

Part Four

Reformed Apologetics: God Said It

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Apologists Who Emphasize Revelation

With the decline throughout the twentieth century of the orthodox, supernaturalistic Christian worldview in American culture, it is understandable that many Christians have declared traditional apologetics a failure and have cast about for a new approach to defending the faith. In conservative Calvinistic or Reformed circles, several closely related apologetic systems have been developed as alternatives to both the classical and the evidentialist approaches. Most of these systems are known by the label **presuppositionalism**, although the term **Reformed apologetics** is more inclusive of the different systems to be considered here. The approach emphasizes the presentation of Christianity as *revealed*—as based on the authoritative revelation of God in Scripture and in Jesus Christ. Its most common forms find absolute and certain proof of Christianity in the absolute and certain character of the knowledge that God has and that he has revealed to humanity.

Because of his continuing importance for Christian theology and apologetics, and because there is considerable debate about his apologetic approach, we will begin by examining in some depth the apologetic thought of John Calvin himself. Following that we will discuss the modern roots of Reformed apologetics, and then consider the thought of four twentieth-century Reformed apologists.

John Calvin

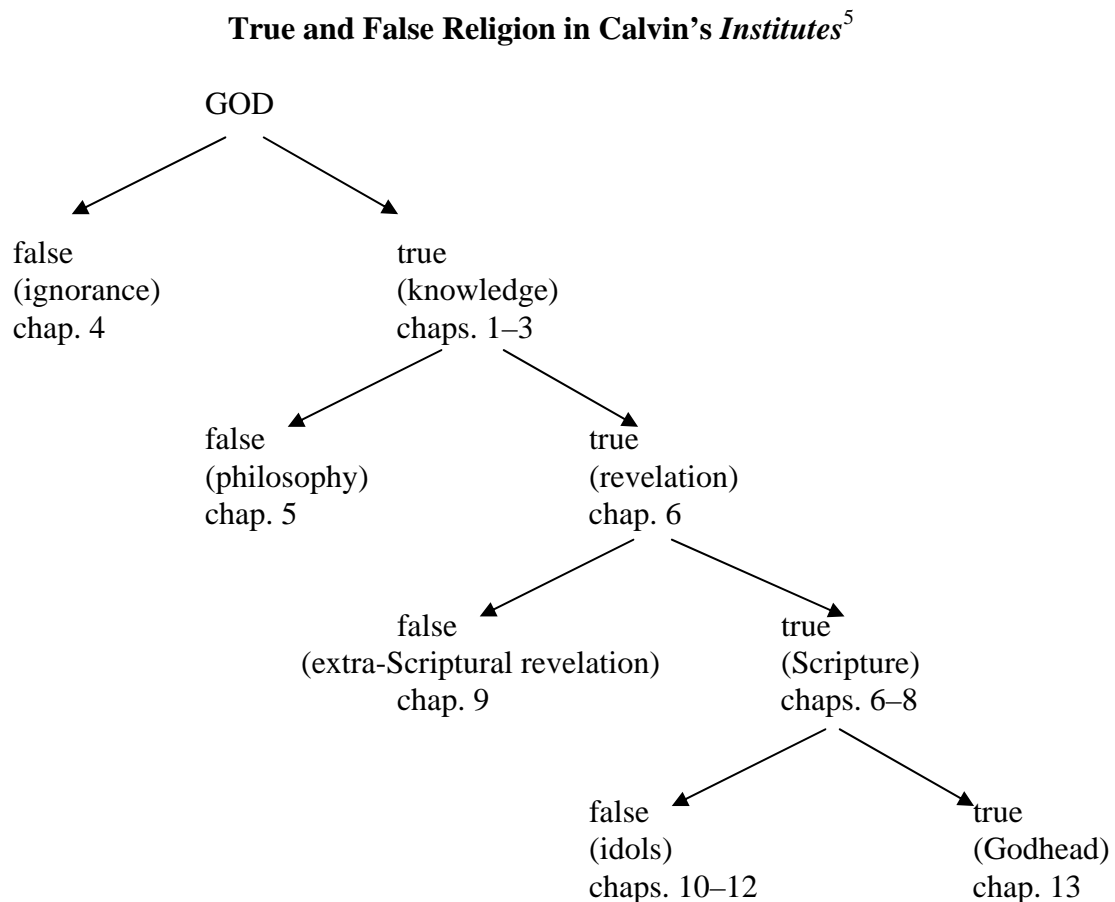
The roots of Reformed apologetics actually go back prior to Calvin. Tertullian's sharp antithesis between Jerusalem and Athens may be cited as the clearest anticipation of the Reformed approach in the ante-Nicene fathers. The mature Augustine, as well as the medieval philosopher Anselm, both explicitly insisted on faith leading to understanding. Although Augustine and Anselm were part of the classical tradition of apologetics, there is a side to their thinking that prepared for and established some precedent for the Reformed approach.¹

Still, it was John Calvin, the sixteenth-century Reformer, who provided the underpinnings of modern Reformed apologetics.² While it would be anachronistic to describe Calvin as a "Reformed apologist" in the technical sense used here, it is true that the Reformed approach is rooted in his theology. We begin our discussion of Calvin and apologetics by examining his most famous work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.³

Basic to Calvin's distinctive approach to apologetics is his strong doctrine of human sin. In his view, our fall into sin has corrupted our entire being, including our mind: "the reason of our mind, wherever it may turn, is miserably subject to vanity" (2.2.25). Thus our reasoning is now not only limited, but suspect. For this reason Calvin insists that the pagan philosophical ideal of "reason alone as the ruling principle in man," the sole measure of truth and guide in life, be abandoned in favor of "the Christian philosophy" of submitting human reasoning to the Holy Spirit's teaching in Scripture (3.7.1). Calvin's rejection of any apologetic that is ultimately rationalistic is plain. Calvinists, following Calvin, have argued that the corrupting influences of sin on the human mind—what are often called the **noetic effects of sin** (from the Greek *nous*, "mind")—must be taken seriously in the apologetic task.⁴

This does not mean that Calvin endorses irrationality. However much Scripture may contradict the reasoning of sinful, unbelieving men, in reality what it presents for faith is consistent, coherent, and reasonable. It is “a knowledge with which the best reason agrees” (1.7.5). The problem that unbelievers have is not that they are rational—they aren’t—but that they are ignorant of the truth.

Calvin’s conviction that Christianity is the truth influenced even the plan and structure of his chief work, the *Institutes*. As Ford Lewis Battles has shown, the opening chapters of the work present a series of contrasts or antitheses between the false, ignorant religious beliefs of the unbelieving and the true knowledge that is essential to Christian faith.



Modern interpreters are sharply divided on the question whether Calvin allowed for any sort of “natural theology” as part of a Christian apologetic.⁶ Some things, however, are clear. According to Calvin, God ought to be known from the “**sense of divinity**” (*divinitatis sensum*) within every human being (1.3.1).⁷ In addition, God “revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe” (1.5.1). Unfortunately, human depravity has rendered this internal and external general revelation incapable of creating a true knowledge of God, and humanity has corrupted the knowledge of God from natural revelation into idolatry or other forms of false worship (1.2.2; 1.10.3). As a result, Calvin concludes, natural revelation ends up giving fallen human beings just enough awareness of and information about God to render them without excuse for their unbelief (1.3.1; 1.5.14).

This negative judgment of the effect of natural revelation is the basis for what Alvin Plantinga has called “the Reformed objection to natural theology.”⁸ Ironically, in a sense Calvin himself seems to practice a kind of “natural theology” in book 1 of the *Institutes*. His argument—that human beings know there is a God from the sense of divinity and from the created works of nature—is drawn heavily from Cicero and other classical writers.⁹ The argument is a “way of seeking God [that] is common both to strangers and to those of his household” (1.5.6), that is, to both non-Christians and Christians. This is different from traditional natural theology in that, for Calvin, all that can be safely inferred from the argument is that human beings, left to themselves, are incapable of viewing God’s natural revelation correctly. Calvin goes on to argue that the true knowledge of God as Creator is to be learned in complete dependence on the special revelation of God in Scripture accompanied by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (1.6-10).

Interpreters of Calvin generally agree that he had little use for the kinds of philosophical theistic proofs offered by Thomas Aquinas and other classical Christian apologists. In Calvin's view, rigorous philosophical proofs for God's existence are unnecessary because the evidences of God in nature are "so very manifest and obvious" that "no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty" (1.5.9). Moreover, because of our innate sense of divinity, the existence of God "is not a doctrine that must first be learned in school, but one of which each of us is master from his mother's womb and which nature itself permits no one to forget, although many strive with every nerve to this end" (1.3.3). Also, such arguments cannot produce faith, since in Calvin's teaching "the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension" (3.2.14). For Calvin, faith must be characterized by an unshakable assurance that goes beyond what reasoned arguments can produce: "Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such, finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation" (1.7.5).

It follows, then, that we ought to "seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit" (1.7.4).¹⁰

Although Calvin questioned the value of theistic proofs, he did not question their validity. That is, he did not attempt to show that the Thomistic theistic proofs, or any other theistic arguments, were philosophically inadequate. He simply viewed them as of marginal value in producing the kind of assured knowledge of God that is characteristic of faith. For his purposes he preferred simple, concrete forms of the traditional theistic arguments. He offered short, simple proofs of "God's power, goodness, and wisdom" from the power and grandeur evident in nature and from the marvelous design of the human being (1.5.1-3). These proofs are

essentially concrete forms of the teleological argument. Calvin also presented a simple cosmological argument, writing that “he from whom all things draw their origin must be eternal and have beginning from himself” (1.5.6). Thus Calvin himself used forms of the traditional theistic arguments.¹¹

Much of what Calvin says about theistic proofs applies also to the issue of evidences for Christianity. Ultimately, according to Calvin, our faith is produced by and depends on the testimony of the Holy Spirit, not reason: “the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason” (1.7.4). There are many good arguments for the truth of Scripture, “yet of themselves these are not strong enough to provide a firm faith, until our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty there, lifts reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy. . . . But those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly, for only by faith can this be known” (1.8.13).

Since Scripture is God’s Word, human reasoning of any kind cannot be used to judge the truth of Scripture; Scripture should not be subjected “to proof and reasoning.” Rather, all human reasoning must be subjected to Scripture as from God: “Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else’s judgment that Scripture is from God. . . . We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork!” (1.7.5).

Calvin is not denying that “proofs” or “marks of genuineness” of the truth of Scripture exist. Rather, he is arguing that our ability to discover and verify such proofs or marks of genuineness by human reasoning should not be the foundation of our faith. To make such evidential arguments the basis of faith would be to place the authority of Scripture under the judgment of human reason.

Calvin allows for two legitimate uses of evidential arguments for the Christian faith. First, he teaches that they can be used to *confirm the truth of Scripture to believers*. We should not use them to try to produce faith in Scripture, and our assurance of faith must ever be sustained by the testimony of the Spirit to the divine truth of Scripture. Still, “once we have embraced” Scripture as God’s Word, “those arguments . . . become very useful aids” (1.8.1). Indeed, the same arguments that can be used to answer the objections of critics can also be the means by which “the dignity and majesty of Scripture are . . . confirmed in godly hearts” (1.8.13).

Second, Calvin teaches that such arguments can have the apologetic purpose of *silencing critics of Scripture*. For the most part this means using evidential arguments to answer objections. He insists that there are many reasons, “neither few nor weak,” by which Scripture can be “brilliantly vindicated against the wiles of its disparagers” (1.8.13).

He presents a very well developed apologetic for Scripture in book 1, chapter 8 of the *Institutes*. He defends the truth of Scripture by appealing to its antiquity and preservation, the candor of the biblical writings, fulfilled biblical prophecies, the preservation of the Jewish race as a miracle, the wisdom of the apostolic writings in contrast with their humble origins, the testimony of martyrs, and other evidences. He also defends the historicity of Moses and his miracles, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and the reliability of the biblical texts (1.8.1-13).

Ramm summarizes Calvin’s position on the vindication of the Christian worldview:

Therefore the certification of the Christian faith is not to be found in the utterances of a proposed infallible Church; nor in rationalistic Christian evidences; nor in the appeals of philosophers to reason; nor is [*sic*] ecstatic experiences of the Holy Spirit. It is to be

found in the knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer; it is to be found in the union of Word and Spirit; it is to be found in special revelation centering on the person of Christ and affirmed by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Although Calvin's most famous writing is the *Institutes*, his apologetic method is actually set forth in greatest detail in a little-known work called *Concerning Scandals* (1550). In this work he discusses in detail how Christians should deal with the stumbling blocks or "scandals" that non-Christians present as objections to the biblical, Reformed gospel.

Perhaps his simplest recommendation in this book is that the response should take into consideration the person to whom it is being given. In particular, he suggests that we concentrate our efforts on answering people who are troubled by objections and can be helped, not those who are clearly using objections as excuses for their unbelief. "I shall address myself to those who are indeed troubled by scandals of that kind, but who are still curable."¹³

Calvin admits it is impossible to answer every objection to Christian faith (because of time constraints, if nothing else), and offers three points for dealing with this problem. (1) Read Scripture with the focus on going the way God's Spirit is leading us and on our relationship with Christ, and we will find that way to be "a plain, consistent way." (2) Do not try to be clever by overcomplicating questions that are difficult enough. (3) "Finally, if we find something that is strange and beyond our understanding, do not let us be quick to reject it."¹⁴

Calvin also instructs Christians to recognize the "root cause" of objections to "the fundamentals of the Christian religion" in the demonic deception that grips the entire non-Christian world, namely, the lie that God need not be feared, that non-Christians are not in danger of judgment because of their sin. Such persons need to be confronted with their own sinfulness and the holiness of God before they will see their need of Christ: "You may therefore

talk about Christ, but it is to no purpose except with those who are genuinely humbled and realize how much they need a Redeemer, by whose mediation they may escape the destruction of eternal death.”¹⁵

Modern Roots of the Reformed Approach

The modern roots of Reformed apologetics are to be found in two streams of Reformed or Calvinist theology: the Scottish Calvinist and Dutch Calvinist traditions.¹⁶ In Scotland the stream of thought that is especially important for the rise of Reformed apologetics is known as Common Sense Realism, the key figure of which was Thomas Reid.¹⁷

THOMAS REID

Thomas Reid is not very well known today, but he played a very significant role in the history of modern thought, and philosophers have recently been giving his thought renewed attention.¹⁸ Reid was one of David Hume’s most famous and important critics in his home country of Scotland. According to Reid, Hume’s skepticism was quite reasonable, given the guiding principles of Hume’s philosophy. Rather than try to disprove Hume on his own terms, Reid sought to expose and refute the “principles” or underlying assumptions of his position. “His reasoning appeared to me to be just: there was therefore a necessity to call in question the principles upon which it was founded, or to admit the conclusion.”¹⁹

Reid identified the faulty principle underlying Hume’s philosophy as *rationalism*—the belief that all knowledge had to be justified by reason, or reasoning. This presupposition had led René Descartes to doubt the reality of everything outside his own doubting, and George

Berkeley to deny the independent reality of anything other than minds and their ideas. Now this same rationalistic premise had led Hume to question the possibility of knowing things that our senses and memories plainly tell us are so.

In direct opposition to such varying forms of skepticism, Reid proposed a *principle of credulity*—namely, that we ought to accept as true that which our mind, our senses, and our memories tell us is so unless we have good reasons to disbelieve them. As Kelly James Clark helpfully explains, the rationalists and skeptics had operated on a kind of “*guilty until proven innocent*” principle of rationality. Reid, by contrast, proposed an “*innocent until proven guilty*” principle. The former held that any belief was to be treated as suspect until it could be definitively proved true; Reid held that any belief was to be treated as justified until it could be shown to be false.²⁰ We might put it this way: whereas the rationalists and skeptics made their motto “When in doubt, throw it out,” Reid advocated as the proper epistemological motto “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

Reid’s principle of credulity is closely related to the *principles of common sense*, “certain principles which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them.”²¹ Even the skeptic who professes not to believe these principles acts as if they were true. “I never heard that any sceptic run his head against a post or stepped into a kennel, because he did not believe his eyes.”²²

According to Reid, the validity of the principles of common sense is ultimately grounded in our creation by God. “Common sense and reason both have one author; that almighty Author, in all whose other works we observe a consistency, uniformity, and beauty, which charm and

delight the understanding: there must therefore be some order and consistency in the human faculties, as well as in other parts of his workmanship.”²³

As various scholars have pointed out, this does not mean that Reid thought one needed to believe in God in order to trust one’s senses. In Reid’s philosophy, belief in God provides a rational ground for belief in the reliability of one’s senses. The person who believes in God will regard God’s existence as “a good reason to confirm his belief” in the reliability of his senses. “But he had the belief before he could give this or any other reason for it.”²⁴

Reid, then, appears to stop just short of including belief in God among the “principles of common sense.” God’s existence is, for Reid, the necessary presupposition of those principles, but not one of the principles themselves. Reid’s own approach to defending belief in God and in the Christian revelation would fit fairly comfortably in either the classical or evidentialist apologetic tradition.²⁵ He favors the design or teleological argument as the principal one confirming the existence of God, on the grounds that “design and intelligence in the cause may, with certainty, be inferred from marks or signs of it in the effect.”²⁶ In his *Lectures on Natural Theology* (1780), Reid contends that, although the existence of God is “so evident” from everything around us that argument may seem superfluous, the design argument can be useful in answering skeptics.²⁷

Reid’s most distinctive argument for God’s existence is the **argument from other minds**. We believe that the people we see around us have minds, Reid pointed out, even though we have no direct access to those minds. Yet there is no good reason to doubt what we all know is true, namely, that there are other minds. From this premise Reid argued that “if a man has the same rational evidence for the existence of a Deity as he has for the existence of his father, his

brother, or his friend, this, I apprehend, is sufficient to satisfy every man that has common sense.”²⁸

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Reid’s approach to apologetics is his contention that, confronted with a purported revelation from God such as that found in Scripture, “reason must be employed to judge of that revelation; whether it comes from God.” Just as reason must be used to interpret the meaning of Scripture and to refute false interpretations of it, so also must it be used to determine whether Scripture really is revelation from God in the first place.²⁹

Although Reid was a minister of the Church of Scotland and worked within the Calvinist tradition, there is reason to doubt that he held to strictly Calvinist theological beliefs. On the problem of evil, he took the position that evil exists because God permits people to abuse their power of “liberty” (or “free will,” as most people would say today). As Paul Helm observed, this explanation assumes “a very mild form of Calvinism, to say the least.”³⁰

Because Reid employed the concept of “common sense” principles and held that our sense perceptions and memories should be assumed to correspond to reality and not be mere constructs of the mind, his epistemology became known as **Common Sense Realism**. This approach to knowledge was to play a significant role in the apologetics of the leading American evangelical seminary of the nineteenth century—Princeton.

CHARLES HODGE

Common Sense Realism greatly influenced American philosophy and theology in the nineteenth century,³¹ notably at Princeton Theological Seminary.³² In Part One we profiled the thought of one of Princeton’s last great theologians, B. B. Warfield. The dominant theologian at

Princeton a generation before Warfield was Charles Hodge, whose *Systematic Theology* is still often reprinted and widely respected.³³

Hodge's indebtedness to the Common Sense Realist tradition is apparent from the opening pages of his work. In chapter 1, after defending the notion of theology as a science and disputing the validity of speculative and mystical approaches to it (1-9), he defends an inductive model of theology patterned after the natural sciences. He points out that the scientist "comes to the study of nature with certain assumptions," notably "the trustworthiness of his sense perceptions"; "the trustworthiness of his mental operations," such as memory and logical inference; and the certainty of such truths as "every effect must have a cause" (9).

According to Hodge, "The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science" (10). The theologian, like the scientist, "comes to his task with all the assumptions above mentioned." He must also "assume the validity of those laws of belief which God has impressed upon our nature," including "the essential distinction between right and wrong, . . . that sin deserves punishment, and other similar first truths, which God has implanted in the constitution of all moral beings, and which no objective revelation can possibly contradict." Not just any beliefs can be assumed as such "first truths of reason," though, or made "the source of test of Christian doctrines." The first truths must be universally and necessarily believed (10). Although the term *common sense* is not itself used here, Hodge's universal and necessary first truths represent essentially the same idea.

In chapter 2 Hodge argues for the necessity of a revealed theology. He distinguishes between natural theology, the knowledge of God gained from God's revelation in nature, and Christian theology, which is based on the Bible. Regarding the former, he seeks to avoid two extremes: "The one is that the works of nature make no trustworthy revelation of the being and

perfections of God; the other, that such revelation is so clear and comprehensive as to preclude the necessity of any supernatural revelation” (21-22). Hodge’s perspective here reflects his staunch Calvinism and is at least broadly in agreement with the approach taken by Calvin himself.

In the third chapter he discusses rationalism as a rival approach to the knowledge of God. Here Hodge is concerned first to refute deism, a form of rationalism that affirms the existence of a Creator God and yet denies any supernatural revelation from that God. Against the deists, he argues that such a revelation is possible and in fact has been supplied in Scripture, and he offers in support a fairly traditional battery of arguments, such as the unity of Scripture and fulfilled prophecy (37-38). In addition, he appeals to “the demonstration of the Spirit” by which people are convinced of the authority of God speaking in Scripture (39). Although Hodge’s articulation of the evidences for the revelatory character of Scripture has been influenced by the evidentialist tradition, the general shape and direction of his thought closely follows that of Calvin’s *Institutes*.

The second form of rationalism Hodge refutes is the variety that admits some revelation of God in Scripture but denies the absolute authority of Scripture. These rationalists will believe only those things in the Bible that they think they can comprehend and prove by reason. Hodge’s leading criticism of this rationalism is that “it is founded upon a false principle,” namely, that it is irrational to believe what one does not comprehend (40). Likewise, the dogmatic rationalism that claims to affirm the doctrines of Scripture on the basis of their fitting into a comprehensive philosophical system is also to be rejected on the “essentially false principle” of “the competency of reason to judge of things entirely beyond its sphere” (47). In line with the Common Sense

Realist tradition, Hodge maintains that reason is competent in its sphere, as are our senses, but neither is competent to determine the truth about God:

Nothing, therefore, can be more opposed to the whole teaching and spirit of the Bible, than this disposition to insist on philosophical proof of the articles of our faith. . . . There is no safety for us, therefore, but to remain within the limits which God has assigned to us. Let us rely on our senses, within the sphere of our sense perceptions; on our reason within the sphere of rational truths; and on God, and God alone, in all that relates to the things of God (48, 49).

Having examined and critiqued three versions of rationalism, Hodge sets forth what he understands to be the proper role of reason in Christian theology. At this point his affinity for the evidentialist approach comes to the fore. He points out, first, that revelation is a communication from God directed to the human mind, and therefore to human reason (49-50). He then affirms that “it is the prerogative of reason to judge of the credibility of a revelation” (50). “Christians concede to reason the *judicium contradictionis*, that is, the prerogative of deciding whether a thing is possible or impossible.” And it is impossible, Hodge urges, for God to reveal anything that is morally wrong, self-contradictory, or contradictory to “any of the laws of belief which He has impressed upon our nature” (51).

Third, Hodge argues that “reason must judge of the evidence by which a revelation is supported” (53). In support of this position he reasons “that as faith involves assent, and assent is conviction produced by evidence, it follows that faith without evidence is either irrational or impossible.” This evidence must be “such as to command assent in every well-constituted mind to which it is presented” (53). Hodge here seems to agree not only with a broadly evidentialist

approach to apologetics, but with the strong epistemological evidentialism enunciated famously in Clifford's maxim.

Like Thomas Reid, then, Charles Hodge was a Calvinist whose thought had strong affinities with both the classical and the evidentialist approaches to apologetics. Nevertheless, certain aspects of their thought, especially in their epistemology, were preparing the way for a new and distinctively Reformed approach to apologetics.

ABRAHAM KUYPER

Contributing also to the rise of Reformed apologetics was the tradition within Dutch Calvinist thought, originating primarily with Abraham Kuyper (rhymes with *hyper*). Dutch Calvinism was keenly concerned about the rise of **secularization**, the principled exclusion of faith from the ordinary activities of life, including the sciences, the arts, and politics.³⁴ The key figure in this stream of Reformed theology was Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), an influential Dutch Calvinist theologian and politician.³⁵ The middle third of his most significant work, *Theological Encyclopedia*, has been translated into English as *Principles of Sacred Theology*.³⁶ In it Kuyper sought to keep two doctrines in balance, common grace and particular grace, both of which he understood to flow directly from Calvinist theology. **Common grace** in Calvinism is the doctrine that, despite the universality and incorrigibility of sin in the human race (what Calvinists call **total depravity**), God graciously preserves non-Christian individuals and societies from becoming as bad as they could be. According to Kuyper, the Calvinist explains “that which is good in fallen man by the dogma of *common grace*” (123). God “has interfered in the life of the individual, in the life of mankind as a whole, and in the life of nature itself by His common grace” (123). By common grace God is “making it possible for men to dwell together in

a well-ordered society” (125). That is, common grace explains why non-Christians can hold down jobs, learn true things about the world, care for their families, and maintain order in society.³⁷ Through it non-Christians can also retain some awareness of God’s existence and their need for God, as expressed in religion. “Sin, indeed, is an absolute darkening power, and were not its effect temporarily checked, nothing but absolute darkness would have remained in and about man; but common grace has restrained its workings to a very considerable degree; also in order that the sinner might be without excuse” (302).

Common grace, though, needed to be balanced by a second doctrine. Kuyper stressed that in spite of common grace, there is an **antithesis** between the regenerate and unregenerate that is grounded in the absolute antithesis between the two sets of principles to which Christians and non-Christians are fundamentally committed. The cause of this antithesis is the new birth, or regeneration, effected by God’s **particular grace** through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. “This ‘regeneration’ breaks humanity in two, and repeals the unity of the human consciousness.” The result is “an abyss in the universal human consciousness across which no bridge can be built” (152).

In his *Lectures on Calvinism* Kuyper divides people into two groups, the normalists and the abnormalists. The former group thinks that the world is proceeding normally; the latter, that it is not. The latter recognizes regeneration as the only hope for humanity’s return to normalcy; the former discounts the idea of regeneration because it sees no need for it.³⁸ Kuyper uses the Greek word ***palingenesis*** as a technical term to refer to regeneration and its effects. What both Christians and non-Christians have typically failed to understand, he maintains, is that all belief and knowledge, even in matters of science, and even for people who consider themselves nonreligious, are at root religious and depend on faith. The conflict is thus not between those

who have faith and those who do not, but between those whose faith is rooted in palingenesis and is placed in the God of Scripture and those whose faith is rooted in their own fallen nature and is placed in something else.

Kuyper defines faith as “that function of the soul (*psuchē*) by which it obtains certainty directly and immediately, without the aid of discursive demonstration” (*Principles*, 129). It follows from this definition that faith is not based on observation or reasoning. “Faith can never be anything else but an immediate act of consciousness, by which certainty is established in that consciousness on any point outside observation or demonstration” (131). When people speak of the “ground” of one’s faith, they are referring not to faith but to its content, “and this does not concern us now” (131). As the act of consciousness possessing certainty, faith “not only needs no demonstration, but allows none” (131-132). In all reasoning, Kuyper observes, one must “have a point of departure.” Such “fixed principles introductory to demonstration” are known as *axioms*. Admitting the existence of axioms is a tacit admission that some things must be taken on faith. “To you they are sure, they are lifted above every question of doubt, they offer you certainty in the fullest sense, not because you can prove them, but because you unconditionally believe them” (136).

Kuyper accepted Calvin’s view that the unregenerate have an innate knowledge of God that has been distorted by the destructive effects of sin on the intellect. Warning that “it will not do to omit the fact of sin from your theory of knowledge,” he asserts that “it is plain that every scientific reproduction of the knowledge of God must fail, so long as this sense remains weakened and this impulse falsified in its direction” (113). Here again, Kuyper attempts to maintain two ideas in balance. On the one hand, following Calvin, and in agreement with such Calvinists as Hodge, he insists that there is a natural knowledge of God—a “natural theology”—

reflected in non-Christian religion, however debased. “The purest confession of truth finds ultimately its starting-point in the seed of religion (*semen religionis*), which, thanks to common grace, is still present in the fallen sinner; and, on the other hand, there is no form of idolatry so low, or so corrupted, but has sprung from this same *semen religionis*. Without natural Theology there is no *Abba, Father*, conceivable, any more than a Molech ritual” (301).

On the other hand, Kuyper insists that this natural theology does the non-Christian no good; indeed, its development in non-Christian religion is completely unhelpful as a support for the Christian faith. “The Christian Religion and Paganism do not stand related to each other as the higher and lower forms of development of the same thing; but the Christian religion is the highest form of development natural theology was capable of along the positive line; while all paganism is a development of that selfsame natural theology in the negative direction” (302).

Lest we misunderstand Kuyper here, he does not mean that Christianity develops natural theology by rationally thinking out its implications. What he means is that in Christianity natural theology has been *supernaturally* developed by the miracle of special revelation. This special, saving revelation of God, necessitated by sin, can itself be received only through the miracle of palingenesis. “There is no man that seeks, and seeking finds the Scriptures, and with its help turns himself to God. But rather from beginning to end it is one ceaselessly continued action which goes out from God to man, and operates upon him, even as the light of the sun operates upon the grain of corn that lies hidden in the ground, and draws it to the surface, and causes it to grow into a stalk” (365).

Kuyper uses the case of us accepting someone’s self-identification to illustrate the necessity of receiving God’s revelation by faith in order to gain knowledge of God. After all, “no one is able to disclose the inner life of a man except *that man himself*. . . . Not observation, but

revelation, is the means by which knowledge of the human person must come to you” (142).

Analogously, Kuyper argues that we cannot know God apart from revelation, and that all attempts to produce religiously significant knowledge of God from our moral consciousness or from nature must fail.

Against all such efforts the words of the Psalmist are ever in force: “In Thy light shall we see light,” and also the words of Christ: “Neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomever the Son willeth to reveal *him*.” Presently your demonstration may have a place in your theological studies of the knowledge that is revealed, and in your inferences derived from it for the subject and the cosmos; but observation or demonstration can never produce one single milligramme of religious gold. The entire gold-mine of religion lies in the self-revelation of this central power to the subject, and the subject has no other means than *faith* by which to appropriate to itself the gold from this mine. He who has no certainty in himself on the ground of this *faith*, about some point or other in religion, can never be made certain by demonstration or argument. In this way you may produce outward religiousness, but never religion of the heart. (149)

There is some ambiguity here and elsewhere in Kuyper’s thought concerning the possibility of rational arguments for the truths of faith. Here he seems to admit that such arguments might produce some recognition of the truth, but warns that such recognition will fall short of certainty and will not produce genuine faith from the heart. Such an admission is all the classical and evidentialist apologists typically claim for their arguments; the arguments are not thought to produce faith in any of the approaches to apologetics, but in the classical and evidentialist traditions they are thought to prepare the mind for faith. In general, Kuyper questions this view of apologetics, going so far as to conclude that apologetics has made matters

worse. In the struggle between modernism and Christianity, he says, “Apologetics has advanced us not one single step. Apologists have invariably begun by abandoning the assailed breastwork, in order to entrench themselves cowardly in a ravelin behind it.”³⁹ Elsewhere he admits that apologetics may have some value in removing difficulties or silencing critics, but he insists that it is useless to assist in bringing people to faith. Christian faith can be produced only by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit:

This is the reason why the arguments for the truth of the Scripture never avail anything. A person endowed with faith gradually will accept Scripture; if not so endowed he will never accept it, though he should be flooded with apologetics. Surely it is our duty to assist seeking souls, to explain or remove difficulties, sometimes even to silence a mocker; but to make an unbeliever have faith in Scripture is utterly beyond man’s power.⁴⁰

Kuyper specifically takes issue with Hodge’s teaching that theology should authenticate the character of Scripture as revelation. “He declares that the theologian must *authenticate* these truths. But then, of course, they are no *truths*, and only become such, when I authenticate them” (*Principles*, 318). Kuyper argues that the necessity of God’s illumination of those who come to faith excludes any possibility of apologetic argument leading people to the Bible and from the Bible to God:

At no single point of the way is there place, therefore, for a support derived from demonstration or reasoning. . . . What God Himself does not bear witness to in your soul personally (not mystically-absolutely, but through the Scriptures) can never be known and confessed by you as Divine. Finite reasoning can never obtain the infinite as its result. If God then withdraws Himself, if in the soul of men He bears no more witness to

the truth of His Word, men *can* no longer believe, and no apologetics, however brilliant, will ever be able to restore the blessing of faith in the Scripture. *Faith*, quickened by God Himself, is invincible; *pseudo-faith*, which rests merely upon reasoning, is devoid of all spiritual reality, so that it bursts like a soap-bubble as soon as the thread of your reasoning breaks. (365, 366)

One of the chief defects of apologetics, according to Kuyper, is that the knowledge it produces is based on probabilities, not certainties. This is a problem because for Kuyper, as for Calvinists generally, certainty is of the essence of faith. Indeed, as we have seen, for Kuyper faith is an incorrigible human capacity for certainty that still operates, though in a sinful direction, in the unregenerate. Apologetics, by seeking to produce knowledge not grasped by faith, actually undermines faith. “Faith gives highest assurance, where in our own consciousness it rests immediately on the testimony of God; but without this support, everything that announces itself as faith is merely a weaker form of opinion based on probability, which capitulates the moment a surer knowledge supersedes your defective evidence” (367-368).

Kuyper specifically takes issue with Hodge’s belief that the special revelation of God in Scripture can and should be tested or validated using reason or natural revelation. Such a position fails to take into account the noetic effects of sin: “If special revelation assumes that in consequence of sin the normal activity of the natural principium [that is, human reason] is disturbed, this implies of itself that the natural principium has lost its competency to judge” (381). Kuyper suggests that asking man to judge the validity of special revelation using natural knowledge is akin to asking a psychiatric patient to judge the validity of the psychiatrist’s method of treatment (381). Likewise, it is impossible to convince a person of the truth of the Christian position if he thinks his natural ability to determine truth is unimpaired. “Being as he

is, he can do nothing else than dispute your special revelation every right of existence; to move him to a different judgment you should not reason with him, but change him in his consciousness; and since this is the fruit of regeneration, it does not lie with you, but with God” (383).

It follows, then, that apologetics as traditionally conceived must be abandoned. Negatively, Christians should seek to expose the anti-Christian religious root of all non-Christian thought. Positively, they should attempt to articulate and model the truth of Christianity to the world by living and working in every sphere of life according to biblical principles. As Kuyper puts it, “Principle must again bear witness against principle, world-view against world-view, spirit against spirit.”⁴¹ In order that “*principle* must be arrayed against *principle*,” Kuyper insists, we must do more than merely offer objections to non-Christian systems of thought and arguments in defense of theism or a generic form of Christianity. Instead, against the comprehensive life system of modernism, “we have to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power.”⁴² Kuyper finds this comprehensive Christian life system in Calvinism.⁴³

Herman Dooyeweerd

Kuyper stimulated tremendous interest among Dutch Calvinist thinkers to work out a Christian philosophy that was faithful to Reformed theological principles.⁴⁴ His seminal ideas were developed into a full-fledged philosophy by others, notably **Herman Dooyeweerd** (1894–1977).⁴⁵ Dooyeweerd (pronounced *DOE-yuh-vair*) was Professor of Philosophy of Law at the Amsterdam Free University, an institution Kuyper founded, and also head of the Kuyper Institute in The Hague. He worked out his philosophy with the help of his brother-in-law, D. H. Theodor

Vollenhoven, also a professor of philosophy at the Amsterdam Free University (specializing in the philosophy of history).

Dooyeweerd's magnum opus was a four-volume work originally published in 1935-1936 as *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* ("The Philosophy of the Law-Idea"). The title reflects his central contention that philosophical thought has an underlying religious root that is related to a transcendent origin and destiny of reality that he called the law-idea. This religious root gives unity to the cosmos in its various aspects or "law-spheres" (such as the biotic, the intellectual, and so forth). Because this law-idea relates to the unity of the cosmos, another name by which Dooyeweerd's philosophy is known is the **cosmonomic** (from *cosmos*, "world," and *nomos*, "law") philosophy.

De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee was published in a second edition in English in 1953-1957 with the title *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.⁴⁶ The English title is also fitting, because the goal of the book is to develop what Dooyeweerd called a **transcendental** criticism of theoretical thought, an idea that comes from Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment philosopher whose most important work was entitled *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴⁷ Putting the matter as simply as possible, in a transcendental critique one seeks to show what are the necessary preconditions or presuppositions of all knowledge. In his *Critique* Kant argued that both *dogmatism* (the unjustified assumption that human reason is competent to know everything) and *skepticism* (the hypercritical denial that human reason is competent to know anything) should be rejected. In their place Kant favored the method of *criticism*—seeking to discern both the competency and the limitations of human reason.⁴⁸

Dooyeweerd's *New Critique* may be read largely as a critique and refutation of Kant's philosophy. He explains, "it can be said that our transcendental critique of theoretical thought

has an inner connection with Kant's critique of pure reason, notwithstanding the fact that our critique was turned to a great extent against the theoretical dogmatism in Kant's epistemology" (1:118). According to Dooyeweerd, Kant recognized the need to avoid dogmatism but actually fell into it by assuming the autonomy of theoretical thought (1:35). That is, Kant assumed "that he could lay bare a starting-point in theoretical reason itself, which *would rest at the basis of every possible theoretical synthesis*" (1:49). To put it simply, Kant sought to use reason alone to critique reason. Dooyeweerd believes such a project impossible, even for well-meaning Christians—among whom he counts himself. "The great turning point in my thought was marked by the discovery of the religious root of thought itself, whereby a new light was shed on the failure of all attempts, including my own, to bring about an inner synthesis between the Christian faith and a philosophy which is rooted in faith in the self-sufficiency of human reason" (1:v). Note the Kuyperian themes of the religious root of all thought and the unavoidability of faith in all human thinking.

Kant's assumption that reason was competent to critique reason was based on the assumption that he could develop a theory of knowledge free of religious presuppositions. Kant's theory of knowledge presupposed a view of nature and freedom that was a "very religious basic motive" (1:89). By "religious basic motive," or ground motive as he also calls it, Dooyeweerd means "the central spiritual motive power of our thinking and acting,"⁴⁹ the most fundamental way of thinking about reality that moves people to think and act a certain way. A ground motive "gives content to the central mainspring of the entire attitude of life and thought" of a religious community (1:61). In other words, it is a basic root way of thinking from which various worldviews and systems of thought spring.

Dooyeweerd identifies four basic ground motives in Western thought. The Greek worldview, given concrete formulation by Aristotle, was rooted in a **dualism** of form and matter in which form represented the rationality of mind while matter represented the irrationality of brute fact. The biblical worldview was not dualistic, but was rooted in the motive of creation, fall, and redemption. The medieval worldview, associated especially by Dooyeweerd with Thomas Aquinas, utilized a half-Greek, half-biblical worldview based on a dualism of nature and grace. According to Dooyeweerd, traditional Christian apologetics has been dominated for centuries by this unbiblical nature-grace dualism. Finally, the modern, humanistic worldview (which Dooyeweerd relates especially to Kant) is characterized by a dualism of nature and freedom (1:61-63).⁵⁰

All three nonbiblical worldviews, argues Dooyeweerd, despite their efforts to secure an autonomous rationality, lead to irrationality by absolutizing one aspect of creation and therefore rendering creation void of meaning. This inevitably results in a dualism in which one side is viewed as rational (form or nature) and the other side as irrational (matter, grace, or freedom). This internal incoherence is due to the fact that non-Christian thought invariably proceeds from one or another kind of **immanentism**, the hopeless belief that one can know ultimate reality using a standard found within one's immanent experience (rather like a goldfish trying to know the fishbowl from within it). Likewise, immanence philosophy refers to "all philosophy that seeks its Archimedean point in philosophic thought itself" (1:14). Exposing this immanentism is the task of a "transcendental" critique.

Only the Christian faith, Dooyeweerd argues, provides a true standpoint of transcendence from which created reality can be viewed. This standpoint involves an *arche* (the Greek word for beginning) and an **Archimedean point** (a metaphor drawn from the story of Archimedes, who

claimed that from a point far enough above the earth and with the proper lever, he could move the earth). An *arche* is “*an origin which creates meaning*,” the transcendent origin of all meaning in the cosmos (1:9). An Archimedean point is a conceptual point from which a comprehensive philosophical view of the cosmos in all its aspects of meaning may be coherently held (1:11). The *arche* of the biblical ground motive is God as the Creator, the Origin of all created reality in all its aspects. The Archimedean point is Jesus Christ as the root of the new, redeemed humanity in whom regeneration (what Kuyper called *palingenesis*) has taken place.

The task of Christian philosophy, then, according to Dooyeweerd, is twofold. First, the Christian thinker is to expose the inadequacy of non-Christian worldviews by showing that they collapse into an untenable dualism with both rationalistic and irrationalistic tendencies. Second, the Christian is to commend the Christian worldview as the only one able to provide a secure footing for knowledge and ethics. In doing so, the Christian will confront non-Christians with their need to receive God’s grace of redemption in Jesus Christ, through whom they will be regenerated and in whom they will find the ultimate reference point of meaning in life.

Cornelius Van Til

Arguably the most controversial apologist of the twentieth century was Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), a Dutch-American Calvinist whose system of thought is often called presuppositionalism.⁵¹ Van Til lived the first ten years of his life in Holland while Abraham Kuyper was at his height both as a Christian theologian and as a statesman. His family moved to Indiana and he later attended Calvin College and then Calvin Theological Seminary for a year. Both institutions were located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church, a Calvinist denomination populated primarily by Dutch immigrants. Van Til

then transferred to Princeton Theological Seminary, the Calvinist institution where Hodge and Warfield had taught. He earned a master's degree from the seminary in 1925 and a doctorate in 1927 from Princeton University, where he studied under the idealist philosopher A. A. Bowman. In 1929 J. Gresham Machen founded Westminster Theological Seminary as a conservative alternative to Princeton Theological Seminary, which had been taken over by liberalism, and the next year brought Van Til to Westminster as its first professor of apologetics.⁵² Van Til served in that capacity until his retirement in 1972, when he was named professor emeritus.⁵³

Van Til has had an impact on Christian apologetics both inside and outside of strictly Calvinist theological circles. His many loyal followers have labored to promote his approach to apologetics, among whom we may especially mention Greg L. Bahnsen and John M. Frame as two of Van Til's star pupils who have proved able interpreters of their teacher. In addition to numerous scholarly publications on other matters, Bahnsen wrote many articles and books expounding and defending Van Til's apologetic, culminating in two important books published posthumously.⁵⁴ Frame taught apologetics for many years at Westminster Theological Seminary in California, a sister institution to the Philadelphia school, and has also written some of the best books on Van Til.⁵⁵ He is also one of the very few self-confessed "Van Tilians" to express significant disagreements and criticisms of Van Til's teaching on apologetics.

Van Til's students have also included some of the most influential apologists of a more broadly evangelical perspective, most notably Edward John Carnell, professor of apologetics at Fuller Theological Seminary, and Francis Schaeffer, one of the most popular evangelical teachers and writers of the twentieth century. Van Til did not, however, regard either of these students of his as sound proponents of a Reformed apologetic, and wrote extensive critiques of their apologetic thought.⁵⁶ Van Til has also stimulated enormous debate over apologetic method;

most of the leading American evangelical apologists of the last forty years have interacted with his approach in their writings.⁵⁷

Van Til has typically been characterized as abandoning the apologetic approach of Old Princeton for a Kuyperian approach. This is not so much incorrect as it is incomplete, as he essentially formed a creative synthesis of the two.⁵⁸ He made this especially clear in his book *Common Grace and the Gospel*. “So far as choice had to be made between the two positions, I took my position with Kuyper rather than with Hodge and Warfield. But there were two considerations that compelled me finally to seek a combination of some of the elements of each position.”⁵⁹ These two considerations were that Old Princeton recognized the antithesis in its theology, if not fully in its apologetics, and that Old Princeton was right in insisting that “Christianity is capable of rational defense” (184).

Van Til, therefore, did not abandon Old Princeton’s epistemology or apologetic concern. “But never have I expressed a basic difference with its theology or its basic epistemology” (155). He agreed with the Common-Sense Realist view taught at Old Princeton that the validity of sense perception, logic, moral values, and the like was guaranteed to us by God’s creation of us and of the world. He also agreed with Old Princeton that apologetics should offer proof for the Christian position. But he integrated this position with the Kuyperian doctrine of the antithesis. Common-Sense Realism had held that non-Christians live in a God-created universe and thus operate on the basis of Christian presuppositions, whether they acknowledge it or not. For the Old Princetonians this meant that Christians might appeal to these shared presuppositions in traditional apologetic arguments. In Van Til’s thinking, however, the Kuyperian doctrine of the antithesis indicated that the non-Christian so suppresses these presuppositions when thinking about matters of principle that no argument based on them will connect.

For Van Til traditional apologetics suffered from being founded on a faulty theological basis—either Roman Catholic, Arminian, or inconsistently Calvinistic. The last fault belonged to the apologetical tradition that had been the rule at Old Princeton. In Van Til's view, the great mistake of this tradition was in using rationalistic arguments that concluded that the truths of Christianity are *probably* true. Van Til thought probabilistic arguments detracted from the certainty of faith and the absolute authority of Scripture as the written word of God. Arguing that a Reformed or Calvinistic theology required an equally distinctive Reformed apologetic, Van Til called on the church to rethink its classical apologetical tradition and develop a radically biblical apologetic.

This apologetic would not attempt to prove or substantiate Christianity by a simple appeal to factual evidence, as though non-Christians were honest enough to examine the evidence fairly. Instead it would argue by presupposition. The first step in this approach is to show that non-Christian systems of thought are incapable of accounting for rationality and morality. Here the apologist is to show that ultimately all non-Christian systems of thought fall into irrationalism. The second step is to commend the Christian view as giving the only possible presuppositional foundation for thought and life.

Christian apologetics, then, is to argue by presupposition, as Van Til maintained in his major textbook on apologetics, *The Defense of the Faith*. "To argue by presupposition is to indicate what are the epistemological and metaphysical principles that underlie and control one's method."⁶⁰ For Van Til this is the *only* legitimate apologetic approach. There is no room in his approach for deductive arguments from premises granted by non-Christians to Christian conclusions. Nor is there any room for inductive arguments from facts granted by non-Christians and used as evidences to support Christian conclusions. The *only* legitimate type of apologetic

argument is one that reasons indirectly and presuppositionally that unless Christianity is true, nothing can be known or predicated.

“There is, accordingly, but one thing that Christians can do,” namely, challenge unbelieving assumptions.⁶¹ The point of contact with non-Christian systems “must be in the nature of a head-on collision” (98-99). Van Til concludes *The Defense of the Faith* with a summary of his position, including the following statement:

That the argument for Christianity must therefore be that of presupposition. . . . The best, the only, the absolutely certain proof of the truth of Christianity is that unless its truth be presupposed there is no proof of anything. Christianity is proved as being the very foundation of the idea of proof itself (298).⁶²

For Van Til there was only one apologetic method—arguing by presupposition.

Gordon H. Clark

Of the four twentieth-century Reformed apologists we are profiling in this chapter, the one whose thought seems least indebted to Abraham Kuyper is Gordon Haddon Clark (1902-1985).⁶³ Clark received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania in 1929, where he taught philosophy until 1936. He then taught philosophy at Wheaton College, an evangelical liberal arts college near Chicago (1936-1943). During this period, most of his published works were professional philosophy textbooks and articles published by secular academic presses.⁶⁴

Finding that he was too Calvinist for the broadly evangelical Wheaton, Clark resigned his position there and in 1945 was ordained as a teaching elder in the Philadelphia Presbytery of the

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), a denomination he had helped J. Gresham Machen get started a decade earlier. Ironically, Clark was regarded as not Calvinist enough by Van Til, who led an effort to have his ordination revoked. Although the presbytery decided in Clark's favor, the controversy led to his departure from the OPC and completely soured relations between Clark's supporters and Van Til's, a situation that generally persists to this day.⁶⁵

From 1945 to 1973 Clark served as chairman of the philosophy department at Butler University in Indianapolis. During this long period of his life he authored his most influential works of Christian philosophy and apologetics. After his retirement at Butler, he took a position at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia (1974-1983).

Gordon Clark is one of the most influential advocates of a presuppositional approach to apologetics. Two of the many theologians and apologists greatly influenced by him are Carl F. H. Henry and Ronald H. Nash. Henry (b. 1913), a student of Clark at Wheaton, was one of the major leaders of evangelicalism in the second half of the twentieth century.⁶⁶ He helped establish Fuller Theological Seminary, was the first editor of *Christianity Today*, was a founding member of the Evangelical Theological Society and of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, and lectured around the world for World Vision International and Prison Fellowship. At the beginning of his magnum opus, the six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Henry enthusiastically made explicit his dependence on Clark's apologetic teaching.⁶⁷ Nash is an evangelical philosopher also greatly influenced by Clark, though he has also expressed some disagreements with Clark's position. Nash edited a volume of essays in honor of Clark⁶⁸ and has authored a number of important works in Christian apologetics and philosophy.⁶⁹

Whereas Van Til's apologetic system may be described as a *transcendental* presuppositionalism, Clark's is best characterized as *deductive* presuppositionalism. The

difference is subtle but important. According to Van Til, the apologist should argue that logic, truth, meaning, and value can be what they are only on the presupposition that the God of Scripture is real. Truth is found everywhere in God's world, but this truth can be known only because we are created in God's image and have been given the capacity to know God's truth. The transcendent God of Scripture provides a transcendental point of reference; it is from God that all truth comes and it is in the light of God that all truth is known.

By contrast, Clark maintained that all that could truly be known was to be found in Scripture itself. In his view, knowledge of truth requires deductive proof, and nothing can be deduced from the uncertain facts of the natural world or of the human mind. Furthermore, inductive reasoning is unreliable, because "all inductive arguments are formal fallacies" when judged by the canons of deductive reasoning, and so cannot be used to arrive at truth.⁷⁰ The only source of indisputable premises with which logic can work is the Bible. So, Clark argued, the infallible statements of Scripture provide the only source of certain knowledge, and only what the Bible actually says, or what can be logically deduced from those biblical statements, constitutes real knowledge.

The truth of the Bible as God's word is what Clark in his later works called his "axiom."⁷¹ The idea of an axiom is most easily illustrated from geometry, where theorems, such as the Pythagorean theorem, are deduced logically from elemental facts of geometry called axioms. "But the axioms are never deduced. They are assumed without proof." Such starting points that are not demonstrable and not questionable are unavoidable, for without them one could never begin a process of proving anything.⁷² According to Clark, "Every system of theology or philosophy must have a starting point."⁷³

The inference is this: No one can consistently object to Christianity's being based on an indemonstrable axiom. If the secularists exercise their privilege of basing their theorems on axioms, then so may Christians. If the former refuse to accept our axioms, then they can have no logical objection to our rejecting theirs. . . . Our axiom shall be that God has spoken. More completely, God has spoken in the Bible. More precisely, what the Bible says, God has spoken.⁷⁴

Although the axiom of biblical revelation must be “accepted without proofs or reasons,” its truth is shown by “its success in producing a system.”⁷⁵ According to Clark, systems of thought that do not rest on the biblical axiom are inevitably inconsistent and incoherent. His apologetic therefore consists of two steps: showing that non-Christian philosophies are hopelessly inconsistent and incapable of accounting for morality and meaning, and showing that Christianity is internally consistent. At the end of his most celebrated book, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, Clark sums up his thesis: “that Christian theism is self-consistent and that several other philosophies are inconsistent, skeptical, and therefore erroneous.” In contrast to such philosophies as Marxism and humanism that Clark believes render history and morality meaningless, “it has been argued that Christianity is self-consistent, that it gives meaning to life and morality, and that it supports the existence of truth and the possibility of knowledge.”⁷⁶ Likewise, at the end of his textbook on the history of philosophy, Clark suggests that “a choice must be made between skeptical futility and a word from God.”⁷⁷

Clark maintains, then, that nonbiblical systems of thought cannot provide an internally consistent worldview within which knowledge and morality have meaning. Of course, advocates of other systems of thought will deny this claim. In particular, advocates of religions that have their own dogmatic principle other than biblical revelation (for example, the Qur'an in the case

of Islam) might object that their claimed revelation could just as well become one's axiomatic starting point. To all such counterarguments Clark simply responds: "Since all possible knowledge must be contained within the system and deduced from its first principles, the dogmatic answer must be found in the Bible itself. The answer is that faith is the gift of God. . . . The initiation of spiritual life, called regeneration, is the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by Abrahamic blood, nor by natural desire, nor by any act of human will."⁷⁸

Ultimately, then, for Clark as well as for Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, and Van Til, we know that the God of the Bible is the true God because he has sovereignly chosen to illuminate our minds by the regenerating work of the Spirit.⁷⁹

Because Van Til and Clark are so often compared, and because both are commonly called presuppositionalists, it will be helpful to review the differing versions of Reformed apologetics articulated by these two thinkers.

Van Til	Clark
Transcendental argument	Deductive argument
Scripture provides rational basis for scientific and historical knowledge	Scripture provides only rational source of knowledge; science and history are not valid sources of truth
Logic must be defined and understood on the basis of God's revelation in Scripture	Logic is the method by which we derive truth from God's revelation in Scripture
<i>External</i> consistency <i>with</i> Scripture as the test of truth	<i>Internal</i> consistency <i>of</i> Scripture as the test of <i>its</i> truth
Believers and unbelievers do not share a common reason	Believers and unbelievers share reason in common

Alvin Plantinga

The one Reformed apologist profiled in this chapter who was still living at the beginning of the twenty-first century is Alvin Plantinga (b. 1932), chairman of the philosophy department at the University of Notre Dame and the director of its Center for Philosophy of Religion. He has served as president of both the Society of Christian Philosophers (which he helped found) and the American Philosophical Association. With Plantinga we have the advantage of two autobiographical pieces in which he tells us about his intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage and introduces his published work.⁸⁰ Our inclusion of Plantinga in this survey of Reformed apologists is controversial because of the significant differences between his views and those of the other apologists profiled here. However, the similarities are significant enough to support identifying his position as a variant form of Reformed apologetics.

Plantinga, the son of a philosopher, Cornelius Plantinga (Sr.), grew up in a Dutch-American home that was staunchly conservative and Calvinist. After a year at Calvin College, he won a scholarship to Harvard University, where he seems to have passed through his major crisis of faith. It disturbed him that so many of his professors and fellow students—including people that seemed smarter than him—did not believe in God. The crisis was resolved on a gloomy winter evening while he was out walking on the campus:

But suddenly it was as if the heavens opened; I heard, so it seemed, music of overwhelming power and grandeur and sweetness; there was light of unimaginable splendor and beauty; it seemed I could see into heaven itself; and I suddenly saw or perhaps felt with great clarity and persuasion and conviction that the Lord was really there and was all I had thought. The effects of this experience lingered for a long time; I was still caught up in arguments about the existence of God, but they often seemed to me merely academic, of little existential concern, as if one were to argue about whether there

really had been a past, for example, or whether there really were other people, as opposed to cleverly constructed robots.⁸¹

During a recess at Harvard, Plantinga visited his family and attended some classes from W. Henry Jellema, the professor from whom his father had learned philosophy in the late twenties and early thirties. Alvin was so taken by Jellema's teaching that he transferred back to Calvin to study under him (from 1951 to 1954). In Jellema's teaching on the history of philosophy, he argued that the rejection of Christianity and theism in modern philosophy did not result from intellectual objections but rather from a religious commitment antithetical to Christianity. "Jellema's way of thinking about these matters (as he said) goes back to Abraham Kuyper and other Dutch Calvinists" (54). Plantinga accepted this Kuyperian notion of the antithesis while carefully observing the qualification (which goes back to Kuyper himself) that this antithesis does not prevent non-Christians from getting some things right:

Those who don't share our commitment to the Lord are in transition, just as we are. As Calvin says, there is unbelief within the breast of every Christian; but isn't there also belief within the breast of every non-Christian? The antithesis is of course real; but at any time in history it is also less than fully articulated and developed.⁸²

Plantinga is not uncritical about the teaching he received at Calvin College. He confesses that at Calvin there

was a sort of tendency to denigrate or devalue other forms of Christianity, other emphases within serious Christianity. . . . We Calvinists, we thought, were much more rigorous about the life of the mind than were fundamentalists, and as a result we were inclined to look down our Reformed noses at them. . . . Since the Enlightenment, we

Christians have had real enemies to fight and real battles to win; why then do we expend so much time and energy despising or fighting each other? (57-58)

Plantinga did his graduate work in philosophy at the University of Michigan, where he took courses from William P. Alston and other noted philosophers. At Michigan the question he considered the most important in philosophy—“what is the truth about this matter?”—was often greeted with disdain as unduly naïve.”⁸³

In the 1960s he taught philosophy at Calvin College with another of Jellema’s students, Nicholas Wolterstorff. Through the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, the two developed close associations with other philosophers sympathetic to a Reformed approach to philosophy, including George Mavrodes, William Alston, and David Holwerda.

THE NEW REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

In 1982 Plantinga accepted a position at the University of Notre Dame, which, although Roman Catholic, had a very high concentration of evangelical graduate students in philosophy. The following year the university press released a book co-edited by Plantinga and Wolterstorff entitled *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*.⁸⁴ The book contained articles by the editors and several other philosophers—Mavrodes, Holwerda, Alston, and George Marsden—from a yearlong project at the Calvin Center on the subject “Toward a Reformed View of Faith and Reason.” *Faith and Rationality* had an immediate and profound impact, not only on Christian apologetics, but also in the halls of academia. Plantinga’s lengthy contribution “Reason and Belief in God,” in particular, changed the direction of philosophy of religion in universities

and colleges around the world. Books and articles appear every year discussing the merits of Plantinga's "Reformed Epistemology," as it has come to be known.

Plantinga's interest in philosophy has been and is largely apologetical. He suggests that "perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that from a philosophical point of view, Christians and other theists have nothing whatever for which to apologize" (33). Three apologetical issues have concerned him: "the existence of certain kinds of evil, the fact that many people for whom I have deep respect do not accept belief in God, and the fact that it is difficult to find much by way of noncircular argument or evidence for the existence of God" (34). The second and third issues do not now greatly disturb him, "But the first remains deeply baffling" (34). His answer to the problem of evil is, like Thomas Reid's, an appeal to human free will (41-47). In this respect he differs from the other major Reformed apologists profiled in this chapter.

The first book Plantinga authored (he had already edited a couple books) was *God and Other Minds* (in 1967). The main argument of this work, as he explains in "Self-Profile," is "that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat; since belief in other minds is clearly rational, the same goes for belief in God" (55).

Years later, Plantinga's assessment of his efforts in *God and Other Minds* was that it looked "like a promising attempt by someone a little long on chutzpah but a little short on epistemology."⁸⁵

In 1974 Plantinga wrote "Is It Rational to Believe in God?," a precursor to his longer paper in *Faith and Rationality*. "There I argued that belief in God can be perfectly rational even if none of the theistic arguments work and even if there is no non-circular evidence for it; my main aim was to argue that it is perfectly rational to take belief in God as basic—that is, to

accept theistic belief without accepting it on the basis of argument or evidence from other propositions one believes” (55-56). This idea of belief in God as “basic” is the core of Plantinga’s new Reformed Epistemology.

Plantinga then turned to a question he found puzzling, namely, that Reformed Christians tended to view natural theology—“the attempt to prove or demonstrate the existence of God”—with suspicion, if not hostility. What is the reason for this (60)? Plantinga concluded that the Reformed thinkers were implicitly reacting against the underlying assumption of much natural theology, namely, the assumption of classical and modern foundationalism that the existence of God could not be among those beliefs that were properly basic (61). Moreover, Reformed thinkers were rejecting the claim that belief in God on the basis of evidence or proof was somehow superior to belief in God without such evidence or proof (that is, as basic). To explain why, Plantinga asks us to consider three analogies. The person who accepts $2 + 3 = 5$ because a computer that yields that equation has proved itself reliable in most instances he has been able to check, is not in a better position epistemically than the person who accepts as self-evident $2 + 3 = 5$ as basic. Nor is the person who, while walking around the Tower and observing pigeons flying around it, believes there are pigeons there only because it says so in the guidebook. The person depending on the computer for his acceptance of arithmetic and the person depending on the guidebook for his knowledge of the pigeons are both exhibiting what Plantinga labels a perverse approach to knowledge.

The same thing may be said for the person who believes in the existence of her husband on the basis of the sort of evidence cited by an analogical argument for other minds. Belief in God on the basis of the sort of evidence furnished by the traditional theistic arguments (even supposing the arguments successful) is, according to the Reformed

epistemologist, rather like these cases. It is not epistemically superior to taking belief in God as basic. The shoe, indeed, is on the other foot: the better of these two ways of accepting theistic belief is the latter. (62)

Plantinga puts the idea of belief in God as basic in a broader perspective by rehearsing Thomas Reid's argument against modern skepticism concerning sense perception. "Reid argues—correctly, I believe—that the deliverances of sense perception don't need justification or certification in terms of other sources of belief as introspection and self-evidence. . . . What Reid said about sense perception, Reformed thinkers have said about belief in God" (63).

Plantinga does not think the Reformed objection to natural theology renders apologetics suspect. In another article, in which he argues that apologetics should play a role in the Reformed tradition, he admits that some Reformed theologians have thought otherwise: "But isn't the very idea of apologetics, whether negative or positive, contrary to the basic Reformed insight of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd? If all thought has religious roots, then the thing to say about attacks on Christianity is just that they too have religious roots—*non-Christian* religious roots; thus they do not require an answer. Faith cannot reason with unbelief: it can only preach to it."⁸⁶

Plantinga's answer is that apologetics is useful after all because people's condition and direction in life are complex and changing. Thus the Christian, according to Calvin himself, experiences doubt as well as the certainty of faith.⁸⁷ Negative apologetics can help Christians, then, by refuting the arguments that stir up doubts. Apologetics, both negative and positive, can also help non-Christians who are on their way to becoming Christians.⁸⁸

WARRANTED CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Plantinga's *magnum opus* is a three-volume series of books that develops his mature thinking regarding Christian epistemology. The first two books, *Warrant: The Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function*, both published in 1993, surveyed the field of epistemology and proposed a theory of warrant. The third volume, *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000), refined Plantinga's theory and applied it to the defense of the reasonableness of Christian belief.⁸⁹ This landmark book deserves careful study by everyone interested in apologetic theory; here we will briefly summarize the argument of the book.⁹⁰

Plantinga begins by saying that the question he will be addressing is whether Christian belief is "intellectually acceptable" for thinking people today (viii). Modern Western thought has posed two kinds of objections to Christian belief. First, *de facto* objections challenge "the truth of Christian belief" (viii); these include the problem of evil and the alleged incoherence of specific Christian doctrines such as the Trinity or the Incarnation (viii-ix). Second, *de jure* objections claim not that Christian belief is (necessarily) false but that it is somehow "not up to snuff from an intellectual point of view" (ix). Plantinga will argue that *de jure* objections to the effect that Christian belief is unjustified or irrational are not viable. "As I see it, if there are any real *de jure* objections to Christian belief, they lie in the neighborhood of warrant" (xi). Warrant is what makes a particular belief not only *true* but also *knowledge*; it is what separates a "lucky guess" and other types of true beliefs that are not knowledge from true beliefs in which we really *know* something.

Plantinga distinguishes both *de facto* and *de jure* questions from the question of whether there can "really be such a thing as Christian belief" (3). This question asks not whether Christian belief is true (*de facto*) or warranted (*de jure*) but whether it is really a belief at all. Plantinga has in mind here the claim credited (at least) to Immanuel Kant (chapter 1, pp. 3-30)

and made by a variety of modern philosophers and theologians—of whom he discusses Gordon Kaufman and John Hick as examples—that if God exists our concepts could not apply or refer to him. Kaufman argues that God, if he exists, transcends all finite reality and so cannot be identified with anything we actually experience; Kaufman ends up concluding that the term “God,” if it refers meaningfully to anything, is a symbol of the “cosmic forces” that make it possible for us to pursue human values. Hick argues that God—or, as he prefers, “the Real”—exists, and our religious language does refer in some way to the Real, but what it says about the Real is not “literally” true. Plantinga examines both of these positions and finds them self-defeating and unworthy of acceptance (chapter 2, pp. 31-63).

In the book *Warrant: The Current Debate*, Plantinga had argued that justification, coherence, rationality, and reliable faculties do not adequately distinguish knowledge from mere true belief. He retraces and augments this argument in chapters 3 and 4 of *Warranted Christian Belief*. In his earlier works *God and Other Minds* (1967) and “Reason and Belief in God” (1983), Plantinga says, he took it for granted “that this question of the rational justification of theistic belief is identical with, or intimately connected with, the question whether there are *proofs*, or at least *good arguments*, for or against the existence of God” (68).

In *God and Other Minds*, I argued first that the theistic proofs or arguments do not succeed. In evaluating these arguments, I employed a traditional but wholly improper standard: I took it that these arguments are successful only if they start from propositions that compel assent from every honest and intelligent person and proceed majestically to their conclusion by way of forms of argument that can be rejected only on pain of insincerity or irrationality. Naturally enough, I joined the contemporary chorus in holding that none of the traditional arguments was successful. (I failed to note that no

philosophical arguments of any consequence meet that standard; hence the fact that theistic arguments do not is of less significance than I thought.) (69)

The problem with such reasoning, Plantinga explains, is that it presupposes that a belief such as belief in God requires rational justification according to the canon of *evidentialism*: “that belief in God, if it is to be rationally acceptable, must be such that there is *good evidence* for it” (70). Plantinga traces this evidentialist approach to religious belief especially to John Locke (71-82). “*Evidentialism* is the claim that religious belief is rationally acceptable only if there are good arguments for it; Locke is both a paradigm evidentialist and the proximate source of the entire evidentialist tradition, from him through Hume and Reid and Kant and the nineteenth century to the present” (82).

Evidentialism is part of a larger epistemological tradition called **classical foundationalism**. According to foundationalism, there are two categories of beliefs: those that we believe “*on the evidential basis* of others” (82), and those “basic” beliefs that we accept without basing our acceptance on other beliefs (83). These basic beliefs are the “foundations” of one’s entire belief system or “noetic structure.” Hence, according to foundationalism, “every proposition is either in the foundations or believed on the evidential basis of other propositions.” Plantinga considers this point “trivially true” and states, “This much of foundationalism should be uncontroversial and accepted by all” (83). However, the classical foundationalist goes further and specifies that only certain kinds of beliefs can be “properly basic”; these are usually specified to include propositions that are self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to one’s senses (84). (By “evident to the senses” in this context is meant merely that we are experiencing certain sensory impressions; for example, that I am experiencing seeing something white.) This classical foundationalism is accompanied by “deontologism,” the belief that humans have a duty or

obligation to regulate their beliefs in accord with evidentialist strictures. The classic expression of this evidentialism is W. K. Clifford's essay "The Ethics of Belief" in which he argued that "it is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (89).⁹¹ Plantinga devotes the rest of chapter 3 of *Warranted Christian Belief* to explaining why this classical foundationalism does not work as a *de jure* objection to Christian belief. The claim that only what is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses is itself none of those things, and therefore the claim is self-defeating (94-97). Moreover, accepting classical foundationalism would require us not to believe many of the things we actually believe, such as our memories, the reality of the external objects that we perceive through our senses, and the like (97-99). Since classical foundationalism is not a cogent position, Plantinga sees no reason why a person who has thought about the objections to Christian belief and remains convinced that Christianity is true would not be justified in that belief (99-102).

In chapter 4, Plantinga explores the notion that Christian belief is intellectually unacceptable because it cannot be shown to be "rational" in some sense (108-34). He finds this claim wanting as well. Clearly, there are millions of "rational" human beings who do in fact accept Christian belief (109), and it is not plausible to claim that in all of these persons their rational faculties are malfunctioning (110-13). Nor will it work to fault Christian belief for not being among "the deliverances of reason": many things that we believe do not fit in that category but are still perfectly acceptable beliefs (113-15).

In *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga had argued that "proper function" constitutes warrant for our true beliefs. He fine-tunes this argument in chapter 5 of *Warranted Christian Belief*. The objections that such non-Christian thinkers as Freud and Marx (136-44) raise to Christian belief amount to saying "that there is something wrong with believing it" whether it

happens to be true or not. “They are best construed, I think, as complaining that Christian belief is not produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly and aimed at the truth” (152). The *de jure* issue, then, is warrant, understood as proper function. “More fully, a belief has warrant just if it is produced by cognitive processes or faculties that are functioning properly, in an environment that is propitious for that exercise of cognitive powers, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at the production of true belief” (xi).

Christian belief, on this definition of warrant, is warranted (assuming that it is true) because the cognitive process that produces Christian belief is the internal work of the Holy Spirit, restoring to proper function the *sensus divinitatis* or natural knowledge of God that all human beings have (xii; see chapters 6-10). Plantinga introduces this “model” of warranted Christian belief in chapter 6. He views the natural knowledge that God exists not as an inference from nature (which would constitute a kind of natural theology) but as “*occasioned*” by our observations of nature (175). “In this regard, the *sensus divinitatis* resembles perception, memory, and *a priori* belief” (175). Therefore, belief in God’s existence arising from the *sensus divinitatis* and occasioned by our experience of the natural world is properly “basic” rather than inferred (176-79). The reason why so many people do not believe in God is that this *sensus divinitatis* no longer functions properly as the result of sin. Thus, “it is really the *unbeliever* who displays epistemic malfunction” (184). Looked at in this way, a “basic” belief in God is probably warranted if God exists though unwarranted if he does not (186-90). It turns out, then, that the *de jure* objection that Christian belief is unwarranted really depends on the *de facto* claim that it is false (190-91). “If I am right in these claims, there aren’t any viable *de jure* criticisms that are compatible with the truth of Christian belief; that is, there aren’t any viable *de jure* objections independent of *de facto* objections” (xii).

Plantinga elaborates and defends this model in chapters 7 to 10. Early in chapter 7, Plantinga explains his purpose:

...I'll argue that many or most Christians not only can be but are both justified and internally rational in holding their external beliefs. External rationality and warrant are harder. The only way I can see to argue that Christian belief has these virtues is to argue that Christian belief is, indeed, true. I don't propose to offer such an argument. That is because I don't know of an argument for Christian belief that seems very likely to convince one who doesn't already accept its conclusion. That is nothing against Christian belief, however, and indeed I shall argue that if Christian beliefs are true, then the standard and most satisfactory way to hold them will not be as the conclusions of argument (200-201).

Plantinga then explores the concept of sin and its noetic effects, concluding with a rather technical discussion of the problems attending naturalism (227-39). Here Plantinga argues that naturalism is not only self-defeating (as he had argued in chapter 12 of *Warrant and Proper Function*) but also improbable.

To complete his account of Christian belief as warranted, Plantinga addresses the claim that Christian belief faces certain defeaters, warranted beliefs incompatible with Christian belief (chapter 11). Plantinga examines what he thinks are the three most important proposed defeaters for Christian belief—historical biblical criticism, postmodernist and pluralist objections to the exclusive truth claims of Christian belief, and the problem of suffering and evil (chapters 12-14)—and argues “that none of these succeed as a defeater for classical Christian belief” (xiii).

Plantinga's project in this book, then, can be viewed as “an exercise in apologetics and philosophy of religion,” the purpose of which is to clear away the *de jure* objection “that

Christian belief, whether true or not, is intellectually unacceptable” (xiii). His purpose is not to show that Christian belief is true but that, *if* it is true, then it is also warranted. In his closing paragraph, Plantinga makes it clear that he has not attempted to address the question of the truth of Christian belief:

But *is* it true? This is the really important question. And here we pass beyond the competency of philosophy, whose main competence, in this area, is to clear away certain objections, impedances, and obstacles to Christian belief. Speaking for myself and of course not in the name of philosophy, I can say only that it does, indeed, seem to me to be true, and to be the maximally important truth (499).

Conclusion

Alvin Plantinga is clearly a different sort of Reformed apologist than Herman Dooyeweerd, Gordon Clark, or Cornelius Van Til. He represents what might be termed the “left wing” of Reformed apologetics, advocating in many respects a more classical approach to the field. By classifying Plantinga as a Reformed apologist, we are by no means glossing over the significant differences between his thought and that of the presuppositionalists.⁹² Nevertheless, his indebtedness to the Kuyperian tradition and his advocacy of the idea that belief in God is properly basic position his apologetic in the Reformed type. We will discuss some of Plantinga’s views further in the next two chapters, while giving more attention to presuppositionalism.

Dooyeweerd’s philosophy is essentially a highly sophisticated development of Kuyper’s position. Of the twentieth-century thinkers profiled here, he was closest to Kuyper both culturally and philosophically.

Clark combined the primacy of deductive logic, characteristic of the classical model, with a radical view of the Bible as furnishing the premises from which logic can derive conclusions qualifying as knowledge. The result is an unusually rationalistic form of Reformed apologetics.

Van Til is by far the most controversial of the major Reformed apologists of the twentieth century. He combined the apologetic tradition of Old Princeton (which drew from both classical and evidentialist approaches) with the anti-apologetic theology of Kuyper. He used the concept of a transcendental argument, which was at the heart of Dooyeweerd's philosophy, but employed it as an overtly apologetic argument. The result is a theory of apologetics that has been both highly influential and severely disputed. In the next two chapters we will give special attention to understanding Van Til in our analysis of the Reformed approach to apologetics.

For Further Study

Clark, Kelly James. *Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. Excellent introduction to Plantinga's approach to apologetics.

Frame, John M. *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995. Excellent exposition of Van Til's thought, including chapters on his controversies with Clark and Dooyeweerd.

Hart, Hendrik, Johan van der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*. Christian Studies Today. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983. Contains essays on Calvin, Reid, and the Dutch Calvinists, and includes Plantinga's article on natural theology.

¹See chapter 2 on Augustine and Anselm. On the importance of Augustine in Reformed apologetics, see Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga: An Introduction to Reformed Epistemology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 57-142.

²Works on Calvin include B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Donald K. McKim, ed., *Readings in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984); William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Wulfert De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; original, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952); T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ford Lewis Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, ed. Robert Benedetto (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); Timothy Paul Jones, "John Calvin and the Problem of Philosophical Apologetics," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 23 (1996): 387–403; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to*

John Calvin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and the excellent collection in Richard C. Gamble, ed., *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, 10 vols. (New York: Garland, 1992). For an annually update of resources, see the Calvin Bibliography of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College (online at <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/bibliography/>).

³ Parenthetical citations are taken from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Citations follow the standard reference to book, chapter, and section. An excellent companion is Ford Lewis Battles, *An Analysis of the "Institutes of the Christian Religion" of John Calvin*, assisted by John R. Walchenbach (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2001).

⁴ On this subject in Calvin, see C. H. Stinson, *Reason and Sin according to Calvin and Aquinas: The Noetic Effects of the Fall of Man* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1966); Paul Helm, "John Calvin: The *Sensus Divinitatis*, and the Noetic Effects of Sin," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): 87-108; Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000); Dewey J. Hoitenga, "The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Review Article," *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003): 68-102.

⁵ Based on Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, 183 (who extends the analysis down to 1.14).

⁶ Cf. the famous exchange on this issue between Emil Brunner and Karl Barth in *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, Centenary Press, 1946; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2002). For an analysis of this debate, placing it in its historical context, see

Trevor Hart, “A Capacity for Ambiguity? The Barth-Brunner Debate Revisited,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 289-305.

⁷On the *sensus divinitatis* in Calvin, see N. H. Gootjes, “The Sense of Divinity: A Critical Examination of the Views of Calvin and Demarest,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986): 337-350; Esther L. Meek, “A Polanyian Interpretation of Calvin’s *Sensus Divinitatis*,” *Presbyterion* 23 (1997): 8-24; Helm, “John Calvin”; David Reiter, “Calvin’s ‘Sense of Divinity’ and Externalist Knowledge of God,” *Faith and Philosophy* 15 (1998): 253–69.

⁸Alvin Plantinga, “The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,” in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. Hendrik Hart, Johan Van der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Christian Studies Today* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), 363-83.

⁹See Egil Grislis, “Calvin’s Use of Cicero in the Institutes I:1-5—A Case Study in Theological Method,” in *The Organizational Structure of Calvin’s Theology*, ed. Richard C. Gamble; *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* 7 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 1-33; reprinted from *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 62 (1971): 5-37. More broadly, see Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1977; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

¹⁰Cf. Plantinga, “Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,” 367.

¹¹See further John Newton Thomas, “The Place of Natural Theology in the Thought of John Calvin,” and Gerald J. Postema, “Calvin’s Alleged Rejection of Natural Theology,” in *The Organizational Structure of Calvin’s Theology*, 153-54 and 135-46 respectively; the latter is

reprinted from *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971): 423-34; Michael Scott Horton, “Legal Rather than Evangelical Knowledge: Calvin on the Limits of Natural Theology,” *Modern Reformation Journal* 7, no. 1 (1998): 28-31; Edward Adams, “Calvin’s View of Natural Knowledge of God,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3, 3 (2001): 280-92.

¹²Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, 178.

¹³Calvin, *Concerning Scandals*, trans. John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 18.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁶On these and other streams of Reformed thought, see *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

¹⁷On Scottish Common Sense Realism and Scottish philosophy in general, see S. A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960); Daniel Sommer Robinson, ed., *The Story of Scottish Philosophy: A Compendium of Selections from the Writings of Nine Pre-eminent Scottish Philosophers, with Biobibliographical Essays* (1961; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1979); Alexander Broadie, *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy: A New Perspective on the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Polygon; Savage, Md.: Barnes & Noble, 1990); M. A. Stewart, ed., *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, Oxford Studies in the History of Philosophy, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁸The contemporary Reformed apologist who has given the most attention to the thought of Thomas Reid is Nicholas Wolterstorff. Our discussion here follows Wolterstorff's treatment in "Thomas Reid on Rationality," in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. Hart, et. al., 43-69. Additional studies include S. A. Grave, "Reid, Thomas," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1967), 7:118-21; Stephen F. Barker and Tom L. Beauchamp, eds., *Thomas Reid: Critical Interpretations* (Philadelphia: University City Science Center, 1976); Michael L. Peterson, "Reid Debates Hume: Christian Versus Skeptic," *Christianity Today*, 22 September 1978; Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer, eds., *Thomas Reid: Inquiry and Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983); Paul Helm, "Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism," in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, 71-89; Melvin Dalgarno and Eric Matthews, eds., *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, Philosophical Studies, vol. 42 (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989); Roger D. Gallie, *Thomas Reid and "The Way of Ideas"* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989); Keith Lehrer, *Thomas Reid, Arguments of the Philosophers* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 143-51.

¹⁹Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind: On the Principles of Common Sense: A Critical Edition*, ed. Derek R. Brookes, Edinburgh Edition of Thomas Reid (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 4 (Dedication). The statement is also quoted (from another edition) in Wolterstorff, "Thomas Reid on Rationality," 44.

²⁰ Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason*, 146-47.

²¹Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Brookes, 33 (2.6); cf. Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 51.

²²Reid, *Essays* 1.2, quoted in Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 54-55. Wolterstorff characterizes this line of argument as *ad hominem* (53-55), but that does not seem to be correct. As Wolterstorff himself recognizes, Reid was arguing not merely that certain skeptics *don't* live consistently with their skeptical principles, but that people in general *can't* live that way. Given that this is Reid's point, his argument is not *ad hominem*.

²³Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Brookes, 68 (5.7); cf. Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 55; Clark, *Return to Reason*, 147-48.

²⁴Reid, *Essays* 2.20, quoted in Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 58.

²⁵Helm comments that Reid's philosophy was “compatible with, if it does not actually entail,” the “*a posteriori* apologetic stance . . . best exemplified in the work of Paley and Butler.” Helm, “Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism,” 80.

²⁶Reid, *Essays* 6.6, quoted in Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 61-62.

²⁷Reid, *Lectures on Natural Theology*, ed. Elmer H. Duncan (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), 2, cited in Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 62.

²⁸Derek R. Brookes, introduction to Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Brookes, xxii.

²⁹Reid, *Lectures*, 1-2, cited in Wolterstorff, “Thomas Reid on Rationality,” 63.

³⁰Helm, “Thomas Reid, Common Sense and Calvinism,” 81.

³¹See especially Sydney E. Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History* 24 (1955): 257-72. On the broader influence of commonsense realism in American culture, see Terence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction*, Indiana University Humanities, vol. 48 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969).

³²On Old Princeton, see especially W. Andrew Hofferger, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

³³Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1875; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981). Parenthetical references in the following paragraphs are from volume 1 of this work. On Hodge’s apologetic, besides the works cited above, see especially Charles Andrews Jones III, “Charles Hodge, the Keeper of Orthodoxy: The Method, Purpose and Meaning of His Apologetic” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1989); Peter Hicks, *The Philosophy of Charles Hodge: A Nineteenth Century Evangelical Approach to Reason, Knowledge, and Truth*, Studies in American Religion, vol. 65 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

³⁴On the influence of Dutch Calvinism in America, see James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984);

Richard Mouw, “Dutch Calvinist Philosophical Influences in North America,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 93-120. Two articles on Dutch Calvinist philosophy during the past century are Jacob Klapwijk, “Rationality in the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Tradition,” and Albert Wolters, “Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality,” in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. Hart, et. al., 93-111 and 113-31 respectively.

³⁵An accessible introduction to Kuyper’s thought is his *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), originally the Stone Lectures at Princeton University in 1898. A recent collection of readings from Kuyper is *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See further Louis Praamsma, *Let Christ Be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper* (Jordan Station, Ont.: Paideia Press, 1985); R. D. Henderson, “How Abraham Kuyper Became a Kuyperian,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 22 (1992): 22-35 (an excellent introduction); Wayne A. Kobes, “Sphere Sovereignty and the University: Theological Foundations of Abraham Kuyper’s View of the University and Its Role in Society” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1993); James D. Bratt, “In the Shadow of Mt. Kuyper: A Survey of the Field,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 51-66 (one of several articles on Kuyper in the same issue); Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998); James E. McGoldrick, *God’s Renaissance Man: Abraham Kuyper* (Darlington, U.K., and Webster, N.Y.: Evangelical Press, 2000). For a discussion of Kuyper’s views on apologetics, see Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, 179-95.

³⁶Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

(Parenthetical page references in the text are to this work.) This book is a reprint of *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, trans. Hendrik De Vries, introduction by B. B. Warfield (New York: Scribner, 1898).

³⁷Kuyper's principle work on common grace, *De Gemeene Gratie*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1931, 1932), has not yet been translated into English. Helpful overviews of this work and of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace include S. U. Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper," in *Communication and Confrontation: A Philosophical Appraisal and Critique of Modern Society and Contemporary Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1972); Jacob Klapwijk, "Antithesis and Common Grace," in *Bringing into Captivity Every Thought: Capita Selecta in the History of Christian Evaluations of Non-Christian Philosophy*, ed. Jacob Klapwijk, Sander Griffioen, and Gerben Groenewoud, Christian Studies Today (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991), 169-90; Kobes, "Sphere Sovereignty and the University" (1993), 122-49.

³⁸Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 132-33.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. with notes by Henri De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900; Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1995), 440.

⁴¹Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 199.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴³Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴See William Young, *Toward a Reformed Philosophy: The Development of a Protestant Philosophy in Dutch Calvinistic Thought since the Time of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Piet Hein, 1952).

⁴⁵Dooyeweerd is notoriously difficult to understand, especially for those not familiar with Dutch thought. Standard introductions to his thought include J. M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1970); L. Kalbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought*, ed. Bernard Zylstra and Josina Zylstra (Toronto: Wedge, 1975); Samuel T. Wolfe, *A Key to Dooyeweerd* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978). A difficult but important study of Dooyeweerd is Vincent Brümmer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy: A Presentation and Evaluation of Herman Dooyeweerd's "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea"* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1961). Edwin Mellen Press (of Lewiston, N.Y.) is publishing in many volumes *The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd*.

⁴⁶Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, trans. David H. Freeman, William S. Young, and H. De Jongste, 4 vols. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1953-1957; bound as two volumes, 1969). All parenthetical references in the following paragraphs are to this work, with the volume number preceding the colon and the page reference following it.

⁴⁷Two of the best editions of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in English are the translations by J. M. D. Meiklejohn in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 42 (Chicago:

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 1-250, and the translation by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965).

⁴⁸See further Brümmer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy*, 27-28.

⁴⁹Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1972), 32.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 39-52; Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, trans. John Kraay (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), 15-22, 148-56.

⁵¹The only book-length biography of Van Til is William White, *Van Til: Defender of the Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), an entirely uncritical work by a close friend of Van Til. For more recent treatments with some perspective, see John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995), 19-37; Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1998), 7-20. These two books are by far the most important works on Van Til. An earlier, helpful work developing Van Til's apologetic is Thom Notaro, *Van Til and the Use of Evidence* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980).

⁵²On Machen's relation to Van Til, see Greg L. Bahnsen, "Machen, Van Til, and the Apologetical Tradition of the OPC," in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 259-94. Bahnsen makes a good case for understanding Machen to be more in agreement with

Van Til's approach than critics of Van Til might suppose. For an equally interesting counterpoint emphasizing Machen's agreement with Old Princeton, see Paul Kjoss Helseth, "J. Gresham Machen and 'True Science': Machen's Apologetical Continuity with Old Princeton's Right Use of Reason," *Premise* 5, 1 (1998), found online 10/27/2005 at <
<http://homepage.mac.com/shanerosenthal/reformationink/pkhhmachen.htm>>. That article is a longer version of Paul Kjoss Helseth, "The Apologetical Tradition of the OPC: A Reconsideration," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998): 109-29.

⁵³A complete collection of Van Til's writings is available on CD-ROM, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (New York: Labels Army Company, 1995), along with a printed guide by Eric D. Bristley, *A Guide to the Writings of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (Chicago: Olive Tree Communications, 1995).

⁵⁴Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, already mentioned, and *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Atlanta: American Vision; Texarkana, Ark.: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996). The first is a massive tome presenting extensive readings from Van Til's writings (especially *Defense of the Faith*, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, and *Survey of Christian Epistemology*, but more than a dozen others as well) with Bahnsen's detailed and insightful analysis and footnotes. The second is a more popular exposition of presuppositionalism that focuses on biblical and practical support for the method. See also Steven M. Schlissel, ed., *The Standard Bearer: A Festschrift for Greg L. Bahnsen* (Nacogdoches, Texas: Covenant Media Press, 2002).

⁵⁵John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), is an involved analysis of the foundations of theology from a Van Tilian perspective. *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994) is a well-written primer on apologetics. *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, already mentioned, presents a well-rounded introduction to Van Til's life and thought. See also Frame, "Presuppositional Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Cowan, 208-231.

⁵⁶On Carnell, see Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed. (Nutley, N.J. and Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967), 227-33, 242-48. Citations from *Defense of the Faith* are from this third edition except where otherwise noted. On Schaeffer, see Van Til, "The Apologetic Methodology of Francis Schaeffer" (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, n.d. [1974]), mimeographed paper. William Edgar has argued that while Van Til and Schaeffer did have some substantive differences, the two were closer than perhaps Van Til himself realized; see Edgar, "Two Christian Warriors: Cornelius Van Til and Francis A. Schaeffer Compared," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995): 57-80.

⁵⁷Representative examples of critical assessments of Van Til by classical and evidentialist apologists include the following: Hackett, *Resurrection of Theism*, 154-78, 250-60 (who treats Van Til along with Carnell and Gordon Clark); the articles by Gordon R. Lewis, John Warwick Montgomery, and Clark H. Pinnock in *Jerusalem and Athen*, ed. Geehan, 349-61, 380-92, 420-26; Gordon R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* (1976), 125-50; Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (1976), 56-64; and especially R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur

Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1984), especially 183-338.

For a critique of the last-named work, see Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, 401-422.

⁵⁸Cf. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 596-612.

⁵⁹Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972), 184. Parenthetical references in this and the next paragraph are to this work.

⁶⁰Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 99.

⁶¹Cornelius Van Til, *Christian-Theistic Evidences*, In *Defense of the Faith*, vol. 6 (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), 58.

⁶²Cf. Van Til, "My Credo," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. Geehan, 21.

⁶³For biographical information about Clark, see especially Ronald H. Nash, "Gordon H. Clark," in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Elwell, 182-86; John W. Robbins, ed., *Gordon H. Clark: Personal Recollections* (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1989).

⁶⁴As noted in Nash, "Gordon H. Clark," 183.

⁶⁵Clark and Van Til discuss their differences in Gordon H. Clark, "The Bible as Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114 (1957): 157-70, reprinted in *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 24-38; Gordon H. Clark, *The Trinity* (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1985), 87-101; Van Til, *Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*

(Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967), 62-72; Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974), 159-73. In the 1940s Herman Hoeksema wrote a series of editorials defending Clark; these have been edited into a book entitled *The Clark–Van Til Controversy* (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1995). John W. Robbins defends Clark’s view in heavy-handed style in *Cornelius Van Til: The Man and the Myth* (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1986). Studies supportive of Van Til include Fred H. Klooster, *The Incomprehensibility of God in the Orthodox Presbyterian Conflict* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1951), and Gilbert B. Weaver, “The Concept of Truth in the Apologetic Systems of Gordon Haddon Clark and Cornelius Van Til” (Th.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1967); Weaver, “Man: Analogue of God,” in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. Geehan, 321-27; Michael A. Hakkenberg, “The Battle over the Ordination of Gordon H. Clark,” in *Pressing Toward the Mark*, ed. Dennison and Gamble, 329-50. For an evenhanded discussion by a Van Tilian, see Frame, *Cornelius Van Til*, 97-113. A recent study putting the matter in some perspective is Mark A. Noll and Cassandra Niemczyk, “Evangelicals and the Self-Consciously Reformed,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), chapter 12.

⁶⁶Henry’s own autobiography is *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986).

Overviews of Henry’s life and thought are found in Bob E. Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983); Richard A. Purdy, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Elwell, 260-75. Purdy’s dissertation on Henry is an important study: “Carl Henry and Contemporary Apologetics: An Assessment of the Rational Apologetic Methodology of Carl F. H. Henry in the Context of the Current Impasse

between Reformed and Evangelical Apologetics” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980). See also Steven Mark Hutchens, “Knowing and Being in the Context of the Fundamentalist Dilemma: A Comparative Study of the Thought of Karl Barth and Carl F. H. Henry” (Th.D. diss., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1989).

⁶⁷Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1976), 10.

⁶⁸Ronald H. Nash, ed., *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1968; 2nd ed., Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1992).

⁶⁹See especially Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

⁷⁰Gordon H. Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1973), 116.

⁷¹There is some question whether Clark’s treatment of biblical inspiration as the axiom for all knowledge was a novel development in his thought. See Ronald H. Nash, “Gordon Clark’s Theory of Knowledge,” in *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, ed. Nash, chapter 5, and Mary M. Crumpacker, “Clark’s Axiom: Something New?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989): 355-65.

⁷²Clark, *In Defense of Theology* (Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1984), 31.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁷⁵Clark, “The Axiom of Revelation,” in *Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, ed. Nash, 59, 60.

⁷⁶Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 324.

⁷⁷Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 534.

⁷⁸Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy*, 123.

⁷⁹Additional studies of Clark’s thought, besides those already mentioned, include the following: Lewis, *Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims* (1976), 100-124; Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic* (1998), 667-72; Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (1999), 150-53.

⁸⁰Alvin Plantinga, “Self-Profile,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, *Profiles: An International Series on Contemporary Philosophers and Logicians*, vol. 5 (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel, 1985), 3-97; “A Christian Life Partly Lived,” in *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 45-82.

⁸¹Plantinga, “A Christian Life Partly Lived,” 51-52; parenthetical references in the next few paragraphs are to this work.

⁸²Alvin Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader*, ed. James F. Sennett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 346.

Thus, the claim that Plantinga “strongly rejects” the idea of an “antithesis between believers and

unbelievers” (Steven B. Cowan, review of *Faith Has Its Reasons* [1st ed.], in *Philosophia Christi* 6 [2004]: 372) is mistaken.

⁸³Plantinga, “Self-Profile,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Tomberlin and Van Inwagen, 21; parenthetical references in the next several paragraphs are to this work.

⁸⁴Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

⁸⁵Alvin Plantinga, “Afterword,” in *Analytic Theist*, ed. Sennett, 353.

⁸⁶Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *Analytic Theist*, ed. Sennett, 336.

⁸⁷Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.18.

⁸⁸Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy,” 336.

⁸⁹Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Parenthetical references in the remainder of this chapter are from *Warranted Christian Belief*.

⁹⁰For some stimulating discussion, see the “Book Symposium on *Warranted Christian Belief*” in *Philosophia Christi* 3 (2001), with articles by Plantinga, R. Douglas Geivett and Greg Jesson, Richard Fumerton, and Paul K. Moser.

⁹¹Plantinga cites W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 183. On Clifford, see also chapter 9 of this book.

⁹²Steven B. Cowan, in his review of the first edition of *Faith Has Its Reasons*, faulted its authors' placing of presuppositionalists and Reformed epistemologists in "the same camp" as "the most obvious error in their classification system" (*Philosophia Christi* 6 [2004]: 372). Cowan registered this complaint despite agreeing with us on specific points of comparison between the two (e.g., "the view that belief in God is properly basic") and despite the fact that we pointed out some of the very differences between the two varieties that Cowan mentioned (e.g., some Reformed epistemologists are less critical of natural theology than presuppositionalists; Plantinga supports a form of the free-will defense against the problem of evil, unlike presuppositionalists). More generally, Cowan's criticism mistakenly treats the four basic types as if they were uniform systems rather than broad categories of approaches to apologetics.