

# **Reformed Epistemology**

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## Introduction

All branches of Christian theology seek in a measure to become conscious of the implications of Christian truth for the whole of life. One, however, has a greater desire for and need of this than another. Romanist theology has its doctrines fairly well established, and though its theology is not dead, any changes introduced must be at variance with its fundamental tenets. Moreover, Rome is as much a system of institutions as a system of doctrines, and changes in the one do not always bring corresponding changes in the other. Lutheranism, in its orthodox phase, does not manifest a strong desire for a comprehensive world and life view. It is satisfied, on the whole, with salvation for the life hereafter. Lutheranism, in its “Arminian” phase, and Arminianism proper, especially in the form of Methodism, have scarcely any desire to come to maturity in the theological sense of the term. It boasts of its childish as well as its child-like faith. Only a rudimentary theology will fit their need; one must feed them with milk and not with meat. To be sure, with men like Watson and Miley there is an attempt at comprehensiveness, but they are exceptions, and even they have not critically examined the noetic influence of sin and deal in a very unsatisfactory fashion with the concepts of revelation and inspiration.

It is the boast of Reformed theology that it continually seeks comprehensiveness and logical coherence so far as the subject matter of theology permits. Calvin is the never to be forgotten originator of the Reformed churches and in what a marvelous fashion was he true to that principle! His *Institutes* cover every phase of life. He thoroughly discusses the nature of man both before and after the fall. Calvin seeks to be a fully self-conscious Christian theologian; the weakness of the child has been displaced by the prowess of the man.

Just as various churches seek in a varying manner and measure to become self-conscious, so the several churches have also sought adjustment to the world of non-believing men. It is natural that if a church or individual is not fully conscious of the implications of Christianity for his or its own life then he cannot be fully conscious of his relation to the world. The relation of Rome to the world is largely mechanical. External force has often brought the world into the church and forced believers out. Lutheranism, scarcely able to apply its doctrine of justification through faith to temporal needs, also yielded in its apologetic to external means or limited it to an appeal for salvation in the life hereafter. Methodism asks no questions about apologetics or the relation of the Christian to the world; it is theologically pragmatic. The sawdust trail and the hallelujah shout are its apologetic.

It is Reformed theology, from the days of Calvin till the present, which has sought to live in an apologetically self-conscious fashion. Calvin discussed the phenomena of apparent good in the world, and prepared the soil for the later doctrine of common grace. Calvin also, was the one who first thoroughly examined the source of the knowledge of God, discussed at length the image of God, the noetic influence of sin, revelation and inspiration, and the work of the Holy Spirit. And in all this it knows what attitude to

assume toward the world. The Reformed churches have sought to follow in his footsteps.

<sup>1</sup> The great modern theologians Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Geerhardus Vos, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck have built up their systems from a consciousness of dependence on the Christ of the Scriptures. Someone has aptly said that there are theologians before and theologians after Kant. Reformed theology, as no other theology, has reckoned with the modern developments in the world of Philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup> Van Til later deleted a sentence: “Scottish Realism has valiantly defended the presuppositions of Christianity against Hume and Kant, and has attempted to provide a metaphysical and epistemological basis for its theology and apologetics.”—editor.

# Chapter 1: The Idea and Right of Systematic Epistemology

There is rather strong current in thought today which affirms that the question of epistemology is hopelessly antiquated. We need only mention A. N. Whitehead, one of the great champions of realism today, as an instance of this in its extremist form. Says he: "There is now reigning in philosophy and in science an apathetic acquiescence in the conclusion that no coherent account can be given of nature as disclosed in sense awareness without dragging in its relations to the mind. The result has been disastrous both to science and to philosophy."<sup>2</sup> Does Whitehead then hope to build up metaphysics without an epistemology? No, there exactly he demurs. He does not aim at metaphysical doctrine. He uncritically accepts the ultimate union of mind and nature and seeks reflectively to extend the unreflective attitude of everyday experience.

On such a basis there is no room for epistemology in the accepted sense of the term. To be sure, Whitehead does speak of epistemology, but for him it is merely "one aspect of natural science on precisely the same footing, e.g. as physics." The phenomenon of the human spirit, its search for certitude and validity, must still be psychologically analyzed and genetically traced, but that is all.

Pragmatism maintains that it does not thus uncritically assume the unity of mind and nature, but that it has critically established the uselessness and impossibility of epistemology. It denies the validity of the struggle for validity. All experience is in flux. Bergson repeatedly emphasizes that our intellect attempts an unwarranted generalization of experience. The intellect is but one element in the pulsing current of life and has no right to set up its mechanistic universal as an ultimate standard. Dewey makes an attempt to prove from the history of philosophy that the problem of knowledge is meaningless. The Enlightenment defended knowledge without fact. Empiricism defended fact without knowledge. Kant did not overcome the dualism between them; form and matter were still assumed to be antagonistic at the outset. The theory of universal validity brings us into a dilemma. We remain in an airy realm of ideas, or in an unrelated mass of facts. Dewey's system is therefore, in the first place, a negation of Idealism. All the inner movements of thought are only functions to pass from one fact to another and not revelations of universal truth. To think that our functional adjustment of thought is a revelation of reality has been the great evil of Idealism, he says. This presupposed too much of a dualism between mind and nature. For what is this mind which receives the revelations? Is it not a part of nature itself? Human, even intellectual activity, is a part of universal behavior, not essentially different from the behavior of plants and animals. The idea of the independent existence of the soul is a sad illusion. Our experience differs only in detail and not in kind from lower forms of existence. Souls are only functions in a whole which is impersonal. The whole manifests a physical behavior. You cannot truly speak of your behavior and therefore validity can have no meaning for you as a person.

On the other hand Dewey also opposes materialism. Facts are not hard and final but surcharged with ideal factors. There is no raw material; I live in a totally different world than did George Washington. Militating against both Idealism and Materialism, Dewey

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<sup>2</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, "The Concept of Nature" p. 7.

offers his biological category as a common meeting ground. Materialism is mechanical and Idealism is logical, but Pragmatism, resolving these, is biological. Evolution, behold the word! But then evolution in both the Hegelian and the Darwinian sense. With Hegel, Dewey refuses to regard the environment as ultimate. The environment is the less progressive part of life, but it still obeys the spirit. All experience is a process. Place no abiding dualities anywhere. Speak of no essential differences lest you be cast out. Nature is not only a process but continuous process. Inanimate and animate, sentient and thinking phenomena, are one. We can have no universal interpretation of experience for the process is creative as well as continuous. Reconstruction of the environment is never fixed. Especially is this the case in human consciousness. Here Dewey caps the climax. Where others find the only point of stability, in the human subject, Dewey finds the current at its fastest.<sup>3</sup> Reflection must be totally impersonal and only cosmically functional.

How does Pragmatism seek to prove its position? By showing that its method is the method of science. Science does not involve the *a priori* implications that it has been said to have. The meaning of law is not, as Kant would have us believe, that all possible experience must be subject to it, because law has been externally imposed upon experience by the very forms of thought. No, law does not enable us to predict with certainty what will happen in the future. We cannot attain to universal knowledge even of phenomena. Kant's agnosticism was not thorough enough. Our viewpoint must be based upon a pluralistic universe. We despair of the conventionality and transmissibility of knowledge. Yet we rejoice in our tribulation, for we give up the notion imposed upon an innocent humanity by Aristotle that knowledge is the highest goal in life. Life is a stream, life is action. The *élan vital* is pushing us ever onward and upward. To know life we must not walk around it, as the mechanism of the intellect is wont to do, but must cast ourselves into the very current.<sup>4</sup>

You will never learn to swim unless you enter into the water. When once in the stream adjust yourself as best you may. You may now forget about your old idealistic or empirical notion of getting a correspondent picture in your mind of reality outside of you. You may make use of the universals taught you in the "school" and offered you by science, but only in the sense of enabling you to make wider strokes and therefore better progress. And then, by all means, do not have any misgivings about the direction of the stream or as to the ocean beyond. All is well with the world; there is no ocean beyond. How do I know? Never mind, don't ask foolish questions; you must have a "Will to Believe," as William James assures us.

But when we halt before entering the pragmatic stream and still show signs of unbelief because we cannot as yet adjust ourselves to such instrumentalism and depersonalization, because it looks to us too much like a bread and butter philosophy, Dewey and Moore at once protest. They invite us to come in because the water is fine. They resent the charge that theirs is a bread and butter instrumentalism. With Schiller and James they wish to be humanists. They admit that as reasonable creatures we even wish to eat our bread and butter self-consciously; a certain intelligibility underlies all our relations to nature. But such admission is fatal to the "pragmatic attitude." To be truly

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<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, *Darwinism etc., Essays in Experimental Logic*, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1907, 1913.

pragmatic you must limit the scope of your interest. If you include all intellectual, moral and spiritual interests of all men of all times you have transcended Pragmatism. We may return with interest the compliment of mechanism.

Man has a need for objective reality. If Pragmatism were sufficiently pragmatic it might also believe this. For if we can afford to ignore the question of the existence of an objective reality, or if we can resolve the meaning of objectivity into scientific non-personal, instrumentalistic terminology, then we ourselves must also enter the sausage grinder to submit to a more thorough adjustment than even the apparatus of a functional theory of consciousness can allow for; we must be totally depersonalized for we are then of a piece with the world. But we cannot deny ourselves. Complete instrumentalism is intellectual Jesuitism. Mackintosh has well pointed out that this sort of psychologism cannot be but a transition phase in the history of thought.<sup>5</sup>

For a psychology that will sever all connections with epistemology and metaphysics cannot long endure. If we should for example, cruelly pour James' conception of a "will to believe" into the crucible of psychological analysis we should find that we have but an imitation of what is generally meant by the term "belief." Yet James ought from his own standpoint be willing to submit to such a test. James' chapter on "Pragmatism and Religion," shows us the nature of his faith. Suppose we take the belief in an objective existence of a personal God and the notion of a life hereafter. For Pragmatism, any other view that will work is equally true. Will then a religion work until it is known to be true? Belief is therefore, for James, purely an act of volition. It needs no definite object to provide evidence for the reality to which the intellect assents. So professor J. M. Baldwin defines belief simply as "mental endorsement or acceptance of something thought of as real."<sup>6</sup> This does no justice to the notion of "bindingness" which is already inherent in the term. Baldwin does indeed speak of belief as a "forced consent" but only "in a measure." To James as well as to Baldwin, belief is "conviction founded on evidence which is subjectively adequate," though it lacks what is ordinarily understood by objective evidence. The distinction employed, that faith rests on evidence not adequately grounded while knowledge builds on theoretic certitude, is also of similar pragmatic import. A. J. Ormond, e.g. believes that "some faith judgments are translatable into judgments of knowledge," but not all. We believe the hypothetically beneficial; we know the perceived real.

So we see that William James and other Pragmatists are great heroes of 'faith.' If trust in a blind conviction be a token of piety, James, Baldwin and Ormond have the preeminent right to an exalted place in the catalogue of the saints. But all this is psychologically unsound. In the first place, negatively, the moment we perceive that the object of our beliefs or convictions is objectively invalid we cannot sustain our faith in them by any sort of subjective adequacy. An observer might maintain that he could, but the agent cannot. Belief can never be identified with conjecture. But, secondly, in a positive sense also, the analysis is faulty. Men mean by their faith not a consciousness of things they would wish to be true, but consciousness of things they are convinced to be true. Belief must always contain *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*, whatever its objective, whatever the stage of its development. Matters of faith are different from matters of

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<sup>5</sup> Macintosh, *Theories of Knowledge*.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Stout, *A Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*.

knowledge, not as resting on a purely subjective basis or as dispensing with evidence and not requiring intellectual assent, but as resting on grounds “less direct and immediate to the soul, and therefore involving a more prominent element of trust.” And when once the evidence is seen as adequate, the whole personality must grant itself, because belief binds the entire person to its object.

Thus we see that Pragmatic psychology cannot stand on its own feet. Nor does it. James himself at divers times and various places drags in epistemology and metaphysics unawares. In his great work on “Psychology” it comes in the form of unconscious. Again in his lectures on Pragmatism he says: “We receive the block of marble but we carve the statue.”<sup>7</sup> But does not this give a good deal of reality to non-subjective existence? And if it is marble that we deal with will nature be as plastic as our instrumentalism might wish it to be? Can we then be certain that there will be any marble to deal with, that is, can we then be certain of predictions; can we do without epistemology? Or, to modify the question, can our attitude toward nature then be entirely non-personal and scientific? But, on the other hand, if it is clay into which we press our fingers, then where is the universalism that we need at least as an instrument? Thus the pragmatic need for objectivity is fulfilled by James to an extent, in spite of himself. And James is not the only one. The various Pragmatists struggle to maintain harmony between the heterogeneous group of pragmatic, realistic, social and intellectual motifs in their thought.

James criticizes Dewey by saying that he takes too much of a backward glance when emphasizing the continuity of all species. Remember Lot’s wife! Through the telescope of faith we must see the Alpine heights, as did the youth that bore a strange device, Excelsior! But how, if we must look ahead, do we know that the mountaintop which has been covered with impenetrable mists till now, does actually exist? May not even the next step we take hurl us into abysmal depths? How can we reveal a genuinely pragmatic attitude, the attitude of meliorism, the attitude of faith in the future, if we have no guarantee of Providence from behind? We cannot be temperamentally optimistic while philosophically pessimistic except at the price of inconsistency or superficiality. Idealism finds its consolations for the future on the belief that the world is in better hands than its own, but on what basis can James take his “moral holidays”? James tells us that our faith is sure because our fellow mountain climbers believe as we do. Does numerical multitudes of illusions then perhaps decrease the greatness of the illusion? Will it not rather increase the final tragedy because of the greater numbers involved? Can communion of the saints mean anything except through him in whom they are called to be saints?

Now if in this discussion of Pragmatism we have demonstrated the impossibility of holding any view of life that totally ignores metaphysics and epistemology we have reached our purpose negatively of establishing thereby the right of systematic epistemology. The human spirit cannot do without it. It cannot be content to live from hand to mouth. Especially in its higher needs does it seek certainty. The less a faith becomes physically demonstrable the greater becomes the need of and desire for certainty. The religious pragmatism so current among so called “Liberalism,” is therefore psychologically speaking a contradiction in terms. As Clarence McCartney recently said

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<sup>7</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, 1907, p. 246.

every man has a creed which he thinks is universally valid even if it be a creed of one sentence only.

In our conception of the idea of epistemology we carefully distinguish it from psychology, even from, yes, especially from, genetic psychology which thinks it takes the place of epistemology when it has genetically traced the rise of its idea. This is evident in the *Religions-geschichtliche Schule* which thinks it has faced the question of religion when its development has been traced. Eisler's definition is therefore partly faulty when he calls epistemology "that part of philosophy which in the first place, describes, analyses, examines genetically the facts of knowledge as such."<sup>8</sup> He himself calls this the psychology of knowledge and he should not classified it under epistemology at all, but should have limited himself to the second part of his definition that it, "tests chiefly the value of knowledge and of its various kinds, its condition of validity, range and limits." In his thinking, psychology is descriptive and without it epistemology could not exist. Only when psychology is developed can epistemology thrive. But the latter should never identify its task with the former. After all the processes of emotion, of volition and cognition have been analyzed and described, the question of the validity of it all still remains. Is ultimate certainty possible? Or are we perhaps adrift in the world? Naive thought assumes certainty. We must critically establish its possibility. If validity is possible, are all forms of knowledge valid, intellectual as well as other, and moral as well as intellectual? Can we call that knowledge which does not partake of the form of the syllogism?

To answer these questions we shall have to ask ourselves what knowledge is, whether it gives us a true representation of objectivity, for with nothing less can we expect to arrive at certainty. And throughout all this comes the ever-burdening question of error. Even when we do not accept the biblical teaching of sin the possibility of error is an enigma. "What signs decide whether certitude in any case is justified?"<sup>9</sup> But to put the question of error in this fashion proves that we have already uncritically limited the problem of error to individual cases. This is epistemological Pelagianism. We must at least ask ourselves whether error is not an incubus to all our thought. Error, or sin, burdens all the questions of epistemology with a load that makes one groan, and only Reformed theology has attempted to do justice to its universal implications.

It is more difficult to distinguish epistemology from metaphysics. It is often proposed that metaphysics be the genus under which epistemology and ontology fall as subdivisions. Reality and knowledge of reality cannot be studied without reference to one another. Locke speaks of epistemology being a preliminary clearing of the ground; Kant also wanted to study the instrument by itself. But Hegel was correct in his criticism of them to the effect that we cannot see the working of the machine when it is empty, and that we cannot stand on the shore to learn how to swim. "For knowledge has no existence by itself or apart from and external to its objects." Hegel said that we want to "combine in our process of inquiry the action of the forms of thought with a criticism of them."<sup>10</sup> "The forms of thought must be studied in their essential nature and complete development; they are at once the object of research and the action of that object." But

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<sup>8</sup> Eisler, *Philosophischen Begriffe*, 2nd ed., Berlin: 1904. 1:29 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, subvoce.

<sup>10</sup> J. E. Creighton, *Encyclopedia Americana*.

though we not only admit but emphasize that epistemology can not be studied totally by itself, it would be as great a mistake to return to the pre-critical period and assume them to be one. Idealistic writers tend to identify logic, epistemology and metaphysics, but there ought at least to remain a difference of emphasis. Knowing, though not possible without an object, is still a very distinct act. While its validity must not be tested without reference to its objects, it must not be identified with its object.

Hence we also distinguish epistemology from logic. Even if we do not understand by logic exclusively the text-book formal rules of thinking but think of it, with many modern writers on the subject, in a more philosophic spirit, the question of validity still remains the prerogative of epistemology.

Transplanting this question onto the basis of Biblical Theism we can say that the question of validity stands in the foreground there perhaps more than anywhere else. Theology deals with objects not apparent to the senses. Theology deals with objects the existence or non-existence of which is of paramount importance to man. Theology deals with a view of the relation between God and man through the incarnation and the redemptive acts of Christ and of the mode of the communication of the fact of this relation between God and man that needs to be established for our consciousness. Epistemology thus receives enhanced importance for Christian apologetics. Theology deals with the fact of error and with the theory of evil in its noetic implication; the question of validity is for it still more involved than it is for non-revelational thought. We must face it, admit ignorance where we must, but not shun the question.

## Chapter 2: History of Epistemology in General

Having now before us the notion of epistemology in its distinction from psychology and other sciences, and being persuaded that the problems presented by our discipline are of perennial appearance because of their fundamental importance, we proceed briefly to review the struggles of the human spirit in which its strivings for certainty have become manifest. We review here the history of epistemology in general and do not here limit ourselves to Reformed thought. Such a general review is not only germane to our subject but indispensable, for, in the first place, we cannot discuss our more particular problem without reference to this more general one even if we would. Secondly, and especially it is a fundamental tenet of Reformed thought that recreation is based upon creation, so that in whatever specific sense Reformed epistemology may differ from other views this difference does not consist in a denial of the nature of man's cognitive and volitional faculties. Thirdly, in the doctrine of common grace Reformed thought has provided for itself the means of keeping in touch with and appreciating the value of the thought of the age. This will become clear when we note that Reformed thinkers have continually sought to absorb and appreciate the meaning of every phase of thought that has blessed the world with its appearance as the fruit of the wise, no less in epistemology than in other sciences.

We can be brief in our survey of Greek thought. It has been generally admitted that investigation of the nature of reality without some theory or criterion of knowledge is quite impossible. But the Greeks had not yet attempted a clear distinction between the two. Early Greek philosophy was almost exclusively objective and assumed the validity of knowledge. When Parmenides and Heracleitus began to differ as to their views on the nature of reality, the former holding that it is unchangeable, the latter that all is flux; and when Democritus endowed it with inherent eternal motion and Anaxagoras required an independent and intelligent motor, the Sophists began to doubt whether any of them were right. They therewith called sharp attention to the theory of knowledge.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle sought to vindicate the validity of knowledge at least of intellectual and universal reality. Plato makes a sharp distinction between knowledge and opinion. We need not enter upon the meaning of his "line" in the republic. His general teaching is clear enough. There is a sharp difference between knowledge which is of universals and opinions which is of particulars. Still there is also such a thing as "right opinion." Even so there remains a sharp dualism between his knowledge and his opinion. Plato can find validity for one form of knowledge only. Aristotle tries to correct the abstraction of his teacher by his notion of development. If we have found the material, efficient, formal and final cause of anything, we have also found its reason and we know. All this is found in the living organism. But knowledge for Aristotle as for Plato is still abstract knowledge. Anything that will not be poured into the mold of the universal cannot be accepted as knowledge. Aristotle, scarcely more so than Plato, brings the two worlds together because for Aristotle God is the prime mover, himself unmoved with an inexplicable relation to this world. This proves that validity cannot be established by abstraction. For knowledge to be valid it must be knowledge of objectivity. Neo-

Platonism followed this abstraction to its conclusion and absurdity. Plotinus places some twenty-eight pairs of mediators between an unapproachable God and man.

Before the Neo-Platonists, Pyrrho already asserted that the nature of things is unknowable and that consequently our greatest wisdom exists in abstaining from judgment. The Middle Academy in the persons of Arcesilaus and Carneades also emphasize the essential unknowability of nature though they admit the possibility of sufficient knowledge for practical purpose.<sup>1</sup> The early church fathers, by defending Christian dogma, tried to show the harmony between faith and reason but did not attempt a critical examination of knowledge except for Augustine who wrote a treatise against the Middle Academy, maintaining that we have not only probable but certain knowledge.

Scholasticism followed Plato and Aristotle in assuming that knowledge can be of universals only. Realism, maintaining that universals exist *ante rem* says that such knowledge is possible, while Nominalism, maintaining that the universals are *post rem*, say that knowledge is not possible.<sup>2</sup>

With the modern period science proper begins. The story of Locke's reason for publishing his "Essay" is well known. His friends argue but disagree. We must therefore have a preliminary clearing of the ground. But the difficulty with Locke was that he made of his study, as Kant calls it, a "certain physiology of the human understanding." He followed the empirico-psychological method of description and could thus not really come to a genuine discussion of epistemology. If experience is nothing but a series of separate states, we can know nothing except these particular states in their isolation. In Hume's philosophy this empiricism turns to skepticism. We can know nothing either of the nature of objects or the subject of knowledge. Rationalism, opposed to this current of thought, asserted the idea that all knowledge is based on universal *a priori* principles after the fashion of mathematics. It erred in the other extreme and totally neglected sense perception.

Kant tried to transcend this psychologism and effect a genuine transcendental deduction of the categories as presuppositions for the possibility of all thought. It was to be a Prolegomena to all future metaphysics, and such it has largely proved to be, for since his day epistemology has enjoyed perhaps more attention than any other branch of philosophy. "Thoughts without perceptions are empty, while perceptions without thoughts are blind." With this formula Kant attempted to overcome the dualism of Rationalism and Empiricism. He subjects the whole knowing process to a critical examination. The question, as Kant put it to himself, has often been put in the formula: "Are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?" Hume had believed that no universal knowledge was possible at all. Kant felt that real knowledge which is to be dependable must be based on *a priori* principles of the mind. That alone will give to it a universality and necessity. But how then are we certain when once we have found these universal principles that we are not shut up in our own laws? That is, knowledge must be synthetic as well as *a priori*.

Kant thinks he can answer his own question in the affirmative. He absorbs the old subject and object of Descartes into a new subject. Objectivity thus receives a new meaning. It is no longer an entity unrelated to the mind but is the result of the creative

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<sup>1</sup> Vide Robert Flint, *Agnosticism*.

<sup>2</sup> M. DeWulf, *History of Medieval Philosophy*. 2 vols, London, 1926.

activity of the mind. The manifold of experience pours into the mental forms of space and time, and further mental activity relates all experience according to the fundamental laws of our thinking. Objectivity, being an activity of the mind, has validity for all the minds similarly constituted. In his transcendental deduction of the categories, Kant attempts with great ingenuity to prove that all experience would be impossible if it did not assume the forms that it does. He does not attempt an *a posteriori* argument, for Hume has shown the impossibility of it. If the law of causality is to have validity for us, it must be as a presupposition of experience. I can predict that things in the future will happen so and so, because if there is to be any such thing as human experience at all it must be in that form. Similarly with his notions of space and time. They have no extra-mental existence; all experience must be poured into them. Throughout all this Kant himself recognizes that his epistemology recognizes the validity for phenomena only. He cannot, properly speaking, get beyond subjectivity. He may attempt to modify the meaning of the term "objectivity" till it means no more than the fabrications of the subject, but he is not justified in so doing. That we can have no experience outside of the categories of space and time does not signify that space and time are subjective, mental forms only.

We may here call attention to the fundamental error of all non-revelational idealistic epistemology, that it needlessly shuts us up into subjectivity. It has made a great contribution to epistemology through its emphasis on the fact that our subject must be the starting point of all experience, but it has failed to analyze what that must mean. Kant's Criticism was here too naive. Would that non-revelational thinking were more critical. It here assumes that all reality must be essentially of one nature if we are to have knowledge of it. All true idealism must assume a unity between all of reality, but reality need not be of one kind for such a unity to be effected. That our starting point must be the human subject does not imply that it must be exclusively creative and productive. All it need mean, and all it can mean, for a true idealism, is that experience must be brought into contact with it to be real for us. But this leaves ample room for receptivity. It leaves open the possibility that reality need not be essentially one and all of experience a mental production, but that there may be reality totally beyond the forms of human experience, of which genuine knowledge is still possible through the initiative, not of the human, but that higher form of reality. This ought to appeal to all idealists who boast of interpreting reality in the highest possible categories. Neither Kantian nor even Hegelian idealism can ever be idealistic. It must always interpret the higher in terms of the lower, which is, for any sort of idealism, an unpardonable sin. Yet Idealism has willfully shut itself up to such a task. It has closed its windows that looked up to the sky.

In our position we do not desire for things that are too high and wonderful for us. We cannot do otherwise than seek finite knowledge of God. We would be more modest than idealism. We would take our stand on the primarily receptive character of the human mind. Receptive here does not mean the opposite of active but of creative and productive. That we do not use the word "passive" finds its justification in the fact that "passive" smacks too much of immobility. And immobility we, as much as any Kantian, would avoid. Genuine activity and receptivity must ever go together. All experience, to have meaning, for us, must come into our consciousness, but we do not produce it. We would have a truly idealistic interpretation of reality and therefore actively seek to receive and interpret the interpretation of God. God must be the first to interpret experience and reality for us. Then, and not till then, can true activity of man begin. The finite, human

mind burns within itself, seeking to interpret the interpretation of God found in the Scriptures.

Kant vaguely felt that, after all, there was dualism in his epistemology. He did leave room for the possibility of a higher form of existence but did not leave room for the possibility of a genuine knowledge of that higher form. The *noumena* may or may not exist. At any rate we have no valid knowledge of them. Kant's subjectivism shut him up within a vicious circle. The result of his dualistic metaphysics was his dualistic epistemology. Or should it be put the other way around? The dualism in his epistemology between intellectual and non-intellectual knowledge, it seems, is the result of his dualistic metaphysic. It was an essential rationalism that Kant fails to shake off. Such a rationalism is suicidal. It lives by the negation of non-rational knowledge. It can not allow that any but intellectual knowledge is true knowledge. It cannot allow that there can be knowledge of particulars. Then how can we get to the knowledge of universals? Dewey's criticism of Kant is to the point when he says that Kant did not get form and matter together.

Much of this criticism is equally valid against the position of Hegel and his followers. The great difference between Kant and Hegel has often been emphasized. And there was a great difference. Hegel said that Kant studied the theory of knowledge too much in distinction from metaphysics. Hence all his dualism. Kant had studied the categories only as to their subjectivity and objectivity; Hegel would study them in their own medium, the medium of pure thought, and while in action. So he sought to identify logic, epistemology and metaphysics. Thus also, he thinks to bring the land of the *noumena* within our ken. There is a direct bridge that connects us with the infinite. How does he seek to do this? By emphasizing Kant's position of the creativity of the human mind. Hegel's position is therefore in the main, one and the same with Kant's. This is important to bear in mind. Their differences should not blind us to their unity. The late English Hegelians such as the Caird brothers, T. H. Green and others, have emphasized the difference between Kant and Hegel and found in the advance of Hegel over Kant the greatest salvation for theological knowledge. Hegel has forever banished the dualism, the Wolffian dualism of Kant, so that now God and man are brought together in intimate and genuine fellowship with one another. But what unity has thus been effected? It is a unity that leads to identification. It is a unity that lead to monism. It becomes the unity of the night in which all cows are black or the night in which all cats are gray.

If it be said that this criticism is unfair to the personal idealists, which have come up in such goodly numbers of late, we shall still have to emphasize and press the same view. The absolute is said to be beyond and above all finite experiences. He is transcendent as well immanent. This sounds like orthodox theology. Many have sought peace for their souls in it. Many have seen in such men as Andrew Seth, Josiah Royce, and others, great protagonists of the Christian faith. But pray what can a transcendence mean that is and can, in the nature of the case, be a projection of the mind of man only? It is a transcendence that is not "essentially different" from immanence. Reality is still of one piece. The supernatural is still the natural, or the natural the supernatural. At any rate they fall under the same category. The consequence of this more subtle but nevertheless no less real identity is that the higher continues to be interpreted in terms of the lower. The human mind is still exclusively productive or creative. The circle is still sealed; no heavenly light can enter in. The criticism that is valid against Kant is valid against later idealism as well. All idealism is at a loss to interpret the phenomenon of error or evil. As

was already noted earlier it will not do to limit the question of error to individual instances and ask how I may be sure that any particular thing will be true. If I am able to doubt one particular thing I thereby doubt the whole, when the whole is so related as Kant and Hegel would have us believe. We then find ourselves in an irremediable dilemma and in desperation proclaim; “the rational is real and the real is rational,” and help ourselves out of the difficulty by saying that, metaphysically speaking, evil does not exist. Granted, but who will deny that epistemologically speaking error is very real? On what basis then can you explain or explain away that fact? Are not metaphysics and epistemology identical for you? The only alternative seems to be the pessimism of Schopenhauer or Von Hartmann. A metaphysics that leads to identity cannot but lead to an epistemology that denies error, and an epistemology that denies evil in its most universal sense cannot but identify God and man, and shuts itself in forever in a circle that cannot be broken. Non-revelational idealism can be nothing but a mirage idealism.

We need not dwell at length upon those forms of modern epistemology quite prevalent today, which oppose the intellectualism of all forms of idealism and emphasize the volitional aspect of knowledge. Generally speaking, epistemology today seeks the unification of experience and begins by overthrowing the old faulty psychology. This is an advance. But whether we emphasize the intellect, the will, or action, or insist upon the unity of all three, the differences that divide these theories among themselves are of minor import in comparison with the difference that places them on one side, and that view of nature which recognizes the possibility and necessity of revelation on the other.

Hence it is our next task to compare those theories that have allowed for the possibility of a revelation and see how they have each in turn adjusted themselves to general epistemological thought and to what degree they have been true to their principle.

## Chapter 3: Revelational Epistemology in General

At the close of our previous chapter we pointed out that all forms of epistemology not allowing for the possibility of revelation are united in their opposition to those that do.

Primary and fundamental for revelational epistemology is the contention that man can have true knowledge of reality. No form of agnosticism is consistent with any form of Christianity. Oh yes, there have not been wanting those that have asserted the contrary, but they are not typical. Agnosticism is suicidal. Arguments from the possibility of error have amply demonstrated that we must choose between real knowledge or suicide. This does not yet touch the question of theistic proofs. It does not follow that because agnosticism is suicidal that therefore the theistic proofs must be unqualifiedly valid. Thus it has often been presented by theistic writers such as Fraser, Flint and also by Shedd. But this is a plain *non-sequitur*. It is the same argument that Hegelianism employs and which we have found to be essentially unsound. All that the argument of the possibility of true knowledge can and does mean is a negation of agnosticism. Then comes the following question, not to be identified with the former, whether the possibility of true knowledge, which in this case must also be an actuality, is attained and can be attained by theistic argument or is in itself historically a product of revelation. But more of this in a later chapter. Suffice it here to state that all forms of revelational epistemology take their stand on the trustworthiness of the human consciousness in the most general sense of the term.

Further, all revelational epistemology presupposes a general theism in which all reality is not “essentially one.” The justification of this position is found in our previous criticism of Kantianism and Hegelianism. Identification of all forms of reality leads to stultification of knowledge. Knowledge presupposes distinct and separate terms, even distinct and separate personalities. Furthermore we have seen that Hegelianism cannot account for evil. Evil within an ironclad whole acts as “and irresistible force in an immovable entity.” In short there is no way in nor out with it. God must become partaker of evil as well as man, notwithstanding Hegel’s “*Begriff*” of the concrete whole and the stages of finite imperfection which will be resolved. A rational explanation of evil and of error in knowledge implies a theism, in which man originates evil instead of God and which thus leaves open the way for its annihilation. A pantheistic epistemology is suicidal. The subject-object, and the subject-subject relation implies the supernatural, and evil cannot be accounted for on any other basis.

As a corollary to this comes the belief in the possibility of revelation. This again does not involve the theistic arguments. All that is meant is the opposite of the Kantian view of the subject as creative and productive. It involves a truly idealist epistemology. If a genuine Theism be a necessity as the presupposition of knowledge, so the possibility of revelation, which again in this case must imply the actuality of revelation since it is the only alternative to nihilism, is also a presupposition of all true knowledge. We are shut up to the alternative between the Kantian subjective creativity and the Hegelian mirage-idealism, which leaves us to interpret God in terms of man and which leaves us hopelessly stuck with the phenomenon of error, or the notion of Theism with its implied Revelation, in which the absolute becomes the interpretive category of reality and there is a way out to the problem of evil.

There is a difference as we shall have occasion to see later between the various supporters of the notion of revelation. Some understand by revelation the redemptive revelation in Scripture; while the Reformed or at least some of them distinguish between a pre-redemptive special revelation and a redemptive special revelation, maintaining that revelation is necessary even without the consideration of sin. Now if the purely philosophical argument is to be used, as we have done so far, it seems that we justify a non-redemptive revelation. A complete Theism, even if it is non-Biblical, implies revelation. Hence also a revelation is meant not merely as a manifestation in the pantheistic sense, but a revelation that is personal and has its initiation in God.

But we may, I think, go further and say that all branches of the Christian church also posit the necessity of a special redemptive revelation. And this has great epistemological consequences. It implies a darkening of the mind and perversion of the will, so that man cannot of himself know God as he needs to know him as a sinner. Again we must here emphasize the unity of the church in its belief in a redemptive revelation. The professing Christian therewith greatly complicates his philosophical and especially epistemological problems. To recognize the influence of sin on the human mind is to recognize that water has been put into the wine so that a chemical process will be necessary to obtain the pure product. But this complication of the problem brings with it at the same time the only way to a solution. We play the ostrich if we do not recognize the influence of evil on the mind. It means foredooming ourselves to failure.

It may seem peculiar that none of all the great thinkers of the world have recognized the fact of sin. Kant called especial attention to the machinery of cognition as such and so did many after him. The fact of error and the limitations of knowledge were bound to drive men to a scrutiny of the reach of their powers. But the strange, and yet not so strange, result has been that men turn to either of two ways but never to the third. Men will either minimize the fact of error, and posit its identity with the absolute so that thereby knowledge becomes valid, or at least as valid as it is for God himself; or else they recognize error, and limit the scope of true knowledge and finally turn to agnosticism.

The believer in Scripture does not accept such an alternative. He is more truly idealistic. He wants to consider all factors in the case and allow to them their full influence. Recognizing the fact of evil and its noetic consequences, he does not therefore despair of true knowledge. He allows for the possibility that through evil his relation to God may have changed and therefore seeks for the revelation, already necessary without the fact of sin, that will bring to him true knowledge of God and of himself and their relation to one another.

I am not now discussing the psychological factors in the process, which might involve a difference of apologetic viewpoint. All I am here seeking to do is to give the philosophical justification of the position as a whole, whether for the believer himself or for his apology to the non-believer. It was necessary that we first stress the fundamental difference between the two main classes of theories. We cannot expect to do justice to opposing views, nor fully develop our own, if we fail to observe just where the main lines of cleavage are found. There is a sharp antithesis between Roman Catholicism and the Reformed as to their views of revelation.

Having thus made clear this fundamental distinction and justified our choices we must proceed further to review the various forms of revelational epistemology and note wherein and why we agree and wherein and why we differ. Why should we differ at all?

Because it is the aim of all to emphasize the great antithesis, not for the sake of hostility, but for the sake of truth and clarity, which is in order to love. As branches of the Christian church we must exercise upon one another a continuous discipline. Such a mutual discipline will aid in our common strength. If one group yields to fraternization with the enemy we must blow the trumpet. Do you not like such martial terminology? Does it sound unmusical to you, this loud clarion call to arms? Then I must at the outset already blow my trumpet in your ears. You have become infected with the poison gas of the enemy. One of the greatest and, surely, always the first victory the enemy boasts is the victory of breaking the morale of the believer. If he can make a Christian believe that no supernatural redemptive revelation is necessary for man because his mind is normal and needs only the mutual check of fellowman to guide it on its flight, then he has accomplished much. Present day liberalism is an excellent example of such a victory. That a pure naturalism, such as liberalism is, should still have a place within a Christian church shows that Christians have slept at the post.

This we would apply especially to epistemology. Here is the gateway, here is the frontline trench. Weaken here and the enemy will enter your territory and you will be entirely on the defensive. Hence we must now enter upon, if we may be pardoned for using Kuyperian terminology for a moment, polemic instead of apologetic epistemology. We shall review Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Arminian epistemology and see to what extent they have developed and remained faithful to the revelational view. If, in the end, we come to the conclusion that it is Reformed Theology that has most fully developed and been most loyally true to the Biblical viewpoint, it will not be with a desire for empty boast because such is all the more excluded the more deeply we realize the necessity of the "*principium speciale*." It is with a sincere desire, first, to make the Reformed themselves fully see the beauty of their heritage, and secondly to bring other branches of the Christian church to realize that the logic of their position demands that they be more true to their initial principle, and third and most of all, not to gain a victory over our enemies, except to make them our friends, and that only by bringing them on our side, where peace is only found.

We have used the term "*principium speciale*." It is borrowed from Abraham Kuyper, Sr. Our use of it here does not necessarily mean concurrence with his divisions of science. It is a convenient term and will, throughout this paper, be used as a general term to connote special objective redemptive revelation, inspiration, and the subjective correspondent to these—faith—in short, everything that has to do with the recognition of the influence of sin as sin and not merely as error.

## Chapter 4: Roman Catholic Epistemology

In our previous chapter we have outlined the nature and scope of a Christian theory of knowledge in general. We saw that it involves a genuine Theism and the recognition of the “*principium speciale*.” Thus we have, at the same time, set our standard by which to measure dissenting views and a standard by which they ought to be willing to be measured.

There is a great difficulty that confronts us and one that confronts us not only here but throughout. Properly speaking, epistemology as a science has not been developed till in recent date. Most of our material will therefore have to be borrowed from other sciences and, of these, especially apologetics. In apologetics Christianity has sought to give to itself and the world a reason for its faith. But apologetics as a science is only a stripling. We are bound therefore to gather up our view of Christian epistemology in general and Roman Catholic epistemology in particular, at least as far as its history sheds any light on it, from anything that may be thrown out to us. Thereupon we can ask what more modern treatises have offered us.

The early church fathers were engaged in defending Christianity against pagan philosophy. The Alexandrian school with its speculative bent lost itself in the pagan flood rather than drawing others out. Augustine was the first to write a systematic work on the subject.

Writing against the Second Academy, which admitted only probable and not certain knowledge, Augustine replies that probability presupposes certainty. All of modern philosophy that has made much of the argument of consciousness from Descartes to Royce have followed in the footsteps of Augustine. For Augustine as for these moderns, doubt implies truth. First logical principles are certain. Knowledge begins with the senses but “perfect knowledge is intellectual knowledge based on the data of the senses and rising beyond them to general causes.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Augustine establishes the validity of knowledge. It is not our purpose to discuss at length Augustine’s defense of Christianity. Its general principles are plain enough, and a detailed study I was not able to make. Generally speaking Augustine, like the other early church fathers, attempted to show the rationality of the Christian religion. His highly developed doctrine of grace, however, would make one skeptical as to the importance he attached to the ability of natural reason to weigh the evidence for the *principium speciale* impartially. There is, however, I believe a strain of intellectualism through Augustine’s writings that justified to an extent the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages to claim his paternity.

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<sup>1</sup> “Epistemology.” *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

## Chapter 5: Lutheran Epistemology

This is a difficult subject notwithstanding the fact that here, for the first time, we meet with a scientific treatise on our subject by Karl Francke, entitled “*Metanoetik*.” It will not do to depend upon this treatise alone. We must first ascertain whether it represents the true Lutheran viewpoint. Moreover, their work is largely exegetical, and however valuable that fact makes it, its scope is therewith limited.

In this brief summary we must recall the main tenets of Lutheranism. What is its genius? Schleiermacher said there was no difference in “*Gemuthzustände*” between the Lutheran and the Calvinist. Schneckenburger says Lutheranism represents the Mary and Calvinism the Martha type of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The Calvinist needs good works to assure him of the certainty of salvation. Some say that Reformed gave too much scope to reason. C. P. Krauth enumerates several different views.<sup>3</sup> Gobel, Nitzsch and Heppe say that Lutheranism emphasizes the material principle of justification by faith and the Reformed the formal principle of the authority of Scripture. Herzog says that Lutheranism, reacting against the legalism of Rome, became Gnosticizing and the Reformed, reacting against the paganism of Rome, became Judaizing. This really amounts to the same as Schneckenburger’s view of the Mary and Martha types. Schweitzer sums up his view by stating that the Lutheran is anthropological and analytical in his method and the Reformed theological and synthetic.

It is remarkable that in all these statements there is one contrast ever recurrent. There is rather strong opposition between the Lutheran and the Calvinist as to their view of the relation between God and man. Luther’s starting point is essentially anthropological. This fact is bound to reassert itself in his epistemology as well as his metaphysics, both of which, as far as Luther himself is concerned, are implied rather than expressed in his theological writings. Luther at first emphasized the absoluteness of predestination bordering even on necessitarianism. He virtually made of man a piece of mechanism. This was due to the fact that he conceived of the image of God as existing in the moral attributes of knowledge, righteousness and holiness only, and not of intellect and will as well. Hence when man lost that image he became as helpless as a block. Later in his “*Trostschrift*,”<sup>4</sup> when Luther thought, “*dasse die Heilsgnade an die Gnadenmittel; besonders an das Wort gebunden ist,*” Luther had to change his strong view of predestination. Luther’s view of the sacraments was bound to outlive his view of predestination. Melancthon makes the first step in the direction of synergism. “*Der grosse Fortschritt bestehl vor allem darin dass zwisschen dem Verhaltniss de Menschen zur Wirksamkeit Gottes im Gebiet des Physischen und dem Verhaltniss des Menschen zur Wirksamkeit Gottes auf dem Gebiet des Sittlichen klar und deutlich unterscheiden wird.*”<sup>5</sup> The mechanism of Luther was bound to develop into the synergism of Melancthon. It could not be expected that salvation should long be thought to depend upon the fortuitous

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<sup>2</sup> Matthias Schneckenburger, *Vergleichende Darstellung, des Lutherischen und Reformirten Lehrbegriffs*. 1855, Chapt. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Charles P. Krauth, *Conservative Reformation and its Theology*, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> Benson, *Zur Frage nach der menschlichen Willensfreiheit. Beziehung zur Sünde und zur Gnade*. Rostock, 1900p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

distribution of the Word. The faculties of man would reassert themselves. The principles of the Remonstrants were recognized by Mosheim to be the principles of the Lutherans as well.

We have mentioned this view of the mechanism turning to synergism in Lutheran thinking since it illustrates the whole relation of God to man as conceived of by Lutheran theology in general. Christ's divine and human attributes tend to blend into one another, so that he is really present in the supper with his human body. Krauth goes to great lengths to make clear the exact meaning of the Lutheran view of Christ's presence in the Sacraments. He tells us that Lutheranism never believed in impanation, subpanation or consubstantiation either as (a), local conjunction of two bodies or (b), as commingling of two bodies. The charge that they violate the very notion of the relation of substance and attribute, he says, is not to the point. Now we should be very careful in stating just what Lutheranism means when it says what it says that Christ is really present in the sacrament, for it is to them of fundamental importance. Krauth is bold to assert that the true doctrine of the incarnation and of the trinity stand or fall with the Lutheran doctrine of the Sacrament. "To say that the nature of Christ is personally present without his humanity is to deny that his humanity is a part of his personality and the doctrine of the incarnation falls to the dust."<sup>6</sup> But here we may ask: Is the incarnation then the assumption of the human nature into the divine person? Krauth himself admits that the infinity may be really present with us though not corporeal. Hence his only argument is that this infinity has actually assumed the corporeal into the divine, and that though we cannot explain them we bow to mystery. Now our argument is not that we would not bow to mystery. We appreciate the unreserved statement of what Krauth perceives to be facts and his principle of letting them guide him in his theology. But it is his interpretation of the facts that we oppose. It is entirely possible to conceive of the union of the natures of Christ in his person as well as to conceive of the union of the natures of Christ in his person as well as to conceive of the union of the natures even in the attenuated sense that Krauth conceives of them.

We see that in the Lutheran view of the incarnation and the sacraments, God and man are not kept properly distinct. There is a Gnosticizing tendency throughout. Lutheranism has an affinity to the *Vermittelungstheologie*. The work of the second person of the trinity in creation and his work as redeemer are not kept clearly enough distinct. Schneckenburger in his various chapters shows that there is a totally different view of the relation of the infinite to the finite underlying Lutheranism than Calvinism. He makes this especially clear in his chapter on the "*Unverlierbarkeit des Gnadenstandes.*" Says he: "*Welches Interesse hat die Doktrin, es hier bei dem unmittelbaren Selbstbewusstsein bewenden zu lassen, und diesem absolute Wahrheit und doch wieder keine bleibende Geltung zuzuschreiben?*" He means to say that men are at one time actually justified and regenerated and still may fall again from grace. His answer is: "*Es ist neben dem sittlichen das religiös speculative, welche ihre ganze Anschauung von Verhältnisse des Endlichen und zeitlich Gegenwärtigen zum Unendlichen und Ewigen durchzieht. Das Absolute ist selbst dem Prozesse des endlichen Geistes immanent, nicht ein davon in abstrakter Bewegungslosigkeit fern bleibendes; darum das unmittelbare Selbstbewusstsein des letzteren ein wahres, sowohl als Bewusstsein der Lünde wie als*

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<sup>6</sup> Op. Cit. p. 350.

*Bewusstsein der Kindschaft durch die Rechtfertigung. Diese Immanens des Göttlichen im endlichen Geiste schliesst nun in sich die Möglichkeit für denselben, sich ins Gegentheil umzusetzen.*"<sup>7</sup> The infinite thus enters into the finite and lends its reality to the finite. On reading this, and it is but a fair sample of the entire trend of thought that underlies Schneckenburger's comparison of Lutheranism and Calvinism, one turns to the cover of his book to see whether perchance he has not picked up the idealist philosopher Josiah Royce, instead of a Lutheran theologian.

Such being the view of the relation between God and man metaphysically, its epistemology can not be true to a genuine Christian position and the meaning of Revelation must become pantheistically tintured. This is what we expect to find. This is what we actually find. Says Krauth: "Ignorance is the counterpart to the divine knowledge and wisdom; weakness to divine omnipotence; but sin is set over against the very heart and moral glory of God."<sup>8</sup> Krauth sees in ignorance almost exclusively the effect of finite limitation. He can, thus, not be true to the "*principium speciale*," because ignorance in so far as it is faulty knowledge of God, is the result of sin and should be contrasted not only with the knowledge and the wisdom of God, but also with his holiness. Although of course ignorance in so far as it is incomplete knowledge of God may be contrasted with God's knowledge, only then we might better not call it ignorance but finite knowledge.

How then does the Lutheran attain to universal validity? He does not. He remains uncertain till the day of his death. Generally speaking he believes in the validity of consciousness and in the reality of revelation. But it is especially in his uncertainty as to his salvation, which means uncertainty of the knowledge of God, that Lutheran epistemology reveals its weakness. But, you say, that is not epistemology. Pray what else is it? The certainty of knowledge of God as we now need it as sinners is the most practical sort of epistemology conceivable; it builds on general epistemology. Schneckenburger repeatedly asserts that the Lutheran has certainty immediately in his consciousness while the Reformed has to assure himself of salvation through his works. So also Dorner says: "*Der Lutheraner fühlt sich vorrsherrschend in einem seligen Kindesverhältniss zu Gott.*"<sup>9</sup> But Geerhardus Vos makes the exact opposite claim. "*De Luthersche leeft als een kind, dat in den lach der vadergunst het oogeblik geniet; de Gereformeerde als een man, in wiens bewusten geest de eeuwige glorie Gods haar schijnsel werpt.*"<sup>10</sup> Vos succinctly expresses the whole of the Lutheran attitude while the others express the meaning of the moment. The Lutheran is certain when he feels the influx of the divine person of Christ surging in his soul, when he is actually justified, but later he has actually fallen away and he is no longer certain of his salvation but is in actual ignorance. The whole procedure reminds one of Anaximenes' condensation and rarefaction. The paternal smile is upon him for an instant, but then again all is darkness. And as this is not only a matter of consciousness or unconsciousness but of full reality, it

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<sup>7</sup> Schneckenburger, *Vergleichende Darstellung*, etc. 1, p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> Krauth, Op. Cit. 379.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Schneckenburger 1:24.

<sup>10</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *De Verbondsleer in de Gereformeerde Theologie*. Grand Rapids: "Democrat" Drukers, 1891, p. 41, English translation: *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980, p. 257.

is all the more important. The Lutheran does not need the certainty that proceeds from the doctrine of election because while he feels one with God he finds immediate certainty in his own faith. *“Allein er enthält sich, von dieser Genesis des Glaubens aus weitere Schlüsse rückwärts bis in die göttliche Wahl hinein zu machen, weil er in der unmittelbaren Selbstgewissheit des Glaubens die Gnadengüter, die justificatio, die unio cum Christo zu seiner vollen Befriedigung empfängt.”*<sup>11</sup> But what kind of validity can one speak of without any *“weitere Schlüsse rückwärts,”* or forwards? This sounds like theological Pragmatism.

We must note that Schneckenburger throughout misinterprets the Reformed conception of good works. Reformed theologians no doubt emphasize good works, but their prime motive for this is loving obedience to Him through whom they already enjoy the certainty of salvation. Even granted that good works must be done to *“make our calling and election sure,”* this refers to a greater consciousness of that fact alone. The *“Reformirte Frommigkeit”* does not assume a *“knechtisch gesetzliche Art,”*<sup>12</sup> but a childlike love that is ever assured of the Father’s care.

Nor is it a fair interpretation of Reformed psychology when Schneckenburger adds in refutation to the contention that election is the last basis of certainty: *“In je abstraktere Höhen also der Reformirte zurück geht, um das Bewusstsein des persönlichen Heils an Gottes unmittelbaren ewigen auf ihn persönlich gerichteten Willenentschluss zu befestigen, desto mehr entsteht für ihn wieder das Bedürfniss in concreter Weise an dem Kerne seines Wesens die faktische Realisirung desselben indieirt zu schen, als Pfand der einstigen Vollendung.”*<sup>13</sup> True, the more the Christian lives into the doctrine of election the more he will feel himself constrained to do good works, but so much the less from the motive of certainty only and so much the more from the motive of obedience, because election makes him realize to some extent the depth of the love of God that chose him without any merits of his own. It is not then, that since we do not know whether we are predestined we must act as though we have to merit eternal life through works. Ours is no *“Theologie als Ob.”* *“Eine gewisse knechtische Lohnsucht,”* is not one of the dangers of Reformed doctrine. In all this Schneckenburger turns about the various moments of Reformed psychology. To him, the Reformed consideration of good works for salvation is primary and the doctrine of election only a secondary safeguard against Pelagianism, while in reality election is always in order to good works.

Schneckenburger would put the whole of Reformed theology before one grand dilemma. *“Indem aber die reformirte Ansicht jene Gegensätzlichkeit im Prozesse des Werdens ermässigt und aus diesem Verfahren keinesweges unerhebliche. Vortheile zieht, verfällt sie dem Dilemma, entweder auch den realen sittlichen Gegensatz zu ermässigen, oder dann ihn zu einem ausserweltlichen Gegensatze in Gott selbst werden zu lassen, also die Gottesidee selbst dualistisch zu bestimmen, auseinander zu springen, und dem entsprechend wiederum in die Welt einen verdeckten Gegensatz fast manichäischer Art zu bringen, der sich zuletzt in der Scheidung der Verdammten und Seligen entladet.”*<sup>14</sup> Why are we placed before such a dilemma? Because on the basis of Reformed theology:

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<sup>11</sup> Schneckenburger, Op. Cit 1:55.

<sup>12</sup> Schneckenburger, Op. Cit 1:63.

<sup>13</sup> Op. Cit. 1:85.

<sup>14</sup> Op. Cit. 1:232.

“Alle Differenzen und Störungen, auch der Fall nicht ausgenommen, sind, genau betrachtet, nur leichte Schattirungen, aufgenommen in den absoluten Urplan selbst, nur Oscillationen, wie sie die Natur des Wachstums und Fortschritts mit sich bringen.” For Lutheranism, on the other hand, the Fall is “ein reales Abbrechen” of the harmony of God’s plan, and the incarnation etc. are measures taken accordingly. Now it is no marvel that from such a point of view it is necessary to place Reformed theology before a dilemma. Schneckenburger can conceive of no genuine moral distinctions except on the basis of absolute independence of the creature, an independence so absolute that he can break the very plan of God, so that God had to adjust himself totally to man’s actions. That he wants such freedom for man, and nothing less, is also evinced in his conception of realism in our relation to Adam. We are not now concerned to show the untenability of the dilemma, but would show that in the placing of such a dilemma the Lutheran reveals his conception of God to man. It is a sort of independence for man as Müller posits in his work on Sin that we meet with in Lutheran writers. It is this sort of independence that can never do justice to Scripture because it hesitates to make God the absolute interpretive category of reality, and moreover it can still less do justice to the *principium speciale*.

With this general background of Lutheran metaphysics and epistemology then, we turn to an examination of Dr. K. Francke’s work on *Metanoetik* or “*Die Wissenschaft von dem durch die Erlösung veränderten Denken*.”<sup>15</sup> The work is very thorough and comprehensive of Biblical data that literally express criticism of the thought of man, but it is weak in its doctrinal conclusions. His starting point is 2 Cor 5:17; “Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” He speaks accordingly of regenerated thought as “*ein radikal verändertes*,” which is designated in the New Testament with the term μετανοειν, whence also the title of his book. Recognizing that the term μετανοια has ethical implications, he seeks only for the “*rein noetische*.” We cannot review in detail his exegesis, nor is such necessary for our purpose. The three divisions are: The Necessity of a renewed thought, the Possibility of it, and the Actuality of it. He first gives us a description of unregenerated thinking in general, which is black enough. “*Es will sich nicht mehr passiv und rezeptiv verhalten, sich auf dem Wege zum Wahrheitslicht durch keinerlei Rücksicht Halt gebieten, in keiner Form Schranken ziehen, Vorschriften machen lassen*.”<sup>16</sup> Thought seeks to find either all knowledge, i.e., it claims vulgarly to have all knowledge, or more reservedly to have the categories for the interpretation of all knowledge, or it turns to pure skepticism.<sup>17</sup> “*Es ist verderbt. Als Hauptfaktoren in der Tragödie dieser Korruption figurieren Trug (απατη) της αμαρτίας Irreführung (πλανε) and Betäubung (κατανοξίς)*.”<sup>18</sup> Under the deceitfulness of sin there is the deceitfulness of philosophy, Col. 2:8, the deceitfulness of riches, Matt. 13:22, and immorality or independent morality, 2 Thess 2:10. These powers upturn thinking, they give a false presentation of reality. They have a repertoire of attractive arguments, πειθοι σοφιας λογοι (1 Cor 2:4), and well developed proofs, ευλογια (Rom 16:18).

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Francke. *Metanoetik, Die Wissenschaft von dem durch die Erlösung veränderten Denken*. Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1913.

<sup>16</sup> *Metanoetik* p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The relation of these powers mutually is of interest. *απαει* and *πλανη* are not used in combination. They seem to work independently. “*Grundverschieden bringen sie das Denken unter ihre Zwingherrschaft.*” Yet they all cooperate or at least produce the same result. “*Legt Trug in den Denkerd (καρδια) Keime unbeugsamer Starrheit (σκληρυνει Heb. 3:13) bildet Irreführung diese Keime weiter aus: Monopol der Betäubung ist es, die Starrheit auf die äusserste Spitze zu treiben. Sie spannt den Bogen des Denktrotzes, der Denkhartigkeit, so straff, dass er zerspringen muss.*”<sup>19</sup> The activity of the one is punished with the other. God gives man over to his own desires. “*Er ist ein Verhängnis, welches Gott sendet, ein Gericht, welches er verfügt. Sobald sich Gott überzeugt, dass sich das menschliche Denken decidiert gegen ihn verhärtet (Ex. 10; 20; 13:15; Dt. 20:2 chissek, hisheka, immez) greift er selbst in den Entwicklungegang ein. Er ‘erzeugt dem sich verhärtenden ein Hartes,’ gibt ihm, ‘Wein der Starrheit,’ dass es von demselben berauscht wird, reicht ihm einen Kelchbecher des Taumels (Ish. 51, 17. 21), das ihm die Sinne vergehen das Bewusstsein schwindet. Erst will das natürliche Denken nicht sehen und hören: Zuletzt kann und darf es solches nicht mehr.*”<sup>20</sup>

We see that the picture of the noetic effect of sin as painted by Francke is black enough. Yet we at once notice that the Lutheran conception of man’s independence underlies it all. Man starts his course of error without any relation to God’s plan. God punishes his evil by increasing his blindness. “*Er muss die ihm schöpfungsmässig garantierte Freiheit respektieren. Aber missbraucht es diesselbe hartnäckig: Zuletzt muss es Gott zum Freiheitsverlust verurteilen.*”<sup>21</sup>

How is man to get out of this predicament? As Luther makes of man almost a piece of mechanism through the loss of God’s image, so Francke has come by his analysis to the opposite view. We would now think that the initiative must certainly lie with God. We would think that the Holy Spirit must blow into his frame the breath of life. But see, it moves, it moves! We were mistaken. The body is not a corpse. It breathes! Only use the air pump and all will be well. No, the self-convicted sinner has not lost all his self-respect. As Luther sometimes appeared to make the origination of salvation depend upon a fortuitous distribution of the Word, so here also God did not only have to respect man’s freedom at the beginning when created, but also now man has power of himself to seek for truth. With the prodigal he “comes to himself,” reflects upon his true condition without any influence of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, not in the fashion that, for example, Eucken conceives of it, that all man has to do is “*zielbewusst sich selbst vertrauen.*” No, “*Die dämonischen Geister des Irrsals können nur durch Mittel und Kräfte eines überdämonischen d.c. göttlichen Geistes verbannt werden.*”<sup>22</sup> Mt 12.28f<sup>22</sup> But the sinner seeing his predicament can at least cry for help. There is a longing to get out of his misery. Here exactly Francke shows his Pelagianizing tendency. True, there is in man a point of contact in the intellect and will, in his rationality, for the Spirit’s operation, but man has not the ability of himself to cry for aid. Francke establishes his point, he thinks, by referring to Christ’s promise of the Spirit of truth to the disciples. This, he adds, would not have been done by Christ, “*wäre nicht im Denken der Jünger ein tiefes Verlangen*

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<sup>19</sup> Op. Cit. 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*, p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem.*, p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*, p. 51.

*nach demselben zutage getreten.*”<sup>23</sup> But here Francke forgets that we may assume that the Apostles were regenerated men, and that even if they were not, Christ knew that irrespective of their desire they would need the Spirit of truth for their work. Here Francke lets down the bars of the *principium speciale*. He does not distinguish, as do Reformed theologians, between the twofold sense in which the term “image of God” is used, the wider for man’s general rationality which man is left with even after the entrance of sin and which affords a point of contact for the Spirit, but itself has no initiative power, and the narrower sense consisting in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, which has been entirely lost through sin. Failing to observe this distinction, Francke posits that man has retained something of the moral image of God, which enables him at least to seek for light, so that man was, after all, not dead in sins and misery as we were first led to believe.

At this point we must note a source of the failure to come to consistency here. Outside of dogmatical prejudices, Francke does not have an organic conception of the relation between the Old and the New Testaments. He identifies the desire for the Spirit of truth as he sees it in sinful man with the desire of the Old Testament saints for the fullness of the promise, e.g., the promise of the Shilo, Gen 49:10. But identification would presuppose that these Old Testament saints were unbelievers. He bases his interpretation that this waiting becomes ever stronger and expresses itself in prayer upon an equally false presupposition. “*Das naturliche Denken kann die Kunst lernen, auf den Geist der Wahrheit zu warten. Und wo diese Warten brünstig, aufrichtig und zielbewusst geübt wird, gestaltet es sich unwillkürlich zum Bitten um denselben.*”<sup>24</sup> But this prayer even becomes intense. “*Letzt sich das von der Plage seines Knechtschaftstandes, von der Pein seines Sklavenelendes gedrückte, mit Gott in Fühlung, neigt es sich anbetend vor ihm, tritt es flehend zu ihm: Sein Leufzen und Schreien wird erhört.*”<sup>25</sup> For the Spirit is promised to such. “*Der Geist der Wahrheit ist das allem schnnenden, wartenden, besonders aber betend mit der Wahrheit Fühlung suchenden Denken zugemessene (1 Tim. 2:4) und zuzufallen bestimmte (Akt 11:16ff. 5:31) Geschenk (δορεα) aller Geschenke*” (John 4:10).<sup>26</sup> But the proofs adduced do not establish his point. 1 Tim. 2:4 speaks of the well meant offer of salvation to all men. Acts 11:16 tells us of Peter’s experience with the Gentiles. Peter tells the brethren that he was justified in preaching to the heathen because the same Spirit had been given them that they, the Apostles themselves, had received upon Christ’s promise. We read nothing of a desire of the heathen for the Spirit of truth, and the apostles to whom the Spirit was promised we must assume to have been disciples of Jesus when promised the Spirit. Finally in John 4:10 we have the story of the woman who did not know who he was and therefore did not ask for living water, and that only if she had known she would have asked. So Francke not only does not prove his point but the very texts he cites testify against him. To quote Ps. 43:3, where David prays: “Oh send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me,” is clearly to defeat his own purpose because David is called a man after God’s heart.

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<sup>23</sup> p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.* 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem.* p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> p. 60.

That Francke has no very deep conception of sin is further evinced by his treatment of original sin. “*Nicht weil dem Denken Sünde angeboren ist, sondern weil es sie begeht, nimmt es an der Gesamtschuld der Menschheit teil, erhöht, steigert, mehrt es sie.*”<sup>27</sup> “*Der Begriff, ‘angeborene’ Schuld bedeutet logisch einen Widerspruch, ethisch eine Abswächung des Gewichtes der Einzelsünde und der durch sie bedingten Einzelschuld.*”<sup>28</sup> This personal, individual note rings throughout. We do not wish to detract from man’s personal individual responsibility for sin. But personal responsibility does not presuppose total independence of the creature. Francke has given a dark picture of natural thought, but it is, after all, not so very dark because natural man still prays for the Spirit of truth and yearns for contact with God, while he is still so independent that the Spirit has no entrance to his soul unless man chooses to open.

Francke divides his chapter on “The Possibility of Regenerated Thought” into sections. The first proves the psychological possibility because the Spirit may actually influence not only the soul of man but the brain as well. “*Er schüttelt die feine Masse, wie der Wind die Bäume.*” The second section proves the religio-ethical possibility because of the strength of the purifying power in the Spirit of truth.<sup>1</sup> The third establishes the metaphysical possibility through man’s natural independence as above described. Summing up his entire teaching, then, we find that the possibility of renewed thought is not due primarily to the regenerative power of the Spirit, which is, to be sure, a *sine qua non*, but primarily to man’s autonomy. The last chapter, “The Actuality of Regenerated Thought,” does not concern us here. We were anxious to see whether in Francke’s work we should find a treatment fully true to the *principium speciale* and we were disappointed. Fully recognizing the invaluable service by the way of organizing Scriptural material, we must nevertheless conclude that Francke has not contributed much to a universal validity for which we are seeking. Universal validity can never be found upon the basis of such extreme individualism as we found inherent in Francke’s system. Universal validity can never be found on the basis of a system that is not truly theocentric in its metaphysics, that gives to man a vicious independence. The universally valid can be found in a system that is in the first place truly theistic. Only on the basis of a genuine Theism is God, as personal, the ultimate interpreter of that reality of which He is Himself the basis, thus assuring validity. And this demand of making God the starting point becomes the more urgent because of the influence of sin. Sin has broken all validity. It has shattered existence and broken universality. Only God can reassure us of a new validity made objectively possible and actual in the incarnation and crucifixion and applied subjectively again by the divine agency of the Spirit.

So once more, we launch out to see whether there may still be another general system of theology besides the Reformed that offers us such an epistemology. But this time our former high hopes are somewhat lowered. We have already incidentally been told that in many respects Arminianism resembles Lutheranism. But in the interest of comprehensiveness we must go and see.

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<sup>27</sup> *Idem.* p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem.* p. 73.

<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* p. 122.

## Chapter 6: Arminian Epistemology

In our survey of the Lutheran position on our problem we saw that its chief defect was in its unacceptable doctrine of the nature of man, and the noetic influence of sin. That must remain our touchstone. Christian epistemology exactly distinguishes itself from a non-Christian one in this respect: that it fully recognizes the distorting influence of sin on the human mind. Now any system that grants to man unwarranted independence at the outset can never do justice to the noetic effect of sin. In our discussion of the Arminian view we shall therefore again have to note its view of the nature of man, and the difference between man in *status integritatis* and man today. We shall limit our discussion to the views of Watson, Miley and Curtis as representative of the whole.

When one begins to read Watson's standard work *Theological Institutes*, one is impressed with its comprehensiveness and thoroughness. At the outset the discussion would seem very promising. He at once sets out to prove the necessity of Scripture and of revelation. The heathen have such confused notions of God, the state of morals and religion among them is everywhere so low that a revelation of God is necessary. This revelation needs external attestation through prophecy fulfilled and miracle performed because the low status of morals and religion will not permit that a subjective starting point be made. But while following his argument we have already been holding our breath to see where it would lead. We are not to be kept in the dark long. Watson continues in a later connection to tell us that the very existence of God must be revealed to us. "The proof of the being of God reposes wholly then upon arguments *a posteriori*, and it needs no other. Even with this safe and convincing process of reasoning at our command, we shall find at every step into the inquiry of a divine Nature, our entire dependence upon divine revelation for our primary light. That must both originate our investigation, and conduct them to a satisfactory result."<sup>2</sup>

From this position we note at once that Watson has not distinguished between the need of revelation in general and the need of a special redemptive revelation. His argument seems chiefly for a redemptive revelation because he emphasizes the low state of morals and religion. Yet his arguments are also based upon the finite limitations of man which can perhaps be an argument for revelation in general but not for the necessity of a redemptive revelation. A constant confusion results.

Yet the confusion as such would not be so great, for we might perhaps untangle it. But we come to think later that it is not so much confusion as a deliberate viewpoint of the author that the arguments for the two kinds of revelation must be taken together. There seems to be a view of the nature of man and of the nature of sin that demands this. Watson does not see much difference between Adam and us. "No creature can be absolutely perfect because it is finite; and it would appear from the example of our first parents that an innocent, and in its kind a perfect rational being, is kept from falling only by taking hold on God, and as this is an act, there must be a determination of the will in it, and so when the least carelessness, the least tempering with the desire of forbidden gratifications is induced there is always an enemy at hand to darken the judgment and to accelerate the progress of evil."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*. London, 1823–24, 1:335.

<sup>3</sup> *Institutes* 1:33.

We observe three things about this. First, for Watson finitude involves imperfection. Secondly, Watson maintains that man must be so far cut loose from God and must have so much independence of God that he can originate an entirely new series of actions. Thirdly, there are from the outset of creation certain inclinations to evil in the heart of man. In his later discussion of redemption Watson develops this. "The creation of beings capable of choice and endowed with affections seems necessarily to have involved the possibility of acts contrary to the will of the Creator and consequently it involved the liability to misery." To be sure, God gave to man several inducements to obey the now promulgated law in order to secure his original purpose of a creation serving and glorifying Himself. But after all, it was a rather dangerous experiment for God to create such rational creatures. God could never know which way they might turn. If they should turn the right way then God would be glorified. The difficulty would still remain, of course, in the case of every new creature coming after Adam because Adam is not their representative, but at least the later ones would be under the good influence of their forebears.

Now such a conception of the nature of man and of his relation to God at once precludes the possibility of a genuine Theism and therefore of a general validity. The whole issue is in the hand of each individual man. God does not determine universal validity; he cannot because any man may break it. Man becomes the interpretive category of God and not God of man.

Granting so much independence to man, we wonder why Watson should stress the unqualified necessity of revelation. His conception of the nature of man does not require it. Man's present condition may require it but not his nature as such. It might at first appear that man's creaturely independence from God, on Watson's point of view, is so great that he needs no revelation at all. But then Watson would reply that man is imperfect and helpless and therefore needs revelation. But Watson's conception of man's independence could not but result in making man to a great extent of a kind with God. We see that for Watson, time must mean virtually the same thing for God and man. "Duration then as applied to God, is no more than an extension of the idea as applied to ourselves; and to exhort us to conceive of it as something essentially different, is to require is to conceive what is inconceivable."<sup>4</sup> We do not contend that Watson's standpoint is that of modern philosophy which makes time and space and changes to be ultimate givens of reality so that no reality can exist beyond them, we would still maintain that there is an element of the same motif inherent in it. Watson does not make the valid distinction that time is real for us in a different sense than for God. We live in time; God does not. Yet time is real for Him. This is not requiring us to conceive the inconceivable because we are not invited to conceive of time for God in any other fashion than time for us, we are only asked to conceive the perfectly conceivable—that God should not be subject to time.

Our criticism so far has been that Watson can not establish a thoroughly theistic basis as a *sine qua non* to a Christian epistemology. Now we must proceed to prove that his low view of sin keeps him from building up the structure itself. Man's too great of an independence vitiates the theistic principle; the low view of sin vitiates true Biblical epistemology.

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<sup>4</sup> *Idem.* 1:357.

We have seen that on the Arminian view Adam was imperfect and had some natural inclinations to evil. This brings Adam down from his pedestal a good bit. Now if we can raise ourselves a trifle we may get fairly well together. To start with, we have that same rational independence that made Adam so dangerous. The Holy Spirit seeking to save us will certainly have to recognize our flag and not enter without knocking lest He meet with a rebuff. Then further, as in the case of Adam, our intellect is essentially sound. It is only our wills that are perverted. "The understanding of man is by its nature adapted to perceive the evidence of demonstrated truth and has no means of avoiding conviction but by turning away the attention."<sup>5</sup> If it is historically and impartially proved to us that prophecies have been fulfilled and miracles have been fulfilled we shall assent, not only to the rationality of revelation, but also to its authenticity. Whether this involves that the will must then follow the last dictate of the understanding, Watson does not make clear, but it would seem that recognition of authenticity involves assent of the entire personality. That such is Watson's view of the present condition of man is further evidenced in his soteriology. He constantly militates against the idea that Christ's active obedience is imputed to us. That would violate our freedom and lead to Antinomianism. No, Christ has only removed the obstacles, so that we can now accept or reject the proffered salvation. Not as though the regenerating work of the Spirit is unnecessary, but that also "is a change wrought in man by which the dominion of sin over him is broken, so that with free choice of will he serves God." The Holy Spirit, therefore, only removes obstacles. Surely we are not far from Adam. For God himself commands us to turn to Him, and God would never command what he did not intend should come about. God would not command us if we were not able.

But now that we think we are about equal with Adam, Watson calls us down to earth again and tells us: "The true Arminian, as fully as the Calvinist, admits the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall of our first parents." What is more, Watson boldly says that the Arminian in distinction from the Calvinist can carry the doctrine through logically while he asserts that even the good we see in unconverted people is already the work of the Holy Spirit, while the Calvinist must here resort to an artificial doctrine of Common Grace.

What are Calvinists to say in the face of such a bold assertion? All we can do is to apply the well tried rule of Protestant exegesis: *Scriptura scripturae interpres*. The very point by which Watson seeks to prove that the Arminian carries the doctrine of total depravity through to its logical conclusion shows that he has essentially denied the doctrine. He says that the good of the unregenerate is distinct in degree only from the good of the regenerate. Both are due to the influence of the Spirit and if that influence is not resisted men are saved. Regeneration is no radical change and sin is not so grievous as we thought it was. Furthermore, Watson's assertion of belief in total depravity must be toned down until it is consistent with his views of the nature of man before and after the fall of Adam into sin. And what is left will no longer be burdensome.

We had dwelt rather at length upon Watson's views because his work may be considered as one of the most conservative and representative. We shall see that Miley and especially Curtis, though in many respects following the footsteps of Watson, tend rather to present a broader view.

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<sup>5</sup> *Idem*. Vol 2:84.

We need not treat the long discussion on theistic arguments which Miley inserts in his work. It will suffice for our purpose to show that Miley's view of human nature is much the same as Watson's and that he finds it necessary to reject the professed belief in total depravity. In the first place, then, Miley says it is an inviolable principle of Arminianism that man's will be totally free. Miley wants as much metaphysical independence for man as Watson does. Hence he, like Watson, cannot do justice to the truth of Scripture. Secondly, Miley discounts the effect of sin to a still greater extent than does Watson. He brings Adam, if possible, still lower and us still higher. Adam, he thinks, lived in a sort of pre-moral childish innocence. Adam's nature "certainly could possess no proper ethical element, such as can arise only from free personal action."<sup>6</sup> So "mere nature" cannot be subject of an ethical sinfulness and demerit. Adam had such a non-ethical and therefore non-meritorious holiness. But purely from the point of view of psychology, Miley might have learned the opposite from Aristotle who spoke of *εξεις*, habits and dispositions as the only possible seat of responsibility over against *διαθεσεις*, which are momentary. Could activity and volition which must come from nature be any more meritorious? Or even if action did not spring from nature, man would still, as a totally dependent creature, have to receive that action from God and merit would again be excluded.

But not only was Adam's nature thus unethical. There were within him susceptibilities to sin. "With a holy nature there were yet in him susceptibilities to temptation. In temptation there is an impulse in the sensibilities adverse to the law of duty." Here Miley attempts the impossible and we do not marvel that he fails. No psychology can be offered of the origin of evil. If it is explained as a possibility because man's finitude left him imperfect, or his rationality demanded susceptibility to evil, we are either making a little God of man or we are charging God with lack of power and attribute to Him the ultimate source of evil. Yes, we must say that a test was necessary for moral obedience and blessedness, but not even the "necessary sensibilities in which there was no impulse adverse to the law of duty" can explain the least of its psychology. Yet Miley attempts it further in his chapter on "Temptation and the Fall." "While Adam and Eve were constituted holy in their moral nature, the spontaneous tendencies of which were toward the good, yet in their complete constitution there were susceptibilities toward temptation which might be followed into sinful action." There were moral forces that acted as a restraint upon any tendencies toward evil. The strength of these forces depended upon proper conditions. These forces, love and fear, might however also become lax in their duty of restraining evil tendencies. "But love is so operative only when in an active state. This state is conditioned on a proper mental apprehension of God." And now, "the constitution of primitive man did not necessitate such a constant apprehension of God. A temporary diversion of thought was possible, and without sin. The temptation led to such a diversion, and so clouded the vision of God as to prevent the practical forces of love. In this state love could no longer counteract the impulses of awakened appetite and disobedience might follow."<sup>7</sup>

We need not present a similar line of thought with respect to fear. It is perfectly clear that Miley sees in Adam tendencies to sin and not merely a susceptibility as a possible point of contact. So we see that Adam was not up so high and hence did not fall so low.

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<sup>6</sup> John Miley, *Systematic Theology*. New York, 1892, 1:409.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*. 1:435.

And again we come up half way to meet him, for, “Through a gracious endowment all men entertain true religious motives.”<sup>8</sup> Nor does it make any difference whether this be native or gracious according to Miley’s own dictum. Says he: “As for the question of moral freedom it is indifferent whether this capacity be native or gracious. For the consistency of Scripture truth it must have a gracious original.”<sup>9</sup> Man’s freedom before and after sin is essentially the same. And even apart from the influence of the Spirit, “The worldly mind can deeply concern itself with heavenly things.” “This is no doctrine of instantaneous self-regeneration, nor of self-regeneration in any sense. It is simply the law under which we can realize the paramount eligibility of the good. The power is a gracious endowment.”<sup>10</sup> We might not agree that this is no doctrine of self-regeneration in any sense. At least synergism must enter at some point. And this Miley clearly admits. “The sphere of synergism lies back of this, where, through the help of grace and the proper use of the powers of our spiritual agency, we may choose the good; while that of divine monergism is specially in the work of moral regeneration.”<sup>11</sup>

But we need not draw out his views any further. In a separate treatise on the “Arminian Treatment of Original Sin,” Miley openly denies the doctrine. He pleads for consistency in their ranks. Arminius, Wesley, Fletcher, Watson, Watts, Pope and Summer—nearly all teach universal guilt but they have to bring it into harmony with the determining Arminian principle. “A common native damnableness is in itself too thoroughly Augustinian for any consistent place in the Arminian system.”<sup>12</sup> If the Arminian holds with the Calvinist that all men are under sin, then he has no right to evade the question of how God might have dealt with the human race simply by asserting that he has made universal atonement for sin. This has been generally done. Miley would meet the Calvinist face to face. The Calvinists are themselves becoming somewhat ashamed of their doctrine of infant damnation, so “it seems time that Arminians were ashamed of the doctrine of universal infant desert of damnation.”<sup>13</sup> It would seem that Miley has logic on his side. If we assert universal guilt and still will not yield anything to the principles of election and reprobation, we must either deny our first affirmation or at the expense of consistency shun the issue of man’s desert and take refuge to the goal of a universal atonement.

Miley has succeeded in bringing Adam and later mankind quite close together. Neither he nor we are by nature entirely holy nor guilty. The need for a distinctly Christian epistemology is virtually precluded because we are all one. Hence Miley’s arguments for revelation, like Watson’s, do not distinguish between the need of revelation in general and the need of redemptive revelation. In the course of the argument he differs from Watson because he holds that the idea of God is innate and therefore attaches great value to the *a priori* argument for the existence of God, while Watson believes in the validity of the *a posteriori* only. But their appeal is to the same general consciousness of man, a vague non-existent consciousness including Adam, unregenerate

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<sup>8</sup> *Idem.* 2:304.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem.* 2:304.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.* 2:305.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.* 2:305.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem.* 2:512.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem.* 2:520.

and regenerate man. Such procedure violates all proper philosophic method. We cannot assume a general unity or similarity of consciousness. We must examine the nature of the consciousness of Adam, of the regenerate and the unregenerate man as best we may. If we do not do this we can plead for universal validity, but it will only hang in the air. There can be no validity for consciousness only.

Not being true to the *principium speciale*, Arminianism needs no Christian epistemology. Neither has it any foundation for it if it were conscious of a need for it. Its extreme individualism and stress on the free will endows man with so much independence that God must adjust his plans according to man's actions and can not assure universal validity, and man, though so independent, is still a creature so that we cannot expect that he can do any more.

When we come to O. A. Curtis we find that he is completely Arminian as far as his individualism is concerned, but has left all the happy evangelical inconsistencies that still cling to the older Arminianism far behind. Curtis seeks to bring the Arminian principle up to date and wants to stand at the apex of modern philosophy. He acknowledges the influence of Whedon, Carlyle, B. P. Bowne and Martensen. His position seems to have been most profoundly influenced by the personalism of B. P. Bowne. Personality! It is a word to conjure with. The hem of its garment makes one whole. "Self decision is the most important feature of the entire personal process for the simple reason that it is the culmination."<sup>14</sup> No decision that is not the ripest fruition of a completely self-conscious personality can, strictly speaking, be regarded as moral. The experienced personality, complete consciousness alone, can be the basis of appeal. We shall not long discuss his views. The gist of it is before us. Man is not even responsible for his individual character with which he is born, but if he assumes this when he becomes self-conscious then he becomes responsible. Man is morally weak because "he cannot organize himself about his main intention." There is fear in his soul. "His intuitive sense of belonging to the supernatural overmasters him." Therefore the "moral law itself must be transformed into a personal friend."<sup>15</sup> This transformation man can effect for himself. Man can treat the situation with originality. "Man naturally fears the supernatural wherever he finds it, but because he is a free person he can do a greater thing than create an arbitrary argument, he can master his fear by a venture of trust. This personal venture we call faith."<sup>16</sup> So man becomes religious. He needs personal union with the supernatural. "Religion is intended to help a man to reach the loftiest moral life."<sup>1</sup> Actively as a person, passively as an individual, man is satisfied in God and the response to this self-commitment is "an onrushing an enswathement of man by the divine life."<sup>2</sup> Beautiful words these, if only one were warranted to put true meaning into them. With Curtis it has clearly become a matter of autosuggestion; naturalism pure and simple crops up on every page. Curtis can still speak of a need of revelation, but it is a need only for our comfort and communion with God. The need of righteousness, of which he speaks, has nothing to do with sin but the need is for a righteousness as a development of our moral personality. It is clear at

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<sup>14</sup> O. A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*- p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.* p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem.* p. 85.

<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem.* p. 91.

once how totally subversive of the evangelical position this is. With all his emphasis on the personal, he has not met the most personal of needs, a universal validity. His presentation, so vibrant with apparent life, is, after all, the mimicry of an electrified puppet.

We conclude that Arminianism, as a form of evangelicalism, cannot be fully true to the *principium speciale* nor to Theism, since Curtis no longer really considers the *principium speciale*, nor can he in view of his individualism lend support to the teaching of the Scriptures.

## Chapter 7: Reformed Epistemology in General; Adamic Consciousness

Coming now to discuss that form of Christian epistemology which we consider most satisfactory, we already know from the standard of criticism employed throughout the previous chapters that the Reformed view makes the claim of having alone done greatest justice to the *principium speciale*. "Calvinism is Theism come to its own." That, as so many others, was a profound and comprehensive statement of Dr. Warfield. Calvinism alone, with its doctrine of the total dependence of man upon God, a dependence which is absolute and which nevertheless does not violate but brings out the true exercise of the human faculties, Calvinism alone could develop a truly biblical theology and philosophy. Calvinism alone, with its covenant-theology could make God the interpretive category of all reality, and thus afford the necessary universal validity. Calvinism alone could offer such a metaphysics upon which a valid epistemology could be constructed. So also with the *principium speciale*. Calvinism alone with its doctrine of the nature of man and the image of God in man did justice to the noetic influence of sin. The full and open recognition of the loss of God's image in the narrower sense through sin, and the retention of that image in the wider sense through common grace could alone open the way for a valuation of the influence of sin upon the consciousness of man that should neither over nor underestimate the same.

The same recognition prepared the soil also, I believe, for a treatment of our subject that has great methodological advantage over any other. We learn through it to distinguish between the various kinds of consciousness. This in turn offers to us the only basis upon which a fruitful discussion of our subject can proceed. For, and this I believe to be an inconvertible proposition, the God who spoke to Adam and through him to all men is the foundation of human knowledge.

This assertion may appear self-evident and we believe it to be so. Yet it is a methodological principle most frequently ignored and violated. We have seen that every work from the Arminian contingent was vitiated by a neglect to distinguish one type of consciousness from another. Arminianism with all its arguments for revelation and inspiration addresses an unanalyzed and gratuitously assumed general consciousness, which, if one grants the noetic influence of sin to any degree whatever, exists nowhere. Anyone who recognizes that sin has had any contact with the human consciousness at all therewith puts upon himself the obligation, before he proceed one step further, to investigate the extent of the influence that sin has exerted. If he does not investigate this influence, all his arguments hang in the air. His argument is then for a universal validity floating somewhere, as Noah's dove, finding no place for the hollow of its foot. Yes perhaps it is still valid to speak of a general consciousness, or at least of an element that all types of consciousness have in common. But we cannot uncritically assume this. If we find a common element it must be because we search for it in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

We would not maintain that the Reformed theologians have been equally fortunate in applying this principle. Speaking generally, however, they have been led, in the nature of the case and because of their fundamental tenets, to develop their discussion more fruitfully than have others. This becomes evident from a survey of the apologetic

literature published. Reformed apologetics critically examines what bearing power its arguments must have for the various types of consciousness. There may be a difference of opinion as to the exact nature of the types of consciousness, and therefore divergent views of the nature of apologetics, but that there are these various kinds of consciousness to be reckoned with is granted by all.

We cannot too much emphasize this all-important feature of Reformed epistemology. There may be a dispute on the basis of non-revelational philosophy as to the place of epistemology in relation to metaphysics. Some would maintain they cannot be studied separately. Others, and, it seems, more correctly, hold that there is an irreducible epistemological level upon which philosophical problems must be discussed as far as possible before pouring in more ultimate metaphysical considerations. But however that may be, for the Christian, validity is always the first consideration. Knowledge of the bare existence of God, does not help him even a little, if he does not know that his relation to the God of the Bible is as it should be—the fountain of our knowledge of God and his works among men.

Granted this, it again is equally important that he distinguish between (1), the consciousness of Adam (2), that of the unregenerate, and (3), that of the regenerate man. If validity is always the first consideration, it is validity for me that is my first consideration. Hence the question is, what is valid for me? What type of consciousness is mine? How does it distinguish itself from other types?

This leads us to a second methodological consideration of equal importance. In our comparison of the several types of consciousness we must make the regenerate consciousness our starting point. This may not seem so self-evident as our first proposition, but upon reflection it will become apparent that it is a corollary drawn from the first. Validity for me must and can be our only starting point. This day am I convinced of universal validity? How did I come to it? I can trace back perhaps the various steps which led me to the present stage, or perhaps I cannot. At any rate I cannot help but make the present moment my starting point, from which I look back. If my present state of consciousness is totally different from my former, I must have experienced them both before I can make a comparison. Moreover if I regard the present as a higher form than the former, I cannot give a correct estimate of the higher upon the basis of the lower, but I must estimate the lower from the viewpoint of the higher. I must stand on the mountain top if I wish to see a panoramic view.

The force of this argument becomes clearer if we observe that the experience of regeneration colors the whole of our consciousness. “I was blind but now I can see,” reechoes through the whole range of our thought. The Calvinist holds that the regenerate self-consciousness must be our starting point. No Hegelian spider web theory of consciousness is meant when we speak of the regenerated consciousness as man’s true starting point. Our consciousness does not create objectivity and does not pose as a standard of interpretation of objectivity, but it alone has received the assurance of validity, and it alone can therefore speak of that validity before the world. It is a Calvinistic and genuinely Theistic idealism for which we plead.

Our methodological propositions do not bind us to a subjective analysis as such. On the contrary, our startingpoint at once points to special redemptive revelation. We must use the Scriptures as our source of information about our own as well as the other types of consciousness. We are not now speaking of the arguments for the *principium speciale*.

All we mean is that with the experience of regeneration in our hearts we at once turn to the Scriptures as our source of information because regeneration implies that we let God interpret experience for us. When we later speak of the regenerate consciousness in distinction from the others we shall have to investigate this Scripture appeal more in detail. For the present we wish only to justify our method of procedure.

It is but natural that we commence our review with a study of the Adamic consciousness. This must historically come first and, moreover, the Adamic consciousness is the essentially human consciousness when sin is left out of consideration. To be sure, Adam was not a systematic theologian. Still, it remains a fact that Adam represents the type of human consciousness in general. His consciousness must be taken as our standard. From there on we see what the result of sin has been, we see what the “natural man” can find in the way of validity. Then again what the effect of regeneration has been becomes the object of our investigation. The Adamic consciousness is the essentially human consciousness which is never lost and underlies both of the other types of consciousness. What we mean by an “essentially human” consciousness is not that vague something which is assumed by Arminian theologians. It is, rather, an element that we find underlying both of the present types of consciousness, even after sin has been fully discounted. Therein exactly it differs from what the Arminian means by his assumed general consciousness. Our viewpoint that the Adamic is the prototype of all forms of consciousness rests upon the Reformed doctrines of the image of God and common grace. We must here assume that these are validly established or we could make no progress in our argument. Upon such a basis then, the image of God in the narrower sense consisting of true knowledge, righteousness and holiness is lost through sin, but the image of God in the wider sense consisting of man’s rationality is retained. Adam, the non-regenerate, and the regenerate man have this rationality in common.

Secondly, on the Biblical basis we assume, as a part of that general prototype of consciousness, a trustworthiness of the most general sort. We shall not now discuss whether or not this general trustworthiness be the effect of a testimony of the Holy Spirit, but simply state the fact which must stand immovable if Christianity is to stand. The trustworthiness of the senses and the intellectual processes of man must be assumed or we fall into self-stultification. In self-consciousness we hit upon a “*noumenon*,” we cannot deny ourselves. This is Biblically established in the doctrine that man is created in the image of God. God is self-conscious and knows all things; we are self-conscious in his image; that which falls within our ken is valid because of our creation in God’s image.

This fact leads us at once to a discussion of the more specific characteristics of the Adamic consciousness. We picture Adam in Paradise. “Created in the image of God” becomes the key phrase to the whole. Created in the image of God, in the first place in general; it includes his general rationality and the validity of knowledge that comes within his sphere.

Right here it seems to me, at this irreducible epistemological level, the question of the validity of the Christian-theistic arguments must be settled. The argument is not as to the general validity of consciousness; that is granted on the basis of the creation of man in the image of God. Even so, one often reads a line of argumentation which contends that the validity of the argument is established if only the validity of consciousness is granted.

This is intermingling the issues and charging one's opponent with an extreme position that is not held. I know of no Reformed theologian that does not grant the general validity of consciousness. But the question is as to the range of that consciousness and as to the method by which it receives its knowledge.

Before we take up these questions we must point to still another source of confusion in Christian theistic argument. The question of the validity of this argument is often discussed without constant observation of our primary methodological proposition—that we must establish for which consciousness we claim its validity. For example, a Christian theistic argument that there must be a God who rewards the right and punishes the wrong could have no meaning for Adam. Not only that, we must critically reckon with the noetic influence of sin before we establish the bearing power of a Christian theistic argument. To do this simultaneously with a discussion of the Christian theistic argument as such is to treat two questions at once, which seldom leads to clarity of thought. In the case of Adam we face the question as such; later it comes to us beclouded by all sorts of entangling alliances. Let us look at it in its pure medium.

In the first place, what was the range of the Adamic consciousness? This is very difficult to determine and we would venture to say that because of this difficulty, arguments in favor of and against the validity of theistic arguments cannot well be too positive. The burden of the proof is here with him who wishes to establish their validity. He must state and prove that knowledge of God came at once by virtue of creation (and creation in the image of God) into the range of the Adamic consciousness. We have seen to be a fact that the idea of creation in the image of God does not in itself prove the point because that can, at most, establish the validity of consciousness but not its range. So the question sharpens itself to the notion of creation.

Creation, it may be urged, is by God, therefore God must be back of creation. Could Adam reason thus? Suppose he could not do otherwise, then the question still remains: what kind of God must be back of creation? The relevance of this question becomes apparent when we reflect that we cannot be satisfied with anything less than an eternal God who has no necessary connection with the universe; the God revealed through Christ in Scripture.

So the question once more sharpens itself to the notion of space and time. Professor Flint, perhaps better than any other non-biblical thinker, recognizes this fact in his "Agnosticism" and realizes that our acceptance or rejection of his theistic argument will stand or fall with our acceptance or rejection of his view of space and time. Man is created in the medium of space and time. If we would maintain here the validity of the Christian theistic argument, we must seek to bring valid knowledge of God within the range of consciousness by either of two methods. We must take the position that man, though living and breathing in the medium of space and time, is not only receptive to the revelation of a higher knowledge but can positively without such revelation, attain to a universally valid knowledge of this non-temporal absolute. Or, if trying this passage we see the Kantian danger signal of "bridge out!" we turn back and try another road, which leads us to a position where we maintain that time and space are a necessary connecting medium between God and man. On the first position, we assume that time is concreated with us as a condition of existence, but that we can get beyond it with our thoughts without the light of revelation. On the second position, time and space are not concreated

with us, but are independent forms in which we live, forms that stand in a necessary connection with the eternity of God.

How can a creature of space and time can get valid notions of an eternal being? On this basis eternity is not conceived of even as an everlasting presence, that is, a time comprehending medium only, but as being a category totally different in nature from time. Time is then real for God because he has concreated it with the world, but it is real for him in a different sense than for man. Man is limited within time and space; God is not only present in all time, and all time present to him, but time has reality only as created by God outside of him, and is not a form of his existence. On such a notion of the relation of space and time to the mode of existence of God it is difficult to see how man can get to possible validity of anything beyond space and time except through the medium of revelation.

Against the second position, it may be urged that to conceive of time as necessarily related to eternity can in no way do justice to the latter. It is what all non-revelational philosophy must do. It must interpret God and man in the same category. Space, time, and change form for it irreducible givens of experience which it is vain to seek to analyze. Such at least is the position of much of modern philosophy. Or if space and time are further analyzed, they are only intellectualized which helps matters nothing whatever because God and man still remain within the same category. So the difficulty for the sort of view of space and time that the second viewpoint maintains is to steer free of creating God in the image of man instead of man in the image of God.

If it may seem doubtful whether man could thus obtain validity, we may ask what possible alternative there is. It would seem that a possible position to maintain would be to say that man at the very moment of creation received supernatural revelation. By supernatural revelation we do not mean a special pre-redemptive revelation but, even beyond that, a supernatural revelation that had reference to this life only. The special supernatural pre-redemptive revelation was to reveal God's will for man's life beyond this world and how to obtain it. But it might be held that even besides that, it was also necessary for God to reveal himself supernaturally in order that man might know himself and God and their relation properly. To take such a position would seem to be the necessary result of the first view of the nature of space and time before mentioned. If space and time are concreated with man, and God is not necessarily related to them, but the eternity in which He dwells is a totally different category than time, the very existence of which would seem beyond the comprehension of spatio-finite creatures, then it becomes necessary that God reveal himself to man if man is to have knowledge of Him at all.

Now which of these two positions is right will, I take it, be difficult to ascertain. It may be said that it is a purely hypothetical question. This may be said by those who make much of the Christian theistic arguments. They will say that man never existed without a knowledge of God and that very fact proves the validity of his knowledge. But we have seen that the question of fact does not, by itself, solve the question of method. Because it is equally maintained by others that revelation also has always been a fact. But to say that therefore the question is purely hypothetical is to forget that it is bound to become a question of importance when the noetic influences of sin are discussed. If the image of God in the wider sense includes the ability to reason from man to God then that ability remained, to an extent at least, in the unregenerate consciousness of man. If even Adam

could not climb to heaven unless the ladder was let down to Him then natural man will not be able to do so either. To escape from the first alternative one might say that though the image of God in the wider sense is left to man it is not left to him unmarred, so that even if Adam could reason from man to God, perhaps man today cannot. On the other hand, to escape the second alternative one must assert the truth of what the Genesis account informs us; God created man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.

But now the second consideration in the discussion of the Adamic consciousness is the image of God in the narrower sense. It consists of true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. We are concerned, of course, only with the purely epistemological implication of these terms. By virtue of the image of God in the narrower sense man comes to a consciousness of his true relation to God. It brings to him universal validity; he has true knowledge of God. Yet how? Here it seems is one of the most baffling problems of Reformed epistemology. We have seen that our view of space and time had to determine whether we conceived of Adam as able or not able to reason to God. We have made the distinction between the validity of consciousness formally and materially, and maintained upon that basis the possibility of holding the view that though by virtue of the image of God in the wider sense the validity of knowledge formally is given yet not materially, so that the verbal pre-redemptive speech of God is basic to a valid knowledge of God. We are told that man was created in the image of God. Does that mean that he therefore at once also had the content of the true knowledge of God? Or will it be necessary that here also we make a distinction between formal and material validity? There seems to be at least one strong argument in favor of it, and that is the necessity of explaining the fact of special pre-redemptive supernatural revelation. God spoke to man through all the trees of the garden; that, if our former distinction is correct, was pre-redemptive supernatural general revelation. God spoke also to man through the tree of life. Through that tree of life God pictured to man a yet greater glory than he already enjoyed in Paradise upon condition of obedience. It is remarkable that in the verbal concomitant vouchsafed to man, God does not speak of a higher realm destined to be the possession of man. He merely enjoins obedience. The speech of that higher life must come through the tree itself. Through it comes a special supernatural pre-redemptive revelation; through the other trees a general supernatural pre-redemptive not only, but non-redemptive revelation. We must ask the question here, if man by virtue of his creation in the image of God knew the content first of a knowledge of God in general and then of God's purpose with him for the future in particular, what then was the function of both of these types of revelation? That the knowledge of a higher life comes through revelation is evident from the fact of the tree of life's being in Paradise. Are we therefore not warranted in making a distinction between formal validity and material validity in the case of the image of God in the narrower sense, as we did in the case of the image of God in the wider sense? The one is then based upon the other. By the image in the wider sense man was certain that the general revelation that spoke to him was valid. Upon the basis of this, through the image in the narrower sense, man is at once certain that the content of the special pre-redemptive revelation is true.

We have introduced this discussion and these distinctions for the sake of an attempt to come to clearness on the question of validity irrespective of the influence of sin. It would seem that at least some of the lack of clearness on questions of apologetics and

epistemology in general is due to a failure of a complete and thorough analysis of the Adamic consciousness. Not till we come to some degree of clearness on that point can we expect to make much progress in any other phase of our problem. But so much is clear that however much divergence there may be on details, Reformed Theology as a whole accepts the validity of knowledge in general. Man has valid knowledge of reality. God, the source of his being, is also the source of his knowledge and therein lies his validity. And herewith we must leave Adam in Paradise; till we see the tree of life on either side of the of the river of life, yielding its fruit every month for the healing of the nations.

## Chapter 8: Reformed Epistemology— Unregenerate Consciousness

Older Arminianism claimed to believe in total depravity but as Miley said, its doctrine of universal atonement was inconsistent with it; Arminianism had to give up either the one or the other and it chose to let total depravity go. Calvinism has held it, holds it today, and will hold it unless it deny itself. Sin has perverted the will and darkened the intellect. “By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.” Thus the Westminster Confession of Faith sums up the result of sin. “Wholly defiled in all our faculties”; that is a strong phrase, and still not too strong when we see the various biblical statements brought together in one whole.

It is not our purpose to review the exegesis of Calvin or any one else has given. We take it that the Scriptures are very explicit in their statements of the gruesome effects of sin. The noetic effects are generally summed up by the term “darkened.” The understanding has been darkened. The Westminster Confession says that sin, “wholly defiled our faculties.” That is a splendid and comprehensive phrase. It takes the faculties together. We might say the whole consciousness has been defiled. When we put it that way we at once guard ourselves against any false separation of the faculties; there lies one of the greatest weaknesses in many discussions on revelation and inspiration. In a previous chapter we saw that Watson and Miley both believed that the intellect is practically untouched by sin and can and will see truth when presented to it, even though the will should demur. Such separation of faculties the Calvinist can never condone. The darkness of the intellect and the perverseness of the will dwell in the same house; they are but aspects of the same consciousness. We cannot lay too much stress on this. It is not anti-intellectualism that makes us do so but opposition to a false intellectualism.

Of course it does not follow that the intellect is therewith shelved. Even Kuyper with his insistence on a twofold science, one of the unregenerate and one of the regenerate consciousness, allows for a three-fold territory where formal cooperation between the two is possible because the intellect operates the same way in both. The first is that of physics in so far as only computation is concerned. The second that of the somatic side of the spiritual sciences such as psychology etc., because also in them there is much intellectual work to be done that needs no interpretation. Thirdly is logic. “*Door het feit der zonde is namelijk de formeele arbeid van het denken niet aangetast, en uit dien hoofde brengt de palin genesie in dezen denarbeid ook geen verandering teweeg. Er is niet tweeërlei, er is slechts éene logica.*”<sup>1</sup> How Kuyper harmonizes this with his later and continued insistence on the total inability of man to see the truth I do not know. Have not the powers of logic been weakened? Kuyper here confuses two things. To establish that there is but one logic for the regenerate and the unregenerate he need not have taken refuge to the statement that the formal power of logic has not been touched by sin. He might have admitted that sin had weakened the formal powers of logic and that they are in this weakened condition in both types of consciousness. Kuyper here unduly separates the faculties.

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia der Heilige Godgeleerdheit*, 1894, 2:107.

With this general position that sin affected the consciousness as a whole, the Reformed view that man lost the image of God in the narrower sense is in full accord. In paradise man had true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Ever since his fall in sin man has none of these. To speak in this connection of “*rein noetische Momente*,” as Francke desires, does violence again to the unity of consciousness. We are chiefly concerned with validity, with man’s knowledge of God. But we are concerned only with that sort of knowledge that is life eternal.

Suppose then that after the entrance of sin man could still intellectually but not morally or spiritually know God, it would not help him. He cannot even intellectually know God as He truly is. He has lost true knowledge. Validity in any rich meaning of the term is gone. When the non-regenerate man speculates about God and speaks of the supernatural, does he then see “glimmerings” of the true God or is it a mirage of his own fabrication? If we say the former we shall be placed before the dilemma of how a little knowledge of the true God can still fail of a full knowledge. Will not any sort of contact with the eternal transform the temporal? Does the Holy Spirit touch with the tip of His wing and still leave men dead in sins? In most philosophy we have the non-regenerate consciousness seeking, stretching, yearning for validity. Ancient philosophy sought it in conceptualization of all experience. Modern philosophy has criticized the ancient because of its abstraction. But we soon see that every criticism of modern philosophy upon its predecessors can be returned upon it. All philosophy must in the nature of the case, be exclusively analytical. Kant’s problem of the possibility of synthetic judgments *a priori* it can never solve. All philosophy is a subsumption under principles that must be valid for every type of experience. Even when, with Kant, space and time are ultimates of consciousness, the ground is only shifted from the outer to the inner and all is again intellectualized. The given of experience, whether for the Greeks or the moderns is all ultimate and the mind cannot extricate itself from such belief. The facts of consciousness are ultimate. Its own judgment is ultimate. Arrange these ultimates and you have philosophy. Of necessity an irreducible  $\alpha\alpha\alpha\kappa\eta$  will then always remain. Neither Aristotle nor Kant meet the irreducible difference between fact and value at the epistemological level. That which is universal and therefore logically valid is to them also real. We can say that, with slight modification, of all non-revelational philosophy. That which seems valid for the finite consciousness, that is, that which falls within its categories, is real and only that is real.

What philosophy can never give us as Christians is that we experience the very suppositions of experience through the Holy Spirit which give us certainty. Philosophy can never come to a genuine deduction of the categories. Kant’s deduction failed because it had to have recourse to the empirical and could not sustain itself in the purely logical. So all philosophical deduction must fail because its wings do not reach to heaven.

We observe this in the modern notion of time. Time is quite generally considered to be an ultimate datum of experience. Modern philosophy protests against the conceptualization of the ultimate by the Greeks. Time must not be explained discreetly as a division between past and future because that finally destroys it. Time is experienced continuously. The meaning of the past and the future are focused in the present. As a collecting snowball we take our past experience and look to the future where the possibility of spiritual experience is so great that, perhaps, it needs a temporal sequence without end to express it. The primary meaning of the New Testament, when it speaks of

heaven, is said to be this semi-timeless concept of spiritual experience so full of meaning. Death is not the end of experience but is itself but one experience as life is but one; the whole being is but an episode. Little waves upon large waves and large waves upon an ocean, such is the relation of time and eternity. God focusing in himself all the experience of all finite personalities both of the past and of the future is, on such a view, eternal in a more comprehensive sense than man, yet in essentially the same sense.

We see that non-revelational philosophy must always remain analytical in its *a priori* and *a posteriori* in its synthesis; it can never get beyond the Aristotelian level. To be sure, modern philosophy in some of its phases tries to meet the question of validity at the “epistemological level” before pushing on to the final metaphysical issues. But it does not succeed. It made a desperate attempt to pursue the right method but it failed; it could not do otherwise. Its epistemology identifies the finite and the infinite at the start of its thinking and must, therefore, do so at the end. Its temporal-eternity relation must ever be of the Platonic sort—time is an imitation of eternity. Eternal generation of the world is the natural consequence.

The image of God in the narrower sense is gone. Man therewith lost his *πιστις*, that receptivity of spirit whereby he would accept the revelation of God as valid. He shifted the ground of validity from the divine to the human. His spirit refused any longer to be receptive as well as active. Anything, to be considered as objectively valid, must from now on be the production of the human spirit. There have been all sorts of Realism that have protested against just this sort of thing. I am not speaking of slight vibrations in the great current or of disharmonies within the family of non-revelational thinkers; I am taking them as a whole. And then a self-generating mirage idealism remains its general type. No form of philosophy can admit of a supernatural revelation of any sort; the finite must forever remain its standard.

This, I take it, is the noetic significance of the phrase that sums up the New Testament teaching on the subject, namely that of enmity against God. That we do not always see an open hatred or venom displayed is due in part to the fact that in this sphere the intellect predominates and the will recedes. But the fact remains that all the faculties are defiled. The whole of man’s propensities are away from God. Man turns his back to God; what eyesight there remains in him looks the other way.

This attitude is best revealed when the *principium speciale* is the object of discussion. In this *principium speciale* the suggestion comes to man that his own basis of validity is unsound. The *principium speciale* offers the restoration of the original validity based upon man’s true knowledge of God, but it comes in external form, that is, before man in the Scriptures and man in his consciousness. It comes with the demand that we recognize that all our own attempts at validity are not only fruitless and vain, but godless. What is the result? The finite consciousness cannot and will not recognize that its gold is false though glittering and its eyesalve only blinding. Methodologically it continues its mistake of pushing on the metaphysical issue before the epistemological has been settled. For it, special revelation can be no factor that demands serious consideration. Granted that ...<sup>2</sup>

...enables man to come to a position of being able to completely follow a theistic argument depends, as we have seen, not only upon our conception of the influence of sin on the mind, but also upon the prior question of the range, extent, and manner of man’s

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<sup>2</sup> missing pager—editor

original knowledge of God. We shall not re-open this question here. At this juncture we must face the problem of the possible influence of sin upon "the image of God in the wider sense." It is an historical fact that no one philosopher has ever come to the viewpoint of Biblical Theism from philosophical considerations alone. This may be due to the fact that the knowledge of God did not, except through revelation, come within the range of man, at the first. And as long as we have not taken a definite stand on this latter question, we shall not be able to take a definite stand on the question whether perhaps sin has influenced the "image of God" in the wider sense, so that though by virtue of creation he could come to a knowledge of God, he cannot now.

How then can we account for the general theistic position that many assume? Even on the extremist view conceivable that, first, the knowledge of God did not fall within the range of man originally and that secondly, even if it had then sin still defiled it, the theistic position can be accounted for upon the basis of the "glimmerings," the "scintillae." If man did not have these, he would be a veritable devil. Powers of logic, though greatly weakened, are still his. He can speculate upon the object-subject and the subject-subject relation as implying a personal supernatural. And since his will also shares in these "scintillae," he has a desire to make these speculations and places his trust in them. But the whole structure that he erects is not a Biblical but a general theism. Between these there is a great difference. The former makes God the starting point; the latter makes man his starting point in thinking of God, the world and himself. This is not stating it too sharply. The Theism (e.g. of Andrew Seth or Josiah Royce) is the diametrical opposite of the theism of the Bible. Hence we conclude that the "*rudera*" are not remnants of the image of God in the narrower sense; they are aspects of the image of God in the wider sense; they amply account for the best that the human spirit, outside redemptive revelation, has produced.

Here we may observe that not until this question of Reformed epistemology at this stage is further developed that the Reformed doctrine of common grace will be understood in all its implications. It was and is the doctrine of common grace that keeps Reformed theology well balanced. It enables it to do justice to that which has appeared upon pagan soil without identifying it with Christianity. It makes a distinction of quality as well as of quantity. In turn, epistemology must render its service to common grace for grace received and clarify further the implication of that doctrine.

The Reformed view is here far, immeasurably far, ahead of any other system of theology. It has enabled the churches that adhere to it to have a well balanced view of the world. It has especially enabled us to assume such an attitude toward the world that, on the one hand, safeguards it against Anabaptism and on the other against world conformity. Let us not forget this advantage. Evangelical Methodism, if taken seriously, errs on the side of Anabaptism. So also a perversion of Kuyper's views as advocated by the Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof. On the other hand, a world conformity lies ever at the door. So today we must become fully conscious of the implications of epistemology for the doctrine of common grace.

And now that we have followed the result of sin upon the Adamic consciousness, and have seen the non-regenerate consciousness in action, in vain attempting to attain validity, we must, finally, turn to a consideration of the regenerate consciousness and see whether and how validity is obtained.

## Chapter 9: Reformed Epistemology— Regenerate Consciousness

If our analysis of the Adamic and the non-regenerate consciousness has not failed to make its point, then we have a basis for further discussion of the subject.

The Adamic consciousness remains the prototype. Recreation is based upon creation. All Reformed theologians, without exception, have made this their basis. One may have emphasized the intellect more than another, but together they have insisted that the God-given faculties of man are not to be ignored but rather made the channels of operation by the Holy Spirit. Every type of mysticism that ignores any one of the human faculties will never find a home under a Reformed roof. The position taken by some, that the Holy Spirit implants the new life immediately in man, is not out of harmony with this, for in that case the faculties are still the media through which this new life comes into consciousness.

From this starting point it follows that the regenerate consciousness is just what its name signifies; it is the Adamic consciousness liberated from sin. Still, that does not cover the entire meaning. Sin has left its traces. The regenerate man's condition has not caught up with his state; evil effects remain in him. But there are not only evil effects, there are also good effects which result from regeneration. In this, validity is now forever established.

Perhaps the best way to come to a clear view of what we understand by the regenerate consciousness is to watch it in its growth; method and content can not be separated. If we see the method through which the influence of sin is banished we will be able to understand what the nature of the consciousness itself must be.

We have seen that man is dead in sin, not merely sick. He cannot even raise himself to receive the medicine he needs, as Lutheranism and Arminianism require. The initiative must come from without. But from whom? From no one less than the eternal God in the third Person of the Trinity. No human being can raise the dead; only God. God alone can reestablish validity. But why should the Spirit be willing to do so? Because God in the second person of the Trinity has once again made the knowledge of God not only possible through His redemptive work but actual as well, and now sends His Spirit, to apply redemption through Jesus' blood and righteousness to the hearts of the elect of God.

Before we can discuss the manner of the activity of the Holy Spirit we must therefore first study the manner through which objective validity comes within the reach of man again. We have already said that it is through the work of Christ. The incarnation and all the acts in the drama of Christ's work are historical acts. The prophets of old, the symbolism that preceded Him, in fine, all the convergent lines of deed and word through which the Christ was prefigured were historical phenomena. This historical manifestation of redemption necessitated the externalization of the avenues through which God would give knowledge to man. Consequently if man was to have valid knowledge of God he could receive it through these channels alone. The Holy Spirit gives him no knowledge of God except that which is taken from Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

God and man were totally separated by sin. Not as though man could live one moment without the sustaining hand of the Almighty. Satan himself is held in existence

by God. But, as already noted, the natural man has no valid knowledge of God. The incarnation reopens the possibility for renewed validity. Without sin the incarnation would have been unnecessary. On the other hand the incarnation, as such, does not restore validity. For right here a forensic factor enters into our epistemology greatly to complicate matters, which, if we ignore, we never shall see light. Non-regenerate epistemology has ignored this factor entirely. Romish, Lutheran and Arminian epistemology have vaguely sensed it but have not done justice to it. Sin is lawlessness, it is disobedience. That lawlessness must be taken away, and obedience renewed before the knowledge of God is possible again. Hence the necessity of the crucifixion of Christ, the Son of Man. All the billows of the wrath of God upon apostatized humanity were there, on the cross, poured out upon the substitute for man. The passive and active obedience of Christ, freedom from sin, and the right to eternal knowledge of God for man follow one another. Christ, as the second Adam, chose to live by faith. He made His Father's will his standard and withstood all temptations. Behold in him the perfect type of human consciousness! His consciousness, when the choice of following God or self was placed before it, has chosen God. Therewith validity is eternalized as well as moralized. He died upon the cross in our stead. Therewith all the obstacles to validity have not only been removed, but validity has been actualized.

But it is just because the forensic work of Christ is the basis of all validity that we cannot attain a true knowledge of reality unless we are partakers of that forensic righteous relation which He has established between God and man. Hence Christ cannot be our model only. His forensic work must become ours. His forensic work can become ours through substitution only. There is no other possible method. If validity could be, and had been established on any other basis than the forensic righteousness of Christ imputed to man, he would descend into outer darkness, where the worm does not die and the fire is never quenched. We must be justified in Him if we are to have knowledge of God, of the world, and of man.

We see from the nature of Christ's work, what must and what will be the nature of our validity if we are in Him. Justification upon the basis of Christ's work is our starting point. When justified, sin, as enmity against the law, has been taken away. The door is unbarred. God's revelation can pour into the soul; man at last has true knowledge of God. This knowledge endures forever, because Christ's active obedience has been imputed unto us.

What then is the role of the work of the Holy Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit who gives us new birth, to make the subjective application of the objective redemption of Christ. The Spirit makes us one with Christ. He makes us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Here is a man, unregenerate, the natural man, who hates God and his neighbor, and not the least himself. The only possible avenue to a valid knowledge of God is now through Christ, as he is revealed in the Scriptures. The only possible basis of man's subjective validity is through the consciousness that he is one with Christ. But I, as a natural man, have turned my back to God. I have set myself up as a standard of my life. The Holy Spirit must therefore turn me about. But I resist. I will not acknowledge that there is anything wrong with my standard of judgment. It is especially obnoxious to me to have men point to Jesus and the Bible as my only hope. Jesus is to me at best a model man and the Bible is an historic piece of literature. I vaunt myself that I have validity, and even place myself upon a Theistic basis; I am a personal idealist of high moral character. If

you would offer the cross of Christ as an object upon which to speculate, I might listen. But the implication of the cross of Christ is that sin has touched the core of man's personality so that not one bit of him is left untouched. Hence you require of me that I get down from my pedestal as judge and let God judge me. It implies that I must repent and believe. To believe, that is the hardest thing in the world for the conceited heart of man to do. It implies a total reversal of one's attitude of mind. It implies an open declaration of bankruptcy which is hard for him to do who thinks he is rich and increased with goods. It implies the attitude of the millionaire reduced to poverty, begging bread. It implies the attitude of the drowning man at sea stretching forth his hands for mercy and sure to perish without it.

In what manner the Holy Spirit overcomes the resistance of man is difficult to determine. Those who insist that faith is assent to evidence hold that the Holy Spirit operates immediately upon consciousness. Warfield has written a paper on Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God in which he informs his readers that Calvin's view of the work of the Holy Spirit was that His acts co-terminate with the activity of consciousness. I have given a review of that paper last year in my essay on "The Will in its Theological Relations" and will not now repeat it. In his *Middelijke en onmiddelijke Wedergeboorte*, Bavinck points out clearly that, generally speaking, Reformed theologians have held to mediate regeneration. That is, the Holy Spirit makes use of means, such as the preaching of the gospel and argumentation. The "indicia" of divinity are upon the face of the Scriptures, but the scales must be taken from our eyes, so as to enable us to see what the Scriptures signify. When the subjective illumination of the Holy Spirit has taken place we see the divinity of Scripture as the physical eye beholds the whiteness of snow. Kuyper has sponsored the idea of immediate regeneration but even then, in coming to the consciousness of faith, the believer must employ his faculties. All agree, however, that whether mediate or immediate, it is the Holy Spirit that takes the initiative in regeneration.

The method employed by the Spirit to transplant from one type of consciousness to the other involves, therefore, also a definite viewpoint of apologetics. We do not intend to enter into a long discussion of all the material produced by Reformed theologians that would have bearing on the subject. The various essays for the supernatural, inspiration, and revelation that have appeared in the *Princeton Theological Review*, and the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, as well as other works of similar nature and especially Kuyper's work on *The Holy Spirit*, would then have to be discussed. We shall confine ourselves to a few general remarks, and a notice of the skirmish between Kuyper and Warfield on this subject.

All agree that the Holy Spirit must convince men of the necessity and actuality of the *principium speciale*. That Warfield's view of the nature of Apologetics as expressed in his article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* is consistent with this viewpoint may be regarded at the least as open to dispute. He speaks of apologetics, and that means, if I interpret correctly, independently of the Holy Spirit, as establishing "the constitutive and regulative principles of theology as a science." For whom? For what type of consciousness? Can I establish the validity of theology as a science without the "subjective illumination" of the Spirit that enables me to see the "indicia" of divinity in the Scriptures? Or is it for me after I am regenerate? But then I, through the Spirit, immediately, as Warfield says in his essay on Calvin, see the Scriptures as divine. Then

theology is established for me as a science already without Apologetics. Warfield speaks of Apologetics as the expression of a spontaneous inclination within the heart of the believer to give an account to himself of the faith that is within him. Apologetics is not to be defensive but is merely expressive, to assure ourselves that we are dealing with realities and not with fancies. Can we thus exclude the defensive? What would self-assurance be if it is not set over against error? Could Adam have apologetics? It is difficult to see how apologetics can be kept from alliance with the defense against error. Apologetics must relate us to the non-regenerate consciousness in some fashion. We present arguments for the supernatural, its possibility and its actuality. But then we ask ourselves about the value of these arguments. Are they not simply to display the indicia of divinity of the *principium speciale*, so that if the Holy Spirit removes the scales from the eyes we may see the light. Such is Dr. Warfield's view of the origins of the knowledge of God. Such, to be consistent, should be his view of Apologetics.

Our second observation follows from the first. Because the Holy Spirit must convince of the necessity and validity of the *principium speciale*, the general view of Reformed apologetics is that the arguments presented in favor of special revelation and inspiration tend to display the "indicia" of divinity in all their splendor according to the dignity of man's intellect. All the articles written by Reformed theologians of Princeton perform this task. They display the reasonableness of Christianity. They put the truths of Scripture into capsules adapted to the needs of the various patients. University professors need intellectual capsules. It may be difficult here to distinguish Apologetics from systematics, which also states according to the modes of the human faculties and capacities, the full truth of Scripture. The completed thetical statement may by its magnificent splendor become the best apologetic. Still, Apologetics assumes more of the argumentative form. The whole exposition of truth needs to act as a prism through which the manifold glory of the truth shines forth, to be seen when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of men. Hence anyone holding unreservedly to the first proposition that the Holy Spirit must take the scales from men's eyes, can consistently hold to no other view of Apologetics than the one mentioned, that it seeks to display the truth in the form best adapted for each man. The Holy Spirit will use various means, simple preaching for simple people; erudite arguments for educated people.

The function of reason thus becomes to work out all the philosophical presuppositions and implications of Christianity, and reveal their reasonableness. Just at this point we have not always been equally clear and consistent. We have sometimes tended to separate reason from the regenerate and reason from the non-regenerate consciousness, and taken them out of their setting, and yoked them unequally together. This was a methodological mistake of Arminianism, and Reformed theologians have not entirely escaped it. It is due to a failure to observe the first and most fundamental rule of epistemology, namely that validity can have no meaning except for consciousness. If we speak of reason as a general something, without stating to what consciousness it belongs, we speak for a vague type of universal validity that can have no meaning for any consciousness but hangs in the air. reason does not exist except (a), in connection with and as part of non-regenerate consciousness and (b), in connection with and as part of the regenerate consciousness.

Hence the reason of the regenerate consciousness can and must display the truth that it experiences in intellectual form and, as such, it will correspond formally to the intellectual aspect of the non-regenerate consciousness, but more it cannot do. Arguments

for Christianity? The more the better. Kuyper with all his opposition to apologetics has by virtue of his genius perhaps presented more arguments for Christianity than any other Reformed theologian. But in every case the Holy Spirit makes them effective.

Bare belief in the knowledge of God as existent without a knowledge of Him through Christ gives no validity.

Such, I believe, to be the general viewpoint and some of the weaknesses of present Reformed Apologetics. It is essentially the same for all leading Reformed theologians. Warfield has indeed attacked Kuyper's view of Apologetics. Now as to Kuyper's encyclopedic division of Apologetics within the science of theology, it is weak. Kuyper says, "*Ze is niet diathetisch want ze beschrijft het dogma niet, ze is niet thetisch want ze stelt het dogma niet, noch bewijst het, maar ze is antithetisch, overmits ze haar pleit ten behoeven van het dogma voert tegenover hetgeen de pseudo-philosophie tegen het Dogma, zijn gronden of gevolgen overstelt.*"<sup>1</sup>

Here we may ask what more effective way is there of defending the grounds, as admittedly apologetics must do, than by proving their rationality? But, secondly, we would ask not only what better way, but what other possible way of defense is there than to prove your position right or at least more tenable than any other. But Kuyper himself, at another place, says that Apologetics is not exclusively defensive. "*Niet enkel ter weerlegging van den tegenstander, maar ter wille van de eere der waarheid, en voor haar eigen rust voert ze haar verweer.*" This is similar to Warfield's expression that Apologetics is a fundamental need of the human spirit. But all this must also be done by Kuyper's Christian philosopher. Kuyper has promised too many jobs; so he is making new departments. However wide and however independent the concept of Christian philosophy be taken, it will be one of its fruits that it afford a sound Christian theistic basis for all the sciences and thus, if you will, incidentally but therefore none the less securely, protects theology against false philosophy. A church building is not erected for rain protection but it may serve that purpose. Why then put up an umbrella when under its roof? That is all the Kuyperian apologist can and need do. Hence we would scarcely expect Kuyper, who so strongly advocates the notion of a comprehensive world view, Kuyper the founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, to plead for a chair in Apologetics when his philosopher can do all the work that needs to be done in defense of the Christian life and world view.

Then, as to the difference of viewpoint between Warfield and Kuyper, that the former says Apologetics is not antithetical and the latter says it is, we should remember that both say that it is for validating truth to the Christian's consciousness. This principle ought to bring them together. Against Warfield we can then maintain that there would be no meaning to validating the truth if the antithesis of falsehood had never come. If Adam had not sinned, he would then too have validated his faith against temptation. But now the search for knowledge of God has assumed the form of a search for truth, and therefore the validation of the true knowledge of God is invariably colored by its opposition to the truth. I ask myself now why I am not an agnostic. To the Agnostic with whom I speak it is not only an implied, if not expressed, defense of my system but an attack on his. On the other hand, Kuyper's position to the effect that Apologetics is only defensive is untenable in another connection.

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia* 3:459.

If Warfield had attacked Kuyper's encyclopedic division or his exclusively defensive viewpoint of Apologetics he would have had a good point. But I think it is evident, and here I do not speak with hesitation, that Warfield has not understood Kuyper's meaning of the task of Apologetics. Perhaps he did not take the time to read it carefully. Perhaps he unwittingly substituted his own view of Apologetics for that of Kuyper and concluded that because Kuyper has tucked away the Apologetic department in a rather remote corner that, therefore, Kuyper was inconsistent. First Warfield correctly states Kuyper's view. "Hidden away as a subdivision of what Dr. Kuyper calls the 'Dogmatological group' of disciplines, ... one has to search for it before he finds it, and when he finds it, he discovers that its function is confined closely, we might almost say jealously, to the narrow task of defending developed Christianity against philosophy, so called."<sup>2</sup>

But on the next page Warfield substitutes his own idea for that of Kuyper and from that standpoint charges Kuyper with being inconsistent. Says he: "Meanwhile as for Christianity itself, it has remained up to this point, let us say it frankly—the great Assumption. The work of the exegete, the historian, the systematist, has all hung, so to speak, in the air; not until all their labor is accomplished do they pause to wipe their streaming brows to ask whether they have been dealing with realities, or perchance with fancies only."

That this is Warfield's own view of Apologetics is clear from his own statement above quoted to the effect that Apologetics seeks to establish and validify the basic principles of theology. If this had been Kuyper's view then he would have been inconsistent because he put Apologetics as a subdivision of a subdivision. But Warfield's own words above tell us that Kuyper's view has almost jealously guarded the task of Apologetics to be a defense against false philosophy only. Hence for Kuyper, Christianity has not been "the great assumption" till Apologetics pauses to see whether we have perchance been dealing with fancies. Apologetics has, for Kuyper, no such function. On whatever other basis, by whatever other method, the question of reality or fancy must be settled; it is for Kuyper not the task of Apologetics.

On the contrary Kuyper has taken great pains to establish certainty by other means. It has been his never-ending refrain that the Holy Spirit produces immediate certainty within the heart of man, even to the point where we might say he underestimates the means the Holy Spirit might employ. For that reason Warfield has classified him with the mystics. How then, after Kuyper had definitely denied the right to Apologetics to establish certainty, and has written his whole *Encyclopedia* to prove that certainty comes through the Holy Spirit immediately upon the consciousness of the believer, how then could Kuyper thereupon turn about and say that now still Apologetics must do the task that he has denied it, and that has been done by someone else?

In reality Warfield's attack should have been leveled against volume two of Kuyper's work. It is there that Kuyper has developed his notion of validity. It is really a scientific treatise on epistemology far more comprehensive than that which Francke has offered. We cannot stop to review its main contention, but would only note that the charge of epistemological mysticism which Warfield makes upon Kuyper, and which is really directed against this part of Kuyper's work, is not to the point. Kuyper has in this work,

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introduction" to Francis Beattie, *Apologetics, or the Rational Vindication of Christianity*. Richmond, VA, 1903. p. 21.

better than any other, followed the only sound epistemological principle for Calvinism, that validity can have no meaning except for consciousness. Throughout, his opposition has not been against the use of the intellect, but against the non-regenerate consciousness. In a former chapter, we have seen that he even held to a threefold territory which the intellects of both types of consciousness may scout with equal success. That proves that his position is not anti-intellectualism. It is perhaps even more correct to say that his opposition was not so much against the non-regenerate consciousness as against forming a neutral bridge between that and the regenerate consciousness. And in this he used, I think, some very sound psychology. How is it possible to extract the intellect that has been part of, been grown over by, a consciousness whose core is vitiated by sin, and set it beside and identify it with another intellect that has been part of and grown over by the regenerate consciousness? This does not militate, and here exactly it is misunderstood, this does not mean a shelving of the intellect. The antithesis is not between intellect and mysticism but between consciousness and consciousness. It does not even mean that, as seen above, there is no formal resemblance between the two types of intellect, so that it has apologetic value to display the arguments for Christianity. But it does mean and all it does mean is that the best of reasoning will be powerless unless the scales be taken from the eyes by the Spirit. And this is exactly Warfield's position in his exposition of Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God. If Kuyper is an epistemological mystic, so is Warfield and so are all the Reformed theologians of the Princeton tradition.

We may perhaps say that Kuyper went too far in emphasizing the total uselessness of Apologetics. In so far as he emphasized that side he was inconsistent, because he used as many arguments, if not more, than anyone else. So there is no doubt room for improvement. We cannot now discuss the question of his *Encyclopaedia*, but generally speaking it would seem that the task of validity, though an indispensable prerequisite of theology, really finds its place in Christian philosophy.

So we have discussed the mode of origination of the regenerate consciousness, and found from it, and from the fact that its validity is based upon the work of Christ, that its nature is the general human consciousness once more freed from sin. The Christian accepts the validity of his faculties, and the truth of revelation that brings their content. For the regenerate validity is doubly valid. Probability is not the guide of life. I know that my redeemer liveth and that I shall see Him face to face.

We rejoice that especially through the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of Common Grace Reformed theology was able to construct an epistemology that is true to the *principium speciale*. It alone does justice to the concept of sin; it alone does justice to the Biblical notion of the perseverance of the saints. So may we never lose those principles. May we lose our weaknesses, and mutually and simultaneously develop the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, of Common Grace and of Original Sin. For the development of all of those, Reformed Epistemology may offer its aid if it keep abreast of the times, of the best that psychology and philosophy and especially further Biblical exegesis may offer.

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<sup>1</sup>Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.