONOMOUSSTARTINGPOINT

InthefirstplacewenotethatthetruthofScriptureisnotCarnell'sab-

solutepresuppositionwhich,astheverbalrevelationfromGod,isnec-

essarytoallphilosophizingandwhichfunctionsasthefinalcriterion

oftruthtobecriticallyappliedtoallnon-Christianwaysofthought.

HenceCarnellpositsonlyarelativeantithesisbetweenChristianityand

otherreligiouscommitments. Asheseesit, Christianityis (merely) the

higheststageorformofreligion—insteadoffundamentallychalleng-

ingallrivals, Christianitymovesbeyondthem. Itisthetoprungofthe

ladderorhighestlinkinthechain.26 Bycontrastthepresuppositionalist

willwanttoholdthat*only* Christianityisavalidreligious commitment,

thatitisanecessarypresuppositiontoallintellectualactivitiesoflife—

therebyrulingoutallotherreligions. Carnelldeniesthepeerlessdomi-

nationofChristthatisinvolvedinsuchapresuppositional approach; he

saysthatChrist*built upon* humanismratherthanderogating it.2' With

suchanoutlookitisnosurprisethatCarnellcouldidentifytheChristian

metaphysicwithPlatonism.-8 Suchconfusionsasthese preventaviewof

theantithesisandabsolutenecessityofbiblicalChristianity.

25. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 123.

26. See Carnell, "Preface," *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion.*

27. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 276.

28. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 86, 127.

The Word of God Not Self-Verified

Indeed Carnell admits for us that his apologetic aim is not to show the absolute need of Christian presuppositions but merely to show "how Christianity is able to answer the fundamental questions of life as adequately as, if not more adequately than, any other world-view."29 So then, God's revelation is not necessary for evaluation and choice between ultimate values, but certain *self-evident* truths guide us in this area instead.30 The Christian God is not indispensable for a balanced world view in Carnell's system, for according to it a balanced life is constituted by clarity, objectivity, facts, logic, and conscience.31 Apparently it is this combination that will bring us to a Christian outlook rather than *vice versa!*

In the place of God, logic is taken by Carnell as the transcendental of meaningfulness;32 love is the precondition of all value;33 and the eventuation of history determines the possibility of miracles.34 As with Clark, Carnell applies only immanent criticisms of his non-Christian opponents and never comes to the place where a transcendent evaluation based on the Word of God is used against them.35 In fact, when he deals

with the theological position of universalism Carnell still does not bring in Scripture but depends on extraneous considerations for his refutation.36 In *Christian Commitment* as well as *Philosophy of the Christian Religion* Carnell analyzes men and their sinful predicament in terms of experience rather than the Word of God—in reading these books, simply note where and how Scripture is brought into the consideration, and contrast that to the free use of extraneous explanation and argumentation. One notes that Carnell can arrive at what he considers to be many sure and safe conclusions without even consulting Scripture as a trustworthy presupposition.37 In line with this, one is said to be *certain* with respect to a

29. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 10.

30. Carnell, "Preface," *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion.*

31. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 24; *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,*

71.

32. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 184, 185, 187.

33. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 211.

34. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959),

93.

35. For example, see Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 20ff., as he deals

with hedonism, Marxism, positivism, rationalism, and humanism.

36. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 389f.

37. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 211, 222, 255.

particular question about *man,* while with reference to God the answer to that question remains *uncertain*;38 quite apart from an understanding of God we can arrive at an unquestionable understanding of man.

That Scripture is not an absolute presupposition for Carnell is also indicated by the fact that he grants that science can be done without a Christian foundation,39 and hence he ends up deferring to the conclusions of science and allowing them to dictate his understanding of topics on which Scripture teaches contrary to "science."40 This is a fatal move; by it Carnell has left the authority of Scripture as an absolute presupposition of all thought and substituted an autonomous guide which is allowed to call even God's Word into question. What Carnell ends up with is the authority of the "expert" (e.g., W. F. Albright) who can *establish* for us "that the Bible is *almost* throughout a reliable account of historical events";41 so then, the Christian "is pleasantly *surprised* to discover the jot-and-tittle correspondence of the Bible to the *facts."42*

By contrast, the presuppositionalist begins with God's Word as the

true and reliable standard by which all other thoughts are judged. However, Carnell looks to the human self rather than to God as a firm starting point and guide for his apologetic. He makes much of his analysis of *self*-transcendence, s *elf*-indignity, *self*-determination, and the free self?43 and these are used as the standard for accepting or rejecting any particular world-view.44 The autobiographical method of *Christian Commitment* also demonstrates this point; in the book Carnell wants to examine the moral-spiritual environment and the inwardness of philosophy in terms of the *self* and with respect to the way of knowing by moral self-acceptance (wherein one is transformed by the duties that already hold him) so that we might arrive at a knowledge of God.45 In this Carnell admits that he is catering to the modern spirit:

The defense must answer to the spirit of the times.... The

38. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 205f.

39. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 214fF.

40. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 95fF.; e.g., man's immediate or mediate

creation.

41. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theohgy,* 89; Bahnsen's emphasis.

42. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 109; Bahnsen's emphasis.

43. See Carnell, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 67ff.

44. Carnell, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 118.

45. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 4 -8, 22.

climate of our modern world is dynamic and existential....
That is why we have sought to impress the contemporary
mind with evidences drawn from man's marvelous power
of moral and rational self-transcendence.46

In passing we can hardly overlook the inconsistency of Carnell when later in this same book he stresses that it is the will of man that is corrupted by sin,47 for this fact undermines his whole approach of following the way of knowledge by *moral* self-acceptance! By beginning with the *self* Carnell sees his apologetic as adjusting to the existential spirit of our day, and since this existentialism has deep roots in the philosophic method of Descartes it should be no surprise to us that Carnell declares, "I have always been warmly attracted to the Cartesian starting point, for it has close affinities with my own procedure."48 The error involved in this was discussed under Clark. What is important to note is that by this method Scripture is *not presupposed",* rather than being foundational, it is brought in only *later*—after an autonomous argument or examination of personal experience has been used for guidelines and information 49

Selfhood as an Ultimate Criterion

As Carnell sees it, the citation of Scripture is not enough in an argument. Having noted the golden rule as stated by Christ, Carnell says, "If we expect to establish the validity of the practical imperative, however, we must do it by a patient application of moral self-acceptance."50 Immediately following this Carnell replies to the person who thinks that Scripture "will not be improved by the strategies of human reason," that "a man of character can believe nothing until it is established by sufficient evidences."51 Indeed, if one merely subordinated his thinking to authoritative Scripture, Carnell thinks he would destroy his individuality.

If we submit to a particular book, church, or priestly

46. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* vii—viii.

47. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 198.

48. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 37.

49. See Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 151 f., 163f., 167ff., 169f., 1741F.,

176f., 179ff., 185.

50. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 82.

51. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 82f.

caste ... the counsel of Kierkegaard, is again germane. Whenever individuals rely on objective security as an escape from moral decision, they jeopardize their own individuality.... Neither book, church, nor priestly caste can relieve us of the responsibility of closing the gap between descriptive essence [i.e., man's natural features, p. 16] and the imperative essence [i.e., freedom to create rectitude, pp. 16 f.]; and any attempt to do so would rob us of selfhood.52

Yet as the presuppositionalist sees it, submission to the particular book revealed by God is not an escape from, but a yielding to, moral decision; it is not the destruction of "freedom" but the proper use thereof. So we note that Carnell does not presuppose the authority of Scripture but would bring it in only later in an argument, and the citation of it there is insufficient without established evidences. One must establish and defend his right to appeal to the Bible, says Carnell,53 and when Carnell does appeal to Scripture he is anxious to tell us that "we are not abandoning that spirit of verification which we have defended up to this point."54 Thus when Carnell views the doctrine of Scripture's inerrancy to be an inference that must be based on empirical investigation and inductive authentication, we can clearly see what it is that has highest

epistemic certainty for him. The presuppositionalist would say by contrast that it is the mind of God as revealed in the Bible.

Reason and External Evidence

Carnell feels that Christian "presuppositions" are subject to the judging standards of reason: "If one will proceed to reality with a humble attitude, he will discover that the presuppositions of the Christian are friendly to the highest tests of reason."55 He should have held that without Christian presuppositions there could be no test by reason at all. So far from taking Scripture as his authoritative presupposition, Carnell endorses Warfield's note that "a right faith is always a reasonable faith;

52. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 141.

53. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 61 footnote 20, 173.

54. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 175.

55. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 197.

that is to say, it is accorded only to an authority which commends itself to reason as a sound authority."56 To this Carnell adds his own note that "a normal person does not submit his life to an authority until, guided by reason, he is fully assured in his mind that the authority in question is trustworthy."57 Hence in Carnell's apologetic the authority of the Bible

must first commend itself to the more ultimate authority of reason—-which means that the Bible is not being presupposed.

Bernard Ramm's analysis of Carnell in *Types of Apologetic Systems?58* is instructive for us and takes us to the root of his system. Ramm sees Carnell as holding that the validity of the *object* of faith must be *tested*;59 Carnell says, "Faith is but a whole-soul trust in God's word as true."60 Yet on the same page Carnell had asserted that the Word of God is *self-authenticating.* So in Carnell's apologetic he both affirms and denies the need for us to authenticate—test—the Word of God! Returning to Ramm's analysis, he says that Carnell depends on the intersection of internal witness (the Spirit) and the external witness *(systematic consistency!)* to build a firm apologetic.61 This exhibits for us that the external witness in Carnell's apologetic is not the self-authenticating Word of God, but philosophy. "If the Spirit of God has an inner witness and an external witness, then we must be able to come to the truthfulness of Christianity from the external dimension, i.e., we may make a philosophical approach."62

In support of this indication that Carnell abandons the self-attesting nature of Scripture is Carnell's own statement that God's Word must "join forces" with "external evidence."63 So at heart Carnell is not a presuppositionalist who depends on the *self*-attesting equality of Scripture, but he is a rationalist who would endeavor to verify that the Bible is a revelation of

God. Right in line with this is the fact that Carnell feels that something (in particular, the synoptic starting point of a system) must establish grounds for, and make good, the highest principle of unity in a system (i.e., logical starting point); he sees this highest ordering principle as the Trinity for

56. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 72f.

57. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 73.

58. Bernard L. Ramm, *Types of Apologetic Systems: An Introductory Study of the Christian*

Philosophy of Religion (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1953).

59. Ramm, *Types of Apologetic Systems,* 216.

60. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 66.

61. Ramm, *Types of Apologetic Systems,* 217.

62. Ramm, *Types of Apologetic Systems,* 222.

63. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 84, 86.

a Christian. Taking all these facts together results in the conclusion that Carnell feels we must provide verification for the *Triune God.M* Because Carnell needs a *pou sto65* outside of God's Word which can be used to validate that the Bible is in fact God's Word, he understandably draws back from the presuppositionalist's position that truth would be impossible on

anything but a Christian position; his apologetic depends on a measure of autonomy and must shun Christianity as an absolute presupposition. Carnell rejects the apologetical attempt to show the impossibility of truth outside of Christianity66 and says that the gospel should not be used as an ideological weapon against the natural man and non-Christian wisdom *(The Case for Orthodox Theology,* p. 128).67

Possibilism

Apparently fearing the situation, Carnell makes the argumentative observation, "When a Christian attacks general wisdom in the name of the gospel, the natural man will attack the gospel in the name of general wisdom."68 But the truth is that the natural man *always* attacks the gospel in the name of autonomous thought—even when one uses a diluted apologetic that embodies autonomous principles itself! The only adequate defense is not to try and meet the antagonist point for point but to show him that he must *assume* the Christian position even to argue against it. So we *should* attack general wisdom as impossible in the name of the gospel; this leaves the unbeliever no leg to stand on and only the prospect of repentance. Carnell's approach is a fatal settlement for "peaceful coexistence." The Christian has nothing to fear in the believer's assault upon the wisdom of God expressed in Scripture; "where is the disputer of this age?" Worldly-wisdom is defeated by the

wisdom of the gospel, for the "foolishness" of God is mightier than the "wisdom" of men. So our apologetic should be a strong one, challenging the very core or foundation of apostate philosophy—and not worrying that the rebel will many times respond by trying to assert his vain autonomy against the Word of God. Our weapons are mighty to the

64. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 124.

65. Place to stand.

66. Carnell, *Christian Committment, An Apologetic,* viii.

67. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 128.

68. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 128.

pullingdownofreasonings.UnfortunatelyCarnellwou ldnotassertthat

God'sWordisabsolutelynecessaryformeaningandinte lligibilityor

thatitisGod'sexistenceandprovidencethatsupportthe useofscience,

logic,andargumentation,becausehewantedtodemonst ratetoChrist's

despisersthattherationalman,thefreeman,themanofc haractercan

useautonomousstandardstomakeGod'sauthoritative Wordpassthe

requisitetestsforverification.

BecauseChristianitywasnottakenashis *absolute* presupposition,Car-

nell's apologeticincludestheillegitimatenotionthatpossibilitysurrounds

GodandHisWord.Thisisthesame"possibilism"thatClarkisguiltyof.

Forallthetheoreticalsuperioritythat Carnell sees in the Christian sys-

tem, he still allows the abstract possibility that God does not exist." This

moraldilemmadoesnotprovetheexistence of *God, for it may be that God*

does not exist,"69 Ratherthanviewingitasanecessity, anundeniablefact,

Carnellattemptstodemonstrate"thatgenericrevelationis *possible."10*

Carnellalsograntsthatitisadistinctpossibility that God is *not*

clearlyrevealedintheBible:"Onemayfinduponexamining the

Biblicalsystemthathe *cannot* believethatthemindofGod istherein

contained;andinthiscaseheshouldabidebyhisconscience inthe

matter."71Howerroneousandgravelymisleadingthis is! Nosinner

canfailtoseeGodrevealedinHisWord;itisimpossiblethatGod

shouldnotmakeHimselfclearlyknowninHisself-disclosure.What

sincandoistoprevent *acknowledgement* and *conscious recognition* of the

objectivenatureofScripture;theunbelieverdistortswhatheseesand

failstolivebywhatisclearlyrevealed.Whenheclaimsnottosee God

revealedinScriptureheshouldnotabidebyhisconscienceinthemat-

ter;heisunder *obligation* toacknowledgeandlivebythetruthevenif

he,infact, *refuses* toseeandobey.Ifhefailstobeconvinced inhis

recalcitrantheart,heneedstorepent.

Weshouldnevergrantthatitis *possible* thatonecouldhonestly fail to

beobjectivelyconfrontedwithaclearwordfromGodinScripture.Itis

possibleforthesinnertocontinueinrebellion,buthe *cannot* come to the

non-ChristianconclusionabouttheBibleinanylegitimatefashion.The

sinner *has* theepistemologicalequipmentnecessary, *and* theclearrevela-

tionnecessary,tobelievethatthemindofGodisrevealed inScripture.

69. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 261; Bahnsen's emphasis.

70. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 176, Bahnsen's emphasis.

137. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 277.

Itis *not possible* thatoneshouldtrulyfindthathe "*cannot*" believe, only

thathe *will not* believe.

SoCarnellhassubordinatedbothGodandHisrevelation tothe

notionofpossibility;perhapstheclearestindicationof thatfactisgiven

inthisquotation:"Asthereisa50/50chancethatwewillfall intojudg-

mentbeforeGod,itisimportantthatweweighcarefullythecharacterof

theuniverse."72Itis *possible,* then,thatGoddoesnotexist andHisWord

isnottrue,accordingtoCarnell'sapologetic.Theabsolute presupposi-

tionofScripturedoesnotcontrolhisdefenseofthefaith;henceGodis

nottakenasthesolesourceofmaterialandlogicalpossibilities,butpos-

sibilityismoreultimatethanGod.

FollowingfromCarnell'spossibilismishisreductionofChristianity

toa *hypothesis*, inlikemannertoClark.

Goodphilosophersarethosewhocanconstructsystem-

aticallyconsistentsystemsofmeaning....Thisconclu-

sionestablishesthe *possibility* ofChristianityasananswer

tolife'sdilemma.Carefulinvestigationofitasasystem

mightestablishits *actuality.73*

Chapter5 *of An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* isentitled"TheChris-

tianHypothesis."InitCarnellmaintainsthat"inthecontestofhy-

pothesis-making...thewinner[is]hewhocanproducethebestsetof

assumptionstoaccountforthetotalityofreality."74Thisistheguiding

principleofhisapologetic.AccordingtoCarnell,theChristian"believes

thepostulateofarationalGodtobeaworkablehypothesisinthelightof

theevidence."75Andhegivesusabundantillustrationsofhistakingthe

Bibleonlyhypothetically:Weareaskedto *suppose* thatapersonalGodis

t h e u l t i m a t e b e i n g a n d t o *suppose* t h a t t h e B i b l e i s G o d ' s W o r d f o r m a n .

W e a r e t o l d t h a t a t r a n s c e n d e n t - i m m a n e n t G o d i s a live *option* j u s t a s

s o t e r i o l o g i c a l p a r t i c u l a r i s m i s a n o p t i o n . A n d C a r n e l l c a n s p e a k a b o u t

i f t h e r e i s a G o d , ...*if* G o d i s a b l e t o s a t i s f y t h e h e a r t , ...*if* t h e b i b l i c a l w o r l d - v i e w i s p l a u s i b l e , . . . *i f* G o d i s o u r F a t h e r . 7 6

72. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 154.

73. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 97.

74. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 94.

75. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 164.

76. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 29, 35, 294, 373, 30, 31, 274,

312, 315.

C O N S I S T E N T P R E S U P P O S I T I O N A L I S M

Y e t w e s h o u l d n o t e t h a t , i n a d d i t i o n t o t h e m i s t a k e o f r e d u c i n g t h e

B i b l e t o h y p o t h e t i c a l s t a t u s , C a r n e l l ' s a p o l o g e t i c f a c e s t h e d i f f i c u l t y t h a t

m o s t o f h i s h y p o t h e s e s a r e e a s i l y c h a l l e n g e d b y t h e q u i c k - t h i n k i n g u n -

b e l i e v e r . F o r i n s t a n c e , i t i s n o t h a r d t o p i c k a p a r t C a r n e l l ' s a s s e r t i o n t h a t

thehypothesisofomnipotenceascharacterizingGodistheoretically

betterthanthecontraryview77—asC.M.Homehasshown.78Over

andoveragainCarnellappliestheterm"hypothesis"toChristianity.79

ThusChristianitycannotbeanabsolutelynecessarypresupposition

inCarnell'ssystem.Insteaditischaracterizedbystatements like:

Arationalhypothesismaybenecessarytoassureusthat

there*is*meaninginsurrenderingourheartstoGod.80

IfthereisaGod,andifthisGodisabletoloveus,a sat-

isfactionwillbegained....81

Sincewearenotyetpersuadedthatthepostulationofa

non-rationalgivenisnecessary,however,hoperemains

thatonemaystilltrustaGodwhoenjoyssovereignty

overeveryhumanpersonality.82

[Theassumingofthewhole Bible] isanhypothesisthat

hasbeenchosenwiththesamediligenceasthatofascien-

tific hypothesis.Likeanyhypothesis,itisverifiedwhenit

resultsinanimplicativesystemwhichishorizontally self-

consistentandwhichverticallyfitsthefacts.83

BecauseGod'sWordpassesthetestofmatchinguptothe well-known

factsthatmenhavecollected,itisaworthyhypothesis:

ThefactofthesedatamakesthepostulationofGod'sex-

istencebothscientificallyandrationallysatisfying... .It is

likewisegoodsciencetodeclareforfaithintheexistenc e

77. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 253.

78. C. M. Home , "Van Til and Carnell—Part II," *Jerusalem and Athens,* ed. E. R.

Geehan (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 373.

79. *See, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 161, 170, 174f., 205.

80. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 321.

81. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 253.

82. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 307.

83. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 174f.

of God. The mark of an acceptable hypothesis is its abil-

ity to explain the facts as we experience them.... Is it not

good science to postulate the existence of God to account

for known data in human experience?84

Hence, simultaneous with the devaluation of the Bible to the status of a hypothesis is the elevation of human reason and science as the proper standards of truth against which all suppositions must be judged. If the supposition of the Bible is to be accepted, that decision must be based on coherence rather than the clear revelation of God, which carries utmost authority in itself.

LOGICAL COHERENCE AND THE TESTING OF G O D ' S W O R D

Says Carnell, "The Biblical system ... presupposes (but refuses to discuss) that in whole perspective coherence, and in it alone, lies adequate truth."85 Because of this man "must use the laws of logic to guide him into paths that are rationally coherent.... We should only commit ourselves to that which is rationally coherent.... The Bible defends the primacy of reason as the faculty through which all options must clear."86 Logical consistency is the surest negative test, the universal test, and the first test of validity.87 Apparently this test is more certain than even the Bible, for "in choosing between the system of Kant and the system of Christ, see, first of all, which makes better peace with the law of contradiction."88

As Carnell sees it, Christianity can be judged as coherent because it never asks us to violate the reasonable dictate of non-contradiction.89 Man is pledged to balance all options by the rule of whole

perspective coherence.90

Since all we can find in history is probability, and since

all we can find in logic and mathematics is formal validi-

84. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 273, 270f.

85. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 40.

86. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 83.

87. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 187, 215; *An Introduction to Christian*

Apologetics, 86, 109.

88. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 99.

89. Carnell, "Preface," *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion.*

90. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 446.

ty, we cannot have complete truth until we unite them....

Perfect coherence always involves two elements: the law

of contradiction to give formal validity, and concrete facts

of history to give material validity.... This is proof by co-

herence.... The only proof [any man] can offer, both for

his system of philosophy and for the actions which flow

from it, is systematic coherence.... It is in this framework

that the Christian offers proof for his system.91

Carnell holds that it is reason that must test revelation.92 "Unless, therefore, we are to throw our apologetics to the wind at this point, a test for faith must be devised.... If what is being believed makes peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of experience, it is a faith which is prompted by the Spirit of God."93

Systematic Coherence Test Self-Defeating

Has this last premise been proven by Carnell, or has he offered scriptural reasons for us to accept it, or has it passed its own test? No. We are left to presuppose its authority in order that we might establish the authority of Scripture; the method should have been reversed! But Carnell submits to the Bible only after it has met the test of "systematic consistency."94 For example: "Submission to the system of Biblical Christianity is good ... because the system is able to support spirituality through its rigorous systematic consistency."95 Or again,

> The Christian finds his system of philosophy in the Bible, to be sure, but he accepts this, not simply because it is in the Bible, but because, when tested, it makes better sense out of life than other systems of philosophy make.... In

91. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 106f.

92. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 31, 38.

93. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 67, 70.

94. "It is a *consistency* because it is based upon a rigid application of the law of con-

tradiction, and it is a *systematic* consistency because the data which are formed into this

consistent system are taken from the totality of our experiences, within and without"

(Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 59).

95. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 506; see also *An Introduction to Chris-*

tian Apologetics, 175.

the game of locating truth, the winner is he who estab-

lishes coherence."96

There are numerous problems with this test by systematic consistency:

In the first place it requires the abandonment of the self-authenticating

nature of Scripture (as indicated above). So the Bible does not function

as the absolute standard of truth for man, but a more ultimate standard

is raised above it. Furthermore, Carnell has simply not grasped what

a *massive* claim he makes when he thinks Christianity can be shown to

pass the test of systematic consistency; to examine the totality of even

our own personal experience (inner and outer), much less the totality

of experience of mankind, and to make full syllogistic and logical inquiry into our thinking and knowledge (plus the knowledge gained by the sciences throughout history) would take far more than anyone human lifetime and energy—yet Carnell handles it in *one volume*\ We really must doubt that Carnell has done an adequate job of testing the Bible for systematic consistency. Moreover, has he really considered the *stakes* involved or the heart's *feelings* in his test? Given the extremely low number of men who have risen (allegedly) from the dead, the fact that I have never seen it happen, the coldness and lifelessness of a corpse, the great discontinuity between the process of living and the state of death which is followed by decomposition in the grave, the stakes are simply too high for me to live a life of self-renunciation and honesty, struggling to know more and more about an apparently irrelevant book of history and aphorisms (i.e., the Bible); there is *little* to base a belief in an afterlife upon, but much to commend the philosophy of "eat, drink, and be merry." Could an application of systematic consistency dissuade such reasoning? Carnell is also inconsistent with his own system. He says that truth is both that which has systematic consistency and that which corresponds to the mind of God.97 These can be combined then by saying that "perfect systematic consistency is perfect correspondence with the mind of God."98 But then Carnell turns around and makes the *test for truth* to be

systematic consistency rather than conformity to God's Word! He even subjects God's Word to that test! Hence Carnell ends up seeing the test mentioned in 1 John 4:1 as that of systematic consistency, whereas John

96. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 102.

97. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 47, 61, 64.

122. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 117.

takes it to be conformity to the Word of God!"

Then again Carnell's actions betray his own lack of confidence, though not admitted, in this test by systematic consistency, for when the opposition gets really tough he resorts to appeals to the Bible.100 Since Carnell saw the centrality of the Bible in modern philosophic presuppositions,101 why did he not simply begin with the authoritative truth of God's Word in confronting his opponents rather than bringing it in only after the test for systematic consistency was exhausted?

Another grave problem with this test is the fact that, without the revelation of God given in the Bible as presupposed, there is no way for the autonomous man to unite bare facts and bare logic. The problem of the one and the many remains the skeptical chasm under all unbelieving thought. Carnell's test appears to be the very endorsement of this vain attempt to

bring the uninterpreted diversity of experience into fruitful contact with the organizing and unifying principles of logic.

And then again, there is the drawback in the test by systematic consistency that it really does not accomplish the validation of Christianity to which Carnell sends it. Since Carnell does not think that the systematization of the Bible can be accomplished, there is no Christian option in the form of a system to be tested by systematic consistency after all. "It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to coax all the data of Scripture into neat harmony."102 Furthermore, Carnell confesses that the believer "will not always see the consistency in God's thoughts, but he is convinced that there is a consistency."103 How then can Carnell grant the *un* believing, unregenerate, natural man the prerogative to test consistency of God's revelation! That consistency is presupposed by the Christian; it cannot be worked up to as a conclusion by the hostile sinner who will not bow before the authority of God's Word. Finally, the reader is referred to the problems that were mentioned above as undermining the coherence test suggested by Clark in his own apologetic.

99. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 70, 73.

100. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 73; *A Philosophy of the Christian*

Religion, 82, 126f., 273, 328, 506.

101. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 28.

102. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 285; *The Case for Orthodox Theology,*

99.

114. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 103, Bahnsen's emphasis.

God's Word Subject to Logic

Concommitant to Carnell's failure to take the Bible as his absolute presupposition, his possibilism, and his view of Christianity as a hypothesis to be tested by systematic consistency, is his *verificationalism.* This is, as was the case with Clark, perhaps the most obvious proof that Carnell is not a presuppositionalist but at heart a rationalist with affinities to scholasticism.

> Why should faith be exempted from the general rule that all belief is subjected to the law of contradiction in the light of the facts of history? What higher floor in the building of knowledge is there than coherence?... A consistent system is a true system. Were a person to demand a higher or a more perfect test than this, he would only show his want of education.104

The section from which the latter portion of this quote was taken is entitled "The Verification of the Christian World View," and in it Carnell offers two principles for verification which he says apply *equally* to philosophy and theology. Contrary to his opinion, a revelation from God is much higher in the building of knowledge than coherence, and divine revelation is a far more perfect test for truth than coherence. If this shows a lack of education, it is a lack of education from the school of Athens, not from the wisdom of Jerusalem (see Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics,* VII). Carnell audaciously maintains that the way in which we validate the authority of another man must be the same way in which the trustworthiness of God's authority is authenticated: "If this credible individual be oneself, the man across the street, or God, one should follow exactly the same rule."105 "When one comes averring to be from God, it surely is a man's duty to demand a proof that this is so."106 "All pretenses to revelation must be put through a scrutinizing test."107 Therefore, "the Bible should be tested in the light of relevant criteria."108

104. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 119; *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 286.

105. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 30.

106. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 268f.

107. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 31.

108. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 41.

Far from being a self-attesting, authoritative book, the Bible is viewed by Carnell as in *need* of being "grounded in reasonable evidences."109 "The Spirit of God draws men through the convicting power of evidences"'110 rather than by witnessing to the *word* of God.

This brings us to what is perhaps the most characteristic quotation from Carnell's apologetic writings; it sums up well the attitude and method of his defense of the faith:

> Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man's assent.111

Because the Bible is not repulsive to the reason of man or the corpus of *well-attested truth,* because it satisfies the "scholar," because it *appeases* all the criteria of truth laid down by the unregenerate philosopher, because it *satisfies* the needs of hedonism, positivism, philosophy, humanism, finitism, universalism, Roman Catholicism, and existentialism, it passes its exams "summa cum laude"—says Carnell.112 And the most amazing thing about this misguided apologetic is Carnell's saying that when

a man will not believe on the basis of the testimony of God's revealed Word but persists in making such a test of God, "God honors the effort," which Carnell describes as "humble"!113

We must register strong disagreement here; *true* humility was exemplified by our Incarnate Lord when He refused to put God to a test but rested secure in the divine Scriptures as Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. This attitude is worlds apart from the apologetic thrust of Carnell when he says that the Christian *""must prove* that the Red Sea actually parted, that Lazarus actually rose from the grave, and that there is a heaven and hell toward which the righteous and the unrighteous are gravitating.'"114

109. Carnell, *A Phibsophy of the Christian Religion,* 449.

110. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 8.

111. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 178.

112. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 178f.; *The Case for Orthodox The-*

ology, 90; *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 512ff.

113. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 84.

114. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 103, Bahnsen's emphasis.

Because Carnell has this defective verificationalism inherent in his apologetic, he also has an erroneous view of faith. In its unexplained form the statement, "Generic faith is a resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidences,"115 would seem acceptable enough, for a self-attesting revelation of God is indeed *sufficient* evidence (as well as necessary, authoritative, and clear). However, this is not allowed by Carnell; he insists that "the ground of belief is the *sufficiency,* not the kind or source, of evidence."116 Even if it is the revelation of God it must prove its sufficiency as evidence before it can be believed; the source of the Bible does not guarantee its sufficiency as Carnell sees things.

Faith Subject to Reason

What does he mean by the "sufficiency of the evidences"? It is clear that when he sees faith as the resting of the heart in the sufficiency of the evidences,117 he does *not* mean trusting an *authority* of any kind, even God's.118 He says, "The extent of this sufficiency is measured by a cool and dispassionate use of reason,"119 and, "Sound generic faith always rests on *warranted* belief."120 Carnell tells us clearly what he means by sufficient evidences when he says, "As long as I have breath, I shall argue that faith is a whole-hearted response to *critically tested evidences*.... We mean a whole-souled satisfaction with *critically tested judgments."121* Carnell maintains, therefore, that faith is based on autonomous

reasoning which has verified or proved to the critical faculties of man himself that the object is worthy of trust; the authority is clearly *man's*, not God's. "Faith must be founded in objectively verifiable metaphysical theories."122 So in Carnell's apologetic, one does not *begin* his reasoning with God as the necessarily presupposed authority, but his ultimate

115. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 450.

116. Carnell, *The Case for Orthotdox Theology,* 25.

117. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 70, 83, 175; *Christian Commitment,*

An Apologetic, 76, 267.

118. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 70.

119. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 76.

120. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 78.

121. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 198, 267; Bahnsen's emphasis.

122. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 117.

starting point is the authority of man's reason. This signifies a departure from the Augustinian position that faith leads to understanding and an *endorsement of the position of Aquinas* that faith must have a rational foundation or platform on which to stand. Generic faith is based on rationally

warranted, autonomous, and critically tested judgments for Carnell. He says, "Unless saving faith is grounded in generic faith, it is really not faith at all. It is blind trust."123 (Should we conclude that those who draw back from following Carnell's autonomous apologetic method do not have saving faith?)

T h e traces of scholasticism are not difficult to find in Carnell's writings. "First we know in order that we might believe."124 A good example is his book *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion.* In it Carnell attempts to ease up the ladder from the worst philosophies to the bad ones, to the better ones, to the best one (i.e., Christianity). Carnell works up through natural revelation eventually to special revelation later; the Bible is brought in at the last as the unbeliever is gradually led from paganism to Christianity by means of "stepping stones" or a ladder of rational degrees. ("The rational connections seem sufficient to me.")125 T h e r e is no challenge of the sinner's autonomy and hypocritical "neutrality" from the very outset; starting with the ground on which the unbeliever stands, Carnell would build the Christian apologetical edifice. While still discussing non-Christian philosophy, Carnell says, "It is at this point where the first piles are driven for the bridge which leads us to God";126 he works *from* well-attested truth gathered by m a n *to* belief in God.127 He presses on from humanism to theism128 and brings in G o d to complete

his system, the capstone to a rational structure beneath.

Man's Moral Sentiment Primary

Carnell exhibits the same method in his book *Christian Commitment.*

His starting point is m a n in action, not G o d the moral judge. From an autonomous *pou sto* constituted by his own analysis of the moral-spiritual

123. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 269.

124. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 515.

125. Carnell, "Preface," *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion.*

126. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 260.

127. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 270f.

137. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 277.

e n v i r o n m e n t and the duties that hold m e n , Carnell would work up to the surety of God's existence, a d v a n c i n g his analysis by degrees of ever-deepening autonomous u n d e r s t a n d i n g of man's situation (without the interpretation rendered in God's Word). " W e *start with realities* t h a t hold us f r o m existence itself"; " G o d *completes* the moral cycle by answering to the judicial sentiment.'"129 C a r n e l l sees each m a n as revealing his belief in an administrator of justice when that m a n judges others,130 a n d this is *analytically* established. However, it is not h a r d to see that Carnell's

particular conclusion does *not* follow by definition at all, and even if it did he would fallaciously be a r g u i n g f r o m a definition to the reality of its referent! His m e t h o d of a r g u m e n t shows us t h a t while the Bible needs proof, the correct u n d e r s t a n d i n g of the realities that hold a m a n in the moral a n d spiritual environment c a n be ascertained independently. T h e a r g u m e n t is to the effect that we can be certain of h u m a n morals, a n d these *point* to the (less certain) conclusion that there is a G o d .

But the direction of this a r g u m e n t is wrong. Carnell says, "If we c a n n o t a p p r o a c h one another without satisfying the claims of the moral a n d spiritual environment, how can we avoid these claims w h e n ap-p r o a c h i n g God?"131 Yet he should a r g u e *vice versa*, f r o m G o d to m a n (as the first great c o m m a n d m e n t precedes the second!). Moreover, Carnell's a r g u m e n t s against all options except the Christian G o d as qualifying as the moral j u d g e involved in the judicial sentiment are completely unconvincing.132 Carnell thinks that his " m o r a l a r g u m e n t " escapes the pitfalls of Kant's, for K a n t dealt with conscience (rather t h a n the j u -dicial sentiment) which is subject to cultural conditioning, a n d K a n t ' s postulation of God's existence was based on wishful thinking.133 How-ever, conscience is just as unconditioned as is judicial sentiment in the weak sense that Carnell sees judicial sentiment as unconditioned (i.e.,

all m e n are *aroused* by mistreatment—yet all m e n are pricked by conscience as well!). *What* constitutes mistreatment a n d *what* brings p a n g s of conscience are *both* culturally influenced. C a r n e l l thinks that the j u dicial sentiment analytically includes G o d , a n d so his a r g u m e n t is not wishful thinking like Kant's; yet this analytical connection between the

129. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 102, 101, Bahnsen's emphasis.

130. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 103.

131. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 127.

132. See Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 104-107.

133. See Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 110—116.

judicial sentiment and G o d is far from self-evident! M a n y people do *not* use moral language *meaning* that G o d exists (even if they should in order to have a basis for ethics). So Carnell's argument is basically K a n t i a n in approach and fellowships in its errors.

Lastly, we note that Carnell's insistence that the will of m a n is corrupted by sin *undermines* his apologetic method in *Christian Commitment.134*

A final indication of the scholasticism in Carnell's apologetic is found in his three philosophically autonomous arguments for God's existence. A

rational argument from the self as finite and the *rationes aeternae* can be found, and an argument for the necessary existence of God,135 as well as an argument from the time-and-space-transcending nature of values.136 T h e errors of attempting such autonomous theistic proofs are discussed under our treatment of Clark. T h e interesting thing with Carnell is that he himself criticized philosophers for doing exactly the same thing he was engaged in doing: calling in G o d to give completeness to a rationally devised system!137

A f u r t h e r indication that autonomy afflicts the apologetic system of Carnell is found in the fact that he held that G o d and His Word could be tested by standards that unregenerate men devised to anticipate God's character.

> If the meaning of God's character cannot be anticipated by information drawn from our own conception of decency, what significance is conveyed by the term "God"? A n d how can G o d be distinguished from other unknowables? ... If we have no moral equipment with which to judge what agrees or disagrees with the character of G o d , then what we think is consistent with perfect rectitude may, when the scrolls of eternity are unrolled, be

134. See Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 198.

135. "We here argue from within the Thomistic-Kantian tradition. If *anything*

exists, something exists of necessity. This necessity is God" (Carnell, *Christian Commit-*

ment, An Apologetic, 130).

136. "Since values can exist only in a mind ... and since the values with which we

are confronted in the cycle of guilt and forgiveness are time-and-space-transcending,

it follows that the mind which supports them must likewise be time-and-space-tran-

scending. What mind can this be but God?" (Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Reli-*

gion, 271).

137. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 277.

found consistent with malignity a n d error.... If G o d does

not extend fellowship in ways that can be n a m e d by a pa-

tient study of the m a n n e r in which we extend fellowship

to one another, we have no sure way of answering those

w h o say t h a t G o d m a y confront m a n on terms which,

when j u d g e d by o u r highest n o r m s of rectitude, are con-

t r a r y to goodness.... Unless we can meaningfully antici-

pate God's standards of rectitude, it m a y t u r n out that the book ... that is least moral on h u m a n standards is most moral on divine standards; a n d we are once again left with skepticism.138

T h e most f u n d a m e n t a l question that we must direct at Carnell's position at this point is whether sinners have or do not have p r o p e r standards of ethical j u d g m e n t . Scripture says that while m e n c a n n o t eradicate the image of G o d a n d voice of conscience, nevertheless m e n on the conscious level of intention do *not* judge aright but need the special revelation of G o d . To allow the apologetic m e t h o d proposed by Carnell here would be to p e r m i t m a n to create G o d in man's o w n image; rather, we should d e m a n d that man's *imago Dei* be set right by God's revealed law in covenantal Scripture. T h e skepticism which Carnell uses to drive us in the direction of a u t o n o m y would be valid only if it were not the case that God's general revelation is constantly impressing all men; when their hearts are regenerated by the Holy Spirit they have sufficient evidence to corroborate that it is indeed the Creator w h o is speaking in the Bible. T h e clear revelation in n a t u r e a n d man's constitution parallels the clear revelation of G o d in Scripture; Carnell has no grounds for skepticism.

Further, in Carnell's a r g u m e n t , *who* is the upright m a n ? Using Carnell's o w n observation,139 we are led to ask if G o d is the author of

confusion based on the variation of standards held by m e n . T h e r e is no practical way for Carnell to apply his apologetic of anticipation, for the unregenerate disagree a m o n g themselves as m u c h as they disagree with the Bible! A g a i n , we wonder if A b r a h a m could have used Carnell's m e t h o d a n d concluded that the supernatural direction he received with respect to sacrificing Isaac was that of the devil, since A b r a h a m could

138. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic*, 138, 133, 152, 142.

139. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic*, 111.

not have anticipated that such a request could comport with the nature of God. The real threat is not that on Judgment Day we should find our accepted standards to be wrong after all, but is that we should grant the unbeliever the presumption to judge God's Word even though the unbeliever is totally depraved and misuses the moral and epistemological equipment that is his by creation. In ourselves we are not sufficient to work out a proper ethical system, for Adam was given special revelation even in the Garden; and after the fall into sin, only a written law revealed by God can serve as our moral standard.

Carnell does not escape the difficulties of his apologetic by noting that he would apply an abstract notion of Goodness to determine who is God

and who is the devil only in an *introductory* sense.140 Carnell holds that once God has passed our test and we are sure that it is God addressing us, *then* it would be inappropriate to continue to judge Him by anything but His own Word. However, this will simply not do in the context of Carnell's apologetic. We simply could not know how long a malignant demon could continue to deceive us, so we would have to maintain our application of the abstract notion of goodness to every supernatural message that came our way. And even overlooking this fact, it is not at all clear why God should honor any application of an autonomous principle to Himself even if for only introductory purposes; He has given clear revelation of Himself to man, and only sin (which is due to the will of man) obstructs it. The sinner can never be held innocent in subjecting God to his autonomous criteria of divinity; the reason for unbelief has nothing to do with God but everything to do with the disobedience of the unbeliever. It is the rebel who is on trial, not God. The unregenerate will never self-consciously be able to anticipate God's standards (though he may know them in his heart of hearts); because of his sin he will do everything possible to avoid being openly confronted with God. And because of his sin his own reasoning and moral standards are distorted. Hence there is no unprejudiced pagan to whom Carnell might appeal and have him by self-reflection arrive at something pretty close to Christian standards—even at an introductory level.

The presuppositionalist who takes God's Word as the most ultimate authority and standard of thought will be appalled when Carnell holds that,

140. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 315, 326, 342f.; *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic*, 149.

> The reason why we are able to trust Christ is that he spoke and lived in a way which is congenial with our axiological expectations.... Jesus Christ is worthy of our faith—and consequently ought to receive it—because both his person and his doctrine are rationally continuous with the values which we have already accepted in ordinary experience Jesus is a good man because he verified everything that a decent society means by goodness.... He is the absolute embodiment of whatever relative goodness we acknowledge in one another.141

The amazing inconsistency of Carnell at this point is seen in the fact that he turns around and with critical tone delivers this indictment: "All non-Christian religions construe their ethic on the optimism that the

virtues of the tribe are continuous with the virtues of God."142 Carnell should have applied this very criticism to his own apologetic; he might then have avoided its crippling autonomy.

CARNELL'S PROBABILISM

We saw in the case of Clark that his failure to take the truth of Scripture as the absolute presupposition, together with his possibilism, his suppositionalism, and his verificationalism led inevitably to viewing Christianity as *probably* true only; this same probabilism is the outcome of Carnell's apologetic:

> Since their systems are never complete, however, propositional truth can never pass beyond probability.... In lieu of perfect insight men must live by the rule of probability ... [in the realm of material truth]. Here one cannot rise above probability.... Probability, as Butler established, is the guide of life.... Rational probability is the guide of life.... All we can find in history is probability.143

141. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 474, 495; *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 82.

142. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 89.

143. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 453, 43; *An Introduction to Christian*

Apologetics, 105f., 113.

Now if contemporary man only has probability to guide him,144 he will not get much more when he turns to Scripture. Rather than finding there the certain truth of God which is necessary for all of man's intellectual ventures, Carnell tells him that the Bible contains (only) "a plausible system of thought."145 Carnell does not take God's revelation as essential to all demonstration and argumentation, nor does he see the truth of it as essential to making sense out of the notion of probability

itself. Instead he asserts that

> Proof for the Christian faith, as proof for any world-view that is worth talking about, cannot rise above rational probability.... The first reason why Christianity cannot—and does not want to—rise to demonstration is that it is founded on historical facts, which, by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty.... If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?146

The answer to that last question should be obvious to a presuppositional apologist. Not only do the Christian Scriptures claim far more than mere probability for their truth, but the apologist for this faith wants his defense to present the strongest possible challenge to unbelief—a challenge that demands the repentance of those who rebel against the sure truth of God. If the defender of the Christian system does not argue for the certain truth of the Bible he is not defending the message of that Bible, and if he presents its truth as only probable he forfeits his argumentative strength and he drops Christianity to the level of any other "probability." The Christian wants to claim more than the scientist be-

cause the Christian wants the scientist to see that his efforts depend upon the prior truth of God's revelation. Christianity is "worth talking about" precisely *because* it rises above mere probability.

Adding injury to insult, Carnell sees the fact that Christianity (on his basis) cannot be more than probably true as a *gain!* "This admission... is not a form of weakness.... The system of Christianity can be refuted

144. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 23.

145. Carnell, *A Phibsophy of the Christian Religion,* 38.

114. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 103, Bahnsen's emphasis.

only by probability. Perhaps our loss is our gain?"147 By reducing the truth of God to the epistemic level of its opposition Carnell would protect it from refutation; if mystery or uncertainty surrounds everything, then there is always hope that the Bible is perchance the truth. Since nobody knows, nobody knows that Christianity is false. Such a "defense" of the faith is not worthy of that name; this is simply a *non-apologetic,* for it offers no positive *reason* for the hope that is in us. The retreat to skeptical probabilism does Christian apologetics no service; the despisers of the faith can make exactly the same move. Carnell makes the same mistake that Clark did in his coherence approach to apologetics; he as much as

admits that this coherence cannot be exhibited. So the next best thing would be having the *least* faults.

There are blind spots in the Christian revelation—many of them. Therefore, whoever *wants* to find fault with Scripture will assuredly meet with no difficulty in his labor. But is this the course prudence dictates? Is not a rational man satisfied with that system which is attended by the fewest difficulties?148

The best that the apologist could offer under these conditions is that Christianity is not *as wrong* as other alternatives. And although Carnell tends to give the impression in many points of his writing that Christianity has a high probability of being true, he does finally admit, "When judged by the precision of science, the claims of religion rate low on the scale of plausibility."149 Hence the Carnellian apologetic is doomed to be practically ineffective, for it intends to show the probability of the Bible's truth while recognizing its low plausibility and while capitulating to the ascendancy of science. Moreover, Carnell's probabilism nullifies any *conclusiveness* that his apologetic might hope to attain; if Christianity is only probably true, as Carnell claims, then he is certainly mistaken to conclude that *only* it will bring dignity, hope, and spiritual promise.150

Not only is Carnell inconsistent with his view of probability, we also

wonder about the consistency of the very notion of "rational probabil-

147. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 115 footnote 15.

148. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 514; see also Carnell, *An Introduc-*

tion to Christian Apologetics, 121.

149. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 81.

150. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 329.

ity." T h i s a p p e a r s t o b e a h y b r i d o f r a t i o n a l *demonstration* p l u s a f i t w i t h

t h e f a c t s t h a t *no one can be sure* of, f u l l y k n o w , or a s s u r e d l y e x p e c t — t h a t

is, *omniscient ignorance!* O v e r l o o k i n g t h i s h o w e v e r , w e still m u s t q u e r y a s

t o h o w C a r n e l l c o u l d a v o i d t h e c o n c l u s i o n t o w h i c h E . S . B r i g h t m a n

c a m e , s e e i n g t h a t C a r n e l l o p e n l y a d m i t s t h a t h i s e p i s t e m o l o g y i s t a k e n

f r o m B r i g h t m a n . 1 5 1 A c c o r d i n g t o B r i g h t m a n *n o conclusions* c a n f i n a l l y b e

r e a c h e d : " t r u t h n e v e r r e a c h e s t h e s t a g e o f c o m p l e t e n e s s . . . . T h e r e i s a

n e v e r e n d i n g q u e s t a n d a n e v e r w i d e n i n g h o r i z o n . " 1 5 2 T h i s p o s i t i o n i s

expressed by Brightman at the end of a discussion of the test for truth, a

discussion which Carnell says he took *en bloc* from Brightman's book.153

We must conclude that the epistemology on which Carnell's proba-

bilism rests is inherently inappropriate for a Christian apologetic that

intends to be *conclusive* in its affirmation that Christianity is true. One

must indeed wonder how Carnell could hold that it was possible to have

complete moral assurance of Christianity's truth. The answer lies in

stressing the word "moral." Carnell somehow thought that moral cer-

tainty was compatible with mere *rational probability*,154 However, incon-

tradiction to this, Carnell took "moral assurance" to be "apprehended

strength of evidence"155 and said,

The only way a person can maintain both social respect

and personal sanity is to *proportion his commitment* to the

veraciousness of the evidence which the understanding

processes.... The obligation of the will to clear with the

verdict of the understanding rises *in direct ratio* to the im-

portance of the value at stake.156

And Ronald Nash quotes Carnell as saying "in our daily living we *pro-*

portion our inward response to the certainty of the evidences."157 Accord-

ingly Carnell's apologetic could only allow one to have probable moral

assurance and never complete certainty of the Bible's truth. Hence the

151. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 47, 56, 59, 82, 95.

152. E. S. Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and

Winston, 1951), 71.

153. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 47 footnote 2.

154. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 116-120.

155. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 117.

156. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 474, 477; Bahnsen's emphasis.

157. Ronald Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 57.

probabilism of Carnell's defense of the faith undermines Christian faith

in both its objective and subjective aspects.

MISCELLANEOUSCRITICISMSOFCARNELL'SAPOLOGETIC

Beforeleavingourcritiqueof Carnell, shortcommentsshouldbemadeupon

furtherflawsinhisapologetic, includinghisviewofbrute facts, rationalism,

experientialism, autonomy, contradictions, anddoctrinalaberrations.

Brute Fact vs. Revelation

Thebiblicalpresuppositionalistholdsthateveryfactoftheuniverse

andhistoryispreinterpretedbythesovereignCreator; itis *what* itis

invirtueofHisplanandknowledge. Hencetounderstandtheworld

correctlyonemustsubordinatehisthinkingtotherevelationofGod,

thinkingHisthoughtsafterHiminareceptivelyreconstructivefashion.

Meaningisnotattachedtobrutefactsbyman'smind, butallfactsbear

themeaningthatGodassignsandmustbeknownassuch.

IncontradistinctionfromthisCarnellallowsforthebrutenessof

facts, andbecausehedoessohecanholdthatthereiscommonground

betweentheChristianandnon-Christianscientists—acommonground

thatisunaffectedbyone'slogicalstartingpointandisirrelevanttoone's

personalcommitmentsorreligion.158BernardRammexplainsthisfacet

of Carnell'sapologeticbysayingthatit *holds facts to exist prior to meaning:*

"Theyarecommonasfacts;theyarenotcommonwheninterpreted."159

Soinsteadofdemandingthatallfactsbeunderstoodonthebasisof

ChristianpresuppositionsandtherevelationofGod,Carnellsays,

Knowledgeisthemind'sconstructionof *meaning*.... Facts

just *are*.... Afactisanyunitofbeingwhichiscapableof

bearingmeaning....Eachofthesefact-situationsmustbe

explained....Meaningiswhatthemindentertainswhen

itpassesjudgmentuponthefacts.160

OnthisbasisfactsdonotrevealtheirCreatorbuttheorderingmindof

158. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 214.

159. Bernard Ramm, *Types of Apologetic Systems,* 232; see also p. 231.

160. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 9 If., 213.

the creature-—the creature who is rebelling against the clear revelation of God all about him! It comes as no surprise that Carnell, holding to the bruteness of facts, fails to capitalize in his apologetic on the fact that God makes Himself perspicuously known in all the facts of His universe; instead Carnell maintains that "all reality is obscure."161

Carnell's Rationalism

The overweening rationalism in Carnell's system is exhibited first of all in his view that truth is *propositional* correspondence to reality and that truth is a property of a *proposition162* This propositional view of truth has been discussed and criticized under Clark.163 Truth is broader than propositions (e.g., John 14:6), but such an assertion makes a rationalist holding to the coherence ideal uneasy. It makes the presuppositionalist uneasy when Carnell says that "Christianity does not gainsay ... that reason guides the wise man into life," or that we must have "faith in what reason gains."164 Is it not rather that the *Word of the Lord* is the lamp of our feet, the light of our path? Should not our trust be in the *Lord,* looking to Him to direct our paths?

Carnell would have reason judge the trustworthiness of the Lord rather than *vice versa.* He holds to the ultimacy and primacy of the laws

of logic165 rather than the law of the Logos, the Word of the Lord. To Carnell the "most perfect philosophical argument ever devised" is, "Significant speech must obey the law of contradiction."166 However, one should think that the existence and revelation of God is a more suitable foundation for logic than human needs for speech, and hence the presuppositional argument for *God's* existence, rather than that of logic, would be more certain than the argument Carnell mentions. Carnell makes reason the supreme judge in matters of truth, even more authoritative than the revelation from God;167 he declares that "there are no

161. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 209.

162. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 450, 453.

163. See pages 159-174 above.

164. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 29, 30.

165. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 184

166. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 40.

167. Carnell , *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 178.

limits to reason as a test for truth."168 The presuppositionalist would maintain, by contrast, that reason cannot and should not be used to put the Lord God to a test; therefore, it has its limits. It gives us pause when

we see the picture that Carnell seems to paint of the status of logic in history. "Rationally necessary connections will abide yesterday, today, and forever. Validity is immutable."169 These laws of logic are uncreated.170 And in harmony with a Platonistic *gestalt* Carnell says that God made the world to be relevant to the laws of logic.171 The bad impression such a viewpoint creates is not relieved when Carnell uses language suggesting that God is bound to the laws of logic.172 A more proper view of logic was suggested above in our critique of Clark.

Carnell's Experientialism

The bankruptcy of authority in Carnell's apologetic is manifest in his references to experiential verification of Christianity. Rather than demanding repentance of the sinner based on the objectively true and ultimately authoritative Word of Christ, Carnell reverts to a form of "Christian hedonism" (what a sorry phrase!).

> There is no proof of any pudding apart from the eating.... One should commit himself wholeheartedly to that which gets him where he wants to go A *perfect* commitment should leave deposits of satisfaction on the spirit which are able to sustain love even after physical vitalities have failed.173

Carnell says that positivism should be rejected because it does not bring

anticipated happiness for one's person174—but what if this is just the cold, bleak fact of existence? He says we should view God as both transcendent

168. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 246.

169. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 213.

170. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 306 footnote 49.

171. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 306.

172. For example, He "follows," "obeys," "abides by" the "laws of Aristotelian logic"; see Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 306; *An Introduction to Christian*

Apologetics, 60 footnote 19.

173. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 45, 147, 220.

174. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 146.

and immanent since this is more satisfying in meeting man's needs175—but what if the universe is simply *not* congenial to man and his needs? Carnell says that the heart cannot yield to a finite god without disappointment; "the heart... knows that it would be better if God were sovereign, for love would then have a perfect environment for expression."176 Yet he does not tell us why we should not expect reality to disappoint us or why Bertrand Russell's "A Free Man's Worship" is not more in tune with what

is objectively the case about the world in which we exist.

Autonomy

In examining various doctrinal hypotheses Carnell wants "to test the gains and losses which the heart experiences if it chooses one option over against the other."177 In addition to being a slight to the authority of God's Word, this procedure reduces to the relativistic error of creating God and the world according to man's imagination. Forgetting that the natural man is satisfied with any number of sinful desires, that his powers of evaluation are distorted, Carnell encourages him to test Christianity finally by experience: "The final proof is in the actual taste.... Thus with Christianity: are its premises able to satisfy the whole man? Is Christianity nourishing and clean?"178 The fact that the man regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit answers yes but the unregenerate answers no "proves" nothing at all; these facts are *about* the various *persons* involved, not the world that objectively forms their environment. Christianity will never *satisfy* the reprobate, *but* it will always be *true.* The Christian hedonism179 that Carnell encourages simply cannot escape the sneering accusation of its being wishful thinking; it serves to prove Marx's declaration that religion is merely "the opiate of the masses." It is certainly the case that faith in Christ is most satisfying to the believer, but the objective truth and ne-

175. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 290—294.

176. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 304, 305.

177. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 361.

178. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 516.

179. Since Bahnsen penned this no later than 1979, it appears that he coined the phrase "Christian hedonism" years before John Piper. Most people rightfully attribute it to Piper, who certainly came to it on his own in 1986, and who uses it in a different sense. Nevertheless, here we have great example of how Bahnsen's intellect put him way ahead of his time.

cessity of the presupposed authority of Scripture must be conjoined with this fact before it can be effectively used as an apologetical lever.

A few r a n d o m observations centering around the autonomy implicit in Carnell's apologetic should be made. W h e n Carnell asserts that "all knowledge is inferential" and "knowledge is inference drawn from facts,"18() he would seem to imply that we can "know" neither our ultimate premises nor the facts themselves, but only the inferences based upon them. Applying this notion of knowledge to the existence of G o d we would end up in natural theology; we could only know G o d as an inference drawn from the "facts." W h e n Carnell says he would defend a system of authority,181 it should be clear to us that the authority he

has in mind is no different from that used by men in general. It is not a distinctively theistic and presuppositional authority at all, for God's "authority" must be *established* by the apologist.

Although it is the case that God's common grace makes it possible for us to speak to the unregenerate and expect him to understand our words, Carnell uses common grace to establish common ground in a completely illegitimate way. Instead of seeing common grace as that which curbs the sinner's *autonomous* methodology, Carnell appeals to it in order to *validate* autonomous common ground. C o m m o n grace *prevents* the sinner from completely breaking out of the Christian epistemological circle, but Carnell uses common grace to *establish* the sinner *outside* that circle! Hence it is not surprising that Carnell begins his apologetic by expressing ultimate areas of agreement with the unregenerate on his grounds; then he wants to "add" Christianity to this foundation. This endorses the non-Christian's refusal to *begin* with the presupposition of G o d and His truth. Any transition from Carnell's foundational principles (agreement with the autonomous thinking of the unbeliever) to the authority and truth of Scripture would be an incongruent and violent changeover—a sheer leap. T h e way in which Carnell encourages the sinner to append the authority of God's Word to that primary authority of the "rational, free m a n " is by apologetically doing *better justice* to logic and facts than did the unbeliever.

In attempting to do this, however, Carnell falls prey to the core difficulty of all autonomous thought. He tries dialectically to balance off logical unity with factual diversity.

180. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 9If.

181. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, 7* 1 .

This is the foundation thesis upon which this system of Christian apologetics is built: In the contest between the rational and empirical schools of thought, a Christian must pitch his interests somewhere between the two extremes....

[We need] to establish a perfect balance between *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements in a consistent epistemology.182

Hence Carnell pits Kierkegaard against Spinoza183 and tries to walk an Aristotelian golden mean between Parmenides and Heraclitus, Plato and the Sophists, throughout his apologetical writings. Aquinas also attempted to conjoin pure rationalism with utter irrationalism and ended up with his "analogy of being";184 secular philosophy has put its mind to this same feat and at best has arrived at Kant's dialectic. Carnell fares no better. Indeed it is easy to discern strong elements of Kantian analysis in Carnell's writings;185 an excellent discussion of this fact can be pur-

sued in Van Til's *The Case for Calvinism.* 186

Having noted Carnell's affinities to Kant, we might also make mention of his unhealthy fraternizing with pagan and unorthodox philosophy. It is not that unbelievers may not possess some elements of truth in their thinking, but when a Christian admits a large measure of respect and dependence upon anti-biblical thought we must pause to wonder as to the significance of such a reliance. According to Carnell, Plato hit upon the right synoptic starting point by illumination, spoke much Christian truth, and was not far from the kingdom.187 Carnell also shows great admiration for Kierkegaard188 and, following Kierkegaard, he proposes truth as based on man's spiritual freedom to make his own being.189 "There can be no question but what Kierkegaard has given a profoundly convincing defense of the third locus of truth. What Christi-

182. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 7; *A Philosophy of the Christian*

Religion, 177.

183. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 201f.

184. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* Part 1, Q. 13.

185. For example, see Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 68, 72, 82, 147,

155 f., 183, 21 Of., 272,218.

186. (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1964), 69-81, 88-94.

187. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 186; *Christian Commitment, An*

Apologetic, 135 footnote XX.

188. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 455-473.

189. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 16.

anity has always assumed, Kierkegaard made explicit."190 With respect to his relation to Kierkegaard's thought Carnell said, "It is easy to follow the very one who wanted no followers It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Kierkegaard."191 And in *The Burden of Soren Kierkegaard* Carnell said that "apart from a few critical remarks" his "approach to Kierkegaard is affirmative rather than negative."192 Again we wonder how Carnell, having said that starting point, method, and conclusion are inseparable, could avoid ending up in final agreement with Plato, or Kierkegaard, or Brightman.193

The same question comes to mind when we see Carnell designate areas of R. Niebuhr's writing as "both profound and convincing," "brilliant and correct," "pure gold," "matchless insight."194 Yet how can a false system provide a foundation for the truth? If Niebuhr arrived at some true conclusions he should have been designated as "inconsistent" with

his own system, *not* "brilliant." Since Carnell held that all aspects of the biblical world-view involve each other, how could he say of Niebuhr's criteria of verification, "I find the pre-soteric criterion entirely compelling. The more I ponder Niebuhr's arguments, the less successful is my escape from their force"195—how could he say all this *and* remain orthodox in his own theology? Having said that Niebuhr rejects the biblical view of immanence, how could Carnell assert that "we may assume that he at least is open to the possibility of Biblical authority?"196 The outcome of Carnell's favorable attitude to the thought of such unorthodox men as Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, Brightman, and Niebuhr was his failure to present a solid challenge to liberal thinking in general. William Hordern felt that Carnell's method of verifying Christianity like a broad hypothesis in the tra-

190. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 473.

191. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 73.

192. p. 7.

193. From whom he admittedly derived his test for truth, *An Introduction to Christian*

Apologetics, 47 footnote 2, 56.

194. E. J. Carnell, *The Theology of Reinhold Mebuhr* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1951), 5, 136, 235, 202.

195. E.J. Carnell, *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought,* Library

of Living Theology, vol. II, eds. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan,

1961), 379.

196. E.J. Carnell, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Scripture," *Inspiration and In-*

terpretation, ed. J. F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1957), 240.

dition of the scientific method was the same as liberalism's procedure.197

L. H. DeWolf thought it odd that Carnell would, with his endorsement of

testing all putative revelations, reject the method of higher criticism.198 Fi-

nally, Niebuhr's response to Carnell's critique of him is especially telling:

> I do not know whether Professor Carnell would regard
>
> his criticism of my thought as substantive, but I do not,
>
> because he agrees with me up to the point of verifying
>
> the Christian faith in the experience of redemption.199

Because Carnell did not take Scripture as his absolute presupposition he

ended up with an improper epistemology, authority, view of common

grace, and cooperation with unorthodoxy. We concur with the conclu-

sion of C. M. H o m e to the effect that Carnell makes m a n intellectually

ultimate, that is, autonomous.200

Carnell's Contradictions

Carnell's system of thought contains a n u m b e r of contradictions which weaken the cogency of his apologetic. First, he has at least four things that he takes as having ultimate "primacy": reason,201 spirit,202 fellowship,203 and love.204 It is simply not possible that all of these should have primacy over each other! A n d it simply will not do for Carnell to segregate these various primacies into axiological and epistemological compartments in order to avoid the implicit contradiction,205 for he defines a value as anything a m a n esteems206—and Carnell clearly has high esteem for reason. Hence he ends up with two value primacies:

197. See Hordern's article in *The New Evangelical Theology,* ed. M. Erickson (New Jersey: F. H. Revell, 1968), 226.

198. L. H. DeWolf, *The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 5 If.

199. In *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought,* 443.

200. See C. M. H o m e , "Van Til and Carnell--Part II," *Jerusalem and Athens,* 369-371.

201. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 183,187.

202. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 176, 179.

203. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 215.

204. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 15.

205. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 215.

137. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 277.

reason and fellowship. The contradiction is again evident.

It is also unlikely that we shall be able to reconcile Carnell's insistence that starting point, method, and conclusion are bound together,207 and that starting point is of utmost significance,208 with his declarations that the method one elects to follow is an irrelevant issue209 and that the route to faith is not important.210 If method and starting point mutually influence each other, then method must be as vital as starting point—not indifferent, as Carnell alleges.

Another contradiction is found in Carnell's assertions of the mind's depravity but also its non-corruption.211 Carnell holds that Christianity is foolish to the natural man because he makes faulty use of the principle of systematic consistency, but also that the natural man can use this test to pass Christianity *summa cum laude.212*

Carnell's apologetic has *two* mutually exclusive, absolute starting points: man (and his use of systematic consistency) and Christ (and His revelation in Scripture); this contradiction reveals itself in the fact that Carnell would have his logical starting point validate his synoptic start-

ing point, yet have his synoptic starting point establish his logical starting point.213 Moreover, with respect to belief in the existence of God, Carnell posits *both* faith and reason as epistemologically *ultimate,*214 and he himself had criticized Thomism for committing this very mistake! Such inconsistencies or contradictions would bring down any system of thought, but they are especially painful in a system which boldly affirms (with McTaggart) that no man ever tried to break logic but what logic broke him.215 We should conclude, following Carnell's advice, that at crucial junctures *logic* has *broken* Carnell's apologetic.

207. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 123.

208. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 4.

209. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 102.

210. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 86.

211. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 156f.; *Christian Commitment,*

An Apologetic, 198.

212. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 85, 178.

213. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 124 f., 212.

214. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 66, 101, 157-172.

215. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 184.

Doctrinal Difficulties

The last major problem we shall examine in Carnell's apologetic pertains to his many theological misconstructions. Carnell implicitly denies the incomprehensibility of God when he says, "Time and illumination alone stop us from understanding the entire revelation of God."216 He overlooks the fact that Scripture contains the "deep things of God" and that nature reflects the character of its Creator, who is incomprehensible to the creature. When Carnell says that God is held by the same moral necessities that bind man, that the finite moral-spiritual environment is precisely the same as the divine moral-spiritual environment, and that a single genus of knowledge envelops both time and eternity,217 we question whether he has adequately safeguarded the Creator/creature distinction. Indeed pantheism is very strongly implied when Carnell asserts that man shares a common environment with God and that this moral-spiritual environment is identical with God;218 when he says, "Man shares in the life of God whenever he makes contact with ultimate elements in either the rational, aesthetic, or moral and spiritual environment";219 and when he says, "We know truth because God graciously allows us to participate in the divine Logos."220

Further aberrations in Carnell's doctrine of God are found in his

holding that God is unknown until experienced in *fellowship* 221 and that God has fellowship with man on the same terms that men have fellowship among themselves.222 In this Carnell forgets that God is clearly revealed to all men through the creation and that He is *known* in *judgment* as well as grace (cf. Rom. 1:21, 32; Ex. 14:4, 18; Ezek. 35:11 f.; 38:22 f.; James 2:19); and that, on Carnell's own analysis of the conditions of fellowship among men, he would be making God to humble Himself before us and have to make explanation for His moral requests!223

216. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 194.

217. Carnell, *Christian Commitment,* An Apologetic, 133, 138; A Philosophy of the Christian Religion, 507.

218. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 138; the identity can definitely be inferred from 136, 206, 208, 212, 253, 269.

219. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 135.

220. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 269.

221. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 275,278.

222. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 149.

223. See Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 149, 182.

Corresponding to his weak view of God, Carnell has a poor view of revelation. According to him general revelation provides insufficient evidence for the existence of God;224 and the evidence that it does give is apparently *unclear* as far as Carnell is concerned, for he maintains that God could inconvenience and hide from the atheist225 (as Clark also maintained), and that it is difficult to know what the conditions for fellowship with God are.226 Yet the first chapter of Romans supplies a corrective to both of these points. We have commented above on Carnell's practical denial of the *self*-attesting nature of special revelation; this denial comes out again in his assertion that orthodoxy accepts the inspiration of the Old Testament for the single reason that Jesus did.227 In fact, with respect to the full question of the canon of Scripture Carnell establishes a "canon" outside of the genuine canon which is God's authoritative Word, for he says that the canon question must be settled by *historical evidences* 228—thereby refusing to bow to the self-authenticating authority of the canonical books themselves.

Not only does Carnell attempt to "out-canon the canon," he also sets up a "canon" *within* the canon of Scripture. "Romans and Galatians are the highest ranking sources in theology, for they alone develop the terms of the Abrahamic covenant in systematic, didactic language."229 In fact, Carnell would abrogate anything from the Old Testament that "does not

materially advance the Abrahamic covenant."230 This inordinate stress on the Abrahamic covenant and use of it as a razor for shaving off the authority of parts of the revealed canon is out of tune with the full canonical status of every word revealed and inscripturated by God for His abiding church. Hence Carnell has a canon outside the Bible and a canon within the Bible; instead we should accept *the canon* which *is the Bible.*

Carnell also held that one could defend the inerrancy of the Bible when Chronicles had been shown to contradict other Old Testament histories; to do so one need only shift his conception of the thing signified (e.g., Chronicles would be an inerrant *copying* of errant source docu-

224. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 175.

225. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 175f.

226. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 121.

227. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 35.

228. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 43, 45, 47.

229. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 66.

230. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 56.

ments). However, by this move Carnell empties inerrancy of its original meaning and practical significance; one's certainty that a passage is true

would have to rest on his knowledge that no source lies behind it or that, on independent grounds, this source is accurate.231 Furthermore, as with the case of inspiration, inerrancy is predicated of the finished *document,* not the process leading up to the completion of Scripture.

Carnell's faulty views of G o d and revelation are accompanied by his misconceived anthropology. He holds to the unbiblical, Greek view of man's constitution: "Perhaps a more graphic way to express the union of soul and body is that of two mighty stallions—pulling, but in opposite directions."232 And Carnell's explication of guilt as the juxtaposition of one's self with his projected *ideal233* is nowhere close to the scriptural concept of guilt with its profound theological overtones. T h a t Carnell has not carried the implications of the scriptural doctrine of man's guiltiness before God over into his apologetic is evident when he says with respect to a believer's inability to convince the unbeliever of the truth of the Bible that "it *may* be that the heart of the natural m a n is adverse to what Christianity teaches."234 May be? Nay, *it is.* On the level of practice, Carnell goes so far as to deny total depravity: "We say that m a n is already systematically in contact with God, and thus knows God.... M a n can become rationally conscious of this relation whenever he wills to."235 Carnell declares his rejection of *total* depravity by refusing to view the intellect of m a n as corrupt: " T h e truly peccant part of m a n is his Will, not his intellect."236 Moreover,

Carnell denies total *inability,* he holds that m a n can indirectly meet the law's demands: "We can be sorry for our want of rectitude, we are capable of humbling ourselves before God."237 Along this same mistaken line Carnell wrote, "Pre-soteric synergism is within our power"238 and, "Depraved affections... do not destroy either our power to flee temptation or our power to be sorry after we yield."239 Furthermore, Carnell's heavy appeal to the unregenerate consciousness of the self-made autonomous

231. See M. Erickson, ed., *The New Evangelical Theology,* 80, 223.

232. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 79.

233. Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* 70ff.

234. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 116.

235. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 101.

236. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 198.

237. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 200.

238. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 265.

239. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 266.

man involves an incipient denial of man's sinful depravity and inability as well. And because of this Carnell held that the gospel was foolish to the natural man, *not as a result of sin,* but because he uses the test of systematic

consistency in a faulty manner.240 Carnell reflects a totally unbiblical view of God's sovereignty as well as the unregenerate's free will when he says with respect to Christ's statement in Revelation 3:20 that He stands at the door and knocks: "But God will not break down the door. He will not violate the sanctity of human personality. The door opens on the inside, and man can turn the handle."241

With such views as these it is not very surprising that Carnell denies the view of Reformed theology to the effect that regeneration precedes and enables genuine repentance. On the same page where he declares his rejection of this biblical truth (cf. Acts 5:31 for instance),242 Carnell asserts that "whenever theologians view repentance as a fruit of regeneration, they end up with a harsh view of predestination. The universal offer of the gospel becomes nothing but an empty form."243 In light of Carnell's view here we must seriously question the biblical and Reformed character of his theology. Grave doubt is also cast upon the scripturalness of his theology when Carnell espouses an unscriptural "preparationalism" within man's power with respect to the Holy Spirit's regenerating and converting work: "Man is not totally depraved.... It is pedagogically wiser to have man admit his unhappiness before showing him the deeper reason why this unhappiness exists. This preparatory work ... may serve to prepare the way for the

display of those objective evidences for Christianity through which the Holy Spirit may be pleased to effect regeneration."244 Indeed Carnell's whole apologetic falls under the error of preparationalism: "Apologetics can only prepare the heart for faith."245

The final indication of doctrinal aberration in Carnell's writings that we shall mention is his weak view of the law of God in Christian ethics and his negative view of the Old Testament ethic;246 his view is

240. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 73.

241. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 303.

242. Also see John Murray's discussion in *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955).

243. Carnell, *Christian Commitment, An Apologetic,* 265.

244. Carnell , *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 41 footnote 23.

245. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,* 70.

246. Especially in Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology,* 55f., 73; see also *Christian*

countered in this author's *Theonomy in Christian Ethics.247* All in all Carnell demonstrates the principle that, with respect to both message as well as method, the strength and validity of a man's apologetic will vary in

proportion to the purity of his theology.

CONCLUSION

The many difficulties that attach to Carnell's apologetic, his rationalism and irrationalism, his doctrinal weaknesses, his failure to presuppose the truth of Scripture as absolute, his possibilism, suppositionalism, verificationalism, and probabilism lead us to reject it as an effective defense of the faith and as a clear representative of presuppositional apologetics. His argumentative method is not presuppositional, and his presuppositions are not biblical. We must conclude, then, that although we can appreciate Carnell's insights and analysis at points in his writings we must refrain from embracing his apologetic as a whole. We wish that Carnell had genuinely set forth a system of authority and not capitulated to the demands of autonomous philosophy. We wish that he had presented God's clear and self-attesting revelation as the transcendental of all thought. But with regret we note that, for the most part, he spoke of God's Word in the hypothetical mood.

Commitment, An Apologetic, 201, 221, 238.

247. 3rd Ed. (Nacadoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2002).

C H A P T E R 6

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

Our treatment of Schaeffer writings need not be as extensive as our examination of Clark and Carnell; this is so for several reasons. Schaeffer's books have not dealt as explicitly and intensively with the question of apologetic method and epistemology *per se* as have those of Clark and Carnell, he has covered wider ground, and for the most part he has done a better job of relating biblical Christianity to the whole of life than either of these other men.

Schaeffer's apologetic has arisen out of his analysis of cultural trends in this century. Though what he has to say has not been thorough in any one area, all of his works suggest valuable insights with which no substantial difference need be taken. Over all Schaeffer has been more consistently presuppositional in his outlook than Clark and Carnell, but not so much so that he escapes their fundamental shortcomings. The above discussion of the problems in Clark and Carnell will be assumed in our critique of Schaeffer. Many fine statements are scattered through the writings of Schaeffer; for instance:

> Christianity is a philosophy—though not a rationalistic one because we have not worked it out beginning from ourselves. Rather, God has told us the answers. In this sense it is the true philosophy, for it gives the

right answers to man's philosophic and intellectual questions.1

There are two concepts or ideas of knowing which must be kept separate. The first is the rationalistic or humanistic concept, namely that man, beginning totally independent and autonomous of all else, can build a bridge towards ultimate truth.... The second concept is the Christian one.2

Christ is Lord of all—over every aspect of life. It is no use saying He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Lord of all things, if He is not the Lord of my whole unified intellectual life. I am false or confused if I sing about Christ's lordship and contrive to retain areas of my own life that are autonomous.3

The Judaistic-Christian position is rational, but it is the very antithesis of rationalism.... The Christian is not rationalistic, he does not try to begin from himself autonomously and work out a system from there on.4

The point to be stressed is that, when nature is made autonomous, it is destructive. As soon as one allows an au-

tonomous realm one finds that the lower element begins to eat up the higher.... There is nothing autonomous—nothing apart from the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Scriptures.5

Christianity says man is now abnormal—he is separated from his Creator, who is his only sufficient reference point—not by a metaphysical limitation, but by true moral guilt.6

1. Francis A Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1969), 139.

2. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1968), 88.

3. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason,* 83.

4. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1968), 17, 113.

5. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 16, 29.

15. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 15, 126.

In turning away from God and the truth which He has given, m a n has thus become *foolishly* foolish in regard to what man is and what the universe is. He is left with a position in which he cannot live, and he is caught in a

multitude of intellectual and personal tensions.7

We must realise that their system as a *system* is wrong.8

But, in fact, no non-Christian can be consistent to the logic of his presuppositions. The reason for this is simply that a man must live in reality.... No matter what a man may believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. As Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world.... Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has made, including what man is.... The more logical a man is to his own presuppositions, the further he is from the real world.9

Any autonomy is wrong. Autonomous science or autonomous art is wrong, if by autonomous science or art we mean it is free from the content of what God has told us.10

Finite man in the external universe, being finite, has no sufficient reference point if he begins absolutely and autonomously from himself and thus needs certain knowledge. God gives us this in the Scriptures.11

Christianity is poles apart from any form of optimistic humanism. But it also differs from nihilism, for nihil-

ism, though it is correctly realistic, nevertheless can give neither a proper diagnosis nor the proper treatment for its own ills. Christianity has a diagnosis and then a solid foundation for an answer.12

7. Schaeffer, *Death, in the City,* 13.

8. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 51.

9. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 121, 122, 123.

10. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason,* 84.

11. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 93.

12. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 46.

It is plain, therefore, that from the viewpoint of the Scriptures themselves there is a unity over the whole field of knowledge. God has spoken, in a linguistic propositional form, truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history and the universe.... The unity is there because God has spoken truth into all areas of our knowledge.13

The non-Christian had no right to act on the presuppositions he acted upon.... But in reality no one can live logically according to his own non-Christian presupposi-

tions, and consequently, because he is faced with the real world and himself, in *practice* you will find a place where you can talk... but this point is not properly to be spoken of as "neutral." It exists because, regardless of a man's system, he has to live in God's world.14

Many Christians still do not know what is happening. And this is because they are still not being taught the importance of thinking in terms of presuppositions.... The flood-waters of secular thought and the new theology overwhelmed the Church because the leaders did not understand the importance of combating a false set of presuppositions. They largely fought the battle on the wrong ground.... Man thinks differently concerning truth, and *so now for us, more than ever before, a presuppositional apologetic is imperative.*. .. To try to work below the line of despair without a clear and defined concept of presuppositional apologetics is simply to destroy the possibility of helping twentieth-century people.15

It is not with statements such as these that we demur, but rather with those that directly contradict this outlook. As strong as Schaeffer may seem in the above quotations, he *more strongly* emphasizes a position that

nullifies this presuppositional emphasis.

13. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 92f.

14. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 14, 126.

15. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 15, 126.

G O D ' S W O R D N O T PRESUPPOSED

Despite surface appearances, Schaeffer does not take Scripture as his absolute and necessary presupposition for all meaningful thought, evaluation and discourse. The truth of Scripture is not presupposed but is subjected to autonomous consideration. "We must have faced the question, 'Is Christianity true?' for ourselves."16 Schaeffer gives us an autobiographical explication of what this entails (as well as a microcosmic insight into the fundamental problem in his apologetic method):

> In 1951 and 1952 I faced a spiritual crisis in my own life.
> I had become a Christian from agnosticism many years
> before Gradually, however, a problem came to me—
> the problem of reality.... I realized that in honesty I had
> to go back and rethink my whole position.... I had to go
> all the way back to my agnosticism and think through
> the whole matter.... As I rethought my reasons for being

a Christian I saw again that there were totally sufficient reasons to know that the infinite-personal God does exist and that Christianity is true.17

Such an independent establishment of the credibility of Scripture is taken by Schaeffer as crucial for the believer: "But how can one expect Christianity to be real if one hasn't taken time to consider what truth is, and whether Christianity is true?"18 Extraneous to the direction and authority of Scripture, an epistemological position must be erected; then one can meaningfully attribute "truth" to the word of God.

So before commitment to Scripture, one is encouraged by Schaeffer to develop a view of truth and see if the Bible can pass the test. However, on the presuppositionalist's basis epistemology and the activity of testing would be unintelligible without prior submission to the revealed word of God. Schaeffer would, on the other hand, have us consider *whether* Christianity is true or not—rather than insisting that *nothing could* be true if it were not.

16. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 128.

17. Francis A. Schaeffer, "Preface," *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971).

18. Francis A. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," Lectures delivered at Westmont College, October 1965, 3.

Schaeffer goes so far in his divorcing of the nature of truth and the question of proper methodology from God's Word that he makes them matters of *pre*-evangelism:

> There must be a pre-evangelism before evangelism is meaningful to twentieth century people.... This pre-consideration falls into two areas: the first is in the area of epistemology and the second, in the area of methodology.19

A man must be prepared by philosophic considerations (particularly from classical Greek philosophy) even before he submits to God's authoritative word: "Before a man is ready to become a Christian, he must have a proper understanding of truth."20 This epistemological work done separately from a commitment to Scripture is pre-evangelism: "In reference to conversion, in a Christian sense, truth must be first."21

Because Schaeffer severs the question of truth from God's Word of truth it is no surprise that he espouses something other than a revelational concept of truth; as did Carnell, Schaeffer makes truth out to be a hybrid of "real history" and "rationality."22 So in the end Schaeffer is asserting that the Bible is "true" in the context of an epistemological position not *derived* from the Scriptures themselves but established

autonomously. Although the truth of God is not anti-historical and anti-logical, we must draw back when history and logic come to have greater epistemic certainty than the revelation of God's mind. By not taking Scripture as the standard of truth Schaeffer inevitably joins with the unregenerate in the common problem of discovering *if* the Bible is "true." This parallels the mistake made by Adam and Eve when they endeavored to develop a theory of "truth" aside from God's revelation to them; in terms of such a "theory" they purposed to arbitrate the question of truth between God and Satan. In so doing they had already rebelled against their Maker—even before applying the empirical test with respect to historical eventuation. By not holding that the truth of Scripture (and its own epistemology) is the necessary condition for meaningful predication and intelligible thought Schaef-

19. Francis A. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," Lectures delivered at Westmont College, October 1965, 1.

20. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 143.

21. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 143.

22. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason,* 92.

fer permits the blinded autonomous man to misconstrue the very pos-

sibility and nature of "truth."

Concomitant with Schaeffer's failure to presuppose absolutely the outlook of Scripture by means of his epistemological pre-evangelism is his refusal to accept the authority of God's Word from the outset of reasoning and discussion.

> It always seems to me a very false thing to ask an honest man who is wrestling as to what the Bible is, to believe the Biblical system on the basis that the Bible is a sufficient authority, when that is the subject under discussion.23
>
> The Bible as a system must stand openly and by itself in the arena, in the forum, of the thought of men. Never, never, never will I say "You must believe it because the Bible teaches it." Why should the nonChristian listen? This is the very thing that is under discussion. This is the point: is there a God there? Is this book anything more than a book of fables? We cannot expect twentieth century men to take the authority of the Scripture as a reason for believing the Christian system.24

These quotes cut the heart right out of the presuppositional position. Schaeffer refuses to see the self-attesting character of Scripture, turns away from its authority, and reduces it to one alternative among many

to be decided upon by autonomous man. The Bible cannot function as an absolute necessity for thought and ultimate standard of authority under such circumstances. Scripture's authority is secondary to that of man's critical faculties, hypothetical rather than indispensable, if we follow the apologetic set forth by Schaeffer. The defense that he offers rests upon something other than God's Word, and apparently more dependable:

> The truth that we let in first is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is.... This,

23. Schaeffer, "Speaking the Historic Christian Position into the 20th Century," Lectures delivered at Wheaton College, 12.

24. Francis A. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," 10.

> I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the twentieth century for man living under the line of despair.25

Here Schaeffer implicitly, but erroneously, assumes that certain facts or truths can be properly understood or meaningfully apprehended outside of the foundational truth of Scripture; further, he assumes the natural

man can have a proper interpretation of certain states of affairs without regeneration. Moreover, he exhibits again that God's Word is not his genuine *pre* supposition, but merely a supposition or hypothesis. This fits in with his statement that "we must strain through the grid of reason everything that comes into our mind,"26 and with his indication in the chapter "How Do We Know That It Is True?" that "reason began the process."27 Hence Schaeffer has asserted the primacy of reason over revelation from God rather than making that revelation the presupposition of reason. In this his position has an unfortunate resemblance to the natural theology of Aquinas. Indeed, forsaking the Augustinian dictum that faith is unto understanding, Schaeffer declares, "Knowledge precedes faith."28

POSSIBILISM AND T H E TESTING OF G O D ' S W O R D

As in the cases of Clark and Carnell, so with Schaeffer a refusal to take God's Word as an absolute presupposition based on its self-authenticating authority and requisite for all cognitive activities results in a lowering of its epistemic status to a hypothesis subject to, and in need of, verification by an autonomous standard of truth. Schaeffer presents Christianity in a hypothetical mood at many places in his writings:

> If God exists and we are made in His image we can have real meaning, and we can have real knowledge through what He has communicated to us.... I would ask him

also to be honest in considering the other *possibility,* that

all this is not so, but rather that we started with a per-

sonal beginning and therefore there is intrinsic meaning

25. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 129.

26. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downer's Grove,

Illinois: Inter-Varsity, 1970), 104.

27. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 113.

28. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 142.

to personality.... This is the crux of the matter; either an

intrinsically personal "what is," in the sense of a creation

by the personal God, or John Cage's devilish din!29

And since Schaeffer's apologetic thinks of Scripture's truth as one hypoth-

esis among other possibilities, it is incumbent that he not only attack the

neo-orthodox for rendering the faith non-cognitive (a proper criticism) but

also for not subjecting it to verification. Schaeffer knows that his own faith

would be left suspended as a hypothesis if he did not hold out for its histori-

cal *proofs',* so he criticizes the neo-orthodox position in this way:

Their new system is not open to verification, it must sim-

ply be believed.... It remains irrational... because it is no longer open to verification.... There is no place for reason and there is no point of verification Faith... becomes a leap without any verification because it is totally separated from the logical and the reasonable.... They are divorced from possible verification by reason.... The sphere of faith is placed in... the unverifiable as opposed to the verifiable.... The Scriptures are not discussed as open to verification.30

When Schaeffer uses the word "verification" he makes it clear to us just exactly what he means, for at the end of *The God Who Is There* he strictly defines it as "the procedure required for the establishment of the truth or falsity of a statement."31 The implication was clear enough in Schaeffer's criticism of neo-orthodoxy, but he *directly affirms* his thesis that "the Bible claims itself to be a propositional truth.... Therefore it is open to discussion and verification,"32 and, "This makes Christian faith open to discussion and verification."33 Hence we see that Schaeffer definitely holds out (as did the older form of apologetic represented by men like Butler) that we must follow a procedure calculated to *establish* the truth of our assertions about the Bible being God's Word, Christ being God's Son, etc., etc. Against both neo-orthodoxy and Schaeffer the presupposition-

29. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 71, 90f., Bahnsen's emphasis.

30. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 54, 94; *Escape from Reason,* 51, 53, 75, 77.

31. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 180.

32. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," 15.

33. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 62.

al approach would take Scripture as the most ultimate authority in human affairs, self-attestingly true, and self-interpreting, clear revelation from God. It is not verified (contrary to Schaeffer), and that is because it is God's authoritative, clear (cognitive) Word of truth necessary to all other intellectual endeavors (contrary to neo-orthodoxy). The Bible is the very *words* of God; the neo-orthodox does not pay sufficient attention to it as the words of God, and Schaeffer (in his apologetic method) does not pay sufficient attention to it as the words of *God.* The Bible is the cognitive foundation needed for the verification of anything at all; as such it should not have been itself made subject to verification by Schaeffer. Rather than demanding that "nature" be interpreted through the spectacles of "grace" (i.e., general revelation read through special revelation), Schaeffer would attempt to make "nature" a foundation

for "grace." In his chapter entitled "How Do We Know It Is True?"34 Schaeffer comes to a discussion of "The Nature of Proof."35 Therein he declares that Scripture deserves no special consideration or handling: "scientific proof, philosophical proof and religious proof follow the same rules." The Bible must not be presupposed then as the basis of the very activity of "proving" but is subject to the same conditions of verification as any scientific hypothesis would be.

The standards of proof laid out by Schaeffer bear great resemblance to those formulated by Carnell:

> The theory must be non-contradictory and must give an answer to the phenomena in question. We must be able to live consistently with our theory.... The answer given must conform to what we observe.36

That is, the Bible must pass the tests of logic, fact, and life before it will deserve our intelligent acceptance; with such a standard of autonomous judgment Schaeffer could challenge any putative revelation from any alleged God to match up to his human expectations. The Christian Scriptures will be acceptable only if they fit into the pattern of our previous knowledge about the world; as Schaeffer puts it, the question is, "Does the Christian answer conform to and explain what we observe concern-

34. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* chapter 5.

35. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 109.

15. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 15, 126.

ing man as he is (including my knowledge of myself as a man)?"37 This is *not* an obedient submission to the self-attesting word of the Lord, presupposing His truth as we carry out the cultural mandate with respect to the world in which He is revealed (i.e., as Adam was to do), but a *putting of the Lord God to a test* (i.e., as the Israelites did at Massah, and to which Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness). God's Word should interpret our world and experience, not *vice versa!* Even in our fallen situation God's word is self-attestingly, clearly, and authoritatively a revelation of His mind; man has no excuse for not accepting it.

Schaeffer would appear to imply that man *does have* a reason for questioning the Bible. Hence he turns to general revelation. *But* the only "reason" man does not hear God's voice in the Bible (i.e., self-willed and self-inflicted sin) is the very same reason he does not see God's face in natural revelation! Schaeffer's method will be of no use to us as it stands. Moreover, Schaeffer gives reason for us to see him as holding that natural revelation is unclear (as a witness to God and His character) and fragmentary (rather than sufficient), as well as that special revela-

tion supplies us with a "god of the gaps."38 Whatever may be the inner tension of Schaeffer's own method of defending the faith, our point has been that his defense does not presuppose, but presumes to establish, the "objective" truth of God's Word. He says, "Christianity, beginning with the existence of the infinite-personal God, man's creation in His image and a space-time Fall, constitutes a non-self-contradictory answer that does explain the phenomena and which can be lived with, both in life and scholarly pursuits."39 With such a consideration Schaeffer thinks that he can "demonstrate the truth of the historic Christian position";40 indeed such a demonstration will be the basis of God's indictment of sinners on the Day of Judgment!41

Flowing from Schaeffer's recommendation of God's Word because it passes an autonomous test of credibility and truth is his position that "only the faith which believes God on the basis of knowledge is true faith."42 He would have us accept the Word of God if there is justifica-

37. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 109.

38. See his illustration of the "torn book"; *The God Who Is There,* 108f.

39. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 111.

40. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 111.

41. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 123.

42. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 142.

tion of an independent sort for us to do so, that is, if there is "good and sufficient evidence that Christ is the Messiah."43 It would seem that God is on trial with sinful man His judge! Schaeffer does not demand that men submit their thinking to the true Word of God based on the authority of God inherent therein, for as he sees it "we are not asked to believe until we have faced the question as to whether this is true on the basis of space-time evidence."44 The presuppositional approach would not, by contrast, attempt to build faith upon the pedestal of rational evidence, but would contend that neither reason nor evidence are intelligible outside of the truth of God's revelation. We should not attempt to build *up to* the credibility of God from a *pou sto outside* of God's Word, but rather Scripture itself must be our Archimedean point of departure.

T H E PRESUPPOSITION OF AUTONOMOUS REASONING

Having seen that Schaeffer's apologetic is not presuppositional in its method, we should also note that the presuppositions he does contend for are not biblical. The presuppositions for which Schaeffer is jealous do not come from Scripture but from classical and pre-twentieth century philosophy (that such was apostate is apparently irrelevant).

Biblical Christianity has often been weak in not sufficient-

ly stressing something of the presuppositions upon which men base their thinking and action Yet prior to these dates (1890 in Europe or 1935 in America) this ignorance did not make a great deal of difference because in examining the thinking of that time, one finds that men in general were operating upon a certain set of presuppositions which in a substantial way was not too different from the Christian's presuppositions.45

Schaeffer demonstrates by this statement an amazing lack of understanding of the history of philosophy; what is distressing is that he has failed to demarcate clearly between Christianity and its foes. Our main point, however, is that certain philosophical assumptions rather than

43. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 141.

44. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 141.

45. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," 22.

the truth and authority of Scripture have been taken by Schaeffer as the presuppositions in which he is interested. He wants us to return to the good old days of pre-twentieth-century philosophy, when everyone (supposedly) worked on "Christian" presuppositions of absolutes and antith-

esis; he thinks we need to build back a mentality of antithesis against the new epistemology which came in the wake of Hegel.46 Our real enemy is not sinful autonomy, but dialecticism.47

Now overlooking the fact that the *ancient* Sophists did not believe in absolutes and that *modern* philosophy still *has* an astounding penchant for logicistic rationalism (i.e., that Schaeffer has grossly over-generalized), we should note that non-Christians who accept the validity of consistency and logical thinking do *not*, nevertheless, have the same concept and use of logic as does the biblical Christian. Furthermore, what the presuppositional apologist should be working to present is (deeper than the idea of antithesis) the crown epistemological rights of our self-attesting Christ (without which there could be no value in logic anyway). It is rebellion against God's authority in the area of truth and revelation, not defection from Aristotle, that is our genuine enemy. As an aside we notice an interesting contradiction in Schaeffer at this point of his affirmation of pre-twentieth century man's use of "Christian" presuppositions, for Schaeffer simultaneously asserts that it is *modern* man (i.e. twentieth-century man) who is already part way to the gospel,48 making our apologetical task easier!49

Apart from Schaeffer's violation of the very law of antithesis that he vies for, his failure to begin with *biblical* presuppositionalism has been

noticed. This is akin to what was discovered with respect to the presuppositionalism of Clark and Carnell. In harmony with them Schaeffer begins his apologetic, not with God's revelation in the Bible, but with man's own knowledge of things (despite the fact that they are not seen as preinterpreted by God): "Christian apologetics do not start somewhere beyond the stars. They begin with man and what he knows about himself.... He knows something of the external world, and he knows something of himself."50 We could wish that Schaeffer had pointed out that

46. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 13f., 44, 47, 54.

47. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 46.

48. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 47.

49. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 46.

50. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 123.

the unregenerate have knowledge only *in spite of* themselves and only on the adequate basis of God's truth (which remains in force regardless of the sinner's rebellion against it). Then he could have driven home the thrust of presuppositional apologetics and its point that man can only *account* for his possession of knowledge on scriptural grounds. But Schaeffer's apologetical starting point is not God's Word; hence he could not

make this strong challenge to unbelief. Because he does not begin with the Christian Scriptures but with "facts" and "logic," it is not surprising that Schaeffer can endorse a two-step, double-level apologetical procedure: from broad theism to the Redeemer-God of the Bible. " *Firstly*, be needs to bow in the realm of Being (metaphysically).... *Secondly*, he needs to bow in the realm of morals.... Now he is faced with God's propositional promise, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.'"51 In this respect Schaeffer has not advanced beyond the mistakes of the traditional method of apologetics.

DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM SCHAEFFER'S M E T H O D

A syndrome of difficulties comes along with Schaeffer's apologetical suppositionalism and verificationalism. Reason comes to be viewed as some neutral tool used by believer and unbeliever alike, something that has its own status as independent of divine revelation. Hence Schaeffer can speak of "a culture cut loose not only from God and revelation, but also cut loose from reason."52

Schaeffer's View of Science

Concommitant with his view of reason is Schaeffer's idealizing of neutral, objective science.53 In fact, as Schaeffer sees things, materialistic science is perfectly fine as far as it goes; its problem is that it is simply incomplete.54

This approach fails to challenge science at its very foundations and to demand a change, a substitution of outlook. Schaeffer merely calls for science to *add* more information (i.e., about the spiritual aspect of the world)

51. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 134.

52. Schaeffer, "Preface," *The Church at the End of the 20th Century.*

53. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century,* 91f.

54. Schaeffer, *Death in the City,* 129-131.

to its deposit of (apparently correctly apprehended) truths. It is true that Schaeffer says that Christianity and materialistic science are antithetical and hence cannot be synthesized; the problem resides in the *reason* Schaeffer offers for this fact. It is because, at the *comprehensive* level, the two differ as to what the range of truth is; Christianity affirms and science denies that there is a spiritual dimension, and so they cannot be synthesized. Here Schaeffer only reconfirms the difficulty we noted in his view of science: the difference between materialism and Christianity is seen as merely quantitative, and not qualitative. As Schaeffer puts it, science has half the orange; Christianity provides the remaining portion. This approach is clearly impotent to challenge the scientist with the epistemological prerogatives of Christ in *every* fact of the universe—empirical or

spiritual (using Schaeffer's dichotomy). The unbelieving scientist needs a new outlook, a complete revamping of his presuppositions; additional religious information is not enough, for he can take this information and simply feed it through his naturalistic grid (thereby neutralizing its effect). The Christian apologist must challenge the non-Christian's interpretation of the seen portion of the universe *as well as the unseen*; this is what Schaeffer cannot, in terms of his apologetic system, do. Consequently he does not set forth the stark antithesis between Christian and non-Christian viewpoints and assumptions.

Indeed, Schaeffer *denies* that the problem with naturalistic science is its rejection of a Christian foundation (as the biblical presuppositionalist maintains); its problem is that it does not do justice to the phenomenon of personality in the universe, that's all. The crucial antithesis has been dropped.

Why is naturalistic science poor science? It isn't that I'm saying that it is non-Christian. I am carefully saying it is poor science. And I would say that it is poor science because it doesn't explain the surrounding phenomena....

Now then, let's ask the question "What does naturalistic science have to do to become good science?" The simple fact is it just has to stop being naturalistic. That's all. Nat-

uralistic science can't be good science because you are there. *This is why* it can't be good science.... Naturalistic science fails to explain one thing. It just simply fails to

explain you. And that's all. It is as simple as that.55

Schaeffer's view of reason and science as neutral areas of thought is not only mistaken as to the true nature of things, but it nullifies the Christian's apologetical challenge to unbelief. Indeed one must wonder how Schaeffer can avoid the very difficulty he pinpoints in Aquinas' system of thought (which led the way for the difficulty of modern culture's divided field of knowledge), for his neutral view of reason and science (i.e., there is no necessity that they be subordinated to Scripture from the very outset of their use) contains an incipient nature/grace scheme all his own! Failing to see the necessity of Christian presuppositions for the very use of critical faculties and assimilation of knowledge, Schaeffer presents an inadequate answer to those who hold out for the possibility that a future alternative to Christianity might arise.56 He is right that such a hope can be applied to any question or issue and that every man must now use some working hypothesis, but this answer does not go to the root of the problem; he allows abstract possibility to surround the truth of Scripture rather than view-

ing God's Word as the *necessary foundation* for *all* philosophy (in which case God is the source of possibilities, rather than one possibility among other imagined possibilities). Schaeffer's avoidance of a true presuppositional apologetic weakens his defense of the faith.

Autonomy and Truth

The above materials suggest another area of difficulty in Schaeffer's writings: He appears to grant the natural man has the competence to judge the truth of Scripture for himself and in terms of self-understood facts about the universe and his personal experience. Thinking that an appeal to an antithesis-founded concept of truth will facilitate acceptance of God's Word, and (in practice anyway) assuming the capabilities of proper rational thought and honesty on the part of unregenerate human reason, Schaeffer does not take serious account of the depravity of man's intellect (1 Cor. 2:14). At base his problem is that he does not see that classical rationalism is as antagonistic to God's absolute truth as modern irrationalism.

As did Clark and Carnell, Schaeffer has erred in trying to formulate

55. Schaeffer, "Historic Christianity and Twentieth Century Man," 15f., 23.

56. See Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 110.

a concept of truth prior to, and independent of, commitment to the authoritative, self-attesting Word of God. Although they all thought such methodology would help to defend the "truth" of Scripture, in reality their approach is an obstacle to submission to God's absolute demand upon man's life—including his intellectual activities. If natural man is given the impression that he can think properly on the issue of the nature of truth, and this without submission to God's revelation, what should keep him from assuming that he can autonomously answer any other question that confronts him? Schaeffer should have heeded his own advice: once autonomy is allowed in any realm of our thought it will engulf the whole.

Subjectivism and Emotion as Verification

There is one final, underlying and crucial weakness in Schaeffer's apologetic. We have seen that he considers Christianity to be a hypothesis that can make sense of the facts and be confirmed by experience, that is, Christ's lordship can be accepted since Christ's word is a supposition that explains the phenomena and gives wholeness to life. That is Schaeffer's broad approach. However, in his writings he does little, if any, analysis of natural phenomena and history *per se;* neither does he take up specific scientific, sociological, historical, philosophical questions and show how Christianity succeeds in these areas where secular-

ism does not. No, the one single datum that Schaeffer is concerned to handle is *human personality*—more specifically, personal *longings* for significance, purpose, love, freedom, morals, etc. The Christian hypothesis is verified by Schaeffer in its ability to ground or explain these human desires. He would say that if Scripture is true, then man is a personal being with significant moral freedom and the purposive ability to love; he would then have his readers (or hearers) consider their own human longings and activities—we all function as *personal* agents in the world, and *love* is an ineradicable element of our experience (e.g., even the naturalist kisses his wife when he gets home from work). This being so, Schaeffer considers the Christian hypothesis to be verified and shown necessary. However, within his framework of thought (where the very ability of the unbeliever to evaluate and ascertain knowledge is not challenged by the presuppositional demands of Scripture), this approach is incredibly weak, for it surrenders the objective, *truth* and *authority* of Christianity

(remember, Schaeffer does not show how external states of affairs or philosophizing or the very concepts of truth, logic, and fact demand the presupposition of God's Word). Although not wanting to do so, Schaeffer has reduced Christianity to a glorified aspirin for the twentieth-cen-

tury man who cannot bear to face the headache of reality about him. "Man simply cannot live as though he were a machine."57 Such a fact could exhibit the dependence of man upon God's revelation *if* it were conjoined with similar observations: e.g., man cannot reason, evaluate, discover, analyze, conclude, etc., without the revelation of God—that is, if objective as well as subjective affairs were held to demand Christian presuppositions by Schaeffer. Yet we have already seen that he fails to make this demand upon reason and science.

As a result we have Schaeffer concluding that Scripture must be true because it gives us an antidote to personal nihilism, provides an outlook and personal understanding with which we can live in the face of the dehumanizing forces of our century and civilization. Because he does not make a further point about the necessity of presupposing Christianity in all matters of *truth* pertaining to the world (i.e., logic, science, predication, reasoning all require the assumption that what Scripture says about reality is the case), Schaeffer's point that man cannot live with materialistic, deterministic conclusions about himself but *needs* the outlook of the Bible is simply *a fact about personal individuals—not* about the objective *truth* and authority *of Scripture!* Schaeffer simply cannot maintain that nihilism is *untrue* because suicide is an activity that is *undesirable* to some people (yet taken as

consistent by others).

Antony Flew makes a telling refutation of Schaeffer's type of apologetic:

> There is, therefore, nothing inconsistent in saying: both that the universe and our individual lives are without meaning, point, or purpose in God's sight, because there is no such sight; and that those lives and many objects may be given purposes—often rival purposes—by our decisions. We are thus certainly not logically dependent upon God to provide meaning, point, and purpose for our lives.... Almost all the mistakes usual and possible

15. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There,* 15, 126.

here are found in a review article on *New Essays in Philosophical Thought* by Brother Leo Williams.... [He claims] that belief is necessary because the alternative is so grim;... [yet] even if there was only one alternative to the religious system favoured by Brother Williams, and even if that alternative was indeed as disagreeable as he believes, this would constitute not the slightest reason for

thinking that the more comfortable option must be the truth. Considerations of cosiness are for present purposes simply irrelevant.... It would be grossly smug for a well-fed and well-heeled English academic of the sixties to have no compassion for the unfortunate for whom "religion is the sigh of the hard-pressed creature, the soul of soulless circumstance, the heart of a heartless world." Before the cry of the real nineteenth-century wage slave one can only be silent: "I think, if this life is the end, and that there is no God to wipe away all tears from all eyes, I could go mad...." Yet when it is a question of argument and truth the need for comfort becomes, if anything, a reason against belief in whatever is found comfortable. The final and more often quoted sentence from that of Marx is not usually construed as a compliment to the realism of religion: "It is the opiate of the masses."58

Against such a consideration Schaeffer's apologetic leaves him no reply—at least no convincing reply (unless Schaeffer shifts his ground). It is still a toss-up as to whether one should choose the hopefulness of Schaeffer or the bravery of Bertrand Russell.59 Therefore, Schaeffer has failed to present an effective apologetic thrust that shows the unbeliever the demand

for him to accept a new outlook (the presupposed truth of God's Word).

CONCLUSION

After the preceding discussion of Schaeffer's apologetic we must conclude that he has not escaped the problems inherent in the systems of

58. Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World), 1966,

105-107.

59. See Russell's essay, "A Free Man's Worship," *Why I Am Not a Christian*, 104ff.

Clark or Carnell (and with them, Butler and the old Princeton apologists). He is in basic harmony with the method of these men; they all draw back from presenting Christianity as an absolute presupposition for all predication, reasoning, evaluation, and thought. They all have autonomous presuppositions instead of biblical starting points.

It has been more difficult to deal with the writings of Schaeffer than those of Clark and Carnell. On the one hand the reviewer is sympathetic to the valuable insights suggested in Schaeffer's rapid, rhetorical style as well as his effective, in-service demonstration of love and concern for lost men in our generation, plus his emphasis on Reformed theology in his L'Abri ministry. But on the other hand his lack

of organization, caricatures of certain philosophies (e.g., analytic philosophy), lack of accurate handling of specific artists and their works in their own right, uncritical use of terms (e.g., "reality"), and misguided over-generalizations (e.g., all twentieth century thinkers and artists take the "leap" of irrationalism) tend to distress the reader and make understanding difficult. Still it is unhappily clear that Schaeffer is subject to the same criticisms that pertain to the more exacting and punctilious, rationalistic writings of Clark and Carnell. While appreciating his ministry, we must decline Schaeffer's un-Reformed apologetic method.

C H A P T E R 7

CONCLUSION TO PART 2: THE CRITICAL QUINTESSENCE

Ronald H. Nash has a discussion in his book *The New Evangelicalism* 1 of the sort of "presuppositionalism" represented by Clark and Carnell. Although the book was published before Schaeffer began to be influential, its account is also accurate as a description of Schaeffer's apologetic method. The heart of the problem with the apologetics of these three men becomes manifest in Nash's (favorable) exposition

of their (alleged) "presuppositionalism." A short look at his book will serve as helpful summary of the central flaws observed in the positions of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer as they were analyzed above.

Having granted the necessity of basic assumptions in all reasoning,2 assumptions that as starting points "are important because they determine the method and goal of theoretical thought,"3 Nash correctly states that these ultimate principles are incapable of strict proof.4 But then enters the difficulty, leaving apologetics standing on an Achilles' heel. Overlooking the fact that God's revealed truth is the foundational necessity even for the task of evaluation and verification, Nash asserts, "There is, however, a way in which they [the ultimate principles] may

1. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) 112 143.

2. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 114.

3. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 115.

4. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 116.

be indirectly verified."5 Thence he goes on to discuss "The Verification of Basic Assumptions."6

Nash says that the presuppositional method of verification is similar to the scientist's way of testing a hypothesis.7 "We conduct a rational and consistent investigation of the implications of every proposed basic

assumption to see which assumptions are more probably true."8 It would seem that, after all, there is some more ultimate standard above these assumptions being investigated; it is against this standard that Nash's "presuppositionalists" would test the truth of God's Word.

The nature of that test Nash describes thusly:

> Basic assumptions may be tested by following out their implications as they lead (logically) to a world view or metaphysical system. We then test the system for truth.
>
> If a world view can measure up to standards and tests for truth, it reflects reliability back upon its first principles....
>
> Thus metaphysical systems must be and can be tested for truth on the basis of their consistency, coherence, applicability and adequacy.9

Metaphysical systems would be *graded,* then, according to their logical consistency, relevance, and ability to explain available data; the suppositionalists expect that the Christian faith will be passed with honors by the unbeliever. Viewing the teaching of the Bible as a supposition to be indirectly verified like a scientific hypothesis rather than as an absolutely necessary presupposition, Nash can render this faint praise: "There are no *prima facie* reasons why, at least in the beginning of an inquiry, the Christian assumption should be any worse than its denial."10 Taking

such a stance as this is a fatal move in apologetics, for it fails to apply the absolute demand of God's true Word to every level and movement of reasoning—it does not challenge from the outset the unbeliever's rebellion against God's clear revelation.

In this short presentation by Nash we see that epistemology has

5. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 116.

6. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 116ff.

7. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 118.

8. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 117.

9. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 118f.

10. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism*, 121.

been made prior to, and independent of, metaphysics. Revelation has not been taken as the criteria of truth. Reason has been made autonomous in that it is taken to stand over and test revelation. The epistemic status of Scripture has been reduced to a mere probability. The truth of Scripture has not been taken as absolutely essential to all reasoning, the condition of intelligibility for logic, science, and history, but rather Christianity is seen as one hypothesis among others. Finally, the method recommended fails to take account of the noetic implications

of man's total depravity, his rebellion against God's revelation everywhere, and the distorting-naturalizing effect of the unregenerate's interpretation of everything. These are the fundamental problems that afflict the apologetics of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer; these are the basic reasons why we cannot consider them genuine *presuppositional* apologists of the Christian faith.

Ironically Nash offers the unwitting refutation to the apologetical position he has been expounding and reviewing when he quotes (in condensed form) from *Remaking the Modern Mind* by Carl F. H. Henry. Nash's quotation (with slight expansion) bears repeating:

> One must begin with God, not only to get to God, but to get to anything [for] the existence of God is the necessary presupposition for the affirmation of intelligibility anywhere.... From a certain vantage point, the concept of God is determinative for all other concepts; it is the Archimedean lever with which one can fashion an entire world view. If the great periods of philosophy have diversely interpreted history, the nature of man, and the space-time universe itself, these differences are traceable to variant presuppositions concerning God.... The modern attempts logically to prove the existence of the Christian God be-

tray almost invariably a failure adequately to appreciate this revelatory principle. The Hebrew-Christian writers nowhere argue to God with Aristotle or any other philosopher as a stepping stone, and this not because of philosophic inability as much as an awareness of the significance of revelation.... Where God has spoken, revealed truth becomes the starting point of consistent knowledge; revelation is the test of truth, furnishes the framework and

corrective for natural reason, introduces consistency into fragmentary human knowledge.... Christian theology involves a revelational philosophy.... It is when revelational truth is considered within its own framework that it is agreeable to a reason that does not insist on paring away one implicate and then another to satisfy non-revelational prejudices. Generation after generation has called Christian theism before the bar of humanistic rationalism, not realizing that all the while the non-revelational philosophies were themselves being tried by the historic faith.11

The apologetics offered by Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer also suffer

from major *internal* weaknesses, thus rendering them ineffective. The basic strategy which all three men use is represented by the following syllogism:

1. If the hypothesis of Christianity is true, then X.

2. X is the case.

3. Therefore, Christianity is true.

For Clark "X" would be "The Bible is logically coherent"; for Carnell, "The Bible is systematically coherent"; for Schaeffer, "Man is a nonmechanical personality."

As it stands, however, this strategy commits an elementary logical blunder; it involves the fallacy of affirming the consequent. A parallel example of this fallacy which clearly exhibits its fallacious character would be:

1. If Shakespeare wrote *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare was a great writer.

2. Shakespeare was a great writer.

3. Therefore, Shakespeare wrote *Paradise Lost.*

Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer simply overlooked the possibility that some rival hypothesis might explain "X" as well as, if not better than, Christianity.

11. Carl F. H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946),

226f., 171, 196, 227, 232.

So, in order to shore up their defenses, these three apologists would have to add the following argument to their case for Christianity.

1. Christianity, or Hypothesis1 or Hypothesis2 or ... Hypothesis"

2. Not (Hypothesis1 or Hypothesis2 or... Hypothesisn)

3. Therefore, Christianity is true.

Yet no human, not even a Christian apologist, has the omniscience to know *all possible* rival hypotheses nor the *eternity* needed in which to test them all. Hence only God could apply this argument with any final satisfaction (but He is the very issue under discussion!), and the human apologist is driven to skepticism, agnosticism, or ignorance.

Lacking omniscience, the apologist has no choice but to retreat to probabilism; having disqualified a few rival hypotheses he might claim that Christianity is more probably true. Yet because the apologist does not know all the alternatives and their relative strengths (i.e., does not know how extensive his ignorance is), there is no way for him to *grade* probability—in which case his appeal to "probability" is argumentatively worthless. Moreover, the appeal to probability is a confession of

some skepticism as to the truth of Christianity; yet Christianity had been offered as an alternative to skepticism. Hence in reality skepticism has engulfed the apologetic and won the day after all.

Thus far we see that the non-presuppositional apologetics of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer is stranded between a logical fallacy and (for lack of omniscience) skepticism. As a final measure they might suggest the following type of argument:

1. Christianity or Hypothesis1 explains SituationA
2. Christianity or Hypothesis2 explains SituationB
3. Christianity or Hypothesis3 explains SituationC etc.
4. Therefore, choose Christianity.

However, the conclusion rests upon the validity of the unproven law of parsimony. (What is to say that the world is not more "messy" than the simplest hypothesis offered? Why assume that economy or elegance

characterize the cosmos?) Even if one accepts the law of parsimony the above argument still rests upon *aesthetic* grounds for its conclusion (and hence it is not telling in a matter of truth).

More important, however, is the fact that this argument commits the fallacy of equivocation, for it compares two different senses or levels

of hypotheses, general and particular. Christianity is a broad, general hypothesis that includes numerous specific hypotheses (e.g., the various doctrines of systematic theology), while Hypothesis1 and Hypothesis2, etc., are specific and particular hypotheses that explain the concrete situation under discussion. Therefore, the argument is more properly cast when it contrasts one item of Christian doctrine with one specific secular viewpoint on a subject (or, on the other hand, contrasts Christianity with secularism—broad labels for various *sets* of specific hypotheses). So this final argument must also go by the boards.

The ineffectiveness of the non-presuppositional apologetic is the inevitable outcome of not challenging unbelief at its very foundation. When the truth of Scripture is not presented as the necessary presupposition for all reasoning and evaluation, what compelling reason can be offered for accepting Christianity as the truth of God? If the apologist offers as his reason that Christianity meets the needs of the heart and brings satisfaction for our personal longings, he overlooks the fact that this could be the case *without* Christianity actually being true in its assertions. That Christianity satisfies someone tells us something about that person, but nothing about the truth status of his beliefs. Moreover, secular psychology can offer alternative explanations for this phenomenon, and secular sociology can offer alternative examples from different

cultures. Furthermore, Christianity simply does *not* satisfy *all* the hearts' desires (i.e., the *sinful* ones); so you could not even rate the probability of Christianity's being the true religion without a *prior* commitment to what are taken as "proper" desires of the heart.

If the apologist shifts his ground and argues from the consistency of the Christian system or the non-contradictory character of Scripture, he overlooks the fact that a system can be consistent without being a divine revelation or a canon for the true religion (i.e., the poem "Humpty Dumpty," the novel *Moby Dick*, etc.). The absence of contradiction does not establish the presence of truth (a valid syllogism for a false conclusion can easily be generated), much less the presence of divinely revealed truth; the test for coherence is a negative test only. Moreover, since no

Christian can legitimately claim to have knowledge of the entire Christian system (all will grant their lack of omniscience and the presence of error in their thinking), he can never be sure whether it is coherent as a whole or not; the best that might be claimed is that the Bible is consistent to the degree that the apologist knows it. However, certain mysteries and antinomies might also make us cautious even with respect to this moderate claim. And, as was seen above, the appeal to considerations

of probability must be ruled out of court when one does not know how extensive his ignorance is.

Well, since the test for coherence is only negative in character, the apologist might now make argumentative reference to the accuracy of the Bible's historical, geographical, and scientific statements (while in all honesty admitting that there are still some unresolved difficulties). But again, the Bible could well be totally accurate in these areas without being of divine origin (compare the case of Churchill's *The Gathering Storm).* That the Bible is correct in its factual assertions (e.g., "he rose again the third day") does not establish its truthfulness in the interpretative assertions (e.g., "was raised again for our justification"). Disproof of the factual assertions could disprove the system (by *modus tollens*), but verification of the factual assertions can prove the system only by committing the fallacy of affirming the consequent (see above). Even the resurrection of Jesus Christ can be accepted by the non-Christian as factual, but not as having the significance claimed for it by Christian theologians; the unbeliever could view the resurrection as simply some freak event in a contingent and "odd" universe.

Furthermore, since facts and their interpretation (to cater to a suspect dichotomy) are held to be separate matters by both non-Christians and those trying to "verify" the Bible, you cannot impute any probability to

the realm of interpretation based upon your verified results in the distinctly *different* realm of fact; that the Bible is factually accurate does not even make it *probably* true in its theological interpretations. Moreover, what a historian will admit or accept as evidence is determined by his view of reality; so it is questionable whether the Christian "verificationalist" could get very far with a naturalist anyway. Each would view the data according to his preconceived scheme of interpretation.

As a final move the non-presuppositionalist apologist could attempt to present a case in favor of Christian faith by *conjoining* the personal, logical, and factual arguments just mentioned; perhaps the various ar-

guments could aid one another even though they are not telling ones when separately considered. As each consideration "points" toward the truth of Christianity, maybe many pointers would amount to an affirmative argument. But even this tactic is misguided and unconvincing. The only thing that a faulted argument points to is the incompetence of those of us who use it, and an accumulation of faulted arguments simply reinforces the impression of our incompetence. "If one leaky bucket will not hold water, that is no reason to think that ten can."12

We can only reiterate our main objections to the apologetic systems

of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer. All three men fail to be presuppositional in their argumentative method, and the presuppositions they do utilize during the course of their defense are not biblical. Although not intended to be so, the apologetics of these three authors is merely a weakened form of natural theology. They have two final authorities: reason and the Bible; of the two, reason plays the paramount role. They make little, if any, argumentative appeal to God's clear revelation in nature and man's constitution, and they bring in the self-attesting revelation of Christ in Scripture only at the *end* of an argument as confirmation of their previously reasoned out conclusions. Where Scripture is introduced at the beginning of an argument it is presented merely as a hypothesis to be verified.

Moreover we have observed that the case for Christianity that all three men present is afflicted with numerous inner weaknesses and faults; their arguments fail to accomplish the task assigned to them. The foundation of a house is its beginning point (for a building is not constructed from the roof down), and the beginning of the apologetics of Clark, Carnell, and Schaeffer fails to be the authoritative words of Christ in Scripture (these words, as the three men see things, need to be verified or justified).

We must conclude, then, that they have "foolishly" erected their

apologetic edifices upon the ruinous sands of human autonomy (see Matt. 7:24-27). Theirs is not a distinctively Christian apologetic through and through.

12. Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy*, 63.

A P P E N D I X 1

THE NECESSITY OF REVELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

1 . "SELF-SUFFICIENT K N O W E R "

In this article we shall maintain that a person cannot deny the existence of a "self-sufficient knower." Next we shall indicate that there can be no more than one such knower. Then, after exploring certain metaphysical and epistemological possibilities this leaves open to us, we will note a significant implication the existence of the "self-sufficient knower" has for Christian philosophers. In all this what we shall mean by a "self-sufficient knower" is a mind whose judgments are incorrigible, infallible, and never in need of verification by independent standards. To deny that there is a knower who makes incorrigible judgments amounts to pronouncing that there can be no indubitable and certain judgments. Yet such a pronouncement is either subject to doubt (in

which case we might ignore it, or at least infer that incorrigible judgments are still possible) or is indubitable (in which case it is self-falsifying). Moreover, if someone were to claim with certainty that there exists no self-sufficient knower, his claim would be credible only if he had knowledge of every state of affairs; yet a person with universal knowledge could hardly be impugned with respect to his assertions (i.e., his judgments would be incorrigible). This is only to say that the only person who could deny that there is a self-sufficient knower would have to be a self-sufficient knower himself! Hence the existence of a

self-sufficient knower cannot be *denied* (this is not to prove that it can be affirmed, however).

A dualism of self-sufficient knowers would, furthermore, be impossible. If the existence of two such knowers is alleged, a number of observations are appropriate. We shall label these two alleged self-sufficient knowers as K ("Knower") and DK "Deutero-Knower"). Now K could never be sure that his judgments were not products of illusions and deceptions generated by DK. K would have to consult DK to make sure that his own epistemological apparatus was not being manipulated. (Remember: we cannot appeal at this point to the self-sufficiency of K's knowledge to refute this observation, for that is the issue under ques-

tion.) If DK has an independent life and is not governed (e.g., by mental telepathy) by K, then K could not know everything about DK; K would depend upon revelation, then, from DK in order to assure the truthfulness of his own judgments. Also K could never be sure that his judgments about ultimate states of affairs would not have to be altered by DK's *self*-knowledge (which is obviously inapprehensible to K). In addition, K could never be sure of his universals and general interpretative principles without first ascertaining whether DK were secretly in control of historical eventuation or not; the "radically new" might otherwise threaten his interpretative schemes. All in all, K would indeed have to consult standards independent of himself (notably DK) before he could be certain with respect to his judgments. All attempts to escape this circumstance fail either to guarantee incorrigibility to each knower or to make the two knowers genuinely independent of each other. In summary, the difficulties of comprehension, past deception, and control over historical eventuation make the existence of two independent, self-sufficient knowers impossible. If they have independent histories, K and DK could maintain their respective self-sufficiencies only if they had mutual control over each other's thoughts, plans, activities, and judgments. However, the concept of reciprocal control is obviously muddled; K cannot both be in control *of* and controlled *by* DK (just as by defini-

tion you cannot have two "ultimates").

If we are prevented from denying the existence of a self-sufficient knower as well as from affirming the existence of more than one such knower, then three alternatives are left to us: solipsism, skepticism, and revelational epistemology (i.e., thinking God's thoughts after Him on a creaturely level; also designated "analogical thinking").

If a man will not grant an existential plurality of minds he need not worry that there is a self-sufficient knower upon whose revealed judgments he depends; all the experiences of such a solipsist (including rational argumentation) are staged by his own mind. Such a position lacks plausibility, and its obvious absurdities do not warrant elaboration. But we will note one difficulty that seems to be overlooked in many cases where solipsism is under discussion: it is afflicted with an irradicable element of *fate* (irrationality). Solipsists are not immune from frustration; when one is late for work he finds that he cannot simply "alter the scenery" at will, and so he (like the other commuters) hastens through the traffic. The solipsist does not have control over what his mind spins out for him but is subject to its conditions (which are created irrespective of his wishes). So we can say that the "world-creating" mind of the solipsist is separate from the

"world-perceiving" mind of the solipsist, and the former is governed by inexplicable fate. This is to say, then, that a solipsist who does not have manipulative control over his experienced world is only a pseudo-solipsist since now there are *two* minds that have to be reckoned with.

To say that there is a real world independent of my mind and that my mind is the only mind inhabiting that world leads to insuperable difficulties as well. There is something absurd about denying that the person with whom I am fervently debating does not have a mind. And even if we might have warrant to deny that he has a mind, the fact that he still argues, informs, corrects, deliberates, etc., just as I do, indicates that on a practical level there is no difference between mind and non-mind. Furthermore, unless I claim to have comprehensive knowledge, to be free from delusion, and to be in control of historical eventuation, the affirmation that mine is the only mind in the world amounts to the denial of the existence of a self-sufficient knower. Such a denial has already been disqualified. If I am not the self-sufficient knower but am the only mind in the world, then the problem of fate afflicts me as much as it does the solipsist. And in an irrational world I could not be sure of anything (past judgments, general principles, present experiences, future uniformity, etc.); even my sense experience could be deceptive, and (further) I could be deceived as to my deceptions. Skepticism would result.

Now, overlooking the analytic discussion of "other minds" in current academia, if we grant a plurality of minds, we must query as to the possibility of attaining true judgments and knowledgeable conclusions. One might have a valid propositional calculus in his argument as well

as a proof of the truth of each of its premises, but then he would have to go on and prove his proofs, on and on until he either reached an incorrigible starting point or encompassed *all* true propositions. In the latter case he would have to be the self-sufficient knower (since his knowledge would be universal). He could, then, supply us with foundational premises by revealing them to us. But if revelation from a self-sufficient knower were rejected, what could serve as starting point in establishing truth? So-called "necessary truths" would not inform us of extramental states of affairs; self-evident truths would be valuable only if they were universally self-evident (but what is obvious to everybody? and how could we canvass all opinions?). Empirical observations might be subjectively incorrigible, but then any case built upon them would be valid and effective only for the subject who had the foundational experiences. And even if we grant the objective incorrigibility of phenomenological protocols (e.g., "I see a pencil now"), such could not be utilized with-

out principles of causation and explanation, assumptions of uniformity and identity, rules of inference, categorical warrants, etc.—all of which would have to be verified in their own turn.

Moreover, an inductive argument (as is well known) leads only to probability, and such probability can be evaluated only in relative and subjective terms (e.g., "better or worse," "persuasive or non-telling"), terms which have to be qualified by designating *to whom* the argument is convincing or unconvincing. We would be left with personal opinion, but not justified true belief (i.e., knowledge)—unless one holds that a majority vote of convinced listeners could impute justification to an argument (in which case even invalid arguments could be "justified" with certain audiences who have great emotional attraction for the conclusion!). Unless an absolute authority guarantees the truth of initial premises to a nonautonomous thinker, that thinker (no matter how renowned a chair of philosophy he might occupy) has his feet planted in the quicksand of relativism, and skepticism cannot be prevented.

The man who precludes any revelation from a self-sufficient knower commits himself (in principle, even if not in consistent practice) to skepticism. Yet skepticism implies the denial of a self-sufficient knower, a denial that has been disqualified above.

Therefore, if we affirm the existential plurality of minds (against so-

lipsism) and the possibility of knowledge (against skepticism), we require the self-sufficient knower's revelation. All non-autonomous thinkers would

depend upon such revelation for grounding initial truths and for synthesizing new knowledge. Knowledge for such thinkers would need to bear an image-relation to the self-sufficient knower's judgments; that is, knowledge for someone who is not self-sufficient would have to be analogous and not autonomous. Reasoning and knowledge would be possible only in an atmosphere of revelation.

2 . S Y S T E M AND T R U T H

The significance of context for the understanding of individual words and assertions has come to be recognized in recent times. The word "desist" could not be understood if we did not have knowledge of the history of its application and use. The utterance of the word would be meaningless outside of a sentence or in-life situation to provide that utterance with a context (e.g., "Growers should cease and desist from using DDT"; in a situation where someone is committing a crime a policeman might utter the word as an imperative). What is true with respect to an individual word is also true with respect to sentences in which it is used: they require a context of understanding before they can function mean-

ingfully. "Not nothings itself' may sound inapprehensible in itself, but if one has a vivid enough imagination he can create a context in which this sentence makes sense (Heidegger apparently thought that he had such a context).

Now if the epistemic importance of a context applies to individual words and to simple assertions, we can ask where one acquires the broader context for paragraphs of thought, large-scale judgments, ultimate conclusions about "reality." How does one arrive at a system of universal interpretative principles that can relate particular thoughts or facts to one another? Within what context does one synthesize his knowledge into a coherent system? The finite knower who tries to construct his system from the particulars of his knowledge will always lack universality in his interpretative principles, but without exhaustive foreknowledge of what history will eventuate he can have no assurance of any projected systems of interpretation. If the finite knower starts with his immediate experiences and imposes categories of understanding upon them, then he must search every nook of the world to make sure that there are no anomalies for his interpretative principles; by not deriving his principles from the particulars of experience he tends to deprive history of its indi-

vidualities. Yet by taking careful account of the integrity of the particulars he is denied any assurance of universality in his interpretation of them; his overarching contextual scheme is made impotent. If, in search for a context that can give meaning to his knowledge, the philosopher denies that there can be any pre-interpretation of the facts of history (by God the Creator of all states of affairs), then he will (because of his lack of exhaustive foreknowledge of historical particulars and lack of assured coherence in his interpretative system) posit the ideal of comprehensive knowledge to safeguard the autonomy and validity of his system. Such is the ideal of much modern science (with the aid of computer technology, to be sure), and it is at least a limiting concept in most fields of thought (witnessed by the common deference to the authority of the "expert" or person having the most years of training and/or academic degrees). Complete certainty comes to rest on comprehension, a context wide enough to give meaning to all the particular facts of experience and history.

It is obvious to most people, however, that no human (or even a computer) can attain to omniscience; failing this, man can have no assurance of meaningful knowledge, no system of truth. He seems to be caught on the horns of a dilemma; one horn is uninterpreted (uncategorized) particulars, and the other is rootless interpretative principles (i.e., divorced from factual and particular information). The choice is meaninglessness

or sheer imagination. If the would-be autonomous thinker would work in a context of revelation, however, he could be in a position to recognize the objective integrity of historical particulars while being assured that they were all meaningful. The comprehensive system of God's mind must precede temporal experience and pre-interpret all facts if they are going to be objectively meaningful. God's revelation to man provides the contours within which man's thinking about the world can take place and make sense. Working within the context of God's revelation the human thinker can attain coherence in his interpretation of his experience and can make meaningful predications. This he would do by striving to think God's thoughts after Him (i.e., on the basis of revelation) on a creaturely level (thereby imaging what God thinks on the level of Creator), thoughts that constitute the plan according to which history proceeds and has meaning. Because man's mind is created by God and revelatory of Him, and because the world is created by God and is revealing Him and His plan, man's mind and the facts of his experience are suitable for each other—they can meaningfully come together. Man can build further meaningful

knowledge upon the foundation of God's revelation; alternately put, he reads general revelation through the spectacles of special revelation.

According to this revelational epistemology, the ultimate point of reference in all mental judgments would be the original and comprehensive system in God's self-sufficient mind; hence knowledge for man would have to be analogous to God's and not autonomous. In summary: there must be a "universe" that is the context of all meaningful mental judgments and intelligible experiences. The requisite "unified-diversity" is found in the mind of God as the sovereign and self-sufficient knower. Revelation from Him brings coherence and meaning to human experience and knowledge. The sovereign Lord orders the world and history as well as creates the mind of man with its interpretative categories, thus making the attainment of knowledge in a meaningful context possible for man. Hence if man is to have both system and truth in his thinking he must renounce his attempts to be autonomous of God's revelation to him. Rather he must seek receptively to reconstruct the system of truth known by God. The creature of God must implicate himself more and more into God's ways of thinking by submitting to the authoritative word of Scripture, learning ever more of God Himself and the world, and finding a basis for all other meaningful reasoning and investigation. Context is essential to meaning; the meaning of our lives and the meaningfulness of our thoughts can be found in the context of God's revelation, a revelation that tells us of the contextual situation in which

we live, and move, and have our existence—God Himself.

3. T H E EPISTEMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CREATOR-RELATION

Because man lives in an environment conditioned by, and resting upon, the knowledge and interpretative principles of his ancestors, and because man is created with certain inherent knowledge of his Creator, man has epistemologically been able to take too much for granted. Men deceive themselves to such a degree that they conclude that they are epistemologically autonomous (i.e., free from the necessity of exploring the Creator-relation when doing science and philosophy). Consider the following illustration.

Imagine an acoustic society where the people are pre-alphabetic and unacquainted with linear type or printed materials. All their communication is oral, and their thinking is based upon sounds and voices rather than written sentences. Should the intellectual elite of this society

happen upon what we call a "typewriter" we could imagine their questions. What is it? How is it? What emotional and operational response is appropriate? Is this active or passive? Is it art or machine or surd? Etc. These thinkers will seek an interpretation of this object in terms of their own personal experiences, but try as they may their efforts would always be arbitrary or distorted or both. Should they simply posit that

this object has some useful purpose (rather than not), where would they begin testing? Should they simply posit (again arbitrarily) that this falls within the general category of machinery, how would they determine how it properly works? By a great stretch of the imagination they might discover through guesswork and trial-and-error that pressing the keys of the object could crack a strategically placed walnut! If they ever could come up with an analysis for this unknown object, it would certainly be as misguided and incorrect as this one. It could be no other way.

On the other hand, suppose that these pre-alphabetic people were given the benefit of seeing the strange object in operation. Imagine that a motion picture was provided for the typewriter's being loaded with paper and used to type a paragraph of thought but with the hands of the operator edited out of the film. Would they fare any better in their interpretative endeavors? Again they would be left to guesswork as to the activity of the strange object. Using their previous experience to guide them they would always analyze its function in an arbitrary or distorted way. Where should their analysis begin? Are the marks on the page causing the keys to depress? Does the ring of the bell frighten the carriage back? Is tabulation merely a burp? Moreover, the printed sheet itself would be to them a hodgepodge of strange marks, uniform scribbles. Obviously the real intent or use of the typewriter would be lost

for lack of reading ability.

Only if this acoustic society receives information from the person who designed and operates the typewriter will they even begin to understand it and its function properly. The creator-relation has to become a factor in their interpretative schemes. The creator and controller of the typewriter could explain what an alphabet and written language are, how to make the typewriter operate, and what the resultant printed sheet communicates. Outside of such consultation with the typewriter's creator these people could never have any assurance of knowledge with respect to the strange object, but with revelation the acoustic society could know for sure the nature, significance, and function of the ob-

ject. Only when the creator-relation is accounted in their interpretations could knowledge be gained; without that foundation, not even one component of the typewriter could be understood.

This illustration can be applied to all human interpretations of the world. The typewriter represents the whole of created reality, and its functioning stands for the history of the world. Neither the universe nor history can be approached intellectually without a prior revelation from their Creator and Controller that delivers founda-

tional information as to structure, interpretative categories, purpose, goal, meaning, and significance for the universe and history. Every detail need not be mentioned, but starting points and direction are indispensable. With these the human knower can proceed to learn more and more about the world and history, being assured that his interpretation rests upon and subsequently reflects the original interpretation in the mind of God.

If a thinker were to attempt to gain knowledge "on his own," there would be no hope for him; his guesswork would be arbitrary and distorted. He would not know whether the diversity or unity of things were to control his philosophy. He would not know whether things were strictly determined by antecedent causes or whether novelty ruled the day. He would not know whether partial ignorance vitiated his interpretations, etc., etc. His arbitrary categories of understanding and rootless assumptions would lead to anything but justified, true beliefs. Autonomous knowledge is no knowledge at all. Epistemological significance is grounded in the Creator-relation. Not even a simple detail of the world or history can be understood properly without revelation from the Creator. Apart from such a revelation the world would be a completely unknown object, without even a hint as to its meaning and an explanatory method appropriate to it. The Creator-relation in epistemology is a *sine*

qua non, and so revelational epistemology is maintained against all forms of autonomous philosophy (which would be cogitation in and against the utterly mysterious or unknown).

Since God is the Creator of all facts and His comprehensive interpretation precedes all states of affairs, the reference point of all knowledge must be revelation from Him; otherwise we force our distorted and groundless categories upon misapprehended facts. If a fact is what it is as a result of God's activity, it will never be given a true interpretation unless understood in terms of the Creator and His plan. To

attempt an interpretation of the world or its details "on one's own" is to assume erroneously the non-createdness of facts. If the revelation of God is turned away from so that His sovereign control over all things is ignored, the resultant assumption that anything can happen in history and that all things must be organized and assigned meaning by the human mind will eventually issue in skepticism. Fate rules the day, and subjective arbitrariness is the quicksand of all reasoning. One either begins his philosophizing with the God who comprehends all things and who delivers an apprehensible revelation, or he begins with an incomprehensible and inapprehensible world. If the world is to be

known, we must consult its Creator.

278

A P P E N D I X 2

THE PRAGMATIST'S REJOINDER AND THE CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE

To all of the preceding discourse1 the modern-day pragmatist would merely sneer and tauntingly respond, "Well, my laws of logic and scientific procedure still *work*, even without acknowledging your God, and whatever theoretical inadequacy or inner tension there may be in my thinking, it has not kept me from success yet!" The pragmatist can still live his life, be fruitful in his scientific endeavors, and be satisfied with his thinking even though he continually rejects revelational authority; he can stubbornly refuse to be affected by the above critique. According to the pragmatist, ideas are no more than plans-for-action. The only meaning any proposition has are its practical consequences for his life. And truth is constituted by an idea's workability and beneficial results in concrete living situations. The pragmatist faces insuperable difficulties in this "convenient relativism."

To be at all helpful, pragmatists must base future plans for action on past effects and experiences of success, thereby depending upon some-

thing that is illegitimate for him: the *truth* of uniformity or regularity in nature. Then, in order to be convincing, the pragmatist's position must be set forth as true, as a moral imperative, or as a personal recommendation.

1. The "preceding discourse" which Bahnsen here mentions refers to Articles 1 through 5 of Chapter 3 above. He excised this section of text during his reworking of the proofs.

CONSISTENT PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

If pragmatism is only a recommendation we are free to reject it. If pragmatism is a moral imperative we can refuse to recognize the authority of the commander and investigate the nature of its moral force by means of reasoned criticism. To have any hearing at all or any intellectual force whatever, then, pragmatism will have to be presented as *true.*

The irony is that pragmatism is a *relativistic* theory that tacitly assumes itself as absolute! But then the pragmatist finds himself required to solve the dilemmas posed for autonomous epistemology above. Most likely though, the pragmatist will simply assert that pragmatism is "true for him." Outside of the fact that *tomorrow* pragmatism might no longer be "true" (in this self-contradictory sense), this use of "true" is at diametrical odds with ordinary language usage; it is at variance with what we mean by "true." Can you imagine the pragmatist's notion of truth being utilized in our law-courts? Truth is usually held to be universally appli-

cable or recognizable. It is not assigned to private and/or contradictory states of affairs. If the pragmatist means that pragmatism is "true" in this common sense, then he is obligated to argue for it (and not simply point to his smug self-satisfaction). If he takes "true" in a different sense altogether, we can ask him, nevertheless, if he believes pragmatism to be true *in the traditional sense*. If he does, we expect a reasonable case for it; if he does not, then we can simply fail to be moved by his personal testimony. If something is not *true* should we be concerned with it? If the pragmatist buries his head in the sand, he cannot expect to convince anyone or even get a respectable hearing. If he will not squarely face the perplexities in autonomous reasoning, our most appropriate response to his personal point of view is, "So what?"

There are other considerations relevant to rejecting the pragmatist's position. Pragmatism rests on an experimental methodology; those ideas that are to have the most beneficial consequences in my life can only be found out by trial and error. However, every experiment is conducted within the context of certain presuppositions (which delimit the conditions of experimentation, method, and standard of success, etc.) and is specifically tailored to solve some particular problem. The outcome and evaluation of the experiment is relative to those presuppositions and problem. Could the pragmatist ever be certain that what

he considered most workable really was so? He could have determined the outcome of his experiment just by the way he set it up; hence his evaluations could be distorted. His methodology itself needs to be sub-

ordinated to some higher interpretative principles. Thus we begin to approximate the difficulties already encountered in autonomous reasoning. The pragmatist is obligated to offer a credible defense. Moreover, since "practical" and "satisfactory" are standards that are very vague and relative to the person utilizing them, they cannot give us a clear idea of what constitutes truth. Furthermore, the pragmatist does not seem able (or willing) to specify the nature of that goal which "true ideas" serve. Indeed his position is too ambiguous to tell us anything at all. If the pragmatist is to be accounted as saying anything meaningful he is going to have to prove himself.

In addition, pragmatism can easily be seen to endorse untrue ideas that lead to certain kinds of practical ends. If I utter a lie but thereby gain what is useful to me, the pragmatist would be in the awkward position of calling a *lie* "true." By considering only his own desires a man can conveniently exclude obvious truths from his thinking in order to

successfully gain personal comfort. And some truths would be simply beyond pragmatic verification (e.g., Royce's illustration: "The totality of experience of many men really exists" can be neither denied nor pragmatically verified). Consistent pragmatism reduces to holding that we must act "as if" our ideas were true to life and reality while realizing all along that they fail to describe genuinely anything at all. The idea of a pragmatist does not assert anything but only challenges behavioral response. Hereby pragmatism leads to skepticism and destroys itself as a truth criterion. The autonomous man who simply mocks the theoretical problems raised previously because he can continue to operate as a scientist or philosopher without consciously acknowledging revelational epistemology fails to be clear in what he is saying, self-consistent in his method, or even plausible in his outlook. Of philosophies pragmatism turns out to be quite impractical!

Finally, when the autonomous thinker refuses to be affected by the critical attacks on his autonomous epistemology and appeals to the successes of his intellectual endeavors, he simply testifies to a self-acknowledged faultiness in trying to be consistently autonomous. He is also testifying to the intuited (yet unacknowledged) truth of the contrary system (i.e., revelational epistemology) which does give him grounds for epistemic significance, success in reasoning, and motive

for exerting his intellect.

In other words, the pragmatist is "successful" simply because he is

wrong in his profession, *not* in spite of the perplexities of his autonomy. If the pragmatist wishes to deny that he secretly knows that revelational epistemology is correct, let him give some reason for his intellectual venturing. What did he think to gain? Furthermore, let him resolve the difficulties of that position he outwardly espouses. Let him *account for* his purported intellectual successes! Otherwise, every time he taunts the critic of autonomy with his proficiencies and accomplishments the autonomous man plays right into the critic's hands. The ability of the self-proclaimed autonomous thinker to do science and philosophy, even in the face of insuperable dilemmas in autonomous epistemology, will always be evidence of the mistaken nature of his autonomy and of the truth of what he consciously denies (but apparently endorses unconsciously). If then the pragmatist wishes to avoid adding further evidence against his professed autonomy, it will be necessary for him to get to work defending himself against those criticisms of his position that were initially laid down. His only alternative is embarrassed silence.

T H E C H R I S T I A N ALTERNATIVE

The Christian has an ultimate metaphysical commitment (derived from God's clear revelation) to the sovereign, self-contained, self-sufficient, trinitarian God who created all things from nothing. Hence the Christian ontology is dual-level: (1) the uncreated, autonomous, absolute, as well as (2) the derivative, created, contingent (i.e., the Christian insists on the Creator/creature distinction). All the facts of this creation are preinterpreted by the counsel of God, and they all reveal the person and divine attributes of God, their Creator, in an authoritative, necessary, sufficient, and clear manner. Consequently there are no "brute," neutral, uninterpreted, or non-revelatory facts. God's revelation in man and in man's environment is so certain that men who refuse to believe the truth about God are without excuse. Their unbelief is an ethical, not an epistemological problem. As a creature made as the image of God, the Christian understands that he must reason in subordination to God (or "analogously")—that is, in a derivative and reinterpretative way. He must think God's thoughts after Him in all areas of intellectual endeavor. Because God is the absolute authority over all creation His infallible understanding must be made foundational for man's thinking. For man, all reality is reinterpreted in the light of God's revealed thoughts. So then, basic to all truly Christian epistemology is the absolute self-

ALTERNATIVE

sufficiency and comprehensive knowledge that characterize God, the Creator and Controller of all reality. This God alone is self-explanatory. As such He is the final reference point of all thinking and He speaks with an absolute authority. His judgments never fail to be justified and relevant, seeing that He has infinite knowledge and that He is the Creator of all states of affairs. His intelligent plan and interpretation lie behind all facts, thus rendering the universe reasonable and coherent throughout; mystery is not ultimate. God's system of thought embraces everything in a meaningful order. That system is exhaustive and incorrigible, since all things happen according to God's sovereign plan.

Thus a rational, coherent God directs every event of history. This God exists exclusively in terms of Himself, needing nothing over against which He must identify Himself, being subject to neither temporal limitations nor spatial requirements, and requiring no test of internal consistency against principles of logic—nothing is more ultimate than this divine Person (neither non-being, time, space, nor logic). Factuality and consistency must, therefore, be measured in terms of God and not vice versa. God's originative, interpretative system for all reality cannot fail with respect to coherence and material factuality, since all things are created by Him and operate according to His wise, sovereign control. The

meaningful Word of God, according to which the world was structured, precedes all facts and provides their meaningful context. Therefore, God is the original of truth: He creates all truth, He is the standard of truthfulness, His Word alone is self-attesting and incorrigible, His interpretation originates all states of affairs and guarantees their meaningfulness (even before discovered by man's mind).

Because God orders both the world and man's mental functions, man can reflect truly upon those states of affairs external to him. The interconnection and relations between facts thought upon by man were originally in the objective world according to the plan of God. Man depends on God's general revelation in nature and its corresponding revelation in his own self-conscious mind to bring principles of reason and facts of experience into fruitful contact. Lacking a comprehensive interpretation of reality, man depends upon divine revelation to get his bearings set and to place his thought in a context of meaning and truth. Prepared by general revelation, man can recognize the authority and self-attesting truth of Scripture, which gives him his standards of meaning, knowledge, and truth. Man, as the image of God, thinks in the at-

mosphere of God's original and comprehensive interpretation of reality,

utilizes dependable axioms of truth found in God's verbal revelation, and has a basis for extending his knowledge according to the pattern of general revelation.

Striving to think his Creator's thoughts after Him on the creaturely level, man unquestionably accept's God's verbal revelation as that through which he reads general revelation. Man strives to have his own interpretation of reality bear an image-relation to God's interpretation. In this way man's knowledge can be true even though not comprehensive. Just as man cannot comprehend God, so he cannot fully comprehend any part of the created world, since it reveals this God. Yet man can apprehend God in a true fashion (based on God's revelation) and so can apprehend the created world truly when he bases his thinking on God's revelation.

In his interpretative endeavors man can use the laws of logic, because the created world is a coherent system under the control of God who created man's mind to function in terms of the laws of thought appropriate for the created world, and sense experience since he is reinterpreting the facts of the created world as the analogue of God. Man can also use the principle of the uniformity of nature, since God has promised the orderly functioning of nature according to His wise providence.

Hence the Christian alternative to the hopelessness of autonomous reasoning is revelational epistemology or "analogical thinking." This re-

quires *beginning* with God's Word as the most certain truth available to man and basing all reasoning upon it. This authoritative Word is not to be subjected to verification by human reason before being accepted. Human reason makes sense only in terms of God's revelation, not *vice versa.* So the Bible does not appeal to human reason to justify what it says.

The Bible is no short-cut to the truth for those who are not blessed with abilities in science and philosophy (and thus cannot arrive at the truth on their own as do the intelligentsia). Rather, the Bible is the foundation of any and all true science and philosophy, disciplines that would never arrive at the truth about God independent of revelation. Accordingly human reason must be seen for what it really is: created and subject to God's authority. Human intellect is not independent of God. Only when man's epistemological abilities are exercised under the authority of God and His Word, begin with the truth of God's Word, and are guided by it, can he arrive at truth (which is theoretically founded) in any area. Men who find truth while denying God have no theoretical foundation for their

thinking. They find truth only in spite of what they say about themselves and God (i.e., they know the truth that is revealed even while refusing

to acknowledge it; this knowledge makes it possible for them to discover truth). This all points to the necessity of regeneration for sinful man, who is in rebellion against God. Only as man is made a new creature recreated unto knowledge will he submit openly to God's absolute authority.

For the Christian, truth is taken to be conformity in thought, word, and deed to God's mind based on Christ's gospel as learned in His Word and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Our thinking begins with, and is based upon, the absolute, complete, underived, and eternal truth in God's mind and should proceed to generate assertions which never contradict God's authoritative Word, which reflect God's interpretation of any area of reality, and which are true to the facts of God's created world and the laws of thought God provides man's mind with which to function. Realizing that he cannot intelligibly conceive of God's non-existence, man must acknowledge that only if the world and he himself are what God's Word says they are can there be any science or philosophy at all.

In any knowledge transaction man is governed by: (1) God's Word and its implications (man is never to impugn his Creator's veracity), (2) logical coherence (God has created the world with a meaningful order according to His own counsel, and man should seek to reflect God's thoughts on a creaturely level), and (3) the facts of experience (man, who is not the original of truth or interpretation, cannot excogitate facts at will but must

accept the world as God made it and presents it to him). Man can gain genuine knowledge when depending upon revelation, coherence, and experience. Of these God's Word is not subject to correction by experience and coherence (though occasionally man's interpreting of God's Word might be), but logic and perception can be corrected by Scripture.

One implication of the concept of "knowledge" delineated above is that "knowledge" must be "justified true belief'; knowledgeable belief must be grounded in justification in accordance with God's thoughts. The primary justification for any belief is the authoritative Word of God written. In this Word and everything that can be deduced from it by good and necessary consequence is found the guidelines for any and all of man's intellectual activities. When Scripture does not specifically speak to a point at issue man is to work within the boundaries that are set down, using the gifts God has provided him in order to fulfill the cultural mandate. Empirical investigation and logical ordering work

under the authority of God's Word. Since God intends for man to gain knowledge beyond that verbally revealed (hence the cultural mandate) man can discover truth by efficient and cautious work. When a man has good reasons for a belief and that belief is true to the facts, then

we can say of him that he has knowledge. Verification of truth comes via careful exegesis of Scripture, cautious and constantly re-examined scientific examination and painstaking logical scrutiny. God, by His Spirit of truth, intends that we be able to adjudicate the relevance of argumentative premises and become assured of proper justification for alleged cases of "knowledge." This calls for faithfulness to all of the tools, gifts, and resources He has put at our consecrated disposal.

A Christian view of God, the world, man, and knowledge as represented briefly in the preceding paragraphs constitutes the only effective alternative to autonomous reasoning of all varieties. In the case of autonomous reason, assertions about states of affairs would be meaningless if not impossible, and "knowledge" would always be engulfed in the yawning chasm of skepticism. Revelational epistemology provides a solid foundation for meaningful knowledge, genuine science, and legitimate philosophy. In it skepticism is vanquished, and the prospect of ascertaining truth is confirmed. Christian epistemology, based on both special and general revelation of the authoritative, living God, provides coherence for experience, uniformity and predictability, intelligible facts, valid principles of logical inference, a connection between the mind and the world, continuity and discontinuity of facts according to the plan of God, and standards of truth and meaning—all of which

autonomous reasoning despairs to attain. Only by subordinating themselves to God's authoritative, necessary, sufficient, and clear revelation can empirical investigation and logical thinking find their legitimate function and beneficial employment.

A P P E N D I X 3

THE POSSIBILITY OF ARGUMENT

When the Christian and non-Christian argue with one another they will both seek to be coherent in their use of premises that are true. Yet neither one will be able to prove the truth of each and every premise used, for that would lead to an infinite regress and make argument impossible (since it could never get started). Every argument must begin with some foundational, unproved premises. What sort of premises must these be? In the case of the allegedly self-evident premises one disputer can always claim that the premise is not so *self*-evident to him. Analytic propositions fail to give any substance to the debate. Protocol statements need to be accompanied with a more ultimate outlook if they are going to be suitable for deductive reasoning or inductive relating. Inductive arguments are always inconclusive, being subjectively evaluated for their strength. A person may *he persuaded* by an inductive argument, but

what he has thereby is personal belief, not knowledge. There is always some doubt as to whether the person was persuaded by the truth of the argument or by circumstantial conditions. Even if the initial unproved premises in an argument could be agreed upon by the disputants, when subsequent demonstration disproves one disputant's position he could take this as evidence that they did not mean the same thing after all by those initial premises. This is only to say that unless an absolute authority guarantees the truth of initial premises, one disputant can always refuse to be moved by

the argument of the other (and with cogent reasons for his stubbornness). In mundane matters men can often agree on initial premises and pursue genuine argument (based on the authority inherent in their personal agreement at the outset). But an authoritative revelation of the truth is the only basis for premises in an argument over ultimate issues, premises that can be used to drive an opponent from his position. If a theological argument is going to be a genuine argument and not a mere exercise in persuasion tactics, then initial truth must be supplied from an authoritative source. Should any disputant question how this authority is known to be genuinely authoritative he has failed to recognize the meaning of "authority." If the authority depended upon some proof of its authoritative status in order that it be acknowledged as the authority, then it would cease to

be the final authority.

So then, if an argument is going to constitute a genuine exchange of ideas and legitimate debate, the two opponents must meet on common ground. If disputants do not use the same initial premises that are known to be true, then nothing is "proven." But we could never know whether two opponents were really using the same foundational premises without a revelation of that fact from One who knows the truth about every situation. In Romans 1 we read that all men have a clear revelation of God that they seek to misuse and hold down. As seen above, only this inner conviction of God's existence provides a basis for knowledge of any sort. So this knowledge must be presupposed in order for any argument to take place. Since all men *have* this knowledge of God (whether they admit it or not) argumentation *is* possible. No one could intend to convince his opponent of the truth without the conviction that each of them shared an initially true premise; this conviction can be based only on a word from God. When the non-Christian rejects the revelation of God and holds to a secular cosmology, anthropology, etc., he has no reason to suppose that contact with another mind on any common ground is possible. If argumentation is going to be possible we need not just any presupposition, but we require clearly revealed and universally necessary ones—presuppositions that Scripture declares God has provided all men.

Here then is the logical oddity of arguments between skeptics and believers. Only if Christianity is true when it claims that all men have a presupposed knowledge of God can there be any common ground on which to maintain an argument at all, and only if God provides the authoritative beginning premise in an argument can the non-Christian

ever hope to do more than merely persuade (in an irrational or emotive fashion). No matter what type of argument is carried on and no matter what type of attack is argumentatively directed against Christianity, they must all presuppose the truth of Christianity if they purpose to be genuine arguments.

The only point of contact between any skeptic and believer who argue with each other must be the truth that the non-Christian is attempting to disprove! He does in fact presuppose this truth but will not acknowledge it (because of his depraved mind). Nevertheless, all genuine argumentation and the attempt to prove a truth presupposes Christianity. To the degree that the unbeliever has any knowledge at all he is dependent upon the revelation of God, even though he may outwardly repudiate this revelation. This knowledge, which God commonly and graciously allows those who disobey Him, makes it possible for them to

argue. The non-Christian, while recognizing the necessity of common presuppositions for argumentation, cannot be assured of them on his own autonomous basis nor can he supply unquestionable axioms that all men know and use. Only the Christian, depending upon the verbal revelation of God, can be assured that God has revealed certain unquestionable truths to all men in all ages. This revelation given to all men provides the necessary point of contact for an argument between two men. Without it, disputants would be incapable of proving anything, being adrift without a common foundation.

Because the unbeliever will outwardly denounce the truths that Scripture declares God has revealed to all men, truths that are necessary for all science and philosophy, the Christian apologist must not carry on his dispute with the unbeliever on the unbeliever's own terms or opinion of himself. Common ground cannot be found at this level. The apologist must appeal to the truth that the unbeliever suppresses (yet utilizes in order to arrive at truth). On the level of outward profession there is antithesis in the presuppositions used by the Christian and the non-Christian, but in their "heart of hearts" all men know the truth about God—for God has Himself shown it to them. Argument will be possible on this level only. It is only because the unbeliever is not true to his professed position but unconsciously draws upon his "ignorant"

beliefs that argument can be exercised between him and a believer. Hence the Christian apologist should seek to lay bare the character of those presuppositions on which the non-Christian operates when argu-

ing against the faith, demonstrate their self-vitiating quality, and then show the suppressed beliefs that make the unbeliever's formal reasoning and knowledge possible and that offer common ground for legitimate argumentation. Autonomous reasoning, with its inherent irrationalism, rather than presuppositional apologetics, makes common ground and argument impossible. The apologetical endeavor is salvaged by a presuppositional approach to the unbeliever, for it allows for genuine and purposed argumentation between them.

SUBJECT & PERSON INDEX

A

Areopagus 44

argument 49, 51

absolute authority 285

indirect 15

absolute idealism 170

argumentation 53 , 74 , 85 , 87, 117,

absolute presupposition 234

125, 126, 127, 182, 208,

agnostic 58, 48, 73, 128

288, 289

agnosticism 128, 245, 265

agnostic 129

Albright, W. F. 203

autonomous 65, 178

analogical thinking 270, 284

arguments

anthropology 238, 288

circular 86

antithesi 55-57

Aristotle 104, 151, 180

antithesis 30-31, 46, 48-49, 51,

atheism 128

71. 112, 128, 143, 201,

atheist 42, 143, 158, 237

253-256

Athens 29, 43-44, 50

antithetical mindset 91
authority 4, 36, 51, 101, 127
apologetical argument 86
absolute 6
apologetical method 174
autonomous 128
apologetical system 150
cosmic 127
apologetic method 12, 59, 218-
final 288
220, 241, 261
God's 57, 83, 137, 140, 154,
apologetic procedure 75
156, 253
apologetics 25, 35, 37, 67, 113,
human 3, 60
225
man's 109, 218
presuppositional 4, 43
of God 56, 60
probabilistic 34

of the Word 3

Reformed 6

personal 88, 90, 125, 157

task of 3, 15

ultimate 4, 85, 87

traditional methods 13

autonomous 33-34, 56, 58, 61,

apologetic task 6

70, 99-101, 115, 204, 275

apologist 36-38, 47, 52-57, 64,

autonomous epistemology 282

69-74 , 96, 115, 119, 121,

autonomous man 73, 90, 97-99,

126, 129, 146, 151, 266,

102, 103, 105, 107, 109,

289

111, 238, 247

apostasy 45

autonomous method 157

apostate 51

autonomous methodology 231

Aquinas, Thomas 218, 232, 248

autonomous reason 7, 217, 281,

256

286, 290

arbitrariness 99

autonomous thinker 100, 105, 105, cosmology 288

111, 281, 282

creation 45

autonomous thinking 103, 108,

creature 62

110, 207, 231

critical realism 170

autonomy 5 - 6 , 91, 116, 129, 149,

cultural mandate 285

154, 207, 218, 221, 225,

245, 256

D

deception 30, 51

B

defending the faith 12

Bahnsen, Greg vii

Descartes 178, 204

Barth, Karl 145, 161

determinism 125

belief

DeWolf, L. H. 254

justification 79-81

dualism 81

believer 48

Brightman, E. S. 155, 226, 235-254

Buddhist 89

empiricism 6, 154, 177, 192

empiricist 85

Cage, John 249

Epicurean 45

Calvin, John 5, 10

epistemic authority 111

Carnell, Edward J. 155, 178, 197-

epistemic certainty 127, 149, 154,

259, 241, 246, 250, 255,

205, 246

256, 260, 261, 263-265, 268 epistemic ground 86

Cartesian method 162

epistemological autonomy 97

challenge to unbelief 69

epistemological belief 81

Chisholm, R. M. 77, 78, 84

epistemological method 80, 82

Christ

epistemological standards 85

Lordship 5, 27

epistemology 4, 12, 15, 54, 37,

Word of 6, 26

45, 77, 83-87, 90, 100, 108,

Christian presuppositions 7, 97

110, 114, 125-124,, 127, 158,

Clark, Gordon H. 155, 157-195,

144, 157-158, 185, 241, 245,

197, 202, 204, 209, 215,

255, 262, 277, 282

225, 241, 255, 256, 260,

autonomous 97, 124

261, 265-265, 268

revelational 5, 97, 108, 124

Collingwood, R. G. 145

equal ultimacy 16

common grace 45, 123, 231

ethical 45

common ground 91, 115, 129, 141, ethical absolutist 111

200, 231, 288-289

ethical norms 185

common sense 183

ethics 34, 223

common sense philosophy 170

evidence 57, 95, 125, 126, 184

conversion 47

existentialism 5, 161, 204

correspondence theory of truth 82

experientialism 227, 229

F

Hordern, William 233

H o m e , C. M. 210, 234

Fabro, Cornelio 178

Hume, David 5, 107

facts 15, 106, 110, 112, 125, 126,

197, 227, 231, 284

brute 169, 227, 282

1

faith 63-67, 71, 191, 199, 235

idealism 5

fideism 13, 15

ignorance 39, 44, 48, 55, 66, 265

Flew, Antony 258, 268

impossibility of the contrary 124

fool 75

inconsistency 92

foolish 72-73

independence 98

foolishness 37, 4 8 - 5 3

independent thinker 101, 103

indeterminism 123

G

internal critique 75, 116, 124
interpretation 97, 113, 115, 191,
geometric axioms 150
197, 277, 278
Gettier, E. L. 99
interpretative principles 88
God
interpretative systems 116
authority of 86
interpreting the facts 14-15
in the dock 9, 11, 15
irrational leap 116
mind of 16
self-sufficient 16
veracity of 58-59, 61, 69, 149
K
Godel, Kurt 89, 182
Kantianism 148
God's existence
Kant, Immanuel 5, 219, 232, 233
probability 5

Kierkegaard, S0ren 205, 232, 233
God's Word
knowing 92-93
sufficiency of 63
God's 187
gospel 38, 48
impossibility of 97
man's 187
H
knowledge 15, 32, 33, 51,' 67, 73,
80, 94, 96, 98, 115, 118,
hedonism 230
186, 204, 215, 227, 275
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich
comprehensive 39
104, 253
foundation of 66
Henry, Carl F. H. 140, 188, 263
genuine 55, 75, 85, 285
Heraclitus 232
inescapability 40

history 7, 43, 45, 49, 52, 55, 91,
man's 62
115, 169, 198, 216, 277, 283
necessary conditions of 72
Holmes, Arthur F. 164, 166
saving 66
Holy Spirit 8, 10, 12, 26, 34-37,
unacknowledged 41
50-51, 64, 67-68, 69, 116,
Kuhn, Thomas 89, 109, 190
121, 124, 128, 141, 183,
Kuyper, Abraham 9
199, 230, 285

L
monist 80
morality 7
language 118-120
Murray, J o h n 10
theory of 138

language analysis 170

law of contradiction 172, 182, 198,

N

216

Nash, Ronald H. 159, 177, 193,

law of non-contradiction 103, 167

194, 226, 261, 262, 263

law of parsimony 115

naturalism 143

Lecerf, August 9

naturalist 108, 167

Lee, F.N. 152

naturalistic scientism 138

Lewis, C. S. 7, 189

natural theology 4, 151

logic 7, 8, 15, 49, 63, 82, 90,

nature 45, 115, 184, 188

97, 103, 104. 114, 127, 144, neo-orthodoxy 151, 249

151, 165, 180, 198, 208, 285 neo-realism 170

formal 160, 182

neutral 14, 43, 101, 104, 121,

laws of 91, 104, 112, 166, 169,
125, 127, 129, 244, 254,
178, 211, 228
256
limits of 183
neutral ground 123
logical analysis 5
neutrality 3, 15, 89, 125
Lystra 44
impossibility of 8 8 - 8 9
neutral methodology 114, 115, 139
Niebuhr, Reinhold 233
M
nihilism 243, 258
North, Gary viii
m a n
fallen 45
image of God 16
O
mind of 16
open-minded 14

natural 8, 214, 230, 235, 239

operationalism 188, J 89

self-sufficiency 16

Mars Hill 45

Marxists 168

Marx, Karl 230, 259

P

Mavrodes, George I. 136, 163, 193

P a c k e r J . I. 8

metaphysical 26, 34, 45, 78, 81

pantheism 181

metaphysical beliefs 82

Parmenides 232

metaphysical determinist. I l l

phenomenology 170

metaphysics 15, 82-86, 90, 108,

philosophy 3, 12, 28-29, 31, 46,

110, 114, 124, 127, 144,

48, 50-54, 69, 82-83, 103,

157-158, 191, 201, 263

165, 215, 252, 256, 277, 284

mind

autonomous 50, 77

depraved 52

foundation for 55

renewed 66

vain 30, 53

mind-set 53

Plato 83, 232, 233

repentance 7, 66, 67

Platonism 6, 201

revelation 17, 19-22, 40, 51-54,

positivism 229

55, 67, 71, 98, 113, 144,

possibilism 207-211, 215 , 248

150, 191, 199, 224, 252,

possibility 5, 142, 145, 147

263, 289

pragmatism 5, 280-282

general 183, 184, 275, 283,

prayer 68

286

preaching 37

God's 86, 97, 246

pre-evangelism 246

natural 8, 43, 44, 218, 251

presuppose 36

necessity of 38

presupposed 57

redemptive 32, 34

presupposition 10, 203

self-attesting 217

absolute 223

special 5, 8, 16, 57, 185, 218,

presuppositional apologetics 62, 64,

237, 275

75, 91, 122, 125, 126, 127,

voluntary 34

192, 244, 290

revelational epistemology 270,

presuppositional apologist 253

275-277, 281, 284
presuppositionalism 162
Russell, Bertrand 230, 259
presuppositionalist 205, 222, 227
presuppositional method 127
presuppositions 15-16, 46, 55,
120-121, 191
Satan 61, 216, 251
apostate 75
Schaeffer, Francis 135, 241-261,
secular 31, 50, 51, 69
261, 263-265, 268
probabilism 223-227, 265
scholasticism 153, 215, 218, 220
probability 27
science 3, 5, 7, 8, 33, 49, 52, 55,
process philosophy 170
69, 91, 96, 103, 106, 108,
proof 57, 63, 64, 129, 199, 219,
143, 175, 188, 190, 203,
250, 272

208, 2 1 1 , ^ 5 4 - 2 5 5 , 284

scientific m e t h o d 159

scientific methodology 108

R

Scripture 46, 59, 103, 126, 185,

Ramm, Bernard 206

192, 198, 202, 208

rationalism 153, 159, 167, 169,

authority of 47, 59-62, 65, 69,

176, 180, 181, 227, 228,

141, 214, 231, 245, 275

232, 253, 256

credibility of 245

Rationalism 6

inerrancy 205

rationalist 111, 206

infallible 6, 7

rationalistic idealism 166

neutrality 4

reason 10, 13, 29, 211, 234, 254,

self-attesting 4 - 5 , 9-10, 12, 13,

258, 263

64, 69, 71, 75 , 88, 156,

Reformed Theological Seminary ix

206, 247, 257, 283

regeneration 64, 65, 69, 71

truth of 4, 10, 47, 55, 123,

relativism 99, 101

125, 144, 256

veracity of 56

thought

secular assumptions 75

secular 55

secularism 151, 173, 174, 266

total depravity 140, 184, 238, 263

secular system 171

truth

secular thought 244

self-attesting 54

self-deception 94-95

self-sufficient knower 269-273

skeptic 54, 112, 113, 116, 118,

U

120, 124, 126, 289

ultimate authority 12, 88, 124, *

skepticism 109, 173, 175-176, 184,

154, 161, 247

192-193, 221, 265, 270, 281, unbelief 38

286

unbeliever 36, 37, 38, 41, 46, 48,

Smith, Morton viii

53, 67, 119

solipsism 106, 270

uniformity of nature 96, 106, 107,

solipsist 80

284

Sophists 232

utonomous thinker 107

Spinoza, Baruch 164, 171, 232

standard

ultimate 12, 15

V

starting point 142, 200, 201, 203,

Van Til, Cornelius vii, viii, x, xi,

206, 227, 235, 254, 277

xii, xiv, xv, xvii, 4, 14, 20,

St. Augustine 10, 65, 218, 248

21, 25, 117, 135, 137, 197,

Stoic 45

232

suppositionalism 254

verification 8, 64, 126, 128, 157,

suppressing truth 42, 44

205, 215, 249, 261, 269, 284

systematic consistency 213-214

verificationalism 150, 159, 174,

system of interpretation 88

215, 217, 254

system of thought 16

vitalism 170

unbeliever's 75

voluntaris 170

at

w

T

Warfield, B. B. 205

theism 34, 152, 160, 254

Weaver, Gilbert B. 166

theist 138

wisdom 32, 34, 48-51, 68

theistic proofs 5, 154, 220

God's 32

theologian 60, 83

pseudo 51

theology 6, 12, 37, 171, 185, 192

worldview 15, 56, 81, 87, 121,

215, 239

166, 168, 184, 199, 200,

natural 34, 43 , 44, 231, 268

202,. 203, 209

thinking

worship 54

vain 53

Thomism 235

296

This book is an important part of the historical record. It is authentic Bahnsen, vintage Bahnsen. It displays brilliantly his intellectual gifts and his devotion to the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life. Despite my differences with Bahnsen, I revere him yet today as a great blessing of God to the church and as one of the most brilliant apologists I have known. He seeks to set forth the comprehensive lordship of Christ over the human mind as over everything else, and he does that effectively. In that goal we should all be in agreement, and we should seek Bahnsen's help to become more consistent in our commitment to the Lord. So I commend this book to all who seek to think God's thoughts after him.

—Dr. John M. Frame, J. D. Trimble Professor
of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL

AV PRESS
The American Vision, Inc.
www.AmericanVision.org
1.800.628.9460

CMP
www.cmfnow.com

ISBN10: 0-915815-55-9
9 780915 815555

Document Outline

- Editor's Preface
- Part One : Presuppositional Apologetics Positively Stated
- Chapter 1 : Introduction : God in the Dock?
- Chapter 2 : The Christian Mind & Method
- Chapter 3 : Neutrality & Autonomy Relinquished
- Part Two : Consistency Applied : Critiques of Incomplete Presuppositionalism
- Chapter 4 : Gordon Clark
- Chapter 5 : Edward J. Carnell
- Chapter 6 : Francis Schaeffer
- Chapter 7 : The Critical Quintessence
- Appendix 1 : The Necessity of Revelational Epistemology
- Appendix 2 : The Pragmatist's Rejoinder and the Christian Alternative
- Appendix 3 : The Possibility of Argument
- Subject & Person Index

Table of Contents

Editor's Preface vii
1 Introduction; God In the Dock? 3
2 The Christian Mind and Method 25
3 Neutrality and Autonomy Relinquished 77
4 Gordon Clark 137
5 Edward J. Carnell 197
6 Francis Schaeffer 241
The Necessity of Revelational Epistemology 269
The Possibility of Argument 287
Subject and Person Index 291
Part One : Presuppositional Apologetics Positively Stated
Part Two : Consistency Applied : Critiques of Incomplete Presuppositionalism
Chapter 7 : The Critical Quintessence
Appendix 2 : The Pragmatist's Rejoinder and the Christian Alternative
Subject & Person Index