

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

Number 299 Copyright 2011 The Trinity Foundation Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692 March-May 2011
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Scripturalism: A Christian Worldview

by W. Gary Crampton

Editor's note: This is a follow up to the last Review article by Dr. Crampton. Van Tilians have continued the same tired accusations against Gordon Clark that Van Til did in the original Clark-Van Til Controversy and its fallout. Here is an excellent defense of Scripturalism – the most consistent Biblical philosophy.

Introduction¹

Scripturalism is a world and life view. A worldview is a set of beliefs about the various issues of life. All persons have worldviews; they are inescapable. One's worldview will determine how he views the entirety of life, the decisions he makes, why he does what he does, and so forth. And all worldviews have presuppositions which govern their system of belief; these presuppositions function as axioms from which all decisions are deduced. Scripturalism is that system of belief in which the Word of God is foundational in the entirety of one's philosophical and theological dealings.² This system of thought avers that Christians should never try to combine secular and Christian notions. Rather, all thoughts are to be brought into captivity to the Word of God (2 Corinthians 10:5), which is (a part of) the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Our minds must be transformed "to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," as found in Scripture (Romans 12:2), *i.e.*, our thoughts must progressively become God's thoughts (Isaiah 55:6-9), which divine thoughts are only known by the Word of God.

Scripturalism, then, teaches that all of our knowledge is to be derived from the Bible, which has a systematic monopoly on truth.

This approach to a Christian worldview is taught by the Apostle Paul and is confirmed by the teachings of the Westminster Standards.³ In the words of the apostle: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:6) we read: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added."

Notice the universals in these two statements: "all," "complete," "thoroughly," "every," "whole," "all," "nothing," "at any time." The Bible, infallibly, and the Westminster Assembly, in compliance with the Bible, both teach the all-sufficiency of Scripture. According to the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, neither science, nor history, nor philosophy is needed to give truth. According to the Scripturalist, there is no "two-source" theory of truth taught in the Word of God. As Paul clearly states in the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians, the wisdom of the world is foolishness, and man is not able to

¹ Much of this article has been adapted from W. Gary Crampton, *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark* (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1999).

² John W. Robbins coined the term *Scripturalism*, see "An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark," *The Trinity Review* (July and August 1993).

³ All references to the Westminster Standards, which are comprised of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, are from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994). The English has been modernized.

come to the knowledge of the truth apart from the Spirit-revealed propositions of Scripture. In *1 Corinthians* 2:9-10, for example, Paul writes: "But as it is written, 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." The Bible is sufficient for all the truth we need. In Scripture alone do we find "the certainty of the words of truth" (*Proverbs* 22:17-21; see also *Luke* 1:4). This is Scripturalism.

Epistemology

A Scripturalist maintains that epistemology (the theory of knowledge) is the key tenet of any theological or philosophical system. Gordon Clark stated it this way:

While the question of how we can know God is the fundamental question in the philosophy of religion, there lies behind it in general philosophy the ultimate question, How can we know anything at all? If we cannot talk intelligently about God, can we talk intelligently about morality, about our own ideas, about art, politics—can we even talk about science? How can we know anything? The answer to this question, technically called the theory of epistemology, controls all subject matter claiming to be intelligible or cognitive.⁴

Aurelius Augustine, John Calvin, Gordon Clark, and the Westminster Assembly all began their systematic approach to the study of God and His creation with epistemology, and they all believed that Scripture was the epistemological foundation for a true theory of knowledge. Revelation is the *sine qua non* of knowledge. Even before the Fall, man was dependent on propositional revelation for knowledge. God had to reveal information to him then, and the present situation, aggravated by sin, makes the necessity of revelation even greater.

Christian Epistemology

First, it is important to understand that all philosophies (or worldviews) necessarily begin with an indemonstrable first principle or starting point, *i.e.*, an axiom from which all else is deduced. A consistent Christian worldview avers that the epistemo-

logical starting point is that the Bible alone is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, and it has a monopoly on truth (*John* 17:17; *2 Timothy* 3:16-17; *1 Timothy* 6:3-5). The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are self-attesting and self-authenticating. Scripture stands in judgment over all books and ideas, and it is to be judged by no person or thing. The Bible alone is the Word of God. This is the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura*.

A Christian epistemology does not begin its systematic approach to theology and philosophy with a discussion of whether there is a god or how we know there is a god, and then seek to prove that this is the God of Scripture. The starting point in a genuine Christian epistemology is revelation. The doctrine of God follows epistemology. This is why the Westminster Assembly began its study of systematic theology with the doctrine of revelation. Chapter 1 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* has to do with our source of knowledge: "Of the Holy Scripture." The following 32 chapters are erected upon the axiom of Biblical revelation.

This was also Calvin's view. He began his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with the following statement: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern." According to Calvin, without knowledge of one's self, there is no knowledge of God. But to know one's self (and the whole world in general), there must first be a knowledge of God. God is known both better, and before, oneself or anything else.⁵ Calvin too began his systematic theology with epistemology. His starting point was revelation.

Critics of this Scripturalist view often claim that this is little more than question begging; that is, it assumes what ought to be proved. How can we say that we believe the Bible to be inspired, and therefore true, because it makes the claim to be inspired and true, and then go on to say that we are to believe the claim because the Bible is inspired and true? Don't we first have to prove that the Bible is the Word of God?

⁴ Gordon H. Clark, "How Does Man Know God?," *The Trinity Review* (July/August 1989), 1.

⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Volumes I & II, John T. McNeil, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) I:1:1-3.

It is, of course, the case, that not every claim is true. There are numerous false witnesses. But it can hardly be denied that the Bible does claim to be the inspired Word of God (see *John* 10:35; *2 Timothy* 3:16; *2 Peter* 1:20-21). And this is significant. It is certainly a claim that very few writings attribute to themselves. Likewise, it would be far from justifiable to say that the Bible was the Word of God if it denied inspiration, or perhaps even if it were silent on the subject. But it is a very plausible position to take to insist the first and foremost reason that we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God is that it claims to be just that.⁶

Second, the *ad hominem* reply to the critic is that *all* systems must begin with an indemonstrable axiom. Without such a postulate no system could ever get started. "Question-begging," in this loose or broad sense of the phrase, is not an idiosyncrasy of Christianity. It is the situation in which all philosophies and theologies find themselves.

If one could prove the proposition that the Bible is the Word of God, then the proposition would not be the starting point. There would be something even before Scripture. According to Scripture, however, there is no higher source of truth than God's own self-disclosure. As stated by the author of *Hebrews*, "because He [God] could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself" (6:13). The Scriptures, therefore, cannot possibly be deduced from any superior principle. They are, as Calvin taught, self-authenticating and self-attesting. He wrote:

For they mock the Holy Spirit when they ask: Who can convince us that these writings come from God? Who can assure us that Scripture has come down whole and intact even to our day? ... Thus the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it. The prophets and apostles do not boast either of their keenness or of anything that obtains credit from them as they speak; nor do they dwell upon rational proofs. Rather, they bring forward God's holy name, that by it the whole world may be brought into obedience to Him.⁷

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:4) says it this way:

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

And Jonathan Edwards commented that the Word of God does not "go about begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has the highest and most proper evidence in itself."⁸ One, then, must accept God's special revelation as axiomatic, or there is no knowledge possible at all. In the words of Clark, "an immediate point, touching on both epistemology and theology...is the impossibility of knowing God otherwise than by revelation...either revelation must be accepted as an axiom or there is no knowledge of God at all."⁹

Further, in Christian epistemology, there is no dichotomy between faith (revelation) and reason (logic). These two go hand in hand, for it is Jesus Christ, the *Logos*, who reveals the truth. Christianity is rational, because Christ is Himself the Logic,¹⁰ Reason, and Wisdom of God incarnate (*John* 1:1; *1 Corinthians* 1:24, 30; *Colossians* 2:3). Being the image of God, man can reason; he can think logically, because God has given him this innate ability.

This God-given ability permits men to understand the propositions revealed in Scripture. It is necessary to believe something, as one's axiomatic starting point, in order to understand anything. To reason properly, one must have a foundation upon which all is based. In the Christian worldview (Christian rationalism), knowledge comes *through* reason (*i.e.*, logic), not *from* reasoning (as in pure rationalism). Unlike pure rationalism, Scripturalism stands upon the foundation of Biblical revelation. As

⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), I:293.

⁹ Gordon H. Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1968, 1993), 60; now included in *Christian Philosophy*, 299-300, and *Clark and His Critics*, 53-54.

¹⁰ The English word Logic is derived from the Greek *Logos*.

⁶ See Gordon H. Clark, *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics* (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1982), 1-23.

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* I:7:1, 4-5.

stated in Augustine's dictum: "I believe in order to understand."¹¹

General and Special Revelation

The Bible teaches that the triune God has revealed Himself to man in both general and special revelation, which are in harmony. The former is general in audience (all mankind) and limited in content, whereas special revelation, which is now found only in the Scriptures, is more restricted in audience (those who read the Bible), and more detailed in content. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1) states:

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary for salvation: therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

As sufficient as general revelation is to reveal God to all men, leaving them without excuse, it is insufficient, as the *Confession* says, "to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation...which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary." Without the propositional truth of God's Word, *i.e.*, special revelation, sinful man is not able to come to a sound and saving knowledge of God. The necessity of special revelation rests on the insufficiency of general revelation. Due to its limited nature, then, general revelation must always be interpreted in light of special revelation. This was true even before the Fall of man (*Genesis* 3), but even more so afterwards, because the universe is now in a state of abnormality (*Genesis* 3:14-19;

Romans 8:19-25). Thus, knowledge of God and His creation can only be derived from Scripture.

The Bible teaches, as stated by John Calvin, that the Spirit of God has implanted an innate idea of Himself, a *sensus divinitatis*, in all men, which is propositional and ineradicable. This is due to the fact that all men are created in the image of God. When man interacts with God's creation, which demonstrates His glory, power, and wisdom, man, as God's image, is forced, in some sense, to "think God." The visible creation itself does not mediate "knowledge" to man (as in the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas), for the visible universe sets forth no propositions. Rather, it stimulates the mind of man to intellectual intuition (or recollection), who as a rational being is already in possession of *apriori*, propositional information about God and His creation. This *apriori* information is immediately impressed upon man's consciousness, and it is more than adequate to show that the God of the Bible is the one and only true God.¹² Yet, without the "spectacles" of special revelation, all of the evidences speak in vain. One must not attempt to prove God; He is the necessary premise for all proof.¹³

Since all knowledge must come through propositions (which are either true or false), since the senses in interacting with creation yield no propositions, knowledge cannot be conveyed by sensation. Rather, as noted above, the senses apparently stimulate the mind of man to intellectual intuition, to recollect the God-given innate ideas that man already possesses. Gordon Clark used the illustration of a piece of paper on which is written a message in invisible ink. The paper (by illustration, the mind) might appear blank, but in actuality it is not. When the heat of experience is applied to the mind (as when heat is applied to the paper), the message becomes visible. Human knowledge, then, is possible only because God has endowed man with certain innate ideas.¹⁴

¹² Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*, 61-62 (*Christian Philosophy*, 300-301; *Clark and His Critics*, 54-55); Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 6, edited by Wallace E. Anderson, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980), 346, 361, 368. Edwards referred to this intellectual intuition (or recollection) as "exciting ideas."

¹³ Calvin, *Institutes* 1:1-6.

¹⁴ Gordon H. Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation* (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, [1961], 1995), 142-143.

¹¹ Augustine, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Volume III, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), *On the Holy Trinity* (15:2); see also Norman L. Geisler, editor, *What Augustine Says* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 14-19.

The Christian view of epistemology has its roots in the *Logos* doctrine.¹⁵ According to the *Gospel of John*, Jesus Christ is the cosmological *Logos* (1:1-3), the epistemological *Logos* (1:9, 14), and the soteriological *Logos* (1:4, 12-13; 14:6). He is the Creator of the world, the source of all human knowledge, and the giver of salvation. As to the epistemological *Logos*, which is the focus of the present study, Christ is the “true light which enlightens every man coming into the world” (1:9). Apart from the *Logos*, the “inward teacher,” knowledge would not be possible.

Another way of explaining this is that the sum total of all truth exists in the mind of God: “For in Him [God] we live and move and have our being” (*Acts* 17:28). Nothing exists outside of the mind of God. That is the meaning of the words “omniscient” and “omnipresent.” If man is going to know the truth, he must come to know the eternal propositions in the mind of God. As stated by Jonathan Edwards, “since all truth is in the mind,” and since “God is truth itself,” if we are going to know the truth there must be “the consistency and agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God.”¹⁶ Some of these propositional truths are implanted in man from conception by God. And when man interacts with creation or reads the words of Scripture, the divine teacher, the *Logos*, illuminates the mind so that the propositions come to consciousness, as the invisible ink. This is possible because the mind of man is enveloped by the mind of the *Logos*, who enlightens him to understand the eternal propositions in the mind of God. It does not come about by man’s effort or initiative, but by God’s, who reveals truth.¹⁷

God created humans with rational minds that use the same laws of thought as His own; men are image-bearers of God. The principles of reason (logic) and knowledge are innately given by God to mankind through the *Logos*. Thus, whenever human beings know truth, they know that which exists in the mind of God; they do not merely have a representation of the truth.

Scripturalism denies the correspondence theory of truth, *i.e.*, that the mind of man has only a representation of the truth, and not the truth itself. Rather, a

Christian epistemology holds to the coherence theory of truth, which maintains that what man has is the real truth: the same truth that exists in man’s mind exists first in the mind of God. As stated by Gordon Clark: “Realism is the view that the mind of man actually possesses the truth. Representationalism holds that the mind has only an image, a picture, a representation, an analogy of the truth, but does not have the truth itself.”¹⁸

A Christian epistemology maintains that a proposition is true because God thinks it to be true. Therefore, when man knows truth, what he knows coheres with that which God knows. Our knowledge must coincide with God’s knowledge if we are going to know the truth. In the coherence theory, the mind and the object known are both part of one system, a system in which all parts are in perfect accord, because they are found in the mind of God. Since God is omniscient, knowing all truth, if man is going to know the truth, he must know what God knows.

Moreover, Scripturalism avers that general revelation (along with the earliest teachings of special revelation which God first gave to Adam) is the reason for the basic religiosity of mankind and the many so-called religions which presently exist. The problem is that fallen man, who is now in an ethical state of total depravity (*Romans* 3:10-18; 8:7-8), suppresses the truth about God which he innately possesses. Yet, this knowledge is part of the basis for his responsibility; and he is inexcusable (*Romans* 1:18-21). Man is guilty before God due to the general revelation that he possesses and suppresses. But even though this revelation is more general than special revelation, and is sufficient to make man culpable, it is not sufficient to show him the way of salvation: Jesus Christ. Such information is given in Scripture alone (special revelation). General revelation reveals God as Creator; special revelation reveals Him as Savior. Calvin wrote:

Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds [*i.e.*, innate knowledge], having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift [special revelation], where God, to instruct the

¹⁵ Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 59-69.

¹⁶ Edwards, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, 340-342.

¹⁷ See Gordon H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1972, 1989).

¹⁸ Ronald H. Nash, editor, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), 440; reprinted in *Clark and His Critics* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2009), 209.

church, not merely uses mute teachers but also opens His most hallowed lips. Not only does He teach the elect to look upon a god, but also shows Him-self as the God upon whom they are to look.... God has provided the assistance of the Word for the sake of all those to whom He has been pleased to give useful instruction, because He foresaw that His likeness imprinted upon the most beautiful form of the universe would be insufficiently effective.... We must come, I say, to the Word, where God is truly and vividly described to us from His works.¹⁹

As taught by the *Westminster Confession* (14:1), “the grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.” This work of God is referred to as the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is an “immediate” work of the Spirit, by and with the proclaimed Word, wherein He produces belief in the mind of the elect sinner.

As the *Confession* says, the Spirit does not (ordinarily) work in the elect sinner apart from the Word. Lost sinners need to hear of Christ. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the church to teach the whole counsel of God, to evangelize, and to do the work of apologetics. These are Christian duties. But the Spirit of God alone produces belief. As stated by Paul in *1 Corinthians* 3:6: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” The sinner, without any special work of God’s Spirit, can understand the message preached. There is a difference between understanding the truth and believing he truth. Some non-believers understand the Bible better than some Christians.

Epistemology and Soteriology

Scripturalism teaches that soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) is a branch of epistemology. It is not a branch of metaphysics, because sin is not a metaphysical problem and men are not deified when they are saved. Neither is it a branch of ethics, for men are not saved by their own works or conduct. Rather, salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone (*i.e.*, by belief in the truth as revealed by God the Spirit in His Word), in Christ alone (*Romans*

1:16-17). And this salvation is the gift of God (*Ephesians* 2:8-10). In agreement with the Westminster Assembly, salvation in its entirety has to do with epistemology. Not only is one justified by means of believing the truth, one is also sanctified by knowing the truth. In *John* 17:17 we read the words of Christ: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth.” And in *2 Thessalonians* 2:13 the apostle says: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

Revelation and Apologetics

A Scripturalist worldview rejects the natural theology of Thomas Aquinas and his modern day followers, as well as the natural theology of the theological liberals and humanists. That is, it does not hold to an evidentialist view of apologetics. Rather than beginning with creation, arguing for the existence of God, and then for the reliability of Scripture, we must begin with Scripture.²⁰

According to Gordon Clark, a Scripturalist critique of natural theology begins with the fact that it is based on an empiricist methodology. We are not able formally to deduce the triune God of the Bible from an empirical examination of the universe.²¹ Knowledge cannot be derived from sensory experience. Empiricism provides us with no more knowledge about the Creator of the world than it can about the world itself.

On this subject, Dr. Clark wrote:

One might consider what the apostle Paul thought of Aristotle’s cosmological argument for the existence of God.... Thomas Aquinas held that Paul proleptically declared valid Thomas’ restatement of Aristotle. From the present paragraph [*1 Corinthians* 1:18-25] one would suppose that Paul regarded it as nonsense.

In so far as Paul’s words can be applied to Aristotle, [*1 Corinthians*] 3:20 would be even a clearer repudiation of philosophical

²⁰ For more on this, see Robert L. Reymond, *Faith’s Reasons For Believing* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2008).

²¹ Clark, *God’s Hammer*, 66.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* I:6:1, 3; II:1-17.

speculation about God.... Christian apologues therefore would do well to repudiate the scholastic futility of so-called "natural theology." They should desist from attempts to prove God's existence and to describe His nature on the basis of empirical observations.²²

All of the traditional "proofs" for God's existence are invalid; they are logical fallacies. As David Hume pointed out, it is not logically necessary for the creator of a finite world to be infinite. All that is necessary, according to Hume, is that the creator be at least as great as that which he created. Not only this, but observation can never prove causality; it may give us sequence, but never causality.²³

Neither is the (non-empiricist) ontological argument of Anselm and Descartes sound. This argument, stated Clark, basically asserts that "God, by definition, is the being who possesses all perfections; existence is a perfection; therefore God exists."²⁴ There are several problems with this reasoning. First, let it be said that the syllogism as stated by Descartes formally is valid. The trouble is not with the form of the argument, but with its terms. Existence, for example, is an attribute that applies to everything without exception. Dreams exist; hallucinations exist; mirages exist. The question is not whether something exists or not; the question is what is it that exists.²⁵ This is why the Westminster Assembly asked the question the way it is found in the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 4): "What is God?," rather than "Is there a god?" If the ontological argument is understood as an unpacking of what the word "God" means in the Bible, then it may be useful. But it is not an argument from something extra-Biblical to God. The definition of God found in the ontological argument includes elements smuggled in from Scripture, including monotheism.

Another error seen in the traditional "proofs" is that normative conclusions may never be drawn from descriptive premises. Gordon Clark wrote:

²² Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, [1975], 1991), 52.

²³ Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, [1957], 2000), 299-308; and Gordon H. Clark and Aurelius Augustine, *Lord God of Truth and Concerning the Teacher* (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1994), 24.

²⁴ Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, [1946], 1988), 31.

²⁵ Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy*, 33-44.

The theory of natural law commits a major logical blunder when it tries to deduce a normative conclusion from descriptive premises. No matter how carefully or how intricately one describes what men do, or what the provisions of nature are, or how natural inclinations function, it is a logical impossibility to conclude that this is or is not what men ought to do. The *is* never implies the *ought*. This criticism applies to all empirical theories.²⁶

Further, if the various proofs, such as Thomas' "five ways," could prove the existence of God, they would prove the falsity of the Bible. How could one know if the five proofs prove the same god? Why could it not be two, three, four, or five gods? In fact, if the theistic proofs are valid, it would demolish Christianity; it would prove, if anything, the existence of a pagan deity, not the Christian God. Fortunately, the proofs are not valid.²⁷

One cannot prove the God of Scripture by means of natural theology. Neither can one prove Scripture to be the Word of God. For the Scripturalist, the Word of God is the axiomatic starting point. It is indemonstrable; it is self-authenticating and self-evident. Augustine's dictum, "I believe in order to understand," must also be our own.

This is not to say that there are not numerous evidences which manifest the Bible to be the Word of God; there are many such evidences. But the evidences do not "prove" the Scriptures to be true. As taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:4-5):

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

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the

²⁶ Gordon H. Clark, *Essays on Ethics and Politics*, edited by John W. Robbins (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1992), 102.

²⁷ Clark, *God's Hammer*, 87-89.

heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and the divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

And in the words of Gordon Clark:

There may be, say, a thousand historical assertions in the Bible. Fortunately, many of these that the modernist said were false are now known to be true. For example, the modernists asserted that the Hittite nation never existed. Today the museums have more Hittite books than they have time to translate. The modernists said that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, because writing had not yet been invented in his day. Well, writing existed over a thousand years before the time of Moses. Still, the fact that the Bible is correct on these points does not 'prove' that it is without error. Obviously there are many historical assertions in the Bible that we cannot check and never will be able to check. Who could hope to corroborate [by means of archaeology and historical research] the assertions that Eliezer asked Rebekah for a drink of water, and that Rebekah drew water for his camels also?²⁸

John Calvin, too, spoke of the persuasiveness of the various evidences that are available to us: the religious or moral argument, the cosmological argument, the argument from common grace, and the argument from the human anatomy. Yet, said the Reformer, unaided by Scripture, these arguments speak in vain.²⁹ He wrote: "The proofs of faith must be [sought at] the mouth of God [*i.e.*, His Word] alone. If we dispute about matters which concern men, then let human reasons take place; but in the

doctrine of faith, the authority of God alone must reign, and upon it we must depend."³⁰

There are numerous evidences, both internal³¹ and external, that the Bible is God's infallible revelation to man. But apart from the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, these evidences are inconclusive. The Bible itself tells us why we believe it to be the Word of God: God the Spirit produces this belief in the mind of the elect; He does not do so for the non-elect. There is no greater authority than the Word of God.

A Scripturalist apologetic methodology presupposes the primacy of Scripture as providing the basis for all proof. The Bible has a systematic monopoly on truth. It is self-attesting and self-authenticating. It stands in judgment over all books and ideas, and is to be judged by no person or thing. This is not to say that the evidences are not useful; they are. They can be used in an *ad hominem* fashion to reveal the foolishness of non-Christian systems. Here the Scripturalist sees *Proverbs* 26:4-5 as very important to the discipline of apologetics: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes." The Biblical apologete refuses to answer the critic of Christianity based on the foolish presuppositions that he has adopted in his non-Christian worldview. The Christian will not answer this "fool according to his folly," because to do so would make him just like the fool. Rather, standing on God's inspired, infallible, inerrant revelation, the Christian apologete should "answer the fool as his folly deserves" by using the evidences apagogically to refute the fool's faulty worldview. Such argumentation is to be used to criticize internally the non-believer's worldview, revealing its inconsistencies, thereby showing it to be in error.³² Gordon Clark said it this way:

Let us use as much archaeological evidence as we can find. Let us go into great detail on *J, E, D,* and *P.* We shall discuss the presence of camels in Egypt in

³⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Volumes I-XXII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), *Commentary on Acts* 17:2.

³¹ Technically speaking, "internal evidences" are not evidences at all; they are a part of special revelation. Only external (extra-Biblical) evidences are actually "evidences."

³² Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 24:1, edited by Stephen J. Stein, *The "Blank Bible"* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 575-576.

²⁸ *What Do Presbyterians Believe?*, 17.

²⁹ Calvin, *Institutes* I:1-5, 16.

2000 BC, and the hypothetical council of Jamnia. But our arguments will be entirely *ad hominem*. We shall show that the principles our opponents use destroy their own conclusions.

The argument is *ad hominem* and elenctic. When finally the opponent is reduced to silence and we can get in a word edgewise, we present the Word of God and pray that God cause him to believe.³³

This apagogic methodology, consisting in a series of *reductiones ad absurdum*, is the principal method available to a Biblical apologist. The reason is that even though there is metaphysical common ground between believers and non-believers in that both are created in the image of God, there is no common epistemological ground. There are no common theoretical propositions, no common "notions," between Christianity and non-Christian philosophies. The *ad hominem* apagogic arguments are to be used against the non-believer, who is a covenant-breaker and already in possession of the innate idea of the God against whom he is rebelling. They are also part of "demolishing strongholds and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God" (2 *Corinthians* 10:4-5). The arguments are to be used in a fashion that will attempt to make him epistemologically self-conscious (and thus God conscious) of his covenant breaking rebellion.

After demonstrating the internal incoherence of the non-Christian views, the Biblical apologete will argue for truth and the internal, logical consistency of the Scriptures and the Christian worldview revealed therein. As taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:5), there is in Scripture a "consent of all the parts." The Biblical apologete will show how Christianity is self-consistent, how it gives us a coherent understanding of the world. It answers questions and solves problems that other worldviews cannot. This method is not to be considered as a proof for the existence of God or the truth of Scripture, but as proof that the non-Christian view is false. It shows that intelligibility can only be maintained by viewing all things as dependent on the God of Scripture, who is truth itself.

Commenting on the Scripturalist apologetic methodology of Gordon Clark, Gilbert Weaver wrote:

An extended example of this type of apologetics is found in Clark's volume, *A Christian View of Men and Things*. In it he takes up the topics of history, politics, ethics, science, religion, and epistemology, and in each one shows that the major opposing non-Christian systems fail to establish answers to the basic problems of the area of study, that they tend to skepticism or self-contradiction and that the Christian worldview based on divine revelation provides plausible solutions in each case. The net result is that the rivals of Christianity are undercut in each area of thought, and thus are in no solid position from which to launch an attack upon the Christian faith.³⁴

Dr. Clark used the Augustinian argument from the nature of truth to reveal the internal consistency of Christianity.³⁵ Truth, he argued, must exist; thus, skepticism is false. Even to deny the existence of truth (that is, to say that it is "true" that there is no truth) is to assert that truth does and must exist. Further, it is not possible for truth to change. That which changes, by definition, cannot be true. To deny truth's eternality (*i.e.*, to say that it is "true" that truth is not eternal or that it will someday perish) affirms its eternal nature. And since truth can exist only in the form of propositions, it must be mental (*i.e.*, being propositional, it can exist only in the mind). But seeing that the mind of man is not eternal and unchangeable, there must be a mind superior to the mind of man which is eternal and unchangeable: the mind of God. God, as Scripture testifies, is truth itself. And if a man knows any truth, he also knows something of God.

In the consistent Scripturalist apologetical system, then, there are two steps: First, the apologete must show the non-believer the logical inconsistency of his methodology. Second, he must exhibit the internal consistency of the Christian worldview. Once these two points have been argued, the Biblical apologete must urge the non-believer to repudiate

³³ Nash, editor, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 451-452; reprinted in *Clark and His Critics*, 240.

³⁴ Cited in Nash, editor, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 290; reprinted in *Clark and His Critics*, 271.

³⁵ Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, 318ff.; Nash, editor, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, 157-161; reprinted in *Clark and His Critics*, 128-131.

his false system and embrace the teachings of Scripture.

Knowledge and Opinion

An important part of the Scripturalist worldview is the epistemological distinction between knowledge and opinion. Throughout the history of Western thought, philosophers such as Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, have correctly differentiated between these two. Augustine and Gordon Clark are just two examples of Christian philosophers who have done the same.³⁶ There is a difference between that which we “know” and that about which we may have opinions.

In the Scripturalist worldview, knowledge is not only possessing ideas or thoughts; it is possessing true ideas or thoughts. Knowledge is knowledge of the truth. It is justified true belief. Only the Word of God (that which, as the *Westminster Confession* [1:6] says, “is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture”) gives us such knowledge.

Opinions, on the other hand, may be true or false. Natural science is opinion; archaeology is opinion; history (with the exception of Biblical history) is opinion. In these disciplines we are not dealing with “facts.” In them there is no justified true belief. To “opine” something is not to “know” it. Justified truth is found only in the Word of God.

The Scripturalist begins with the presupposition that the Bible is the Word of God; this is axiomatic. He then deduces everything else from Scripture. How does man come to knowledge of God and His creation? This is possible only by means of God’s self-revelation. Knowledge is possible only because God has chosen to reveal Himself to man. Such knowledge is not received from or discovered by either sensation or ratiocination. All knowledge is revelational and propositional by nature, and its source is God.

³⁶ See W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), 402; Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1969); Robert Crouse, “Knowledge,” in Allan D. Fitzgerald, editor, *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 488; Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*, 57-92 (*Christian Philosophy*, 297-323; *Clark and His Critics*, 57-77); and Robbins, “An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark,” *The Trinity Review* (July/August, 1993).

Epistemological Limitations and the Language of Scripture

Scripturalism avers that man can “know” the truth. But this does not mean that man is able to have exhaustive knowledge (*Job* 11:7; 36:26; *Psalms* 139:6). Only God has such knowledge (*Romans* 11:33-34; *1 Corinthians* 2:11). God is omniscient. All of His knowledge is intuitive, while man’s is discursive. There are limitations on man’s knowledge, not only due to sin, but also due to the fact that he is a creature. Even sinless Adam, prior to the Fall, could never have obtained exhaustive knowledge. This limitation will not even be removed in the final sinless state.

Nevertheless, whatever knowledge man has, because it must be a truth that God knows, must of necessity be the same knowledge as God’s knowledge. This means that we must reject the Thomistic and Van Tilian view of analogical predication. According to Thomas Aquinas and Cornelius Van Til, all of man’s knowledge of God and His creation is analogous. There is not a single point of coincidence between God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge.³⁷

The Scripturalist does not deny that there is a quantitative difference between that which God knows and that which man knows. There is a vast difference in the degree of knowledge (*Psalms* 139:6). But there is not a difference in the knowledge itself. There is a point of contact between that which God knows and that which man knows; there is a univocal point at which God’s knowledge meets man’s knowledge. Gordon Clark wrote that “if our minds and God’s mind did not have some univocal content, we would know nothing at all. If He has all truth, we cannot know any truth except the truth God knows.”³⁸ The difference between God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge is one of degree. God knows more and will always know more than any creature. If all we have is an analogy of the truth, then we do not have the truth. A mere analogy of the truth,

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, XXXII-XXXIV. Cornelius Van Til held to a view similar to that of Aquinas. In his “Introduction” to B. B. Warfield’s *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, edited by Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), for example, Van Til has written that it is because of the analogical nature of Scriptural revelation that man’s knowledge is “at no point identical with the content of God’s mind” (33).

³⁸ Gordon H. Clark, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1983), 119.

without a univocal point of understanding, is not “the truth.”³⁹

The special revelation given to us in Scripture is propositional in nature. The triune God of Scripture has revealed Himself to man in the form of propositional statements. He speaks to man in propositional, universal truths. Propositions are logical, understandable combinations of words—subject, copula, predicate—which objectively teach something. They are the meaning of indicative sentences. Propositions are either true or false. And what makes a proposition true is that God thinks it to be true. Moreover, there is no such thing as a non-propositional truth. Truth is a characteristic, an attribute, of propositions alone.

According to the Scripturalist, the truth of Scripture is not “in between” or “above” or “behind” the words, or only in the mind of the interpreter. Neither are the words secretly symbolic or metaphorical, intimating some “higher” truth. Rather, God’s truth lies in the logical meaning and organization of the words of Scripture themselves.⁴⁰ His truth comes through our understanding of these propositions according to the rules of grammar and logic. Thus, the Bible does not contain logical paradoxes. Obviously, these propositional statements cannot teach two or more contrary or contradictory “truths” at the same time (as in Neo-orthodoxy and Neo-liberalism). They teach one truth at a time, and this one truth may have various applications or logical implications. This also relates to the events of history and their meaning. That is, not only does the Bible teach us that certain events have occurred in history, but it also tells us the meaning of those events. The interpretation of the event is not left to the subjectivity of one’s own imagination. Scripture gives us the event and the meaning in propositions.

As noted above, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the logic (*Logos*) of God (*John* 1:1); He is Reason, Wisdom, and Truth incarnate (*1 Corinthians* 1:24, 30; *Colossians* 2:3; *John* 14:6). The laws of logic are not created by God or man; they are the way God thinks. And since the Scriptures are a part of the

mind of God (*1 Corinthians* 2:16), they are God’s logical thoughts. The Bible expresses the mind of God in a logically coherent fashion to mankind.

Conclusion

Scripturalism is a Christian worldview. It is the only consistent worldview taught in the Word of God itself. Scripturalism maintains that the Bible, which is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, is foundational in the entirety of one’s philosophical and theological dealings. Scripture stands in judgment over all and is to be judged by no person or thing. The Bible must be considered as the Christian’s axiomatic starting point. It is the indemonstrable first principle, the axiom from which all is deduced. Every system of belief must begin with indemonstrable premises. If these premises could be proved, then they would not be first principles. Hence, Christianity begins with Scripture and its self-authenticating claim of inspiration.

Again to cite the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6):

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

Soli Deo Gloria

³⁹ Clark, *God’s Hammer*, 30-34, 38, 71.

⁴⁰ It is, of course, true that all of the statements of Scripture are not in the form of propositions. Some, for example, are commandments, and others ascriptions of praise to God. But even these can be made propositional by putting them into a larger sentence, for example, “God commands thus and so,” and “God is worthy of praise.”

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