



PRESUPPOSITIONAL
APOLOGETICS

Stated and Defended

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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 66

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* according 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. 11:19f.; 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 67

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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. 1:16f.).

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 man-ner 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 68

The C h r i s t i a n M i n d & M e t h o d : S t u d i e s i n S c r i p t u r e 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 apologetic 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 i s 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.

KEYWORDS VS. FOOLISH QUESTIONS

PURE WORDS VS. FOOLISH QUESTIONS

When the Christian and non-Christian speak with each other about the faith, and the believer is called upon to defend the hope in him, he should in the ensuing verbiage keep in mind that God's Word is that which powerfully stops the opponent and brings the foolishness of the unbeliever's thinking to light. Evil men cannot speak good things (Matt.

12:34), for the mouth reflects the attitude of the heart. Where a man's treasure is, there shall his heart be also (Matt. 6:21), and it is evil treasure that the unbeliever has in his heart (Luke 6:45). Thus his heart gives forth evil thoughts, deceitfulness, and foolishness (Matt. 15:18ff.; Mark 7:21ff.); his heart is darkened and foolish (Rom. 1:21), desperately wick-

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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.). When the unbeliever speaks against the faith, the apologist should remember these things. The 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). The 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 God for all generations (vs. 7). It is this Word of God that stops every mouth (Rom.

it is the 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 characterize 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 comm 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

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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 condemned 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. 1:7; 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 de-lude 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-71

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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 despises 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 72

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.

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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 74

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

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).

CHAPTER 3

NEUTRALITY & AUTONOMY

RELINQUISHED

1. THE NECESSITY OF COORDINATING

EPISTEMOLOGY WITH METAPHYSICS

R. M. Chisholm distinguishes between two different questions in *Theory of Knowledge*¹ 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-Hall, 1966).

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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 impossibility 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?"

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

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-79

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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 represented 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).

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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 imagining 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 pro-pounded 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 metaphysical 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-81

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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 82

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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—de-bends 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 per-ceiveable 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 83

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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.

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2. ULTIMACY IN AUTHORITY

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

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.

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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 86

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 worldview that embraces his interdependent metaphysic and epistemology. When two people, Christian and unbeliever, are arguing, their ultimate authorities will be dis-tinguishable 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 worldview (the axis of metaphysics-epistemology-ethics) 87

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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 dogmatic 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 88

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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 interpretation 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."

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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 finds logic in God; the other finds 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 accents God's interpretation of everything without question; the

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 90

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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 begins 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 apologetic 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

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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

apologetic argument possible.

4. IGNORANCE OF ONE'S OWN KNOWLEDGE.

One of the curious things about the activity of human knowing is 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 mistaken, 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).

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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, 93

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"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 schizophrenic 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

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 94

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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 poison-ous 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 something 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 ad-verse 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 fa-ther 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 95

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his eyes to the facts."8

Apologetical Implications of Self-Deception

We conclude, then, that it is possible for a man to meet the conditions 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).

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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.

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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 98

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standards, then every man is a law unto himself. Also we observe that autonomous thinkers operate on the basis that the less a man 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 man 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 man 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 man 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).

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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

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 100

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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

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 101

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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, and 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 102

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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 mindset.

The autonomous man must be pressed to explain the *necessity* of the 103

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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 "rational 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

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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

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.

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T H E P R I O R I T Y O F L O G I C A N D T H E T E S T I N G O F 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 escapes 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.

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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 verificationism 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 pro—

ducing 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 de-lineation 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.

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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.

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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 supposed 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.

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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), 153

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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 gewufft 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.

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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 *empirical*

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.

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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 *very 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 156

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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 157

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to be exercised in order that a sinner would submit to God; worldviews 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 altogether.

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 worldview.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.

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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, verificationism, 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.

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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.

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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 con-firms 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 apa-gogic 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.

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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 Mohammed 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.

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| 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 *apodosis*⁹⁷ 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, $A \cdot B \cdot C \cdot \dots \cdot N$, 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 $A \supset B, B \supset C, C \supset D, \dots, M \supset N, N \supset A$.

Conjoin all these (in any order) along with $A \vee N$, 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 163

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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 Re-deemer), 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.

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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 being employed by the apologist. Yet the axiomatizability 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 worldviews 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 worldview 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.

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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 "mean—

ingless" 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 irrational-ism; the unbeliever seems insouciant about the incongruity, for

¹⁰⁴ "The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 226.

example, or 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.

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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 supplementa-tion.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 worldviews one is told to consider the implications his choice has in *many* fields of study.¹¹¹

Consider these quotations:

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 gran—

diose. 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.

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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.

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Christianity standing as the only available choice for the philosopher.

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. Husserl, 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.

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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, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 69.

120. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 89.

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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.

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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 re-sides 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 apolo-125. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, 32.

126. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious*, 370.

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gist than his system would lead us to believe, for his verificationism by means of a test for coherence unwarrantedly exalts logic instead of God's Word, does not insure truth, reduces to triviality, carries with 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 worldviews, 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 verificationism 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; 174

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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—

answered, 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.

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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, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 59.

139. Clark, "Reply to Roger Nicole," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 479.

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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 transcendental 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.

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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 in-avoidable. Cornelio Fabro is quite accurate in tracing the roots of modern 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).

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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.

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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 dog-matically 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. Rationalism 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 ex-egetical 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} The Logos of God 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.

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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 dispense 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.

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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 application 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 Gordon H. Clark*, 76-77. Bahnsen further pursues the quantitative/qualitative critique below, pages 187-188.

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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 revelation. 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.

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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 man (i.e., logical ability) to test religious hypotheses for

their coherence; apparently he has forgotten that the image of God in fallen man is no longer normal—it cannot operate properly on its own. Following the apologetical method Clark proposes would imply that man is able to choose correctly among rival worldviews without the aid of revelation (in fact, he would pass judgment upon what constitutes revelation and what does not in terms of logical consistency). Throughout Clark's writings man 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, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 102.**

175. Clark, "Reply to Gilbert B. Weaver," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 464f.; see also Weaver's relevant criticism, "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist," *The Philosophy 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.

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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 sav-age 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 con-fronts 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 ma-trix 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.

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theologian would properly be interested in.

The final point of doctrine we need to comment upon in Clark's writings 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 re-views 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.

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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 187

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rationalistic reliance upon our own thoughts and ways to God's revelation we learn to wonder at the world; in doing so we wonder at the incomprehensible God whom He directs it. In affirming God's incomprehensibility we submit to His thoughts and learn that the creature must never covet His epistemological prerogatives and attributes. The difference between God's knowledge and man's knowledge is *qualitative*; God 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 and 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 can call into question the finality of scientific conclusions.¹⁸⁷ This Clark finds in what he calls the best available philosophy of science: operationalism.¹⁸⁸

Clark's position can be summarized with a few quotations from his article, "The Nature of the Physical Universe."¹⁸⁹

Now, in view of the absence of basic definitions, in view

of the chaos of our time, and in view of the constant re—

placement of one scientific theory by another, it should

be quite evident that science can provide no firm ground for denying the possibility of miracles or for making any confident declaration regarding spiritual realities....

Operationalism asserts philosophically...that science provides no knowledge of nature itself.... What twentieth-

eth-century science has come to is the view that science

will never, can never describe how nature works. Science

does not aim at truth; it aims at invention.... Scientific

concepts...are plans for action.... But science now has

nothing to do with describing or explaining nature. Its

aim 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. The ideas expressed are also found in Clark's longer work, *Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*.

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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 objections to Christianity.¹⁹⁰

Since science cannot be true, holds Clark, it cannot challenge Christianity.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. The 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 supply-ing 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 Philosophy 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.

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tious of snatching at any scientific theory which, for the moment, seem to be in our favour. We may mention such things; but we must mention them lightly and without claiming that they are more than "interesting." ... If we try to base our apologetic on some recent development in science, we shall usually find that just as we have put the finishing touch to our argument science has changed its mind and quietly withdrawn the theory we have been using as our foundation stone. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* ["I fear the Greek even when they bear gifts" — from Virgil's *Aeneid*] is a sound principle. 198

The type of apologetic against science Clark suggests does not demand that the scientist accept Christianity but simply get science off the Christian's back temporarily — and at the cost of a depreciating view of science at that.

Although the present author favors a view of science that sees that discipline utilizing *models* for operational purposes — rather than Baconian "facts" — I do not conclude that science has no right to make *truth* claims.

One must stop and wonder what kind of description Clark

would be willing to designate as "true"! Even the simple eye ball observation that "the table is green" could be rendered subject to non-cognitive evaluation of an *operation* in Clark's sense. In fact many, if not all, statements can be viewed as having operational meaning. Even Clark's cherished laws of logic do not *describe* the world but direct us in argumentative *operations*, the rules of inference state the proper ways of deducing conclusions (an operation).

When I say that "the table is green" I can be understood as saying that if someone walked into the room he would experience a certain sensation (an operation of empirical nature involving light, color frequency, retinal reaction, etc.) and would be in a position to assent to my veracity (again, an operation). By saying that science only renders operational truths and not descriptive truths Clark may have said something true, but only trivially true. He makes the same mistake that Thomas Kuhn makes at the end of his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, i.e., thinking that an operational framework makes all talk of scientific "truth" meaningless and unimportant. Science could recast all of its laws or conclusions *into predictive* assertions (e.g., if you drop the ball from so high off the ground it will 198. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, 92.

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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 191

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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 passage-199. Clark, "The Axiom of Revelation (Wheaton Lecture II)," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 90-92.

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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 repentance 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 and Epistemology," *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 247.

201. *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 247f., 174.

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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 divine 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 view-point 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.

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GORDON CLARK

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 doctrine 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.

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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.

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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; as a sampling of them is reproduced below. In these observations Carnell concurs with the positions 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 real-

ity, truth is a property of that judgment which coincides with the mind of God. If man, thus, fails to say about real-

ity what God says about it, he has made an error.¹

When one begins his philosophy apart from the assump-

tion 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.

And even if he did, his interpretation would be subject to change without notice, for the flux of reality might shift at any moment.²

1. E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 46f.

2. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 123.

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Christianity assumes the existence of the God Who 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 juxtaposed, 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.

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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. The 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.

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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.

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Edward J. Carnell

The Christian believes that starting point controls both method and conclusion.²⁵

However, as was the case with Clark, Carnell does not build his entire apologetical system on this bold Christian challenge. The solid presuppo-

sitionalism reflected in these quotes is not maintained by Carnell through-

out his writings, and it is not made to count as basic argumentation. In fact, it is plainly contravened. With disappointment we note that the larger portion of Carnell's writing is given over to a type of apologetic that abro-

gates the commendable assertions above. He commits many of the same errors as does Clark; where this is the case we shall indicate the position of Carnell that is not approved of and rely upon the longer discussion of Clark to explain the reason for our disapprobation.

CARNELL'S AUTONOMOUS STARTING POINT

In the first place we note that the truth of Scripture is not Carnell's ab-

solute presupposition which, as the verbal revelation from God, is nec-

essary to all philosophizing and which functions as the final criterion of truth to be critically applied to all non-Christian ways of thought.

CHRISTIANWAYSTHOUGHT.

Hence Carnell posits only a relative antithesis between Christianity and other religious commitments. As he sees it, Christianity is (merely) the highest stage or form of religion—instea

of fundamentally challenging all rivals, Christianity moves beyond them. It is the top rung of the ladder or highest link in the chain.²⁶ By contrast the presuppositionalist will want to hold that *only* Christianity is a valid religious commitment, that it is an necessary presupposition to all intellectual activities of life—thereby ruling out all other religions. Carnell denies the peerless domi-

nation of Christ that is involved in such a presuppositional approach; he says that Christ *built upon* humanism rather than derogating it.²⁷ With such an outlook it is no surprise that Carnell could identify the Christian metaphysic with Platonism.²⁸ Such confusions as these prevent a view of the antithesis and absolute necessity of biblical Christianity.

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.

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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.

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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, *self*-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 Theology*, 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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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.

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a Christian. Taking all these facts together results in the conclusion that Carnell feels we must provide verification for the *Triune God*.⁶⁵ Because Carnell needs a *pou sto*⁶⁵ 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 settle-ment 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 worry-ing 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 Commitment, An Apologetic*, viii.

67. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 128.

68. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 128.

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Consistent Presuppositionalism pulling down of reasonings. Unfortunately Carnell would not assert that God's Word is absolutely necessary for meaning and intelligibility or that it is God's existence and providence that support the use of science, logic, and argumentation, because he wanted to demonstrate to Christ's despisers that the rational man, the freeman, the man of character can use autonomous standards to make God's authoritative Word pass the requisite tests for verification.

Because Christianity was not taken as his *absolute* presupposition, Car-

nell's apologetic includes the illegitimate notion that possibility surrounds God and His Word. This is the same "possibilism" that Clark is guilty of.

For all the theoretical superiority that Carnell sees in the Christian system, he still allows the abstract possibility that God does not exist. "This moral dilemma does not prove the existence of God, for it may be that God does not exist,"⁶⁹ Rather than viewing it as a necessity, an undeniable fact, Carnell attempts to demonstrate "that generic revelation is

possible."¹⁰

Carnell also grants that it is a distinct possibility that God is *not* clearly revealed in the Bible: "One may find upon examining the Biblical system that he *cannot* believe that the mind of God is therein contained; and in this case he should abide by his conscience in the matter."⁷¹ How erroneous and gravely misleading this is! No sinner can fail to see God revealed in His Word; it is impossible that God should not make Himself clearly known in His self-disclosure. What sin can do is to prevent *acknowledgement* and *conscious recognition* of the objective nature of Scripture; the unbeliever distorts what he sees and fails to live by what is clearly revealed. When he claims not to see God revealed in Scripture he should not abide by his conscience in the mat-

ter; he is under *obligation* to acknowledge and live by the truth even if he, in fact, *refuses* to see and obey. If he fails to be convinced in his recalcitrant heart, he needs to repent.

We should never grant that it is *possible* that one could honestly fail to be objectively confronted with a clear word from God in Scripture. It is possible for the sinner to continue in rebellion, but he *cannot* come to the non-Christian conclusion about the Bible in any legitimate fashion. The sinner *has* the epistemological equipment necessary, *and* the clear revela-

tion necessary, to believe that the mind of God is revealed in Scripture.

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.

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It is *not possible* that one should truly find that he "cannot" believe, only that he *will not* believe.

So Carnell has subordinated both God and His revelation to the notion of possibility; perhaps the clearest indication of that fact is given in this quotation: "As there is a 50/50 chance that we will fall into judg-

ment before God, it is important that we weigh carefully the character of the universe." 72 It is *possible*, then, that God does not exist and His Word is not true, according to Carnell's apologetic. The absolute presupposi-

tion of Scripture does not control his defense of the faith; hence God is not taken as the sole source of material and logical possibilities, but pos-

sibility is more ultimate than God.

Following from Carnell's possibilism is his reduction of Christianity to a *hypothesis*, in like manner to Clark.

Good philosophers are those who can construct systematically consistent systems of meaning.... This conclusion establishes the *possibility* of Christianity as an answer to life's dilemma. Careful investigation of it as a system might establish its *actuality*.⁷³

Chapter 5 of *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* is entitled "The Chris-

tian Hypothesis." In it Carnell maintains that "in the contest of hy-

pothesis-making... the winner [is] he who can produce the

best set of assumptions to account for the totality of reality." 74 This is the guiding principle of his apologetic. According to Carnell, the Christian "believes the postulate of a rational God to be a workable hypothesis in the light of the evidence." 75 And he gives us a abundant illustration of his taking the Bible only hypothetically: We are asked to *suppose* that a personal God is the ultimate being and to *suppose* that the Bible is God's Word for man.

We are told that a transcendent-immanent God is a live *option* just as aoteriological particularism is an option. And Carnell can speak about *if* there is a God, ...*if* God is able to satisfy the heart, ...*if* the biblical world-view is plausible, ...*if* God is our Father. 76

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.

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Yet we should note that, in addition to the mistake of reducing the Bible to hypothetical status, Carnell's apologetic faces the difficulty that most of his hypotheses are easily challenged by the quick-thinking un-

believer. For instance, it is no hard to pick apart Carnell's assertion that the hypothesis of omnipotence as characterizing God is theoretically better than the contrary vi

ew // — as C. M. Home has shown. 78 Over and over again Carnell applies the term "hypothesis" to Christianity. 79

Thus Christianity cannot be an absolutely necessary presupposition in Carnell's system. Instead it is characterized by statements like: A rational hypothesis may be necessary to assure us that there is meaning in surrendering our hearts to God. 80

If there is a God, and if this God is able to love us, a satisfaction will be gained.... 81

Since we are not yet persuaded that the postulation of a non-rational given is necessary, however, hope remains that one may still trust a God who enjoys sovereignty over every human personality. 82

[The assuming of the whole Bible] is a hypothesis that has been chosen with the same diligence as that of a scientific hypothesis. Like any hypothesis, it is verified when it results in an implicative system which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts. 83

Because God's Word passes the test of matching up to the well-known facts that men have collected, it is a worthy hypothesis: The fact of these data make the postulation of God's existence both scientifically and rationally satisfying... . It is likewise good science to declare for faith in the existence 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.

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of God. The mark of an acceptable hypothesis is its ability 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

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 validity—

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.

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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 coherence.... 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 contradiction, 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 Christian Apologetics*, 175.

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the game of locating truth, the winner is he who establishes 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.

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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.

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God's Word Subject to Logic

Concomitant 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 *verificationism*.

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.

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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 Philosophy 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 Theology*, 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.

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CARNELL'S VERIFICATIONALISM

Because Carnell has this defective verificationism 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 Orthodox 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.

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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?)

The 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 There 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 man to belief in God.¹²⁷ He presses on from humanism to theism¹²⁸ and brings in God 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 man in action, not God 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.

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environment and the duties that hold men, Carnell would work up to the surety of God's existence, advancing his analysis by degrees of ever-deepening autonomous understanding of man's situation (without the interpretation rendered in God's Word). "We start with realities that hold us firm existence itself"; "God completes the moral cycle by answering to the judicial sentiment."¹²⁹ Carnell sees each man as revealing his belief in an administrator of justice when that man judges others,¹³⁰ and this is *analytically* established. However, it is not hard to see that Carnell's particular conclusion does *not* follow by definition at all, and even if it did he would fallaciously be arguing from a definition to the reality of its referent! His method of argument shows us that while the Bible needs proof, the correct understanding of the realities that hold a man in the moral and spiritual environment can be ascertained independently. The argument is to the effect that we can be certain of human morals, and these *point* to the (less certain) conclusion that there is a God.

But the direction of this argument is wrong. Carnell says, "If we cannot approach one another without satisfying the claims of the moral and spiritual environment, how can we avoid these claims when approaching God?"¹³¹ Yet he should argue *vice versa*, from God to man (as the first great commandment precedes the second!). Moreover, Carnell's arguments against all options except the Christian God as qualifying as the moral judge involved in the judicial sentiment are completely unconvincing.¹³² Carnell thinks that his "moral argument" escapes the pitfalls of Kant's, for Kant dealt with conscience (rather than the ju-

dicial sentiment) which is subject to cultural conditioning, and Kant's postulation of God's existence was based on wishful thinking.¹³³ However, conscience is just as unconditioned as is judicial sentiment in the weak sense that Carnell sees judicial sentiment as unconditioned (i.e., all men are *aroused* by mistreatment—yet all men are pricked by conscience as well!). *What* constitutes mistreatment and *what* brings pains of conscience are *both* culturally influenced. Carnell thinks that the ju-

dicial sentiment analytically includes God, and so his argument 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.

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judicial sentiment and God is far from self-evident! Many people do *not* use moral language *meaning* that God exists (even if they should in order to have a basis for ethics). So Carnell's argument is basically Kantian in approach and fellowships in its errors.

Lastly, we note that Carnell's insistence that the will of man 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

The errors of attempting such autonomous theistic proofs are discussed under our treatment of Clark. The interesting thing with Carnell is that he himself criticized philosophers for doing exactly the same thing he was engaged in doing: calling in God to give completeness to a rationally devised system!¹³⁷

A further indication that autonomy afflicts the apologetic system of Carnell is found in the fact that he held that God 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"?

And how can God be distinguished from other unknow—

ables? ... If we have no moral equipment with which

to judge what agrees or disagrees with the character of

God, 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 Commitment, 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-transcending. What mind can this be but God?" (Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 271).

137. See Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 277.

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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 patient 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 cont r a r y to goodness.... Unless we can meaningfully anticipate 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.

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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.

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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 verificationism 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.

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CONSISTENT PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

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 in-

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