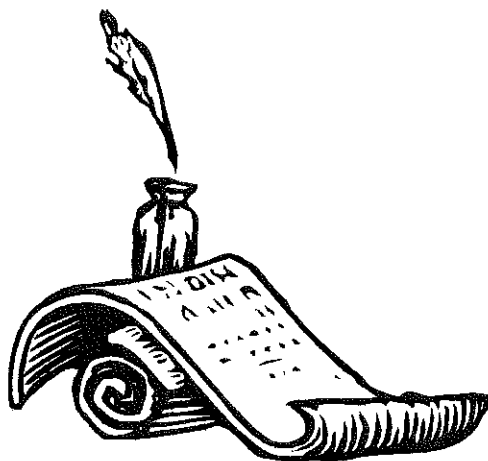


CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICAL METHODOLOGY



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PART I: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1A. PROLEGOMENA

1B. Glossaries -- Since traditional presentations of apologetics employ philosophical terminology, the uninitiated student may have to refer to some basic glossaries:

1C. Jim S. Halsey, For a Time Such as This: An Introduction to the Reformed Apologetic of Cornelius Van Til (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), pp. 167-72.

2C. Gordon R. Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), pp. 340-47.

3C. Ronald B. Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 219-28.

2B. Bibliographies -- Since historical and especially contemporary works on apologetics are very numerous, most students will find it advantageous to have in their possession a few good bibliographies on the discipline:

1C. William L. Custer and Jack Cottrell, The Seminary Review, 26:2 (June 1980):71-102 [briefly annotated].

2C. Norman L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 379-90.

3C. Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 40-44, 71-75, 98-99, 122-24, 148-50, 173-75, 207-09, 230, 252-53, 283-84 [annotated].

4C. Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, pp. 229-38.

3B. NOTE: No survey will be attempted concerning early Jewish apologetical methodology (e.g. Philo; s.v. ISBE, "Philo, Judaeus," by R. M. Wenley, 4:2380-83). However, it must be noted that both early Jewish and Christian apologists were generally steeped in Greek humanistic philosophy. This was the assumed sphere of common ground wherein they fought their word-wars. Furthermore, this Alexandrian mindset has greatly affected not only 'classical apologetics' and polemics but also hermeneutics and theology ever since those early days.

2A. THE PROBLEM OF ELUSIVE DEFINITION

1B. The important concession: "No uniform phrase has been adopted to express the idea of Christian apologetics" (B. Ramm, Appeal to Reason, pp. 14-15; cf. Bush, Classical Readings, pp. 375-86; Dulles, History of Apologetics, etc.).

- 2B. The unfortunate contradiction: "Although the word apologetics (Gr. apologētikós) does not appear as such in the NT, the NT uses the vocabulary of apologetics, which is derived from Greek legal practice, in a popular and technical way" (ISBE [revised], s.v., "Apologetics, Biblical," by B. Ramm, 1:190).
- 1C. However, ἀπολογία/ἀπολογέομαι (apologia/apologeomai) must not be extracted from a strictly secular background and then taken as a frozen technical term used to define all stages of the Christian discipline.
- 2C. The history of Christian apologetical methodology evidences:
- 1D. changes in emphasis.
- 2D. expansion in scope.
- 3D. an overlap with other vital activities of Christian ministry:
- 1E. It "not only defends but commends the faith" (Reid, Christian Apologetics, p. 14).
- 2E. It "is essentially an activity in the Church-- indeed of the Church -- closely related in spirit to preaching and evangelism" (Casserly, "Theology and Apologetics," CJT 3 [Oct 1957]: 227).
- 3E. Cf. Furnish's list of NT synonyms for one overarching activity ("Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching," Int 17 [Jan 1963]: 52).
- 3B. Sample Definitions:
- 1C. "On the technical level apologetics is the defense and presentation of the truth of Christian faith on intellectual and moral grounds. As such, it is the work of the theologians and philosophers. But on the everyday level apologetics is simply the matter of facing up to the questions of what we believe and why" (Colin Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind, p. 3).
- 2C. "Christian Apologetics is the scientific vindication of the divine authority of the Christian religion" (Keyser, A System of Christian Evidence, p. 21).
- 3C. "The science and art of defending Christianity's truth-claims" (Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, p. 340).
- 4C. "A defense . . . for the doctrinal and ethical content of biblical religion" (Montgomery, Faith Founded On Fact, p. ix).
- 5C. "Defense of Christianity in the face of the various attacks made upon it by the unbelieving world" (Halsey, For a Time Such As This, p. 168).

- 6C. "Christian apologetics has three great tasks: reasoning for the existence of God, establishing the deity of Christ, and defending the inspiration of Scripture" (Geisler, "Foreward," in The Resurrection of Jesus: An Apologetic, by Gary Habermas).
- 7C. "Christian apologetics is concerned with a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian religion. The task of theology is to define the content of revealed truth while the task of apologetics is to defend its validity" (Pinnock, Set Forth Your Case, p. 3).
- 8C. "Christian apologetics is the comprehensive philosophical, theological, and factual demonstration of the truthfulness of our Christian religion" (Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences, p. 13).
- 9C. "Christian apologetics is the discipline wherein an intelligent effort is made to defend before an unbelieving world the truth claim of the Christian faith, specifically its claim of exclusive true knowledge of the living and true God, in a manner consistent with the teaching of Scripture" (Reymond, The Justification of Knowledge, p. 1).
- 10C. "Apologetics is that branch of Christian theology which answers the question, Is Christianity rationally defensible?" (Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, p. 7).
- 11C. "Apologetics is the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life" (Van Til, Apologetics, p. 1).
- 12C. "Apologies are defenses of Christianity, in its entirety, in its essence, or in some one or other of its elements or presuppositions, as against either all assailants, actual or conceivable, or some particular form or instance of attack; though, of course, as good defenses they may rise above mere defenses and become vindications. Apologetics undertakes not the defense, not even the vindication, but the establishment, not, strictly speaking, of Christianity, but rather of that knowledge of God which Christianity professes to embody and seeks to make efficient in the world, and which it is the business of theology scientifically to explicate" (Warfield, "Apologetics," in The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, 1:232-33).
- 13C. A humorous definition: "Proving what you have never doubted by arguments you don't understand" (Holdcraft, ed., Snappy Squibs for the Church Calendar, p. 106)!
- 14C. My working definition: "The philosophy of methodology pertaining to all forms of Christian communication."

3A. SELECTED APOLOGETICAL APPROACHES

1B. Some Selected Personalities (for a good selection of primary sources, see L. Russ Bush, Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics, A.D. 100-1800 [Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1983]).

1C. The Early Apologists and Polemicists (cf. Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, pp. 184-95).

1D. Justin Martyr: The First Apology of Justin

2D. Athenagoras: A Plea for the Christians, by Athenagoras, the Athenian: Philosopher and Christian

3D. Irenaeus: Against Heresies

4D. Tertullian: The Apology

5D. Origen

1E. On First Principles (De Principiis)

2E. Against Celsus (Contra Celsum)

6D. Athanasius

1E. Against the Heathen (Contra Gentes)

2E. On the Incarnation of the Word (De Incarnatione Verbe Dei)

2C. Augustine

1D. Selected Works

1E. Concerning the Freedom of the Will

2E. Confessions

3E. City of God

2D. Key observations:

1E. Stressed the effects of the Fall

2E. Stressed the priority of faith

3D. Mayers' apologetical grid (pp. 95-96):

1E. "What is the role of Philosophy in Christian theology and apologetics?"

"Because of Augustine's ontological and epistemological realism between God and man and his reliance on Platonic thought at many points, philosophy's questions are ultimately theology's problems also. The prime difference is probably methodological, as philosophy begins with man and his reason and finds at least inklings of God within man, and theology begins with God and His revelation and understands the relationship of God and creation. The radical doctrine of sin and its ravages short-circuits this mutuality for unregenerated man."

2E. "How are faith and reason related?"

"For the believer these are mutually interdependent as faith is a response of the will based on creditable and noncontradictory evidence. For the unbeliever, since faith as trust is God's gift, these are functionally mutually exclusive."

- 3E. "Of what significance is the doctrine of sin for Christian apologetics?"

"For Augustine it is very important as sin perverts the will and dulls the intellect. Therefore, divine illumination is really needed to properly understand everything as related to the Creator. This illumination is absolutely indispensable for revelation proper."

- 4E. "Do the theistic proofs have any worth for convincing the unbeliever?"

"This is very difficult to assess as Augustine seems to accept them, even if never completely presented, due to his rationalistic tendencies. At the same time he limits their usefulness because of the effects of sin and man's inability to accept God in an unregenerate state. As usually interpreted in the history of philosophy and Christian apologetics, they are certainly not Augustine's first line of defense."

- 5E. "To what extent may a believer and unbeliever form a shared point of contact on common ground?"

"Because both believer and unbeliever are God's creatures and live in God's universe they share the same real world and logical principles; however, since all facts are ultimately God-interpreted facts, only the believer illumined by special revelation truly 'knows' the truth of God, himself, and nature. This perspective is adopted by all twentieth-century presuppositionalists and verbalized to mean that believer and unbeliever have a common ontological ground but no common epistemological ground."

- 6E. "Are historical Christian evidences important, or even possible, as evidence for the unbeliever?"

"Miracles and fulfilled prophecies are the proofs and evidences that must appeal to the rational man prior to faith. There are reasons behind miracles even though we cannot comprehend them with our limitations."

- 7E. "What degree of certainty is there in the truthfulness of Christianity?"

"The believer can have absolute certainty through the witness of the Holy Spirit by means of special revelation."

NOTE: Cf. Ramm's crucial questions for evaluating apologists and apologetical systems (Varieties of Christian Apologetics, pp. 17-27).

3C. Anselm [the father of rational theistic proofs]

Note his preface to Monologium on the Being of God: "Certain brethren have often and earnestly entreated me to put in writing some thoughts that I had offered them in familiar conversation, regarding meditation on the Being of God. . . . It is in accordance with their wish . . . that they have prescribed such a form for the writing of this meditation; in order that nothing in Scripture should be urged on the authority of Scripture itself [italics added], but that whatever the conclusion of independent investigation should declare to be true, should, in an unadorned style, with common proofs and with a simple argument, be briefly enforced by the cogency of reason [italics added], and plainly expounded in the light of truth" (in Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics, p. 242).

Note the a priori argumentation throughout the Monologium.

4C. Thomas Aquinas [the father of evidential theistic proofs]

1D. Important Works

1E. Summa Contra Gentiles

2E. Summa Theologica

2D. Key observations:

1E. Father of RC theology and apologetics

2E. Tabula rasa

- 3E. Arguments for the existence of God (esp. cosmological)
- 4E. Employs a posteriori argumentation in his writings.
- 3D. Mayer's apologetical grid (pp. 102-03):
- 1E. "What is the role of philosophy in Christian theology and apologetics?"
- "Philosophy is independent of and thus considerably more than the handmaiden of theology. Its function is to demonstrate rationally the praeambula fidei, that is, presuppositions of revelation and theology, and thus prepare the mind of man to receive Christian revelation by faith. Philosophy proves God's existence prior to theology discussing God's essence. Nevertheless, philosophy can and does logically elucidate the Christian revelation as well as defend its truths."
- 2E. "How are reason and faith related?"
- "Faith and reason are mutually exclusive. For the most part, reason is the means of knowing the mundane things and faith the means of knowing the things of special revelation. It might also be said that reason is superior to faith in the clarity and exactness of knowledge, but that faith is preferred by means of the character of the knowledge it knows."
- 3E. "Of what significance is the doctrine of sin for Christian apologetics?"
- "Sin did not leave man rationally or volitionally incompetent as only original righteousness was lost in the Fall. Thus a true philosophy can be constructed, theistic proofs are valid, and a system of ethics is possible based on natural law."
- 4E. "Do the theistic proofs have any worth for convincing the unbeliever?"
- "Theistic proofs are seemingly more than inductively probable, they are rationally demonstrable. They are the first line of argument to use with the unbeliever."
- 5E. "To what extent may a believer and unbeliever form a shared point of contact on common ground?"
- "There is most definitely an epistemological common ground between believers and unbelievers as the methodology of natural theology must assume. This epistemological common ground is possible because all

men have the possibilities and usage of reason untainted by the Fall."

- 6E. "Are historical Christian evidences important, or even possible, as evidence for the unbeliever?"

"Special revelation is indispensable for Christianity if not for theism. Proof of special revelation is the traditional evidences of God's supernatural work as seen in fulfilled prophecy, miracles, and so on."

- 7E. "What degree of certainty is there in the truthfulness of Christianity?"

"At the point of evidence, reason by means of demonstration is more certain than faith; however, as stated in question (2), faith is superior to reason because it puts man in contact with the supernatural realm as expressed in special revelation, especially the incarnation and the resurrection -- the heart and soul of the Christian religion. In regard to the theistic arguments alone, Thomas believed that there [sic] certainty was a logical necessity and not simply an inductive probability."

- 4D. Note: "The Scriptures are nowhere concerned with the theistic proof or proofs for the existence of God, such as are found throughout the history of philosophy and theology: . . ." (ISBE [revised], s.v. "Apologetics, Biblical," by Bernard Ramm, 1:190).

5C. The Warfield/Kuyper Tension

- 1D. "According to Kuyper there is a general revelation but no correct natural theology unless and until one has the light of special revelation. . . . Warfield's position is that the unbeliever can and does gain a natural theology from and prior to special revelation" (Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley, Classical Apologetics, p. 38).

- 2D. The central issue was (and still remains within Calvinistic apologetics) the relationship between faith and reason:

"This brings us to the point where the Reformed apologists cannot agree -- the relationship of faith and reason Succinctly stated, does the Holy Spirit work through the evidences on the mind of the unbeliever as Princeton Calvinism [sic] taught throughout the nineteenth century and as is exemplified by Benjamin B.

Warfield? Or, are Christian evidences confirmatory to the believer only after he has been given faith by the Holy Spirit? — a perspective more conducive to Dutch Calvinism best expressed by Abraham Kuyper. In actuality, it is the a priori/ a posteriori controversy raising its head within the bastion of Calvinism" (Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, p. 108).

- 3D. Inconsistencies in Warfield's apologetical methodology may be observed in his 'classic' treatment on miracles; for a critique, see: Colin Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind (Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 197-203. Note that most of Brown's criticisms may also be applied to contemporary 'classical' apologists.

6C. Van Til

- 1D. Key generalization: "Biblical Authoritarianism" (Lewis' terminology).

- 2D. For a general but excellent outline of Van Til's presuppositionalism, see: Halsey, For a Time Such as This; cf. "The Revelational Fideism of Cornelius Van Til," in Geisler, Christian Apologetics, pp. 56-68.

- 3D. Some key tenets:

1E. "The only 'common ground' with unbelievers is that they too are creatures in God's image and live in God's world. But there are no common notions or methods; non-Christians approach the world differently from Christians and they view it differently. We have a common world with unbelievers but no common world view [italics added]. The contact point with unbelievers is the imago Dei. But even here the 'point of contact' is the 'point of conflict.' . . . Conflict is inevitable because of human depravity and sin" (Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 57).

2E. "According to Van Til's main trend of thought, reason cannot of itself discover the true meaning of sense data, or determine the most consistent view of the world. Fallen man cannot refer to facts or logic to test the words of God. Every thinker begins with some unproved presuppositions and so does the Christian. Presupposing the triune God of the Bible, Van Til simply seeks to set forth the Bible's teaching. Reason's role is not to check the validity of Scripture by evidence or noncontradiction, but simply to interpret the Scripture as accurately as possible. . . . Van Til asks us to believe not what we can confirm or infer, but what God says because God says it. . . . Faith in divine authority precedes every valid use of the intellect" (Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 292, 294).

7C. Gordon Clark

1D. Key assumptions:

- 1E. "There is only one logic, and it is Divine" (Gordon H. Clark, The Gordon-Conwell Lectures on Apologetics; Tape 7: "Veridicalism and Empiricism" [The Trinity Foundation, 1981]).
- 2E. "The Biblical teachings are the set of axioms from which the theorems of Christianity are deduced" (Ibid.; Tape 5: Empiricism).

2D. Apagogic methodology

- 3D. For surveys and criticisms of Clark's approach, see: Geisler, Christian Apologetics, pp. 37-45; and Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 100-22, 291-92.

8C. Edward J. Carnell

1D. "The Verificational Approach" (Lewis' terminology).

- 1E. "Carnell has been called a combinationalist because of the presence of both rationalistic and empiricist elements in his methodology" (Bush, Classical Readings, p. 379).
- 2E. In Carnell's system, "There are actually four tests for truth: logical consistency, internal personal coherence, external empirical adequacy, and existential relevance" (Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 122).

- 2D. See the survey by his loyal disciple: Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 176-283.

- 3D. For a more objective critique that highlights some strategic weaknesses in Carnell's apologetical methodology, see: Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind, pp. 203-06.

9C. Bernard Ramm

1D. Key assumption: Stages of Verification.

- 2D. "The Christian is convinced of the truth of his faith first by the witness of the Spirit to the Gospel, second by the actions of the living God which make a difference in the cosmos, and third by the adequacy of the synoptic vision Christianity provides of humanity, the world, and God. In the third stage Christianity is found to be true because on its principles one can make the most sense out of life in this world" (Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, p. 329).

10C. John Warwick Montgomery

- 1D. "Montgomery's system with its stress on methodological presuppositions, objective evidence, the fitting of the facts, an inductive use of reason, and the ground for faith in high probability, is a noble attempt at a pure empiricism . . ." (Ibid., p. 308).
- 2D. "Evidentialist John Warwick Montgomery argues that the Resurrection of Jesus is a historical event so persuasively documented that only 'a recalcitrant will' can deny its truth. The historical context of this event, moreover, demands that one recognize the validity of the claims of Christ and submit to the full authority of infallible Scripture" (Bush, Classical Readings, pp. 383-84). Note that Montgomery fails to concede practically and apologetically the fact that all natural men are characterized by 'recalcitrant wills.'
- 3D. For some valuable critiques emphasizing the shortcomings of Montgomery's apologetical methodology, see: W. Stanford Reid, "Subjectivity or Objectivity in Historical Understanding?" in Jerusalem and Athens, ed. by E. R. Geehan (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 404-19; Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind, pp. 206-10; and especially W. Gary Phillips, "Apologetics and Inerrancy: An Analysis of Select Axiopistic Models" (Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1985), pp. 94-248, 378-81.

11C. Francis Schaeffer

- 1D. A unique evangelistic methodology.
- 2D. Part presuppositionalist and part verificationalist.
- 3D. "While the stress on presuppositions sounds like Van Til, the meaning of those statements is more like Carnell's hypothesis, for they are subject to testing by the coherence criterion of truth. . . . Reason has an important role in Schaeffer's approach, but it is not the sole principle apart from revelation" (Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 298-99).

12C. Norman Geisler

- 1D. Geisler introduces his own methodology as follows (note the two stages):

"Establishing the truth of a world view is a special problem and demands a special test for truth. We have concluded that the traditional tests for truth will not suffice because they are inadequate to judge between world views. More than one world view may be true on the grounds of rationalism, experientialism, evidentialism,

and so forth. However, unaffirmability can falsify a world view and undeniability can verify a world view. Supposing this to be the case when judging between world views, we now come to the problem of determining what is true within a given world view. It is here that combinationalism [which he previously dubbed as a "leaky bucket"] or systematic coherence seems to be the most adequate test for truth . . ." (Christian Apologetics, p. 145).

- 2D. His system has been labelled "Neo-Thomistic Apologetics" (Purdy's terminology; cf. Richard A. Purdy, "Norman Geisler's Neo-Thomistic Apologetics," JETS, 25:3 [September 1982]: 351-58).

Geisler outlines his overall argument for theism as follows (Christian Apologetics, pp. 238-39):

- "(1) Some things undeniably exist (e.g. I cannot deny my own existence).
- (2) My nonexistence is possible.
- (3) Whatever has the possibility not to exist is currently caused to exist by another.
- (4) There cannot be an infinite regress of current causes of existence.
- (5) Therefore, a first uncaused cause of my current existence exists.
- (6) This uncaused cause must be infinite, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect.
- (7) This infinitely perfect Being is appropriately called 'God.'
- (8) Therefore, God exists.
- (9) This God who exists is identical to the God described in the Christian Scriptures.
- (10) Therefore, the God described in the Bible exists."

Building upon this he continues (ibid., pp. 264-65):

"Historical Christianity is inseparable from claims of the miraculous. Indeed, the central premise in the Christian apologetic is the miraculous and historical incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. The argument takes on the following form:

- "(1) Undeniability is the only adequate test for the truth of a world view.

- (2) Theism is the only world view that meets the test of undeniability.
 - (3) Therefore, theism is true.
 - (4) In a theistic universe miracles are possible.
 - (5) Historical events are knowable in a theistic universe.
 - (6) Systematic consistency is the test for the truth of claims within a world view.
 - (7) The claim that Christ's coming was a miracle is the most systematically consistent position.
 - (8) Therefore, it is true that Christ's coming was a miracle.
 - (9) The claim that Christ is God is the most systematically consistent view.
 - (10) Therefore, Christ is God.
 - (11) Christ verified that the Bible is the Word of God."
- 3D. For a brief survey and critique of Geisler's apologetical methodology, see: Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 308-12; cf. also Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind, pp. 210-15.
- 4D. Even Geisler at the outset of the development of his methodology is forced to concede, "Of course, there is no way to show in advance that theism is actually undeniable and all nontheisms are unaffirmable . . ." (Christian Apologetics, p. 144). He also concedes that "it must be admitted that systematic consistency does not provide an apodictic or undeniable test for truth. No finite mind is in actual possession of all the facts . . ." (Ibid., p. 146).

13C. Clark Pinnock

- 1D. His burden: "The shape of our defense is to some extent molded by the intellectual climate of our times. . . . What is needed now is the emergence of a new generation of tough-minded Christian intellectuals" (Clark Pinnock, Set Forth Your Case [Chicago: Moody Press, 1967], pp. 8, 139; cf. pp. 85 ff.); cf. his articles "Does Faith Need Reasons?" His (October 1976): 16-18, and "Our Basis for Faith: Limited but Sufficient," His (April 1977): 12-15.
- 2D. For a brief survey of Pinnock's approach, see: Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims, pp. 301-04.

14C. Josh McDowell

"Josh McDowell, utilizing a team of researchers, has brought together a vast compilation of quotations from specialists in the examination of evidence related to belief in the truth of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ. . . . The overall structure reflects an approach of pure empiricism . . ." (Ibid., p. 326).

15C. R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley (see: Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics [Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1984]). For extensive critique, see my review article: GTJ 7 (Spring '86): 111-23.

16C. Frederic Howe

1D. Bib Sac articles and Challenge and Response: A Handbook of Christian Apologetics (Zondervan, 1982).

2D. His burden: the separation of apologetics and evangelism.

17C. Others

2B. Some Selected Categories

1C. Verificationists

1D. Evidentialists (usually assume tabula rasa; usually employ cosmological argument)

1E. Key point: For all practical purposes most evidentialists assume that Christian evidences are inherently compelling.

Brown's comments are instructive: "Broadly speaking, Christian apologists find themselves pushed into two camps over the question of miracles. . . . The first camp may be labeled the offensive camp. Its leaders see miracles as objective events that give irrefragable proof of divine intervention. Such events are ascertainable by anyone who cares to use the normal

techniques employed by secular historians investigating secular history. Miracles are seen as providing objective grounds for believing, and do not require any special faith-commitment as a prerequisite to accepting them" (Miracles and the Critical Mind, p. 197).

2E. Key words:

1F. σημεῖον [semeion] (i.e. "sign, sign-miracle"): In John's "Gospel there is special reference to the σημεῖα of Jesus (2:23; 3:2; 6:2, 26; 9:16) and sometimes there is summary mention of their great number (11:47; 12:37; 20:30)" (TDNT, "σημεῖον," by Rengstorf, 7:245; cf. his whole survey, pp. 243-57).

2F. δύναμις [dynamis] (i.e. "miracle") in the Synoptics

3F. ἔργα [erga] (i.e. "works")

3E. Key passages:

1F. John's Gospel

1G. Much emphasis is placed upon John 2:11, 23; 4:48; 6:2, 14, 30; 7:31; 10:37-38; 14:11; and of course 20:30-31 (cf. Morris Inch, "Apologetical Use of 'Sign' in the Fourth Gospel," The Evangelical Quarterly, 42:1 [January-March 1970]: 35-43).

2G. For balance concerning Jesus' Messianic attestations, carefully note:

1H. The context of John 2:23 (i.e. vv. 24-25)

2H. The context of John 6:30 (i.e. vv. 2, 11-14) -- apparently there are never enough sign-miracles to generate saving faith!

Brown's appeal to Pascal (i.e. Pensees No. 835) is an important reminder herein: "Thus, there is enough evidence to condemn and not enough to

convince, so that it should be apparent that those who follow it are prompted to do so by grace and not by reason, and those who evade it are prompted by concupiscence and not by reason" (Miracles and the Critical Mind, p. 39).

- 3H. The mixed response in John 12:27-29.
- 4H. The clear statement of fact in John 12:37.
- 5H. The restricted audience (i.e. the eleven) of John 14:11.
- 6H. The syntax of John 20:31 along with its immediate (e.g. v. 29) and larger contexts (e.g. 3:2; 6:14; 7:31; 10:37-38).

1I. These attestations were directly locked into Messianic prophecies, and the combination of revelation, attestation, and illumination led the elect Israelite along a progressive pathway of soteriological enlightenment.

2I. Consider the following excerpts from Colin Brown's, Miracles and the Critical Mind:

"Miracles are not to be severed from the accompanying teaching" (p. 98).

"Shedd's view of miracles as tokens may well come closer to John's view of miracles as signs (John 20:30) than the assumption that they are inescapable, verifiable proofs. For a sign is not a conclusive scientific demonstration, but a pointer or indication that calls for a response" (p. 167).

"What is clear from all this is the fact that miracles were not thought of as a basic ground for belief in God. God's existence is to be believed in on other grounds. Miracles function as a sign of identification,

enabling the one who performs them to be identified as God's agent. But a sign is not the same as a proof. A sign points to something. It may carry with it some indication of its authenticity and veracity. But its function consists in directing us toward that to which it points" (p. 19).

"It is not for nothing that scholars like R. E. Brown interpret the Fourth Gospel as 'The Book of Signs.' However, if we speak in this way, it is important to remember that the signs illustrate and embody the teaching of Jesus. The signs are interwoven in a series of discourses and discussion that they illustrate. They are thus prophetic signs in the tradition of Old Testament prophecy. They do not lead away to another God, like the signs of the false prophet who is to be condemned and destroyed. Rather, they illustrate and embody the work of the Father, and as such reveal God's glory.

"Despite the emphasis on the signs of Jesus in John 20:30-31, signs have an ambivalent value. The preceding verse caps the account of Thomas's unbelieving attitude toward the resurrection with the question, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe' (20:29). Lohse observes that

Jesus' miracles exert no incontrovertible power before which all must bow, but rather, like his preaching, consistently provoke a double reaction (7.40f.; 9.16; 10.19; 11.45f.). On the one hand stands faith, which understands the signs of Jesus as a revelation (2.11; 4.46-54). But on the other hand,

the signs of Jesus release the embittered hatred of the Jews, which brings him to the cross.

"Throughout the Gospel, the signs of Jesus (like the teaching of Jesus) provoke both belief (2:11, 23; 4:50, 53; 5:9; 6:14, 21; 9:11, 17, 33, 38; 11:27, 45; 12:11) and unbelief (5:18; 6:66; 9:16, 24, 29, 40f.; 11:53). The desire for signs and wonders, which does not get beyond being impressed with the remarkable, could be compared with what the Synoptic parable of the sower likens to seed fallen on the path or among thorns (2:24f.; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2; 12:18). For the reader of the Gospel, the purpose in recording the signs of Jesus is not to provide conclusive proof but to provide grounds for believing in the Christ, the Son of God, so that the believer may have life in his name" (pp. 323-24).

- 2F. Matthew 11:2-6 (i.e. Jesus' response to John the Baptist; cf. Messianic connection: Isa 35:5-6). Contrast Jesus' response to the hostile in Matthew 12:38-39.
- 3F. Mark 2:1-12
- 4F. The great messages in Acts (Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, pp. 149-50); the evidentialist appeals to the following:
 - 1G. Jewish Apologetics
 - 1H. Pentecost, 2:14-39
 - 2H. Peter to Jewish populace, 3:12-26
 - 3H. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, 4:8-12; 5:29-32
 - 4H. Stephen's speech, 7:2-53
 - 5H. Peter's sermon in Cornelius' house, 10:34-43
 - 6H. Paul at Antioch of Pisidia, 13:16-41
 - 7H. Paul before Jewish audience at his arrest, 22:1-21

- 8H. Paul before the Sanhedrin, 23:1-6
- 9H. Paul to Jews while under house arrest, 28:17-28
- 2G. Gentile Apologetics
- 1H. Paul at Lystra, 14:8-18
- 2H. Paul at the Areopagus, 17:22-31
- 3H. Paul before Felix, 24:10-21
- 4H. Paul before Festus, 25:8-11
- 3G. Apologetics with Mixed Audience
- 1H. Paul before Felix with his Jewish wife, 24:24-25
- 2H. Paul before Festus with King Agrippa, 26:1-29
- 5F. The Voice from Heaven: 2 Peter 1:17-18 (yet, note vv. 19-21: our possession is the "more sure prophetic word"; also, remember the significance of John 12:27-29).
- 4E. Key premise: "Biblical apostolic practices are normative and must be the measure of any apologetical framework" (Ibid., p. 136).
- 1F. However, Mayers is forced to contradict himself when it comes to the bottom-line issue, since the biblical writers were "witnesses" in a unique sense (e.g. cf. 1 John 1:1-3; 4:14):
- 1G. "Unlike all nonbiblical historians, John had the Holy Spirit of God to superintend and direct his selection of data, his recording of that data, and his interpretation of the historiographical account so that his product is 100 percent accurate In the final analysis, biblical accounts are different from all other historical records as they are the joint product of God and the human historian" (Ibid., p. 68).
- 2G. Mayers and others need to recognize that those of the apostolic circle were primary witnesses (usually eyewitnesses) whereas we are secondary witnesses; the biblical data is impressive:

- 1H. Consider: John 14-16 (e.g. 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15; 21:24); Luke 24:48; Acts 1:21-22; 5:32; 10:40-43; 13:31; 22:15; 26:16; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:14.
- 2H. On the significance of the μάρτυς [martys] word complex, note the following excerpts:
- 1I. "The word-group first acquired its specific importance in biblical theology in the NT, more precisely, in Acts and the Johannine literature. . . . The frequent use of the witness-theme in the NT stresses the importance of the historical foundations of the Christian religion. The principal events of the public ministry of Jesus were wrought in the presence of his chosen companions and apostles. They had been present in Jerusalem during the final week, and were in a position to attest the facts of his trial, crucifixion and burial. Above all, they were competent witnesses to vouch for the fact of his resurrection. For both Luke and John the Jerusalem apostles occupy a special place in holy history, because they had been with Jesus from the commencement of his public ministry. . . . In the Book of Acts the factual content of the apostolic testimony receives particular attention, especially in the speeches. . . . It was of supreme significance to the New Testament writers that the apostolic teaching was not based on a collection of myths, but on the experience of eye-witnesses" (NIDNTT, s.v. "μάρτυρία," by Coenen and Trites, 3:1042, 47).
- 2I. "It is Luke's usage in Lk. 24:48 and Ac. which takes us beyond this [i.e. the popular usage of the terms], but in such a way that here, too, the term first denotes one who declares facts

directly [emphasis added] known to himself. . . . The fact that Luke applies the concept of the witness to the content of the Gospel is grounded in his marked concern to expound clearly the historical foundations of the evangelical message. At issue are, not doctrines, myths, or speculations, but facts which took place in the clear light of history at a specific time and place, facts which can be established and on which one can rely. Hence one must speak of witnesses. Nor are these witnesses in general. They are those who are qualified to be witnesses because they themselves lived through the events. They were indeed specifically called to be such (Lk. 24:47; Ac. 1:8, 22-26). They were given the necessary equipment for their task (Lk. 24:48; Ac. 5:32). Herein may be seen Luke's concept of, and interest in, the witness. This concept coincides with that of the apostles in the narrower sense, and unless it undergoes reconstruction, it is equally bound to disappear as historical development proceeds.

"All the essential elements are present already in the first and only instance in Lk., i.e., in the missionary command of the risen Lord to the eleven in Jerusalem (24:48). Jesus first shows that according to the statements of Scripture Christ had thus (i.e., as He did) to suffer and on the third day to rise again. He then says that on the basis of His name repentance for the remission of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. In the last phrase the reference to scriptural statements becomes the missionary charge to the disciples. The addition ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες τούτων ['y o u a r e witnesses of these things'] shows

why the disciples are fitted for this task, and how they will discharge it. They are fitted because from experience they can bear witness to the factuality of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, and also because they have grasped in faith the significance of Jesus, and can thus attest it. They discharge the task by proclaiming both the facts and their significance as they have grasped this in faith. Only thus does the kerygma become the kerygma. As special equipment they have the prospect of the Spirit whom the Father has promised and whom Jesus will send (v. 29).

"What is intimated in Lk. is developed in Ac. The missionary charge to the apostolic band is repeated with the phrase ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ['You shall be my witnesses'] (1:8). The primary thought is that they can and will proclaim from first-hand knowledge the story of Jesus (1:22; 10:39) and especially the fact of His resurrection (2:32; 3:15; 5:31f.; 10:41). But in so doing they will always emphasize its saving significance (cf. esp. 10:42). It is at once apparent that this condition can be met only by a select circle whose members had the honour of personal encounter with the risen Lord (10:41; 1:22). These are μάρτυρες αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν λαόν ['His witnesses to the people'] (13:31)" (TDNT, s.v. "μάρτυς," by Strathmann, 4:492-93).

- 3I. Such emphases lead Brown to stress another factor of apologetical discontinuity: "Reports of events, especially at this distance in time, do not have the same evidential force as direct experience of events themselves Those who were eyewitnesses to an alleged miracle were in a different position from us

who read the account of it some nineteen centuries later. They were in a position to ask questions and check facts in a way that we cannot do" (Miracles and the Critical Mind, p. 205).

2F. Nevertheless, we do now have the apostolic kerygma inscripturated; this constitutes our Divinely sanctioned evidential reservoir. Even in the light of this important truth, Brown reminds all that "the historical evidence for many miracles is limited to the testimony of at most the four Gospels and sometimes to that of only one Gospel. If, however, miracles are accepted . . . because they are reported in Scripture, which is divinely inspired, it has to be acknowledged that the miracles themselves have ipso facto ceased to be independent items of evidence that compel faith and have become themselves objects of faith" (Ibid., p. 203).

5E. Key problem: Evidences are shackled because of the Fall, natural man's world-and-life view, etc. Cf. Luke 16:27-31.

1F. The unbeliever has only an AM receiver and we must broadcast on FM!

1G. Note Mayers' continued concessions to the biblical facts:

"There is no truly 'neutral' appeal to the facts in some forensic and legal manner as the facts are already previously given definitive interpretation in Scripture. This rules out the approach of those who feel there is an analogy between neutral jurors and autonomous and alienated unbelievers who analyze, evaluate, and decide for or against a supernatural and authoritative revelation of the Creator's person and will. Such interpretive common ground simply does not and cannot exist between the believer and unbeliever. Pure common-ground evidentialism is impossible for Christian apologetics. The Christian apologist is not a defense lawyer approaching a neutral and undecided jury. Rather, he faces a self-determined and God-rejecting enemy of Christ in need of divine reconciliation. . . . Though history cannot be rejected so glibly or we reject Luke and John, it is at the same time a healthy reminder that all the objective evidence

possibly conceivable is not capable of regenerating a person and turning him from sin, Satan, and self to the Creator, Savior, and Lord. . . . Doubtless Jesus did not do miracles to induce conviction or overcome doubt in an apologetic manner, though this was frequently the effect of His miracles. . . . Jesus seemingly did miracles only where great need or great faith (or both) were present -- not to create faith. . . . But, and this is very important, miraculous signs are not enough As important as empirical evidence is, it is never entirely sufficient in its own right. . . . The episode ascribing Jesus' exorcism of demons to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, shows how blind to the evidence and illogical the unbelieving heart can be (Matt. 12:22-28). The use of such revelatory evidence may very likely have the same result today. . . . Men, alienated from God, can always disbelieve if that is their wish -- miracle or fulfilled prophecy notwithstanding" (Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, pp. 72, 131-32, 140-43).

2G. Geisler well notes:

"Contrary to evidentialism, meaning is not inherent in nor does it arise naturally out of bare facts or events. Nothing happens in a vacuum; meaning always demands a context. And since the facts are admittedly distinct from the interpretation, it is always possible that in another context or framework of meaning the said facts would not be evidence for Christianity at all. For example, in the context of a naturalistic world the resuscitation of Jesus' corpse would not be a miracle but merely an unusual natural event for which there is no known scientific explanation but which, by virtue of its occurrence, both demands and prods scientists to find a natural explanation. Meaning, then, does not really grow out of the event by itself; meaning is given to the event from a certain perspective. The earthquake that an Old Testament theist believed was divinely instigated to swallow Korah (Num. 16:31ff.) would undoubtedly be explained by a naturalist as geological pressures within the crust of the earth. What the New Testament claims was the 'voice of God' in

John 12 was admittedly interpreted by someone standing nearby as 'thunder.' No bare fact possesses inherent meaning; every fact is an 'interprafact' by virtue of a necessary combination of both its bare facticity and the meaning given to it in a given context by a specific or world view" (Christian Apologetics, p. 96; cf. his expansion on p. 97).

- 3G. Note Ellis' appropriate challenge of evidentialist assumptions concerning "the 'empty tomb' traditions":

"It is not an apologetic to unbelievers at all, for the Gospel accounts admit that an empty grave convinces no one -- not even the disciples. . . . For proof of the resurrection can one neither go to the empty grave nor seek assurance from appearances ([Luke] 24:12, 24, 27, 41). One's conviction of the resurrection must arise primarily from the conviction that Jesus is Messiah of whose passion and resurrection the Scriptures prophesied and who himself so prophesied (24:25ff., 44ff.). That is, for Luke the resurrection is 'confessional history.' This does not mean that it is less historical or a different kind of history in its 'happened-ness.' But it does mean that one's assurance and affirmation of it rest ultimately on the witness of the Word of God and not on a resurrection certificate from the Jerusalem medical society. Thus the resurrection of Jesus can rise above the 'probable' to which all historical verification is subject and become a 'certain' historical event" (E. Earle Ellis, The Gospel of Luke, Century Bible [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966], pp. 273-74).

- 4G. The strategic relationship between a man's world-and-life view and Christian evidences is commendably developed by Brown as he interacts with both early evidentialists and many contemporaries who stand in the Old Princetonian line:

"The view that one takes of miracles depends in the long run, not simply on isolated pieces of testimony, but upon the view that one takes of the testimony in relation to the view that one takes of the world in general. . . . No one appears to

have based belief in God as such on miracles. Rather, the miracles were interpreted as signs that fitted into and modified an existing framework of belief. They were seen as saying something about what God was doing and about the person who wrought them. Although they modified the framework of belief, they did not establish that framework in the first place. . . . The whole argument [i.e. Warfield's] is further modified by the admission of belief in a personal Creator God as the condition for granting the feasibility of miracles. It would seem from this that Warfield was ready to concede that miracles could not be admitted as objective proof that would compel belief in someone who was not prepared to accept a theistic world view One wonders how Warfield himself would have reacted to a student who pointed out that Warfield's own approach to miracles was not a matter of objective proof that created faith. Rather, they have a place as part of the fabric of a belief-system in which beliefs not only about the trustworthiness of the Gospels and the acceptance of their reports at face value, but also the prior commitment to beliefs about sin, creation, incarnation, and resurrection play a decisive part. This decisive part not only affects their interpretation (which actually tends to be pushed into the background in Warfield's writings) but also the question of their possibility and actuality. . . . If we acknowledge the miracles as historical events, as the present writer does, it is not on the basis of overwhelming historical evidence as such, but as events consonant with biblically grounded beliefs about God. Within this scheme of belief, the miracles function as signs pointing to further perceptions about Jesus but not as irrefragable objective proofs" (Miracles and the Critical Mind, pp. 168, 200, 202, 205).

2F. Even believers have short circuits in their FM antennas!

For example, note Mark 6:51-52 in its miracle context and Luke 24:11 in its context (cf. vv. 1-11 and the background statement of Matt 16:21).

2D. Rationalists

- 1E. "The seeds of rationalism have been firmly implanted in the Western world since at least the time of Plato. . . . Rationalism is characterized by its stress on the innate or a priori ability of human reason to know truth. Basically, rationalists hold that what is knowable or demonstrable by human reason is true. . . . Rationalism can be most easily understood by contrast with empiricism. The former stresses the mind in the knowing process and the latter lays emphasis on the senses. . . . Along with its stress on the mind, rationalism holds to an a priori aspect to human knowledge, that is, something independent of sense experience. By contrast empiricists stress the a posteriori, or what comes through empirical experience" (Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 29).
- 2E. Alleged Rationalistic Examples
- 1F. Acts 17:1-3
- 1G. The allegation: The meaning of διαλέγομαι [dialegomai] is to be derived directly from its employment as a Greek philosophical term.
- 2G. Its refutation
- 1H. "In the New Testament there is no instance of the classical use of διαλέγομαι in the philosophical sense" (TDNT, s.v. "διαλέγομαι, διαλογίζομαι, διαλογισμός," by Schrenk, 2:93).
- 2H. "In Ac. διαλέγεσθαι with the dat., or with πρὸς τινα, or sometimes absol., is used of Paul's addresses in the synagogues (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19), in the temple (24:12), in the school of Tyrannus (19:9), and to the church in Troas (20:7, 9). There is no reference to 'disputation,' but to the 'delivery of religious lectures or sermons.' . . . What is at issue is the address which any qualified member of a synagogue might give" (TDNT, 2:94-95; cf. NIDNTT, s.v. "διαλογίζομαι," by Furst, 3:821).
- 2F. Acts 17:16-34
- 1G. The allegation: "that the apologist must adjust his epistemological authority or method in terms of the mindset of his

hearers as he finds them'" (an accurate summary of their contention by Bahnsen, "The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens," Ashland Theological Bulletin 13 [Spring 1980]: 31).

2G. Its refutation

1H. Via precedent

"It has been suggested that the structure of the Areopagus address reflects, in its major motifs of monotheism, anti-idolatry, a moral demand and an impending eschatological event, the same type of approach which Diaspora Judaism utilized in their Gentile proselyte literature. For Paul to reflect such emphases should not be considered strange, in light of his background and training in the Judaism of his day.

"While this interesting similarity has been observed, it has not been insisted that correlation of content demands that Paul merely adapted the propagandistic methods and message of Diaspora Judaism for his own missionary endeavors. It is, however, strongly implied that such correlation should not be lightly dismissed, since both Paul and Judaism have the Old Testament as their ultimate source

"We see the Apostle Paul as a thorough-going Hebrew of Palestinian persuasion, whose education would have acquainted him with Jewish literature and beliefs in contradistinction to Greek philosophy. We have observed that the basic motifs of the Areopagus address are similar to the extra-Biblical motifs of Judaeo-Christian missionary propaganda, making the fundamental motif of the speech Jewish-Christian rather than Greek-Stoic. Yet, to align Paul's Gentile apology with Judaism's apologetic methodology is not tantamount to saying that Paul also reproduced their total conceptual propositions. Paul is certainly versatile enough to utilize a basically valid approach

while editing the concepts through insightful Biblical eyes with the aid of New Testament revelation" (Meadors, "The Areopagus Address: A Judaeo-Christian Missionary Sermon," Th.M. thesis [GTS, 1979], pp. 158-59; p. 77).

2H. Via observation

1I. The background of Paul's sermon:
Acts 17:16-22a

2I. The essence of Paul's sermon:
Acts 17:22b-31

1J. Declarations: vv. 22b-29

2J. Exhortation: vv. 30-31

3I. The reactions to Paul's sermon:
Acts 17:32-34

3E. Shortcomings

1F. Philosophical shortcomings:

- 1G. Augustine, Aquinas, Blaise Pascal (Pensees), etc.
- 2G. Logic [for the 3 basic "'laws'" see Mayers, Both/And, p. 39], in and of itself, is not necessarily unassailable (cf. John V. Dahms, "How Reliable Is Logic?" JETS 21:4 [December 1978]: 369-80). Cf. Geisler pp. 136-37.
- 3G. Similarly, "No strictly rational proof is available for the existence of anything. It is a mistaken effort to contend that reality can be rationally proven" (Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 43; cf. his whole section on "The Inadequacy of Rationalistic Methodology," pp. 42-45).
- 4G. Geisler appropriately continues: "Rationalism in the strong form of logically inescapable arguments proves nothing, since there is no way to logically prove the very laws of thought which are used to prove things. All rational justification must come to an end in first principles. These first principles cannot be rationally proven, for if logic is used as the basis for proving logic, then one is simply arguing in a circle. Further, even granting the validity of the laws of thought, they cannot be validly used to demonstrate any reality by logical necessity. . . . In the weak form of rationalism, that is, noncontradictoriness, it is also insufficient; for many competing world views may be internally consistent. The law of noncontradiction as such is only a test for falsity, not a test for truth" (ibid., pp. 136-37).

2F. Biblical shortcomings:

The theological and practical implications of post-Fall reason are astronomical. Again, Mayers' concessions to the biblical perspective are noteworthy:

"Total depravity, therefore, affects the reasoning process if not the very ability to reason by the men for whom Christ died, that is, wayward, lost, and unbelieving men in need of new birth. . . . The actual content of his reasoning begins with man's will and reason, not God's will and Word. . . . Man's continuous drive for ultimate autonomy demands that

whenever he thinks of origins, death, and other ultimate issues, his self-produced presuppositions must reinterpret God's universe in an agnostic or atheistic manner. . . . Sin certainly affects man's psychological activity, hindering his ability to think correctly. . . . In his actual godlessness and wickedness, then, man suppresses and/or interprets in a nontheistic framework the obvious evidence of God's reality and care. The Fall thus affects the reasoning process if not the ability to reason as God's unique creature" (Mayers, Both/And, pp. 45-46, 203; cf. "The Inadequacy of Rationalistic Methodology" in Geisler's Christian Apologetics, pp. 42-45).

2C. Presuppositionalists

1D. Biblical Fideists

1E. The priority of faith.

Note: For the biblical fideist, faith is above reason. In contrast, for the rationalist, faith is according to reason, and for the existential 'fideist,' faith is contrary to reason.

2E. The necessity of commencing with self-referential axioms.

3E. See: "The Positive Contributions of Fideism" in Geisler's Christian Apologetics, pp. 59-61:

1F. "The antirationalistic emphasis of fideism has significant value. Man can neither rationally comprehend nor logically demonstrate the existence of the transcendent God of Christian theism."

2F. "Fideists are right that neither evidence nor reason is the basis for one's commitment to God."

3F. "Objective evidence alone does not induce a religious response. Apologetics as such does not and cannot produce faith in Christianity."

4F. "Faith is more than intellectual, it is volitional. . . . It is a heart commitment."

5F. "The fideistic stress on the personal dimension of truth is an important contribution to our understanding. . . . It is truth that must be appropriated by a person (the believer) in a personal way, namely, by a personal commitment."

. . . In short, fideism is a welcomed corrective to the abstract and deadening influences of religious rationalism."

6F. "An overlooked contribution of Van Til's view is his insistence that no scientific or historical 'facts' make any sense outside of a metaphysical framework. . . . All facts are 'interprafacts.' . . . The same events and 'facts' do have different meanings within different world views."

7F. "Man's sinful condition affects his response to God. . . . Man's sinfulness does indeed influence the world view he formulates."

2D. Existential Fideists (i.e. irrationalism)

1E. Kirkegaardian approach (e.g. an existential leap)

2E. Neo-orthodoxy (e.g. Barth, Brunner)

3E. Self-refuting (i.e. not biblical)

3C. Hybrids

1D. Practical Hybrids (cf. various personalities above)

2D. Self-acclaimed Hybrids

1E. Hanna's Veridicalism (more philosophically oriented)

Crucial Questions in Apologetics, by Mark M. Hanna. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. Pp. 139. \$5.95. Paper.

Apologetics is the theological discipline that brings theology to interface with philosophy. The key point of contact is epistemology. This provocative book questions the correctness of empirical epistemology as well as that of presuppositional epistemology. Veridicalism is presented as a more adequate epistemological starting point that will satisfy the claim of special revelation, the claims of experience, and the claims of reason.

A brief presentation of subject matter is followed by a section of questions and answers. A review of contemporary challenges, the relation of apologetics and theology, and the distinctive approaches of presuppositionalism, verification, and veridicalism constitute the pattern of the work. Significant criticisms are brought against both the presuppositionalist and the verificationist. These criticisms warrant careful consideration from each position. Criticism is balanced with appreciation for that which Hanna feels is of value from each of these divergent views.

Veridicalism's vision seems to be a form of foundationalism. Knowledge can be reduced to certain foundations. These foundations in the past have either led to skepticism through empiricism, or to dogmatism through rational apriorism. Hanna seeks to escape both by reducing knowledge to phenomenological givens. He defines a given as that which presents itself to awareness, does so directly, and as something that can be corroborated by reflective examination of it and its comportment with other givens. Givens are of two types. There are self-evidencing givens, like the principle of noncontradiction, and perceptual objects, that are universal and thus form neutral ground for the believer and unbeliever. There are self-evidencing special givens like the Bible (pp. 101-3).

The focus of the vision of veridicalism is now clear. Both empirical and non-empirical universal givens are used in gaining certainty. Justification of the truth of Christianity stems from the union of the special givens of Bible with the relevant universal givens. A major question arises over what union or comportment actually mean? Is this a form of phenomenological idealism in which rational coherence to givens is the basis to justify truth claims?

Hanna has promised another book to expand and develop veridicalism. One hopes that the question/answer format is abandoned, for at best the questions seemed contrived and not the most relevant questions to be asked in light of the content. Veridicalism is a creative position in apologetics and this seed book deserves wide reading in the evangelical community.

JAMES GRIER

(Grace Theological Journal, 3:1 [Spring 1982]: 138-39; cf. Gordon H. Clark, *The Gordon-Conwell Lectures on Apologetics*; Tape 6: Veridicalism [The Trinity Foundation, 1981].)

2E. Mayers' "Both/And" Approach (more scripturally oriented)

(Ronald B. Mayers, Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic, Moody Press, 1984.)

Mayers' work is a respectable attempt at methodological bridge-building (pp. xi, 197). His thesis is that "a Christian methodology, based on the ontological implications of creation and the epistemological assumptions of special revelation, demands an eclectic apologetic framework that does justice to both the a priori person of God and the a posteriori interpreted work of God in creation and revelation" (p. 198). Although he is insistent regarding this both/and approach, it seems (to his credit) that theologically he is a bottom-line presuppositionalist (cf. e.g. pp. 8, 18, 45-46, 60, 68, 72, 76, 131-32, 140-43, 168, 203, etc.). Mayers' greatest contribution resides in his exposure of "the extremes of the purists" (p. 212; cf. pp. 17, 87) in both the evidentialist and presuppositionalist schools.

1F. His dialectical grid (pp. 212-13):

1G. Ontological

1H. Being Per Se

Both	And
God	Creation
Infinite	Finite
Permanence	Change
Unity	Plurality
Absoluteness	Relativity
Purpose	Spontaneity
Necessary	Contingent
Grace	Nature

2H. Being of Man

Both	And
Spirit	Body
Greatly Dignified	Wretchedly Depraved
Ideally Theonomous	Actually Autonomous
Inherently Dependent	Sinfully Independent
Loving	Cruel
Creative	Destructive

2G. Epistemological

Both	And
A Priori	A Posteriori
Deductive	Inductive
Rational	Empirical
Universal	Particular
Certainty	Probability
Internal Relations	External Relations
Consistency	Coherence
Objective	Subjective
Logic	Intuition
Knowledge	Mystery

3G. Theological

Both		And
Three	God	One
Transcendent	God	Immanent
Inward	General Revelation	Outward
Event	Special Revelation	Word
Divine	Christ	Human
Historic	Christ	Contemporaneous
Holy Spirit	Inspiration	Man
Sovereignty	Ethics	Freedom
Provision	Salvation	Response
Belief	Faith	Trust
Already	Last Things	Not Yet

2F. His apologetical grid (pp. 214-17):

1G. "What is the role of philosophy in Christian theology and apologetics?"

"Philosophy and theology are interdependent for the Christian thinker. Philosophy and theology are concentric circles as the former attempts to work out in detail and systematize a Christian world view based on and within the parameters of divine revelation and theological doctrine. However, from the perspective of intellectual problems and cultural implications of the Christian faith, philosophy functions differently than theology, albeit never independent of God and His revelation. In regard to theological prolegomena, philosophy is the handmaiden of theology in dealing with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the theologian, but it is never capable of constructing a viable natural theology apart from special revelation."

2G. "How are reason and faith related?"

"These are neither identical nor opposites. Faith as belief and trust is both objective and subjective. As belief, faith is rational and dependent on reason for a logical presentation of the evidence. Like the disciples who were first told by the women of the resurrection, we cannot believe if what we are to believe seems 'like nonsense' (Luke 24:11). And like John, we do need to 'see' rationally if we are to believe (John 20:8). Spiritual understanding is more than rational comprehension, however, and thus with Blaise Pascal we must wait for God, by means of the Holy Spirit, to give 'spiritual insight, without which faith is only human, and useless for salvation' (Pensees No. 282)."

3G. "Of what significance is the doctrine of sin for Christian apologetics?"

"Man is totally depraved and can do nothing on his own to either know God or gain God's favor. Although total depravity does not mean man is no longer man made in God's image, it does mean that his God-given abilities are perverted and unconsciously and consciously used wrongly to maintain what man perceives to be his own independence and divinity. Thus the evidence of God's reality and His redemptive activity and care for man is plainly visible in both creation and supernatural revelation, but man's willful refusal to accept God's gracious provision is a product of both his sin nature and his actual sinfulness."

4G. "Do the theistic proofs have worth for convincing the unbeliever?"

"Because of the persuasiveness of natural revelation, particularly in man's intuitive knowledge of God through his own ontological makeup, there is a built-in receptivity to the claims of natural theology. However, the arguments are not only logically invalid, the Christian apologist must disclaim God's special revelation in order to claim the Thomistic path of natural theology. . . ."

- 5G. "To what extent may a believer and unbeliever form a shared point of contact on common ground?"

"There is common ontological ground on three fronts: creation, God's image in man, and historical revelation. Because believer and unbeliever alike live in God's universe and are made in His image, the ultimate structure of being is identical. The Christian apologist must appeal to this inherent 'feel' for the transcendent and personal that can only be met and fulfilled by the living, personal, triune God. Similarly, believer and unbeliever have the same history, including the culmination of God's special revelation -- the incarnate and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. However, man's willful and autonomous sinfulness will not permit him to see and interpret these realities and facts in the only possible way they can be truly interpreted. Thus there is no epistemological common ground until an individual is enabled by the Holy Spirit to accept revelation as revelation. Until then, common ground between the believer and unbeliever may be implicit given creation and history, but it is never explicit."

- 6G. "Are historical Christian evidences important, or even possible, as evidence for the unbeliever?"

"They must be or what Jesus claims concerning His works (John 10:37-38), and what John writes (John 20:30-31) cannot be correct! This is the historical reality that cannot be reasonably denied. This is the means by which the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). But, at the same time, eyes covered with scales (Acts 9:18) and blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) will not correctly discern these facts without the indispensable work of the Holy Spirit. . . ."

- 7G. "What degree of certainty is there in the truthfulness of Christianity?"

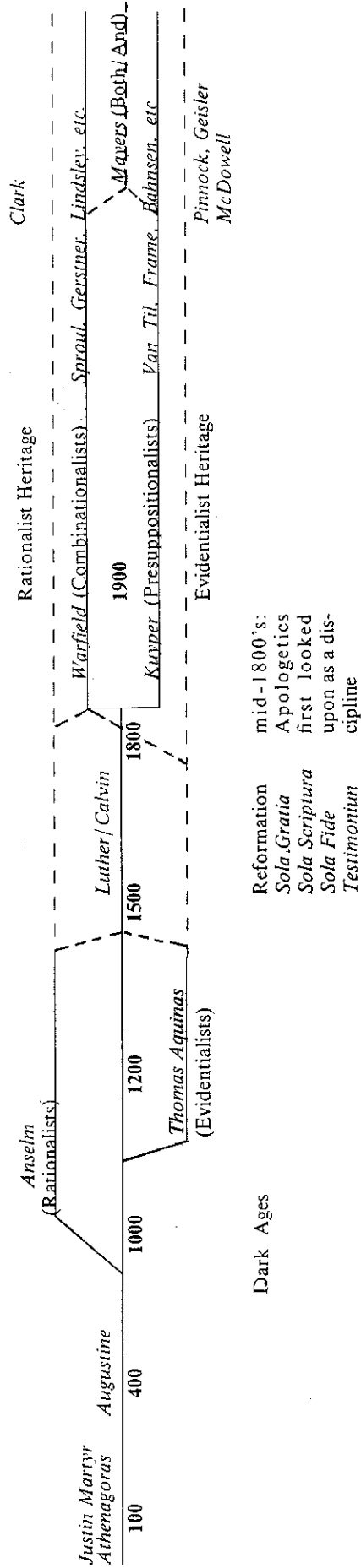
"All historical evidence is only probable, and that is all we can ask of Christianity from the standpoint of objective and rational evidence. Regardless of the high

degree of probability that is indicated, inductive, historical evidence is not susceptible to deductive proof. But neither is any other reality, and if it were, there would be no need of trust in the person of God beyond the evidence. This does not mean the believer is left with only probability. There is absolute personal subjective certitude by means of the witness of the Holy Spirit that enables us to see scriptural revelation as God's special revelation, and through indwelling the believer 'the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children' (Rom. 8:16). . . ."

3B. Review Charts

Note the following two charts.

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICAL HISTORY: SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES



(Adapted from classroom transparencies by Robert Flack)

HORNE'S CHART: "A SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY APOLOGETIC TYPES"¹

TYPE	RATIONALISTIC		REVELATIONAL
	Arminian	Moderate Calvinism	Consistent Calvinism
Theologically			
Philosophically	Categorical Presuppositionalism —Assumes no system or world view. —begins only with an epistemology.	Analytical Presuppositionalism —Assumes the Christian world view hypothetically. —Subjects it to an epistemological verification.	Metaphysical Presuppositionalism —Accepts unquestioningly the Christian world view. —Rejects all efforts at verification.
Apologetically	Starting Point—Man's Reason.	Starting Point—Ultimately man's reason. —Logical—God. —Synoptic—Man's reason.	Starting Point—God's revelation.

Exponents	S. C. Hackett F. J. Sheen	E. J. Carnell B. Ramm G. Clark J. O. Buswell	C. Van Til G. C. Berkouwer H. Dooyeweerd J. M. Spier R. J. Rushdoony
	Common Ground— Epistemological	Common Ground— Epistemological	Common Ground— Metaphysical

¹ Charles M. Horne, "Van Til and Carnell," in Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, ed. by E. R. Geehan (N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), p. 379.

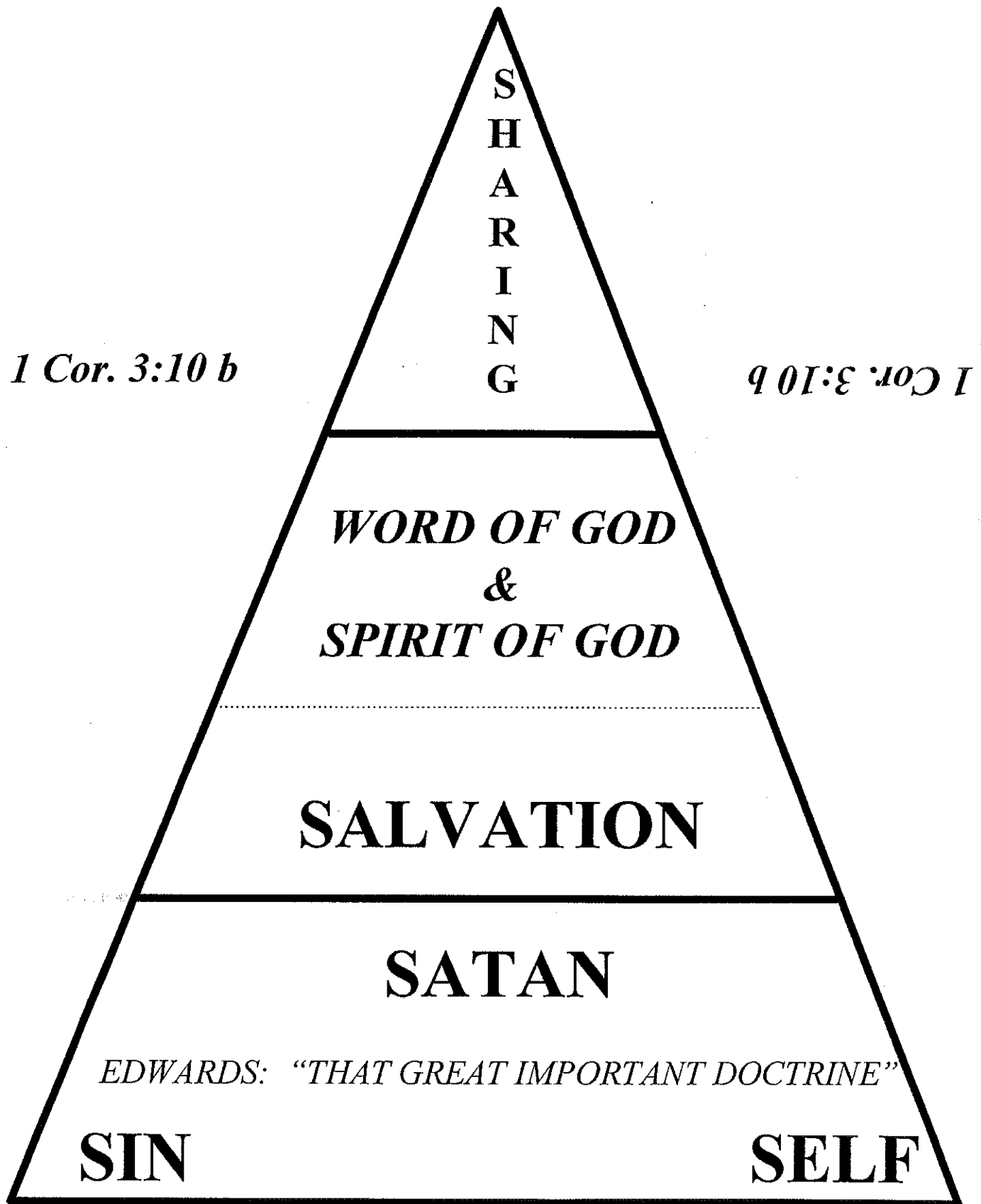
LEWIS' CHART

SUMMARY OF APOLOGETIC SYSTEMS

ISSUES IN APOLOGETIC SYSTEMS	BUSWELL	HACKETT	CLARK	VAN TIL	BARRITT	CARNELL
Logical Starting Point	Empirical Data	Empirical data and rational principles	Axioms of: Logic God Bible	Presuppositions of: Autonomous Scripture and the Triune God	Testimony to Christian experience	Hypothesis of: The Triune God of the Bible
Common Ground or Point of Contact	All Facts	Facts and the mind's thought-forms	The mind's thought-forms	No common ground epistemologically in principle. Actually dependence on God, suppression of awareness of God, guilt	No significant common ground prior to conversion experience	Facts, Law of non-contradiction, the quest for values, laws of morality and love
Test for Truth	Integration (Correspondence)	Coherence	Consistency	Self-authenticating biblical claims	Self-authenticating experience	Systematic Consistency (Coherence)
Role of Reason	Pure Induction	Rational Induction	Pure Deduction	Interpretation of Scripture and confessions	Interpretation of experience	Verification of hypotheses by all inner and outer experience
Basis of Faith in God, Christ and Scripture	Intellectual Probability	Rational Demonstration	Syllogistic Certainty	Scriptural Authority	Psychological Certitude	Intellectual Probability and Moral Certainty

(Gordon R. Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims [Chicago: Moody Press, 1976], p. 286.)

TRYING TO DO GOD'S BUSINESS MAN'S WAY



DOING GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY

PART II: EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

1A. AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

1B. The Availability of a Biblical Perspective

2B. The Need for a Thoroughly Biblical Presentation

1C. Proverbs 3:5-7

2C. Hughes' plea:

"The construction of a system of apologetics that is distinctively Christian should be founded on the testimony of Scripture to the nature of reality in its divine, its human, and its cosmic aspects. It should, moreover be founded on the biblical testimony in its entirety, for the teaching concerning God, man, and the universe is plain and consistent throughout the whole of Scripture and is not dependent on the selection of a few isolated proof texts" (P. E. Hughes, "Crucial Biblical Passages For Christian Apologetics," in Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til [N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971], p. 131).

3B. The Introduction of Key Presuppositions

1C. The Crucial Presupposition

1D. The God-breathed, self-attesting Word (i.e. an autopistic rather than axiopistic assumption)

2D. Grier's challenge:

"A true defense of Christianity demands the open communication of self-authenticating Scripture to man. . . . It would be fruitless to defend a self-authenticating Scripture by abstract non-scriptural argument. . . . The internal evidence ought to be presented unashamedly from the starting point of the Bible as God's authoritative word. It ought to be presented with the force of an absolute demand and the prayer that God the Holy Spirit will open the blind eyes of the hearer so that he will see the overwhelming evidence and bow in repentance and faith" (James Grier, "The Apologetical Value Of The Self-Witness Of Scripture," GTJ 1 [Spring 1980]: 74).

2C. The Corollary Presuppositions

1D. Generally, concerning theology

- 1E. Although apologetics and theology are interrelated, "theology must supply the presuppositions of apologetics" (Greg Bahnsen, "Apologetics," in Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1976], p. 238).
- 2E. "Let us no longer allow our apologetics to come far behind our theology" (Horne, "Biblical Apologetic Methodology," p. 84).
- 2D. Specifically, concerning epistemology: hamartiology must 'inform' epistemology
- 1E. The recognition of a delicate interrelationship between:
- 1F. The significance of the image of God in mankind
- 1G. A survey of the Scriptural data
- 1H. Pre-Fall: Gen 1:26-30
- 1I. Functional
- 2I. Relational
- 3I. Analogical
- 4I. Combinational
- 2H. Post-Fall: Gen 9:6; James 3:9
- 2G. An introduction to the theological tension (cf. 2F. below)
- 1H. "At no point does man, acting upon his adopted principle of autonomy, interpret or discern anything correctly--Scripture is express on this truth (I Cor. 2:14; 1:20, 21; 3:19). . . . One who holds to scriptural teaching concerning the depravity of man must maintain that the faculties are corrupt and defiled, but this doctrine does not imply their complete annihilation" [emphasis added] (Halsey, For A Time Such As This, p. 30).
- 2H. "The common ground between believers and unbelievers lies not in a supposed common epistemology but in a common bearing of God's image. This metaphysical common ground, involving as

it does the sensus deitatis, becomes the proper point of contact in apologetics and evangelism. Men are accessible to the gospel because they are God's image-bearers and live in God's universe which constantly testifies to them of God" (Dave L. Turner, "Cornelius Van Til and Romans 1:18-21: A Study In The Epistemology Of Presuppositional Apologetics," GTJ 2 [Spring 1981]: 57).

2F. The limitations of natural man's knowledge and conscience

1G. His knowledge is suppressed

1H. Salient observations from Romans 1:18-32

1I. Preliminary contextual observations

2I. Selected exegetical observations

2H. Epistemological implications from Romans 1:18-32

1I. "The intellect is not a part of human nature somehow exempted from the general corruption, not something which can be appealed to as an impartial arbiter capable of standing outside the influence of the ego and returning a perfectly objective judgment" (Cranfield, Romans, 1:118).

2I. "Man refuses to honor God-in-his-revelation and formulates a life-and-world perspective more congenial to his standpoint of revolt" (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 1:402).

3I. "The fall of man was a catastrophic personality shock; it fractured human existence with a devastating fault. Ever since, man's worship and contemplation of the living God have been broken, his devotion to the divine will shattered. Man's revolt against God therefore affects his entire being; he is now motivated by an inordinate will . . . he devotes human reasoning to the cause of spiritual rebellion. . . . His revolt against God is at the same time a revolt against truth and the good . . ." [emphasis added] (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 2:134-35).

4I. "Man in sin does not have the will or the means to recover a true knowledge of God" (ISBE [revised], s.v. "Apologetics, Biblical," by Bernard Ramm, 1:191).

2G. His conscience is circumscribed

1H. Salient observations from Romans 2:12-16

1I. Preliminary contextual observations

2I. Selected exegetical observations

2H. Epistemological implications from Romans 2:12-16

"What has been said of the revelation of God in nature may also be said of the second source of the

knowledge of God, the revelation of God in conscience (cf. Rom. 2:15-16). This 'guardian appointed for man,' 'this inner witness and monitor,' by which man is given a native sense of the will of God, is by reason of sin a faulty sense also. It, too, cannot save sinners" (S. Lewis Johnson, "Paul and the Knowledge of God," Bibliotheca Sacra 129: 73-74).

2E. The commensurate methodological restrictions

- 1F. "Man must know God in order to find intelligibility in anything else. Man cannot gain knowledge by looking within himself for the final reference point or interpretive category of experience. Human knowledge is completely dependent upon the original knowledge of God, and thus God's revelation is foundational for man's epistemological endeavors" (Bahnsen, "Apologetics," in Foundations, p. 213).
- 2F. "The sin-darkened mind, contrary to popular opinion, is a slave to certain very definite presuppositions. Failure to accept Scripture's teaching on this most important point lies at the base of the historical impotence of Christian apologetics and evangelical witness. . . . If one does not begin one's investigations of ancient, medieval, or modern philosophy with the biblical presupposition of the noetic effects of sin . . . , he will eventually establish a refuge for the apostate man" (Jim S. Halsey, For A Time Such As This: An Introduction to the Reformed Apologetic of Cornelius Van Til [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976], pp. 100, 105-6).
- 3F. "Since apologists had surrendered the battle at the presuppositional level already, it is no surprise that we find them accommodating to the methods of idealistic philosophy . . . , higher criticism . . . , and Darwinian science. . . . The same arguments which appeared throughout the history of the church were again rehashed, with all the ensuing defects of the Socratic outlook thwarting their success.

"By taking as its starting point an agreement with apostate thought and presuppositions, Christian apologetics has throughout its history ended up in captivity behind enemy lines. Having said 'yes' to unbelieving epistemology or interpretation at the outset,

the later attempt to say 'but' and correct the conclusions of non-Christian thinking has been manifestly unsuccessful" (Bahnsen, "Apologetics," in Foundations, pp. 230-31).

4F. "To capitulate to the unregenerate demand for autonomy and submit the biblical revelation and its evidence to his viewpoint is to deny what Scripture says about him as a sinner whose mind is at enmity against God" (Grier, "Apologetical Value of Self-Witness," p. 74).

5F. "The method is, then, not to reason to the full theistic position from a standpoint outside of it, but to stand within the Christian theistic position itself" (Robert D. Knudsen, "Progressive and Regressive Tendencies in Christian Apologetics," Jerusalem and Athens, ed. by E. R. Geehan [N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971], p. 283).

3C. The Charge of Circular Reasoning

1D. First, "presuppositions are universal": "all epistemological authorities start with linguistic assertions that are self-referential" (Grier, "Apologetical Value Of Self-Witness," p. 75).

2D. "Man is God's creature and is dependent on God for knowledge through self-revelation. The evidence for the truth of God's revelation is internal to the revelation and is adapted to man in language form" (Ibid., p. 76).

3D. Consequently,

"We move from the Scriptures, through the Scriptures, to the Scriptures. Many will condemn this . . . as arguing in a circle, or debating within a closed system. Our only rebuttal is that all arguing . . . is arguing in a circle. The only question becomes, Who has drawn the circle? Who has closed the system? Insofar as the circle is a Bible-centered one, it is also God-centered. And a God-centered mind is always closed, in the most beautiful sense. Our appeal is for more closed minds, more arguing in terms of God's circle" (Harvie M. Conn, Contemporary World Theology: A Layman's Guidebook [Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973], p. ix).

2A. HAMARTIOLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS

Remember: "if this doctrine of total depravity is not clearly understood in its full Biblical delineation, then one's apologetical system is bound to be woefully defective" (Horne, "Biblical Apologetic Methodology," p. 83).

- 1B. Internal Complications
- 1C. The Scriptural Evidence for Original Sin and Total Depravity
- 1D. Man's polluted roots
- 1E. The realities of the Fall
- 1F. The reminders from Genesis 2 and 3

"Adam went through a unique experience. . . . When Adam sinned, he fell from an estate of being good into an estate of being evil. He was created by God as a creature of whom it could be said that he was 'very good.' From this estate in which he was created by God he fell into an estate of sin and misery and by his disobedience plunged all men into that same estate of sin and misery. That is not true of me. My sin has not plunged all men into an estate of sin and misery. Furthermore, by my sin I did not fall from an estate of being 'very good' into an estate of evil. I and all men like me were born into that miserable estate of sin, and when we sinned we simply showed that we were in such an estate. By sinning Adam became a sinner; by sinning we do not become sinners, we are already sinners. Sin does not cause us to fall from the estate wherein we were created, for we were born into a fallen estate. With Adam, however, the case was quite different. His sin brought him into a fallen estate. By disobedience he fell; by disobedience we simply show that we are already fallen" (E. J. Young, Genesis 3 [London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966] pp. 60-61).

2F. The reminders from Romans 5:12ff.

1G. Note the following summary chart by Newell:

GOD'S PLAN: THE "REIGN OF GRACE" THROUGH
CHRIST
Romans 5.12-21.

THE TWO MEN

ADAM } Verse 14.
CHRIST }

THE TWO ACTS

ADAM—one trespass: Verses 12, 15, 17, 18, 19.

CHRIST—one righteous act (on the cross): Verse 18.

THE TWO RESULTS

By ADAM—Condemnation, guilt, death: Verses 15, 16,
18, 19.

By CHRIST—Justification, life, kingship: Verses 17, 18,
19.

THE TWO DIFFERENCES

In degree } God the Creator's grace by Christ, abounds
Verse 15 } beyond the sin of the creature, Adam.

In kind or } One sin, by Adam—condemnation and reign
operation } of death.

Verse 16 } Many sins on Christ—justification and
"reigning in life" for those accepting God's
grace by Him.

THE TWO KINGS

SIN—reigning through Death: Verse 17.

GRACE—reigning through Righteousness: Verse 21.

THE TWO ABUNDANCES

OF GRACE }
OF THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS } Verse 17.

THE TWO CONTRASTED STATES

CONDEMNED MEN, SLAVES OF DEATH, BY
ADAM

JUSTIFIED MEN, REIGNING IN LIFE, BY
CHRIST

(William R. Newell, Romans: Verse by Verse
[Chicago: Grace Publications, 1945], p.
176)

- 2G. "The context of Romans 5 over and over again relates our sin and guilt to the act of one man. . . . It does seem essential to Paul's point to maintain that the nature of the union between the two principles and their people is parallel. . . . In v. 12 the apostle makes the point that all die because all have sinned. In the following verses, vv. 13-19 (including both the parenthesis of vv. 13-17 and the apodosis of vv. 18-19), he makes the point that all die because one sinned. Can the apostle be dealing with two different things? Hardly. The one fact may be expressed in terms of both plurality and singularity. . . . There must be some kind of solidarity" (S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Romans 5:12 -- an Exercise in Exegesis and Theology," New Dimensions in NT Theology, ed. by Longenecker and Tenney [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], pp. 310, 13).
- 3G. "Romans chapter 5 . . . reveals the true starting point of his [i.e. Paul's] hamartiology" (D. J. W. Milne, "Genesis 3 in the Letter to the Romans," Reformed Theological Review 39 [Jan-Apr 1980]: 11).
- 2E. The results of the Fall
- 1F. Personalized in Psalm 51:5
- 2F. Generalized in Ephesians 2:1, 3

Note Simpson's eloquent summary:

"This bill of indictment cannot but grate harshly on the ears of shallow religionists of effeminate sensibilities and an extenuating temper; and manifold are the attempts they make to elude its impact by the help of evolutionary or philosophical presuppositions. Fond of patting human nature on the back and of glossing over its vicious propensities, they persuade themselves to regard it as innocent in the main, or, if somewhat of a scapegrace, 'more sinned against than sinning.' Its obliquities are frequently attributed to the development of the passions in advance of the judgment. But that complacent theory does not tally with the facts of the case. For, as the history of humanity abundantly proves, all mankind without exception turns aside to his own way. We are sinners in grain; every mother's son learns to be naughty without book. Nor will either impulse or example suffice to account for the anomaly of wrongdoing co-extensive with an entire species of moral agents, whilst our fellow-lodgers, the animal creation, fulfil their instinctive ends without fail. To confine sin to outward acts is merely resorting to a hollow euphemism; for whence these uniformly corrupt fruits save from a corrupt tree? Deny original sin and the state of our world becomes harder to construe than if you embrace the tenet. The evil principle lurks beneath the surface, seated in the hidden heart" (Simpson, Ephesians and Colossians, pp. 49-50).

2D. Man's profane reputation

1E. Discussed in Job

1F. Job 4:17

2F. Job 14:4

Barnes well comments:

"The sentiment was undoubtedly common--so common as to have passed into a proverb--that man was a

sinner; and that it could not be expected that any one of the race should be pure and holy. The sentiment is as true as it is obvious--like will beget like all over the world. The nature of the lion, the tiger, the hyaena, the serpent is propagated, and so the same thing is true of man. It is a great law, that the offspring will resemble the parentage; . . . so the offspring of man . . . is a man with the same nature, the same moral character, the same proneness to evil with the parent" (Albert Barnes, Job, vol. 1, in Notes On The Old Testament, ed. by Robert Frew [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, n.d.], p. 267).

3F. Job 15:14-16

4F. Job 25:4-6

2E. Noted by Solomon (cf. his blanket assertion in 1 Kgs 8:46)

1F. Ecclesiastes 7:20

2F. Ecclesiastes 7:29b

3F. Ecclesiastes 9:3

3E. Heralded by Jeremiah (17:9-10)

The summary by Laetsch is excellent:

"Vv. 9-10. The 'heart' in Hebrew thought is the center and fountainhead of life in its every form and

phase (Prov. 4:23). This heart is 'deceitful,' literally, following the heel, dogging one's footsteps for the purpose of betraying him. Compare 'Jacob' Gen. 25:26; 27:35-36, the name derived from the same root word. In point of deceitfulness, treachery, the human heart exceeds all things. And the greatest deception it has conceived is the lie of the natural goodness of man's heart. On this fallacy all efforts of man at self-reform and national reform are based. This treacherous lie is the greatest obstacle to a humble return to God. 'Desperately wicked,' a very apt translation of the Hebrew word, literally, 'incurable,' occurring eight times Is. 17:11; Jer. 15:18; 17:9, 16; 30:12, 15; Job 34:6; Micah 1:9. The verb occurs once (2 Sam. 12:15). Desperately wicked! See Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Matt. 15:19. 'Who can know it?' Just because of its inherent incurable treachery no man can fully fathom the depths of the depravity of man's heart. The Lord is not speaking here of particularly wicked degenerates. He describes the human heart, the life seat of every human being. And the diagnosis of the Searcher of man's heart, the greatest Psychologist, is: Incurably wicked! This Searcher of the heart is also the Judge!" (Theodore Laetsch, Bible Commentary: Jeremiah [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952], p. 163).

4E. Confirmed by Jesus

1F. His diagnosis: Mark 7:20-23

Note Lane's summary:

"The substance of verse 15b is repeated in verse 20, followed by the explanation (verses 21-23). The source of true defilement in men is the human heart, and the tragedy of man's having to sin reaches its demonic fulfilment in man's wanting to sin. There is no heart in which this radical evil has failed to take root. The catalogue of sinful acts and dispositions which flow from the heart is thoroughly Jewish in character. At the head of the list is 'evil thoughts' which stand behind the evil actions of men" (William L. Lane, Commentary on the Gospel

of Mark [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974], pp. 256-57).

- 2F. His avoidance: John 2:23-25
- 2C. The Practical Effects of Original Sin and Total Depravity
 - 1D. Man's perverted reasoning
 - 1E. Identified in Genesis 6:5 (cf. 8:21)

In summary:

"In Gen. iv; viff. the author continues his reflection on the state of man. Instead of being innocent, as God intended him to be, man is a sinner and this fact makes itself felt more and more. When man in his high-handedness is left to himself he goes from bad to worse. . . . In ch. vi. 5 and viii.21 (cf. ix. 18ff. and xi. 1ff.) we see how sin poisons the human heart. Especially in vi. 5 this is stressed very clearly: 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' A more emphatic statement of the wickedness of the human heart is hardly conceivable. This is emphasized once more because in viii. 21 the same judgment is pronounced on humanity after the Flood; indeed, in ix. 18ff. and xi. 1ff. both Noah and his descendants prove to be wicked" (Theodorus C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958], p. 210).

- 2E. Amplified in Ephesians 4:17-19

The noetic conclusion is summarized as follows:

"The reason of man's mind still functions, but no matter where it functions the result is vanity and

evil, always in opposition to God. Man still has some desire to investigate truth, but the corruption of the mind renders him incapable of the right way of investigating truth. Unless seen in relation to God and His Word, this reasoning only leads to further perversion" (Donald Eggleston, "The Biblical Concept of νοῦς," M.Div. thesis [Grace Theological Seminary, 1979], pp. 53-54).

2D. Man's perpetual resistance

1E. An inspired review: Romans 3:9-18

1F. The polemical context

2F. The powerful indictments

2E. An inspired synthesis: Romans 5:6-10 (cf. Col 1:21-22a)

3C. The Apologetical Implications of Original Sin and Total Depravity: Man's Inability

1D. The burden of Jeremiah 13:23

Laetsch well highlights the impact of this passage:

"This sin is not merely an acquired habit, which they might give up at any time they chose to do so. They can relinquish their sinful nature as little as the Ethiopian can rid himself of his skin or the leopard his spots. Ever since Adam's fall all children of Adam are, like their father, sinful, every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts being only evil continually (Gen. 6:5; 8:21;

Jer. 17:9; Rom. 5:19; Eph. 2:1-2). To make man willing to yield himself to God and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God is a miracle even greater than changing an Ethiopian's skin and a leopard's spots, a miracle possible only to the almighty grace of the Lord Jehovah (Jer. 31:18, 20, 31-34; 33:8)" (Laetsch, Jeremiah, pp. 141-42).

2D. The burden of 1 Corinthians 2:14

1E. Man's hostility

Morris aptly points out the significance of the leading metaphor:

"Such a man receiveth not the things of the Spirit. The verb has an air of welcoming about it, being the usual word for receiving a guest. Thus the point is that the natural man does not welcome the things of the Spirit; he refuses them, he rejects them" (Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958], p. 60).

2E. Man's hopelessness

1F. "The words: he cannot know them are still stronger, since they do not merely refer to what the natural man attempts but what is objectively true about him; they refer to his condition" (F. W. Grosheide, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953], p. 73).

2F. A natural man "lacks the equipment necessary to examine spiritual things. . . . He is like a blind man in an art gallery, like a deaf man at a symphony" (James L. Boyer, For A World Like Ours: Studies in I Corinthians [Winona Lake: BMH, 1971], p. 41).

3F. The implication is that "at no point does man, acting upon his adopted principle of autonomy, interpret or discern anything [i.e. spiritual] correctly" (Halsey, For a Time Such as This, p. 30).

2B. External Complications: Satanic Opposition

Note: "But there is another power at work besides the wills of those whose hearts are veiled against the gospel light--the god, namely, of this world, to whom, in turning away from the one true

God, those who are perishing have submitted themselves, and by whom their unbelieving minds are blinded" (P. E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962], p. 126).

1C. Aimed at the Recipients of Truth

1D. At the outset (2 Cor 11:3)

2D. Throughout history

1E. The fact of 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

2E. The remembrance of Ephesians 2:2

3E. The knowledge of 1 John 5:19

Notice that:

"John does not say that the world is 'of' the evil one as we are of God (although he has already declared this in iii. 8, 10, 12; cf. Jn. viii. 44, 47), but in him, since he is thinking now not so much of the godless world's origin as of its present sad and perilous condition. It is 'in the evil one,' in his grip and under his dominion. Moreover, it lies there. It is not represented as struggling actively to be free but as quietly lying, perhaps even unconsciously asleep, in the arms of Satan" (J. R. W. Stott, The Epistles Of John: An Introduction and Commentary, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964], p. 193).

2C. Aimed at the Disseminators of Truth: Ephesians 6:10-20

3B. Conclusions

1C. The Hopelessness of Anthropocentricity

1D. Concerning the lost sinner

1E. Biblical summary: Romans 6:17-18, 20

2E. Theological summary: "The sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. . . . In the spiritual realm, when judged by God's standards, the unsaved sinner is incapable of good. The natural man is enslaved to sin; he is a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or to prepare himself for salvation. In short, the unregenerate man is DEAD IN SIN, and his WILL IS ENSLAVED to his evil nature" (Steele and Thomas, Romans, p. 153).

2D. Concerning the saved sinner: anthropocentric hangover

1E. Scriptural implications

1F. Romans 7:14-8:8

2F. Romans 12:1-2

3F. 1 John 1:8-10

2E. Two acute spheres of manifestation:

1F. Pride in the 'pew'

2F. Pride in the 'preacher'

- 2C. The Hope of Theocentricity: "BUT GOD"; e.g. Ephesians 2:4-10 (in context)

3A. SOTERIOLOGICAL THEOCENTRICITY

- 1B. An Introduction to God's Sovereignty in Salvation

- 1C. An Old Testament Assertion: Psalm 3:8

- 2C. A New Testament Assertion: Titus 3:5

- 2B. Some Insights into God's Sovereignty in Salvation

- 1C. He is the Architect of Salvation

Note: God is the Sovereign Architect of a plan drawn up in eternity which includes the provision, means, and application of salvation.

- 1D. The prophecy of Isaiah 53

- 2D. The declaration of Ephesians 1:3-14

- 2C. He Takes the Initiative in Salvation

- 1D. Acknowledgments of this perspective

- 1E. From the initial perspective (i.e. 'salvation')

- 1F. The theological implication of Jeremiah 31:18-19 and Lamentations 5:21
- 2F. The theological corroborations of Matthew 11:25-27 and 16:15-17

Kent well notes: "Spiritual awareness of Christ and his Kingdom is not arrived at through intellect or common sense. . . . The final explanation of human response . . . lies in the good pleasure of God (cf. Eph 1:5; Phil 2:13). . . . Jesus claims an authority which distinguishes him from all other persons (cf. Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3). Here that authority is stated as involving the revelation of God to men. . . . Matthew is in agreement with thoughts more frequently expressed by John and Paul. This shows that the Biblical writers were essentially of one mind regarding the truth that man is dependent upon God's grace in Christ for all spiritual knowledge" (Kent, "Matthew," Wycliffe Bible Commentary pp. 948-49).

- 3F. The theological manifestations of Romans 5:6-11
- 4F. The theological affirmation of Romans 9:16

Newell's plea still retains its urgency: "Oh, that this great verse might sink into our ears, into our very hearts! Perhaps no statement of all Scripture so completely brings man to an utter end. Man thinks he can 'will' and 'decide,' Godward, and that after he has so 'decided' and 'willed,' he has the ability to 'run,' or, as he says, to 'hold out.' But these two things, deciding and holding out, are in

this verse utterly rejected as the source of salvation,--which is declared to be God that hath MERCY. Human responsibility is not at all denied here: man ought to will, and ought to run. But we are all nothing but sinners, and can do,--will do, neither: unless God come forth to us in sovereign mercy" (Newell, Romans Verse by Verse, pp. 367-68; cf. John 1:12-13, esp. v. 13b).

2E. From the continual perspective (i.e. 'sanctification')

1F. Implied in the process of Colossians 3:10

2F. Noted in the plan of Philippians 1:6

3F. Identified in the provision of Philippians 2:13

Lightfoot's paraphrase is illuminating:

"Therefore, my beloved, having the example of Christ's humility to guide you, the example of Christ's exaltation to encourage you, as ye have always been obedient hitherto, so continue. Do not look to my presence to stimulate you. Labour earnestly not only at times when I am with you, but now when I am far away. With a nervous and trembling anxiety work out your salvation for yourselves. For yourselves, did I say? Nay, ye are not alone. It is God working in you from first to last: God that inspires the earliest impulse, and God that directs the final achievement: for such is His good pleasure" (J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians [reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953], p. 115).

4F. Summarized in the panorama of Romans 8:28-30

- 2D. Attribution of this initiative: grace
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- 3B. Some Illustrations of God's Sovereignty in Salvation
 - 1C. The Example of Israel (Deut 7:6-11)

 - 2C. The Example of an Old Testament Saint (Ps 119:93)

 - 3C. The Example of the Gentiles
 - 1D. Peter's testimony (Acts 9:32-11:18)

 - 2D. Paul's testimony
 - 1E. Concerning his call to ministry (Acts 26:16-18)

 - 2E. Concerning his first missionary journey (Acts 14:27)

 - 3E. Concerning the Thessalonian converts (1 Thess 1:2-5; 2:13)

 - 4C. The Example of a New Testament Saint (Acts 16:14)
-
- 4B. Some Implications of God's Sovereignty in Salvation

1C. Theological Implications (John 6:37, 44-45, 64-65)

This effectual call is summarized by Kent as follows:

"It must not be imagined . . . that this 'drawing' is a mere influence which may be wholesome and beneficial if followed, but is not always successful. The verb employed is a strong one, and is used of the actual dragging of a net (John 21:6, 11), dragging someone from the temple (Acts 21:30), and haling someone into court (James 2:6). In none of the uses where material objects are involved is there any suggestion that the 'drawing' was not accomplished. This concept must not be overlooked when the word is found in the figurative sense of the divine pull on man's spirit as here and in 12:32" (Kent, Light In The Darkness, p. 107).

2C. Apologetical Implications (1 Cor 3:5-7)

4A. EFFICIENT PROVISIONS

1B. The Irresistible Dynamics

1C. The Objective (i.e. preceptive, propositional) Dynamic: The Word of God

1D. Selected Old Testament Affirmations

1E. Through David: Psalm 19:7-14

2E. Through a personal testimony (Ps 119:93)

3E. Through Jeremiah (5:14; 20:7-10; 23:29)

Concerning the last passage:

"The Word of God impinged powerfully on men's minds. It burned itself first of all into the minds of those who received it and proclaimed it, and subsequently made an impact on those who heard it from them, convicting the hearers of sin and demanding of them total obedience. The two metaphors of fire and a hammer that shatters the rock convey something of the powerful character of the Word of God" (Thompson, Jeremiah, NICOT, p. 502; cf. Laetsch, Jeremiah, p. 201).

2D. Selected New Testament affirmations

1E. Through Paul

1F. The Word's power

1G. Romans 1:16

2G. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

1H. The key verbal always denotes an effectual working (cf. Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, p. 214).

2H. In this context it must be noted that "the efficacy of the preached Word" is being emphasized (Klaas Runia, "What is Preaching according to the NT?" Tyndale Bulletin 29 [1978]: 28).

3H. It must be also noted that:

1I. "It appears to have been generally accepted by the early church that the apostles' preaching represented the 'word of God.' This apostolic 'word' (or testimony), as inscribed in the Gospel accounts of the life and work of Christ and in the letters sent by the apostles to the

churches, became the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament" (Tennis C. Van Kooten, The Bible: God's Word [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972], p. 66).

2I. "The New Testament churches do not really distinguish between the spoken and the written apostolic word. The same authority first delegated to the apostles for their oral proclamation was later carried over into their writing. . . . In view of their nature as apostolic proclamation, the oral and the written word could not be regarded as rivals" (Henry, God, Revelation And Authority, 4:24).

3G. 2 Timothy 3:15

2F. The Word's productivity (Col 1:4-8)

2E. Through the author of Hebrews (4:12-13)

3E. Through Peter (1 Pet 1:23)

2C. The Subjective (i.e. Personal) Dynamic: The Spirit of God

Thesis: The Divine Author of the Word of Truth, the Holy Spirit, is also the dynamic behind man's appropriation of that truth. The Spirit effectuates the message of the Word.

1D. Historical expressions

1E. Early expressions

2E. Reformation expressions

1F. Calvin: "'the secret testimony of the Spirit''";
 "'the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit''":

1G. "The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit" (Calvin, Institutes [I. 8:13], 1:83).

2G. "Our mind is too rude to be able to comprehend the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us by faith, and our hearts are too prone either to diffidence or to a perverse confidence in ourselves or creatures, to rest in God of their own accord. But the Holy Spirit by his illumination makes us capable of understanding those things which would otherwise far exceed our capacity, and forms us to a firm persuasion, by sealing the promises of salvation on our hearts" (John Calvin, Tracts And Treatises On The Doctrine And Worship Of The Church, vol. 2, trans. by Henry Beveridge [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958], p. 53).

3G. Critiques:

1H. By Warfield:

"An objective revelation of God, embodied in the Scriptures, was rendered necessary, and, as well, a subjective operation of the Spirit of God on the heart enabling sinful man to receive this revelation--by which conjoint divine action, objective and subjective, a true knowledge of God is communicated to the human soul" (B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Augustine, ed. by Samuel G. Craig [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1956], p. 31; cf. pp. 80-83).

2H. By Preiss:

"The same Spirit who speaks to us in the Scriptures speaks also in our hearts. The exterior testimony which we read in black and white is confirmed to us and sealed in our hearts

by the secret testimony of the Spirit. And the secret testimony of the Holy Spirit does not lift us proudly above the letter of the Word, but, on the contrary, having made us understand it a little, it stimulates us to submit ourselves to it further in order to know it better. The inner testimony then sends the believer back to the external testimony, which alone is normative. It adds nothing to the written revelation. Extra eam nulla revelatio, said Calvin of Scripture. The Spirit only attests, seals, and confirms to the heart of man that such and such a page in the act of being read or explained in public worship or in private is truly the Word of God. The work of the Spirit then consists in making the exterior testimony speak in the inner testimony. . . . On the part of Calvin the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit occurred at two points: it made the believer know, on the one hand, the authority of Scripture, and on the other hand the certainty of his own personal salvation . . ." (Theo Preiss, "The Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and Scripture," trans. by D. G. Miller, Interpretation 7 [July 1953]: 261-63).

2F. Luther

1G. Mueller's evaluation:

"To Luther the written Word of the Scriptures is always indissolubly joined with the power of the Holy Spirit, who has made it for all times the means by which he operates on and in the hearts and minds of those who properly hear and read it" (J. Theodore Mueller, "The Holy Spirit And the Scriptures," in Revelation and the Bible, ed. by C. F. H. Henry [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958], p. 276).

2G. Ramm's evaluation:

"To Luther there was an outer and an inner clarity of Scripture. By the usual laws or rules of language, a Christian could understand the Scripture as a written

document. This is the external clarity of Scripture. Due to man's sinfulness he needs an inward assist so that he might grasp the spiritual Word of God as the Word of God. The Word of God is a spiritual entity and can only be understood in faith with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is the inner clarity of Scripture. Hence, to Luther the Holy Spirit was the Hermes from heaven" (Bernard L. Ramm, Rapping About The Spirit [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974], p. 84).

3E. Contemporary expressions

- 1F. Ramm's The Witness of the Spirit; Rapping about the Spirit
- 2F. "The Holy Spirit sustains varied relations to the Holy Scriptures. He is independent of them in personal sovereignty, yet identified with them in official ministry" (George C. Needham, "The Spirit and the Word," in The Inspired Word, ed. by Pierson [New York: Randolph and Co., 1888], p. 324).
- 3F. "The Holy Spirit is related to Scripture in many ways. Some of the more significant dimensions of the Spirit's work vis-a-vis Scripture include inspiration, illumination, application (conviction), and the testimonium" (R. C. Sproul, "The Internal Testimony Of The Holy Spirit," in Inerrancy, ed. by Geisler [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979], p. 337).

2D. Scriptural intimations

1E. The undergirding principle (1 Cor 2:10b-11)

- 1F. "The Holy Spirit . . . functions notably . . . as the supernatural conveyor of divine knowledge" (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 4:272; cf. p. 283).
- 2F. "Now, the Holy Spirit has been sent to the Church as its Teacher, . . . to make them wise unto salvation, to testify to them of Christ and to glorify Him thereby. To the apostles, He came to remind them of Christ's teaching, to show them its meaning, to add further revelation

to it, and so to equip them to witness to all about their Lord. To other men, He comes to make them partakers of the apostolic faith through the apostolic word. Paul indicates the permanent relation between the Spirit, the apostles' word and the rest of the Church in 1 Cor. ii. 10-16" (J. I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" And The Word Of God [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958], p. 111).

- 3F. "Man cannot himself find out the truth about God and his purposes; only the Spirit of God can make these things known, for the Spirit searches out all things, even the deep things of God. It is the Spirit who convinces the hearer of the truth of the Gospel (ii. 4), the Spirit also who brings out the meaning of what is given in the Gospel (ii. 12). . . . In the same way, no one knows (or, has ever known, ἐγνώκειν) the inward truths about God except the Spirit of God. Only God knows and can communicate the truth about himself (cf. Matt. xi. 25ff.; Luke x. 21f.) . . . Apart therefore from the Spirit of God, man remains in ignorance of God and of his wise purpose for the world" (C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971], p. 74).

2E. The Spirit's initial operation

1F. John 16:8-11

2F. John 3:5ff.

3E. The Spirit's continued operation

1F. An Old Testament example (Ps 119:18, 33-34, 130)

2F. A New Testament example (Eph 1:17-18)

2B. The Intricate Synergism

1C. Asserted (Eph 6:17)

Note Simpson's summary: "The Epistle to the Hebrews employs the same figure (4:12) to set forth the trenchant power of Scripture, its scimitar edge, capable of sundering the joints and marrow and dissecting the intents of the heart. This soul-searching quality makes it the chief medium of conviction, far more availing than the subtlety or eloquence of the preacher. A Bible text smites the conscience point-blank, or floors self-righteousness as no weapon of mortal fabrication would do. The omniscient Spirit of the Lord breathes through its pages, that Spirit whose fathomless line can sound the depths of Deity itself, much more the shallows of human nature" (Simpson, Ephesians and Colossians, p. 151).

2C. Applied (Acts 16:14; 1 Thess 1:5)

1D. "The Spirit works with the Word . . . and through the Word . . . , not without or apart from the Word" (Sproul, "The Internal Testimony Of The Holy Spirit," p. 338).

2D. "The Word is the instrument of the Spirit. But the Spirit is not the prisoner of the Word, nor does the Word work automatically. The Word brings the Spirit to the heart, and the Spirit brings the Word within the heart" (Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964], p. 38).

3B. The Implications for Apologetics

1C. These Efficient Provisions Must not be Diluted

1D. Cf. Ramm's bad example.

2D. Cf. Hendriksen's good example as he comments on 1 Thess 1:5:

"Just as at Corinth (I Cor. 2:4), where Paul was carrying on his missionary activity while he was writing this letter, so also at Thessalonica, he was not interested in mere words (I Cor. 2:4) but in a genuine demonstration of the Spirit. . . . There was spiritual dynamite (δύναμις) in the message, enough dynamite to demolish the idol-gods (verse 9). In fact, the dynamite of the Spirit was of a different kind than physical dynamite, for whereas the latter is limited to destructive operations,

this dynamite was also constructive ("to serve God, the living and real One," etc.). Notice how the concepts of Spirit and power go together here, as so often (see Rom. 1:4; 15:13, 19; I Cor. 2:4; Gal. 3:5; and cf. Rom. 1:4, II Tim. 1:7, 8). . . . The reason why there was such power in the message was because when Paul (and those associated with him) spoke, God was speaking" (Hendriksen, I and II Thessalonians, p. 51).

2C. These Efficient Provisions Must be Determinative

- 1D. "The Christian preacher, too, is a herald--a herald of God" (Victor Paul Furnish, "Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching," Int 17 [January 1963]: 55).
- 2D. "The written and spoken Word draws its power from its union with the Holy Spirit, who is always operative through it. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are inseparable. When the Word is preached the Spirit is always operative" (Robert Preus, "The Power of God's Word," Concordia Theological Monthly 34 [Aug. 1963]: 465).
- 3D. "If today's preacher brings the same message . . . as Paul and the other apostles, God also speaks through him. Then his word too is not just a human word, but the Word of God Himself" (Runia, "What Is Preaching According To The New Testament?" p. 32).

5A. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

1B. The Example of the Prophets and Apostles

Note the impact of the IF's (i.e. introductory formulas) throughout the Scriptures.

1C. An OT Prophetic Precedent (Ezek 2:1-7; 3:4, 10-11, 24-27)

2C. A NT Apostolic Precedent; e.g.

- 1D. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

2D. 1 Peter 4:11a

2B. The Example of the Reformation under Josiah (2 Kgs 22-23; 2 Chr 34-35)

3B. The Example of the Reformations under Nehemiah and Ezra

4B. The Example of Our Lord

1C. A Polemical Pattern (Matt 4:1-11)

On the impact of this IF, see: Jacob A. O. Preus, It is Written (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971).

2C. A Presentational Pattern (Luke 24:13ff.)

1D. Enlightening the two

2D. Enlightening the ten

Note Connelly's comments: "Christ opened the disciples' minds (v. 45)--He made understanding possible by giving them the needed insight--so that they could comprehend the Scriptures. It was at this point that John and Peter and

the other apostles fully believed in the resurrection. They did not believe on the basis of the circumstantial evidence of the empty tomb or even on the basis of the risen Christ but on the inerrant testimony of divine revelation. The resurrection was true because God had predicted that it would happen in His Word" (Connelly, "The Old Testament Predictions of the Resurrection of Jesus," Th.M. thesis [Grace Theological Seminary, 1981], p. 7).

5B. The Examples of Philip and Peter

1C. Acts 8:26ff.

2C. Acts 10:34ff.

6B. The Example of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

7B. The Example of Paul

1C. Observed Through His Practice

1D. A polemical context (Col 2:4-3:4; esp. 2:4, 8)

Carson's summary is valuable: "The word philosophy here is obviously linked closely with the phrase vain deceit, . . . hence the phrase is descriptive of the philosophy. It is empty for it is void of real truth. It is empty of vital power, for the dynamic of the gospel is absent. It is empty of hope, for it leads away from the light of God's presence into the mists of man's speculation. It is deceitful because of its attractive presentation which seduces the minds of those who are drawn away by it, and which conceals its own barrenness. The question arises as to whether Paul completely condemns philosophy itself or

only a perversion of it. In the early Church there were those who would say that philosophy was no enemy of the gospel; and might indeed, like Judaism, be a preparation for it. There were others who saw philosophy as productive only of error. With Paul it would no doubt be true to say that philosophy, in the simple sense of a love of knowledge and a desire for truth, would be quite compatible with his position. But to philosophy in the developed sense with its emphasis on the primacy of human reason he would obviously be utterly opposed. For Paul, the gospel was rooted in revelation. God had spoken clearly and finally in Christ. The believer comes in humility to hear what God has to say to him. His reason is applied to understand the wisdom which is revealed in Christ. Thus, Pauline theology is God-centered in contrast to any humanistic philosophy which begins with man, and which makes man's reason the measure of truth. The introductory chapters of I Corinthians show this contrast between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Hence, while the Christian may see a certain negative value in speculative philosophy, he will constantly be on his guard lest he come to study revelation, not as a believer, but as a humanist. This does not mean that he should come with a blind unreasoning faith. But it does mean that, instead of bringing philosophical presuppositions which will colour his study of Scripture and so prejudice his interpretation, he comes as one conscious of the finiteness of his intellect, and aware that his mind also is affected by his sinful nature. Thus he is willing to be taught by the Holy Spirit, and acknowledges that it is the Word of God rather than his own reason which is the final arbiter of truth" (Herbert M. Carson, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], pp. 61-62).

2D. A presentational context (Acts 28:23-24)

2C. Observed Through His Testimony

1D. Concerning himself: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1E. The burden of the context

1F. Esp. 1:19-20; 2:10b-11 contra. with v. 14; 3:18-21a

2F. Cf. James 3:13-18 on pseudo-wisdom and biblical wisdom

3F. Summary statements:

1G. "Two wisdoms confront each other in First Corinthians: the 'wisdom' of the world and the Wisdom of God. . . . The 'wisdom' of the world may best be defined as self-centeredness: self-love, self-trust, and self-assertion. . . . Behind all their surface problems was one problem: the 'wisdom' of the world. Behind the solution to any problem at Corinth he looked to the Wisdom of God. Thus, in First Corinthians may be seen its underlying motif: God's Wisdom over against the 'wisdom' of the world, judging it and offering true answer to the foolish and futile strivings of egocentric man" (Frank Stagg, "The Motif of First Corinthians," SwJT 3 [October 1960]: 15-16).

2G. "In the strongest possible terms the apostle presents this wisdom [i.e. God's] as inaccessible to human wisdom, thus as revelatory, known only through the agency of God's own Spirit" (Robin Scroggs, "Paul: ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," NTS 14 [Oct 67]: 33).

3G. "Let him beware who puts his trust in human wisdom" (ibid., p. 33).

4G. Polemically expressed:

"'Stop thinking of Christianity as something in which ingenuity or impressiveness counts'" (C. Clare Oke, "Paul's Method not a Demonstration but an Exhibition of the Spirit," ExpTim 67 [November 1955]: 35).

2E. The burden of Paul's disclosures:

1F. Paul's general disclosure concerning his communication (2:1)

1G. Remember that:

"Some at least of the Corinthians were setting too high a value on human wisdom and human eloquence in line with the typical Greek admiration for rhetoric and

philosophical studies. In the face of this Paul insists that preaching with wisdom of words was no part of his commission. That kind of preaching would draw men to the preacher. It would nullify the cross of Christ. The faithful preaching of the cross results in men ceasing to put their trust in any human device, and relying rather on God's work in Christ. A reliance on rhetoric would cause men to trust in men, the very antithesis of what the preaching of the cross is meant to effect" (Morris, 1 Corinthians, pp. 51-52).

- 2G. This demands "an anti-rationalistic approach" (Theo Kunst, "The Implication of Pauline Theology of the Mind for the Work of the Theologian" [Th.D. dissertation, DTS, 1979], p. 136):
- 1H. "'To tell the good news in wisdom of word' is an implicit contradiction; 'news' only needs and admits of plain, straightforward telling" (Findlay, "1 Corinthians," p. 767).
 - 2H. "To preach is not a philosophy to be discussed, but a message of God to be believed" (ibid.).
 - 3H. "The 'power of God' lies in the facts and not in any man's presentment of them" (ibid.).
- 2F. Paul's specific disclosure concerning his content (2:2)
- 3F. Paul's specific disclosure concerning his limitations (2:3)
- 4F. Paul's specific disclosure concerning his method (2:4-5)

Based upon Paul's testimony even Ramm must conclude: "In I Cor. 2:1-6 Paul emphatically declares that Christian faith does not rest upon the methodology followed by philosophers. Christianity does not rest upon 'lofty words or wisdom,' nor upon 'plausible words of wisdom,' nor upon the 'wisdom of men'" (ISBE [rev.], 1:191).

2D. Concerning his successors: the Pastoral Epistles

1E. What not to do

1F. 1 Timothy 1:6-7

2F. 1 Timothy 6:20-21

Kent concludes: "There is nothing to fear in true knowledge. But when men parade their hypotheses and schemes as settled fact, particularly in the spiritual and religious realm, such knowledge is falsely named and must be shunned. This sort of knowledge which by its nature is the antithesis (antitheseis) of revealed religious truth is the counter affirmation of the enemies of God to the genuine spiritual knowledge revealed by God's Word. This falsely-named knowledge subjects God and His revelation to the mind of man.

"Throughout the history of the church, there have been men who have claimed a superior knowledge, and have subjected Scripture to their boasted intellect" (Kent, Pastoral Epistles, p. 210).

3F. 2 Timothy 2:23-26

Custer makes an appropriate application: "Now, do you know why we are not meek; do you know why we are not gentle? Because, you see, we get this thing confused. We think it's our job to convince men. . . . We don't have to berate people; we don't have to hit them over the head. We don't have to prove we're right. You simply

deliver the message lovingly, graciously, kindly, and then say, 'Dad, they're all yours'; and watch them move. We ought to give God time to work in our teaching" (James Custer, "Three Qualities That Set Apart Champions of the Ministry; Part III: An Unswerving Commitment," recorded chapel message [Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, October 6, 1978]).

2E. What to do

1F. 2 Timothy 2:14-18

2F. 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Salient inferences:

1G. "We observe at once that the message Timothy is to communicate is called a 'word,' a spoken utterance. Rather it is the word, God's word which God has spoken. Paul does not need to specify it further, for Timothy will know at once that it is the body of doctrine which he has heard from Paul and which Paul has now committed to him to pass on to others. It is identical with 'the deposit' of chapter 1. And in this fourth chapter it is equivalent to 'the sound teaching' (3), 'the truth' (4) and 'the faith' (7). It consists of the Old Testament Scriptures, God-breathed and profitable, which Timothy has known from childhood, together with the teaching of the apostle which Timothy has 'followed,' 'learned' and 'firmly believed' (3:10, 14). The same charge is laid upon the church of every age. We have no liberty to invent our message, but only to communicate 'the word' which God has spoken and has now committed to the church as a sacred trust" (Stott, Guard the Gospel, p. 106).

2G. "He must proclaim as a herald (keruxon) the message which has been given to him by his Lord. He must announce it in its completeness (Acts 20:27), without alteration, addition, or subtraction. He must proclaim, not philosophize or argue.

This message is the Word of God, which has previously been explained as God-breathed Scripture (3:16, 17). To proclaim God's Word involves all the themes of Scripture, not picking out some and ignoring others. The Word of God in its entirety is the basic material of the preacher's message" (Kent, Pastoral Epistles, p. 292, emphasis added; cf. Lenski, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p. 852).

- 3G. "According to Scripture . . . 'heralding' or 'preaching' is generally the divinely authorized proclamation of the message of God to men. It is the exercise of ambassadorship" (Hendriksen, Pastoral Epistles, p. 309; note his whole discussion: p. 309, n. 168; pp. 309-10. Cf. Furnish, "Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers," pp. 55-60).
- 4G. "Timothy is to 'preach' this word, himself to speak what God has spoken" (Stott, Guard the Gospel, p. 106).
- 5G. "The sermon is nothing less than a representation of the Word of God" (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 4:479).
- 6G. "Today's minister must never forget that it is only His own Word that God has promised to bless" (Kenneth L. Barker, "Jeremiah's Ministry and Ours," Bib Sac 127 [July-Sept. 70]: 229; cf. pp. 228-29 for a good discussion of 2 Tim 4:2).

3F. Titus 1:9

6A. SUMMARY-CONCLUSION

1B. Concerning the Unregenerate Recipient of Truth

2B. Concerning the Regenerate Recipient of Truth

Remember the priority of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3B. Concerning the Regenerate Disseminator of Truth

Cf. Howe's pertinent observation on 1 Peter 3:15-16:

"The Apostle Peter stresses an attitude of dependence on God. If the call is issued for the act of giving defense on the basis of this verse, it is imperative also to issue the call for the proper attitude in this activity, an attitude exemplified by New Testament believers in their defense. The apostle stresses an attitude of total dependence on God. . . . The passage teaches that believers are encouraged to be prepared to give defense, but this defense is to be devoid of all arrogance, pride, or self-sufficiency" [emphases added] (Frederic R. Howe, "A Comparative Study of the Work of Apologetics and Evangelism," Bib Sac 135 [Oct.-Dec. 78]: 305).

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The Perils Of Persuasive Preaching

A. DUANE LITFIN

THE STUDY of human persuasion has a long and noble heritage, reaching back at least as far as the ancient Greeks and Romans. For most of its history the subject was pursued under the banner of "rhetoric," but in more recent times it has been studied by social scientists under such rubrics as "persuasion theory," "attitude change," and "social influence."

The relation between secular views of persuasion and preaching is also of long standing. Christianity was conceived in a Jewish womb, and its first preachers, audiences, and modes of discourse were all Jewish. Yet the new faith was born into a world dominated by Greco-Roman influence and immediately began to take on some of the characteristics of its environment. One of the most obvious of the Church's adaptations was its appropriation of what was then the crown of a liberal education, rhetoric, for its own use in preaching.

The sermon as we know it now was not what took place in the New Testament. Today's sermon resembles the oratorical activity of the ancient Greeks and Romans more than the practice of the apostles, as almost any standard work on homiletics demonstrates. For exam-

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ple, in the classic work of John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, the discussion of how to construct and deliver sermons is much more indebted to the rhetorical Aristotle and Cicero than to the practice of Peter and Paul. For other homiletical writers the debt may be more implicit, or it may be to a more modern set of theorists, but the dependence upon secular writers is present just the same.

This dependence is not necessarily bad. The apostles never intended to provide a comprehensive theory of homiletics. Our situation is not that of the New Testament preachers either culturally or chronologically, and we would be foolish to try to copy them to the letter. Moreover, the work of rhetoricians and persuasion theorists, many of whom were themselves preachers, abounds with wonderfully valuable insights into human communication. To the extent that we can use their work to make our proclamation more effective, we not only should but must do so.

But can we do it unquestioningly? One who did not was the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, whom evangelicals are increasingly coming to realize as less an ogre than they had thought (see, for example, the review of books on Kierkegaard in the June 9, 1972, issue of *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*). Kierkegaard believed that secular theories of persuasion form an inadequate approach to preaching because the goals of rhetoric and preaching are very different. Instead, he advocated his own theory of "edifying discourse," which he believed was more consonant with Christian goals.

Kierkegaard's analysis at least raises an important question. The genesis of any theory of discourse must lie in the philosophy or theology that underlies it. Is it possible that some modern preaching practices are based upon secular theories of persuasion whose underlying assumptions are contrary to those of Christianity?

I am convinced that this is a question we need to be answering, and I would like to suggest a particularly troublesome area where we might begin. It has to do with the role of persuasion in preaching in general, and the goal of preaching in particular.

Secular theories of persuasion have always been designed to enable men to influence their fellow men more effectively; that is, they are avowedly instrumental, utilitarian, or goal-oriented. Responsible rhetoricians have seldom condoned sophistry or casuistry, of course, but their efforts have been frankly directed toward drawing forth particular decisions, attitudes, or behavior.

Significantly, homileticians tend to hold that the goal of the preacher is similar to that of the secular persuader, to elicit a desired response from the listener, and that it is quite proper to use a broad range of rhetorical techniques to achieve this goal. This assumption lies beneath much of the contemporary writing on homiletics. For example, one well-known homiletician writes: "Before the preacher understands the approach to be made to disbelieving audiences, he must first understand the sources through which people accept belief, so that he can organize his material in such a way as to gain the desired response." And: "If a good talk made a good sermon the preacher's lot would be an easier one. It is the fact that a sermon has to achieve a certain change of will that puts upon the preacher the double compulsion of knowing both the response he desires and the countless techniques which will help him achieve his goal. Persuasion becomes an art" (Ronald E. Sleeth, *Persuasive Preaching*, Harper, 1956, pp. 17, 45).

While we may grant that the secular persuader can proceed in this way, using his techniques to gain a particular response, are there not additional considerations for the preacher? One may ask whether the preacher should use any technique in an effort to *induce* the desired response from his audience—whether, in fact, gaining "the response he desires" should be the preacher's goal at all. For is it not possible that having this goal increases the possibility that the results will be of man and not of God?

For the sake of illustration, let us consider an extreme

example. In his book *Hypnotism: Fact and Fiction*, Frederick L. Marcuse reports a research study conducted at a large eastern university. The researchers attempted, through hypnotic suggestion, to induce a convinced and vocal atheist to become "religious." The attempt was so successful that it had to be halted and all suggestion removed from the subject's mind. When his entire attitude toward religious faith changed after only three sessions and for the first time in his life he began to attend church, the investigators decided that the ethics of the situation prevented them from pursuing their research any further.

While the example is admittedly a dramatic one, it serves to raise a monstrous question: would it be possible through hypnotic suggestion to create a "believer," quite apart from any work of the Holy Spirit? And would such a person truly be a child of God? Such questions are not simply academic. Psychologist James McConnell has said, "The time has come when if you give me any normal human being and a couple of weeks . . . I can change his behavior from what it is now to whatever you want it to be, if it's physically possible. I can't make him fly by flapping his wings, but I can turn him from a Christian into a Communist and vice versa" (quoted by Marvin Karlins and Herbert Abelson in *Persuasion*, Springer, 1970, p. 1).

Clearly, it is possible to employ means that go too far in seeking results, means that tend to bypass some essential element in the human thought process and therefore render any "results" less than satisfactory. Although researchers have shown that audiences are not nearly so malleable as was once thought, nevertheless skilled persuaders, including some who stand in the pulpit, are often able to exert a tremendous influence on other human beings. And they do not have to resort to such dramatic methods as hypnotism. Consider, for example, the words of the well-known social scientist Milton Rokeach:

"Suppose you could take a group of people, give them a 20-minute pencil-and-paper task, talk to them for 10 to 20 minutes afterward, and thereby produce long-range changes in core values and personal behavior in a significant portion of this group. . . . Suppose, further, that you could ascertain quickly and that you could predict accurately the nature and direction of these changes. . . .

"My colleagues and I have in the last five years achieved the kinds of results suggested [above]. As a result we must now face up to the ethical implications that follow from the fact that it now seems to be within man's power to alter experimentally another person's basic values, and to control the direction of the change" (*Psychology Today*, Sept., 1971, p. 68).

Rokeach probably gives too much credit to modern researchers, for persuaders have long been able to influence the values, attitudes, and behavior of their fellow men; but he is correct in asserting that techniques are now reaching a new level of sophistication and scientific accuracy. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the techniques he used were as simple as he says, and that

**As messenger he is responsible
for seeing that all hear. But
the response of the hearers is not
the messenger's affair.**

they are only a sample of those available to any preacher.

All this suggests that through the use of certain techniques it is possible to get "results" even where the Holy Spirit is not active at all. But according to the Scriptures, God has said that his work is to be accomplished "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6). The psalmist wrote, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps. 127:1). Paul later applied this principle to preaching when he avowed to the Corinthians that "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (I Cor. 2:4, 5). Paul obviously understood that "persuasive words of wisdom," so highly prized in the rhetorically oriented Corinthian culture, could never bring men and women to Christ. Only the straightforward presentation of the Gospel could do that. The use of persuasive techniques might indeed win a response, but it would be a response based upon the "wisdom of men" and not the "power of God." Paul had the insight to see that such results would inevitably "make void" the very Gospel he preached.

Many Christians are troubled today by the seeming impermanence of much of what is accomplished by modern evangelistic methods. Perhaps a certain amount of the attrition can be explained by Christ's parable of the sower, but is it not also possible that the results we get are often the product, not of God's Spirit, but of our own "might" and "power" as persuaders? And are not such false results worse than no results at all?

It is said that D. L. Moody was accosted on the streets of Chicago one day by a drunk who exclaimed, "Aren't you Mr. Moody? Why, I'm one of your converts!" Said Moody in reply, "That must be true, for you surely aren't one of the Lord's." We need more of Moody's honesty in facing the fact that it is possible for people to respond to the messenger and his techniques instead of to the Gospel and the Saviour it sets forth.

How can this pitfall be avoided? It is a function of the fact that God has chosen to use fallible human beings as instruments to reach other human beings. I suggest, however, that the danger can be minimized by a careful rethinking of the goal of preaching.

Earlier I suggested that homileticians, borrowing from secular persuasion theorists, have often set up "eliciting a desired response" as the goal of preaching. The trouble with such thinking is that it places the responsibility for obtaining "results" too much upon the preacher. J. I. Packer has analyzed this error perceptively in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. He says:

"While we must always remember that it is our responsibility to proclaim salvation, we must never forget that it is God who saves. . . . Our evangelistic work is the instrument that He uses for this purpose, but the power that saves is not in the instrument: it is in the hand of the One who uses the instrument. We must not at any stage forget that. For if we forget that it is God's prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them. And if we forget that only God can give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends, in the last analysis, not on God, but on us, and that the decisive factor is the way in which we evangelize. And this line of thought, consistently followed through, will lead us far astray.

"Let us work this out. If we regarded it as our job, not simply to present Christ, but actually to produce converts—to evangelize, not only faithfully, but also successfully—our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating. We should conclude that our basic equipment, both for personal dealing and for public preaching, must be twofold. We must have, not merely a clear grasp of the meaning and application of the gospel, but also an irresistible technique for inducing a response. We should, therefore, make it our business to try and develop such a technique. . . . We should regard evangelism as an activity involving a battle of wills between ourselves and those to whom we go, a battle in which victory depends on our firing off a heavy enough barrage of calculated effects" (Inter-Varsity, 1961, p. 27).

Much of the contemporary writing on preaching theory demonstrates the very tendencies Packer describes. But this need not happen. Let us examine the problem more closely.

In an excellent article on attitude change in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (III, 173), psychologist William McGuire suggests that human attitude change may be broken down into at least five steps or levels: "attention, comprehension, yielding, retention, and action." The hearer must "go through each of these steps if communication is to have ultimate persuasive impact," he says, "and each depends on the occurrence of the preceding steps." The traditional approach to homiletics seems to suggest that the goal of preaching is the third step, *yielding*; that is, the preacher's goal is to induce the listener to yield to (and ultimately to act upon) a particular value, attitude, or belief. I suggest that the preacher's goal should not be viewed as the yielding step at all but simply the previous step, *comprehension*.

Someone might protest that this makes preaching merely a sterile intellectual exercise; but to say that is to miss the point. Certainly the preacher must deal with the whole man, including his emotions. My point is that the goal of preaching should be so to present the Gospel that the listener comprehends, sees, is grasped by the issues involved. This may well include and even require the use of "emotional appeals," but those appeals will be directed toward helping the listener to comprehend, not toward inducing him to yield. Technique has a valid role

in inducing comprehension but should not be used by the preacher to induce yielding.

Preaching must always be a fork-in-the-road experience for the listener. He must be so clearly and powerfully confronted with the truth that he cannot evade or ignore it. Comprehension is pressed upon him, and he is forced to make a decision. But the decision is his to make, a matter between him and the Holy Spirit. The preacher has shown him the choice; now he is forced to decide, to accept or reject.

What the preacher must not do is use the many techniques available to him to shuttle the listener down one road instead of the other, even though he deeply wants the listener to choose that way. To do so is to violate the listener's freedom by manipulating him; but worse, it is to shoulder an intolerable burden, one that belongs only to the Holy Spirit. It is to take upon oneself the responsibility of getting results.

The preacher is a herald or ambassador for Christ (II Cor. 5:20), a function inherent in the words used in the New Testament for preaching: the preacher comes to bring or announce the good news of Jesus Christ (*euaggelizo*), to solemnly proclaim the Gospel (*kataggello*), to announce as a herald the Living Word of God (*kerusso*). As the appointed messenger he is responsible for seeing that all hear and that, to the best of his ability, all understand. But the response of the hearers is not the messenger's affair. He is not called upon to persuade the hearers to respond.

Secular persuasion theory tries to help the speaker mold his efforts to the needs and values of the audience in order to produce the desired response. The preacher, on the other hand, should mold his efforts to his audience for a different reason: to ensure that they comprehend his message. He should use all the techniques at his disposal to put the message in terms that his audience can understand, to break through a hearer's defenses so as to confront him with the truth. But having done this he dare go no further. Only the Holy Spirit can properly go beyond this point.

But, some may object, why can't God use a speaker's persuasive techniques to bring people to Christ? The answer is that he can and sometimes does. He does not need such "help," but he may use it in spite of us.

Would it be possible through hypnotic suggestion to create a "believer," quite apart from any work of the Holy Spirit?

But what about all those misguided persons who respond to the messenger instead of the message because of high-powered efforts to get results? Are we not at least partially responsible for leading them astray, for encouraging them to rest their faith on the "wisdom of men" rather than the "strength of God," and will we not be

judged for our well-intended efforts that went beyond legitimate boundaries?

This is not to say that the preacher must refrain from urging, entreating, exhorting, or beseeching his listeners to follow Christ. The very essence of the Gospel is invitation, and some of the terms used in Scripture—for example, *parakaleo* (Acts 2:40) and *deomai* (II Cor. 5:20)—clearly portray this aspect of the preacher's ministry. Nothing I have said is meant to deny the validity of straightforward encouragement or exhortation to receive the Gospel, and of an opportunity to respond during the service. After all, invitation itself can hardly be viewed as a persuasive technique designed to induce (i.e., to cause rather than simply be the agent of) yielding. But the preacher would do well to have serious reservations about methods like these:

1. Slick and flashy evangelism centered around a flamboyant, pseudo-celebrity type of evangelist. (Says Packer: "Those who have begun to understand the sovereignty of God . . . seek to efface themselves in all their work for God. They thus bear a practical witness to their belief that God is great, and reigns, by trying to make themselves small, and to act in a way which is itself an acknowledgment that the fruitfulness of their Christian service depends wholly on God . . ." [Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, p. 271].)

2. The familiar machine-gun, pulpit-pounding style of evangelistic preaching that tends to rev up the emotions but bypass the rational facilities.

3. Sad-story-laden messages lacking any real biblical substance.

4. Interminable invitations designed to wear down resistance until someone, anyone, responds.

5. Such widespread techniques as asking people to raise their hands to be prayed for and then asking all who raised their hands to come forward. (Unwittingly—or perhaps not so unwittingly—those who do this are using a very sophisticated method based upon a cognitive consistency model: having publicly admitted his need by raising his hand, the person is placed under tremendous social and psychological pressure to comply when the second invitation is given.)

Such practices seem to be aimed at inducing yielding and should probably be avoided by those who do not want false results.

In a widely published IBM advertisement, an executive was portrayed in a pensive mood, and the copy read: "No one can take the ultimate weight of decision-making off your shoulders. But the more you know about how things really are, the lighter the burden will be. IBM. Not just data, reality." In a sense, the goal of the preacher should be to function for his listeners the way IBM purports to function for executives. The preacher cannot, must not, take the weight of decision-making from the shoulders of his hearers by employing persuasive techniques in such a way that he induces the listener to yield; but he can and must do everything in his power to induce comprehension of the reality of God's claims upon the listener. □

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This we cannot tell. . . .

What then must we think of those definitions of divine inspiration, in which Scripture seems to be represented as the altogether human expression of a revelation altogether divine? . . .

These definitions are not exact, and may give rise to false notions of inspiration. . . . They contradict facts. . . . In fact, they assume its being nothing more than the natural expression of a supernatural revelation; and that the men of God had merely of themselves, and in a human way, to put down in their books what the Holy Ghost made them see in a divine way, in their understandings. But inspiration is more than this. Scripture is not the mind of God elaborated by the understanding of man, to be promulgated in the words of man; it is at once the mind of God and the word of God. . . .

Finally, it is always the inspiration of the book that is presented to us as an object of faith, never the inward state of him that writes it. His knowledge or ignorance nowise affects the confidence I owe to his words; and my soul ought ever to look not so much to the lights of his understanding as to the God of all holiness, who speaks to me by his mouth.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Gaussen, *Theopneustia*, 106-12.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense

GEORGE J. ZEMEK, JR.

Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics, by R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. Pp. 364. \$12.95.

It is increasingly rare these days to find a book in which the contents really correspond to its title. However, this volume is indeed both a presentation and defense of "classical" apologetics and a critique of presuppositionalism. Furthermore, it is well written (especially in those difficult portions dealing with sophisticated philosophical interactions) and fairly well organized. However, the format employing endnotes is inconvenient.

The greatest asset of Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley's argumentation is at one and the same time this volume's greatest deficit—an *uncompromising* defense of traditional apologetics. They certainly cannot be charged with ambivalence, but they frequently may be perceived by the reader as being arrogantly dogmatic. Consider, for example, the following excerpts:

If there is no reasoned defense for the Christian faith there can be no sound Christianity [p. 97]. . . . At their classical best, the theistic proofs are not merely probable but demonstrative [p. 101]. . . . We have endeavored to update the traditional theistic arguments, trying to show that when properly formulated they are compelling certainties and not merely suggestive possibilities [p. 136]. . . . Miracles are visible and external and perceivable by both converted and unconverted alike, carrying with them the power to convince, if not to convert [p. 145]. . . . Aquinas, Edwards, Butler, Reid, Warfield, Beattie, Orr, and others . . . were assuming, *rightly we believe* [italics added], that the mind as a faculty or power remained and functioned as it was intended to do. Therefore, it can and does survey the evidence and it can and does draw proper conclusions, with detachment and neutrality [p. 258]. . . . We have seen that the traditional view sees natural man as capable of understanding not only the world but the Bible itself. The unregenerate need no supernatural, spiritual, illumination to understand anything of which the human mind is capable. . . . [p. 298]; [etc.].

From this inflexible perspective they often criticize such apologetical 'commitment' as Geister, Montgomery, Pinnock, and others (cf. pp. 125-26, 148)!

Nothing interrupts the authors' tenacity to traditionalism. They are not deterred by the reservations of their verificationist contemporaries, nor by the *balanced* arguments of Augustine, Luther and Calvin, and most unfortunately, not even by exegetical theology. Historical tradition, auspiciously labeled by them as "classical" and "Reformed" (e.g., pp. 296, 319, etc.), is their ultimate yardstick. This becomes most conspicuous in their critique of presuppositionalism:

Presuppositionalism has become the majority report today among Reformed theologians, although it cannot even be called a minority report of church history. If Charles Hodge is right [for them this is a Class I assumption], that what is new is not true and what is true is not new, presuppositionalism, being new, falls of its own weight [p. 183]. . . . We will show that this new apologetic was virtually unheard of for eighteen centuries, only coming into its own in this one [p. 188].

Besides reminding the authors that justification by faith did not "come into its own" until the sixteenth century, it must be said that their classical position has a massive Romanist footing and foundation. In the volume they skillfully circumvented this fact with only one passing paragraph (p. 210). Consequently, for these reasons and more importantly exegetical ones the following statement by the authors should be no cause of embarrassment to the presuppositionalist: "But, we hope. . . that presuppositionalists and other fideists [sic] think wishfully that the traditional position supports them will grant that it does not" (p. 211).

Undoubtedly, the greatest shortcoming of this treatise is its detachment from the moorings of biblical exegesis. Although the authors are long on polemical engagements with Van Til and others in the philosophical arena in which they sometimes prove themselves as victors, they forfeit many battles in the arena of theological exegesis. This charge will be substantiated specifically in the following pages of this review; however, a preliminary criticism needs to be made in reference to one assumption which permeates their whole argument. This assumption is that there is a dichotomy between "mind" and "heart" (cf. pp. ix, 21, 219, 243, 297, etc.). However, if one conducts a careful investigation of $\nu\eta$ / καρδιά (i.e., the seat of *both* rational *and* volitional functions) in anthropologically and hamartologically significant contexts, the endeavor yields more than sufficient evidence to render their above assumption a biblically false dichotomy. Not so incidentally, it is in this area of theological exegesis that presuppositionalism displays its *preeminent* attribute: "Thus, for the presuppositionalist, theology and apologetics are inseparable. A sound theology is essential for a sound apologetic" (p. 187).

Prior to a chapter by chapter critique, a word needs to be said about the seemingly incongruous dedication of *Classical Apologetics* "to Cornelius Van Til who has taught a generation that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of thought and life." Apart from these words and one edifying paragraph (pp. 183-84), Van Til is sometimes caricatured during the authors' critique of presuppositionalism (e.g., pp. 234-39, 263, etc.). A tactic of guilt by association (especially with existential and Neoorthodox fideists) is also employed. This reviewer found such apparent innuendoes offensive.

"The Crisis of Secularism" is the topic of chap. 1. Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley draw a proper distinction between "secular" and "secularism" (along with other -isms, pp. 3-5). After some good observations relating to the meaning and impact of secularism (pp. 6-12), they attribute its epidemic to the wrong cause—the waning of traditional apologetics (p. 12).

A brief but bold definition of apologetics stands at the head of chap. 2 (i.e., "The Task of Apologetics"): "Apologetics is the reasoned defense of the Christian religion" (p. 13). It is in this chapter that the authors begin their guilt by association arguments. Anti-rationalistic existentialists are associated with theological fideists (pp. 13-17; cf. p. 33; etc.) leading to the conclusion that "presuppositionalism is orthodoxy's defense of no-reasoned defense for Christianity" (p. 16). In response to this it is their "hope" that "presuppositionalism will be giving way more and more to classical apologetics as a reasonable modern response to *reasonable modern people who want a reason why they should believe*" (p. 16, italics added). The emphasized portion of this quotation draws attention to their hamartiological deficiency which will characterize the rest of the volume. That their "hope" is naively idealistic is intimated not only by biblical theology but also by their concession on the very next page: "Sin complicates both the knowing and the object known, adding clarification to the already heavy responsibility of apologetics" (p. 17). Yet it becomes progressively obvious that the authors do not view this truth as seriously as they should.

The portion of chap. 2 dealing with "Apologetics: God's Example and Command" suffers from quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. It is far too brief to support the dogmatic conclusions postulated by the authors. Their conclusions regarding a normative methodology are in need of biblical modification in the light of prevalent scriptural evidences substantiating a presuppositional model. Also, their restriction of διαλέγουμαι to a technically philosophical sphere of usage fails to understand Luke's employment of the term in its common first-century context of the Jewish synagogue (i.e., a preaching and teaching emphasis, not a polemical one; cf. Schrenk, "διδάσκωμαι, διαλογίζομαι, διαλογισμός," *TDNT* 2 [1964] 94-95; and Fürst, "διαλογίζομαι," *NIDNTT* 3: 821; etc.).

"Natural Theology and Fideism" are on center stage in chap. 3. At the outset the authors call attention to some important distinctions; for example, "there is a crucial difference between natural (general) *revelation* and natural *theology*." (p. 26). After a preliminary historical survey of natural theology emphasizing the skepticism of the philosophical fideists (pp. 26-35; note the rare concession that the existential fideism of Barth was "unalloyed"; cf. p. 34 on "Barth's *type* of fideism" [italics added]), they bring forth their major contention in the section entitled "the 'Back of the Book' Method": "But the question remains: do we move from general revelation to special revelation or from special revelation to general revelation?" (p. 36). Much of the subsequent development of their treatise deals with this issue of sequential priority as it relates to the apologetical task. However, let it be said that the biblical data seems to support a both/and *perspectival* emphasis which would indicate that the data are not intended to force an issue of methodological priority. Should one feel compelled to make a decision at this juncture, Kuyper's is preferable

in the light of mankind's epistemological predicament outlined in Romans 1 and in other places (cf. also Reymond's *The Justification of Knowledge*): "According to Kuyper there is a general revelation but no correct natural theology unless and until one has the light of special revelation" (p. 38). Chap. 4, "The Biblical Evidence Confirming Natural Theology," is the most exegetically oriented chapter in the book. However, some of the most crucial scriptural data were either not mentioned or not stressed. Concerning Romans 1, the authors made several good points, e.g., "suppression of the truth is at the heart of Paul's indictment of paganism" (p. 42). They also mentioned the significance of God's nature being "clearly perceived" in natural revelation (p. 43); nevertheless, their case could have been strengthened all the more by some significant observations on the force of καθολαίω. An extremely significant conclusion arises from this: "In Romans 1:20, Paul is affirming that humans can in fact move from the phenomenal realm to the noumenal realm, making the dispute with Kant all the more vivid" (p. 44). Their point is well taken; however, one must never forget the undergirding context of Rom 1:18-3:20 (e.g., mankind's suppression of truth and God's judicial abandonment of the race). The authors are certainly justified in criticizing those who water down the teaching of Rom 1:19-20 (cf. pp. 48-49), but they appropriately concede the enormous difficulty anyone encounters in trying to systematize an epistemology based upon the exegetical data of Romans 1 (p. 50; cf. David L. Turner, "Cornelius Van Til and Romans 1:18-21," *GTJ* 2 [1981] 45-58).

"There are those who argue that the objective general revelation is there for all to see, but that because of the fall into sin and especially because of the influence of sin on the mind (the noetic effects of sin) the objective revelation never gets through, it is not subjectively appropriated" (p. 47). Sproul, Gertner, and Lindsley fail to heed the exegetical and theological evidence that motivates this conclusion. Although the authors mention Rom 1:21b and 1:28 (cf. pp. 52-56), they refuse to accept the practical epistemological implications of mankind's futility in reference to his reasonings (διανοησμοῦς), his darkened mind (ἀσύνετος καρδία; cf. 1 Cl 36:2), and God's giving them over to an unapproved, depraved mind (δόκιμος νοῦς). This and other biblical data stand conspicuously opposed to their bold conclusions (cf. their assertions 7-9 on p. 62). In addition, their apologetical mandate "to establish once again a sound natural theology" (p. 63) is an exercise in futility in the light of mankind's moral and noetic predicament (cf. Gen 6:5; 8:21; Mark 7:20-23; Eph 4:17-19; etc.).

Chap. 5 dealing with method is a strange admixture of dogmatism and reservation (contra their reprimand of compromisers mentioned at the outset of this review). The strongest point of this chapter is its periodic appeal to pragmatic argumentation. For example, they commendably expose dialectical gibberish (à la Barth, *et al.*): "Talking in contradictions is nonsense, regardless of how transcendently profound it may sound" (p. 76). Concerning "the Law of Noncontradiction as a Universal Prerequisite for Life" (pp. 80-82), the authors astutely remark, "All people hold to it in *fact*, though some do deny it" (p. 80). Additionally, in reference to the "law of causality," it is observed that "it too may be denied by the mouth but not by the life" (p. 84). One

could wish that this refreshing practicality would infiltrate some of their errant extrapolations.

Some key reservations which *they* honestly acknowledge need to be pointed out. Of significance is the affirmation that "variant epistemologies produce variant conclusions" (p. 67). They also acknowledge that "logical errors occur in the application of the law of causality. The fallacies of faulty causal generalization and of false cause are perils to the application of the law" (p. 83). In other places the following cautions are posted:

Because our senses are fallible and limited we speak of *basic* or *rudimentary* reliability of sense perception rather than *total*, *perfect*, or *infallible* reliability. . . . The barrier to achieving perfect universality of classification is not merely the weakness of our sensory equipment or apparatus but the limits of the *scope* of our investigation, limits that are imposed by space and time. . . . It is because of this problem of the relationship between induction and certainty that many Christian apologists have sought to avoid any dependence on empirical data for building a case for the existence of God. . . . To venture into the empirical realm of sense perception is assumed to necessitate a foray into the hopeless land of probability and its attending levels of uncertainty [again, cf. some of the reservations of the compromisers]. . . . This is what motivates the presuppositional apologists to begin their apologetics with the assumption of the existence of God [pp. 87, 88, 89].

In spite of these and other significant reservations, the authors' verifical dogmatism is not stiffed: "We will endeavor to show that we can move from the phenomenal to the noumenal by the application of the law of noncontradiction, the law of causality, and the basic reliability of sense perception" (p. 89). The primary factor of underestimation which has contributed to this unjustifiable dogmatism is in the area of what they call "psychological prejudice" (pp. 69-70). Although the authors acknowledge that "even a sound epistemic system, flawless deductive reasoning, and impeccable inductive procedure does not guarantee a proper conclusion" (p. 69; cf. the practical and theological reasons given for this on p. 70!), they fail to apply the hamartiological connection to method. Although they concede "if we consider common ground to mean a common perception and perspective of reality, then obviously no such common ground for discussion exists between believer and unbeliever" (p. 70), yet they champion a common *epistemological* ground. Incidentally, they subsequently speak of "a *kind* of common ground" (p. 71. Italics added) which in its paragraph context is the very same "kind" supported by Van Til!

A well-argued case for the ontological argument as developed by Anselm and perfected especially by Edwards is offered in chap. 6. Although Sproul, Gertner, and Lindsley's communication is extremely sharp in reference to this profound philosophical debate, they necessarily succumb to that which they hate; they introduce into their argument several nondemonstrable assumptions. For example, the very last sentence of the chapter presuppositionally asserts: "*Infinite being must exist because we cannot conceive of its not existing*" (p. 108). Some of the other assumptions standing behind this bold conclusion are:

Once we think of the possibility of God, everything is proven. *To think of being is to know being* [p. 101]. . . . We cannot think of the nonexistence of perfect, necessary being. Therefore, that being must exist [p. 102]. . . . When one adds the simple observation that the necessary proof of anything is the inability to think of its nonexistence, this establishes the necessary existence of the perfect being [p. 103]. . . . But the idea of a necessary being does include in it eternally necessary existence [p. 106]. . . . [etc.]

Such boldness has resulted from the authors' failure to heed at least two warnings. The first has to do with the justifiable reservations of moderate rationalists: it is the warning that one must not leap from ontological probability to ontological certitude (once again, remember the compromisers). The second warning is far more serious; it involves the practical implications of a biblical hamartiology. That the authors are once again culpable may be illustrated through the implications of statements of theirs such as: "But does a human seeking God prove the finding of Him?" (p. 99, italics added). In the light of Psalm 14 (cf. Psalm 53), Romans 3, etc., they need to submit their assumptions and conclusions to an exegetical scrutiny pertaining to a scripturally sound and practical view of man and sin.

Chap. 7 organizationally follows with their defense of "the Cosmological and Teleological Arguments." The bottom line of their "updated" defense (cf. p. 136) is once again the tally of several nonverifiable assumptions. It should be pointed out, however, that there are several noteworthy concessions and challenges recorded in this chapter. Concerning the former, the authors well note:

We say that the cosmos, which almost all of us recognize, argues a Cosmic Mind, which all of us should acknowledge. If we do not, it must be for some reason other than lack of orderliness. . . . It will turn out that *a priori* we do not believe that there is a Cosmic Mind. . . . Because of our *a priori*, we will not allow ourselves to see a posteriori evidence of an orderly cosmos. *None are so blind as those who will not see* [p. 115, italics added].

Concerning significant challenges, the one relating to Montgomery's improper utilization of John 7:17 is illustrative:

But this is not the way Christ intended this statement: First, this cannot be an invitation to an unbeliever to experiment because it is morally impossible for an unbeliever to do the will of God. To do God's will one must begin by believing in Him and repenting of one's sins which, *ex hypothesi*, an unbeliever will not do. An experimenting unbeliever is a contradiction in terms. . . . So far from this text being an invitation to unbelievers to experiment, it is a rebuke to them that their not doing God's will is the source of their blind unbelief [p. 127].

Such biblically based concessions and challenges need to be taken far more seriously by the authors themselves. One wonders about their theological and apologetical assumptions when they pose the following questions (p. 127):

What objection is there against logical compulsion? What is logic if it is not compelling? If the case for Christianity is merely suggestive, or merely makes consideration feasible or intelligible or respectable, why should anyone convert?

Are we to believe that logic usurps the prerogatives of the omnipotent Spirit e.g., John 16:8)?

Chap. 8, "Supernatural Revelation and Miracles," is unfortunately characterized by axiomatic excess as illustrated by the following quotation: "Now we have thus proved that the Bible is the Word of God on this formula: Natural revelation plus miracle plus claimed revelation proves revelation" (p. 159, italics added). (For a full critique of the major problems of their argument, see: Gary Phillips, "Apologetics and Inerrancy: An Analysis of Select Axiomatic Models" [Th.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1985].) Practically speaking, apologetical finesse is exalted to the place of assisting the sovereign Spirit via a pre-Testimonium: "There is no circle here because when the Word testifies to the Spirit it has already been established as the Word of God by apologetics" (p. 141). For a presuppositional approach see James M. Grier, "The Apologetic Value of the Self-Witness of Scripture," *GTJ* 1 (1980) 71-76.

Their whole argument is doomed to failure because of their hamartologically naive first premise: "It is *virtually* granted that the Bible (not assumed to be inspired) contains *generally reliable* history" (p. 141, italics added). Then they put forth an apologetical task of sheer frustration: "To those outside the church, the case for basic reliability must be made" (p. 142). To this is added their argumentation concerning miracles: "From an *un-inspired* Bible we are arguing for miracles, and from miracles we are arguing in for an *inspired* Bible" (p. 144). This they assure the reader is not arguing in that ever-dreaded circle. From their perspective (and ours, i.e., the Christian's *Weltanschauung*) the conclusions flow quite naturally:

The biblical miracles need to be considered on their own merits. Their impossibility, or even improbability, has never been demonstrated. We have positive evidence for their occurrence. The *reasonable person* [italics added] will believe that they occurred as recorded. . . . But if our argument is sound, then *rational and honest people* [italics added] must not only believe *that* the Bible so teaches but they must also believe *what* the Bible teaches [pp. 152, 153].

But where are these "reasonable," "rational and honest people" to be found "outside the church?" Outside of Christ are only those who are actively hostile in their minds to the things of God (cf. ὄντας . . . ἐξθροβῶς τῆ διαβολῆ in Col 1:21; etc.). Not only is this problem found outside the flock but it often plagues the sheep of the fold (contra some of the authors' unqualified assertions on pp. 140-41, etc.). Even after the disciples witnessed incontestable miracles they still demonstrated symptoms of 'heart trouble' (e.g., Mark 6:51-52); after they had received intensive instruction on the resurrection (e.g., Mark 8:31ff.), they still refused to receive the testimony of the witnesses (cf. Luke 24:1-11). They just were not very reasonable!

The relationship of "the Spirit, the Word, and the Church" is briefly surveyed in chap. 9. Some positive contributions include their discussions of the pneumatological significance of Pentecost (p. 165), the statement about predestination as it relates to apologetics (p. 167), and the acknowledgment that Christ's testimony to the Word of God is ultimate (pp. 177-78). However, once again, it is apparent that the second and third of these observations never become apologetically determinative for the authors.

At the outset there is a slight contradiction concerning the Spirit's testimony to Messiah (cf. pp. 162-63). There are, however, more significant

hermeneutical and theological problems either in the chapter or as it relates to the rest of the volume. For example, John 14:26 is inappropriately used to support a *general* testimony (pp. 166, 168). John 14:26, 15:26–27, and 16:13 undoubtedly have a special application to the apostles. Similarly, 1 Cor 2:9 is used initially without qualification (p. 167); however, later some important observations provide clarification (p. 171). The biggest disappointment of the chapter concerns those pneumatological truths which are practically forgotten or rendered impotent in the subsequent development of their apologetical methodology. The authors themselves state, “We know persuasion is not by apologetic might, nor rational power [and yet compare the contents and critique of their last chapter!], but by the Spirit of the Lord. . . . The Spirit of God testifies to the Word of God” (pp. 167, 178). However, these statements are contradicted by their assertions in the previous chapter (see the comments above).

Chap. 10 (i.e., “An Outline of Presuppositional Apologetics”) introduces the major points of tension between historical verificationism and presuppositionalism. Several observations based upon this chapter have already been made in the general portion of this critique. But let me state two further observations. First, the authors express their aversion to circular argumentation (p. 188). However, they ignore the larger philosophical problem of the universal necessity of beginning with nondemonstrable assumptions. Second, they express their concern that presuppositionalism represents a departure from Reformed theology (p. 184). However, departures from orthodoxy are conspicuously related to verificationist preoccupations.

Chap. 11 is characterized by overstatements, understatements, and even by non-statements. It is best to explain this last criticism first. In a historical survey of traditional apologetics it is interesting to note the conspicuous absence of Aquinas and the Romanist core of this tradition. Rather the authors apparently choose to become carefully selective namedroppers as reflected in their chapter title, “General Apologetic Tradition on Reason and Faith: Augustine, Luther, and Calvin.”

Their survey of the evidence from Augustine seems to be well balanced (cf. pp. 189–96). Faith and reason do not appear to be mutually exclusive for Augustine; nevertheless, it is obvious that he put things into perspective through a sound hamartiology (cf. pp. 193–94).

The too brief discussion on Luther and reason (pp. 196–98) opens with one of those aforementioned understatements: “Martin Luther is notorious for his opposition to reason” (p. 196). Modification of that observation is suggested but not supported by *primary* sources. Their reliance upon one secondary source (i.e., B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*) leaves the reader unconvinced.

Another understatement introduces the section entitled “Calvin and Reason” (pp. 198–208): “There has been considerable debate about the nature of Calvin’s position on the knowledge of God” (p. 198). An essentially credible survey ensues. However, it is doubtful that Calvin really “regarded” the heuristic arguments “as compelling” (p. 203) or that he “regarded evidence as a foundation for faith” (p. 206). In the context of Calvin’s overall theology, these appear to be overstatements on the part of the authors.

As has been previously acknowledged Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley have not only pointed out some verifiable inconsistencies in Van Til’s epistemology, etc., but they have also distorted some of the essentials of his presentation as used to exemplify presuppositionalism. Chap. 12, “The Starting Point: Primacy of the Intellect and Autonomy,” may be used to illustrate this point. Some examples of fair evaluation occur sporadically on pp. 212, 223, and 231–33. However, these are overshadowed by misconceptions, unfair evaluations, and invalid conclusions based upon distorted and/or false assumptions. Often these occur amidst or at the end of some credible critiques. For example, after a few quotations from Van Til in which he genuinely acknowledges the noetic effects of sin, the authors caricature his position with the following words: “Human reason, which is a God-given instrument for truth [i.e., their presupposition which is never substantiated via exegetical theology], has become an instrument leading to error. In that case, human mental faculties (not only holiness) have been *eradicated* by the Fall” (p. 213, italics added). No presuppositionalist, including Van Til, would have argued that way. The authors flagrantly deny any noetic effects of the Fall, and furthermore boldly assert that “this is theological error, as well as an apologetic fatality. Van Til has not answered his critics because, believing as he does, he cannot” (p. 213). From the tenor of Van Til’s *total* presentation and from the meager exegetical correctives mentioned in this critique, it seems obvious that they are the ones who are errant theologically. But it must be remembered that for them theology is apparently subservient to apologetics!

In another place they interact with secondary sources (e.g. p. 216) and conclude that presuppositionalists are hyper-Calvinistic (p. 217). Rather than proceeding down this avenue and utilizing their construct of “Reformation theology” as the ultimate yardstick, one wishes they would consider in a profound way the exegetical and apologetical implications of passages such as 1 Cor 2:14. Selective allusions to 1 Cor 2:14a will not do (cf. pp. 216–18, *passim*), and besides, reflection upon the impact of the *whole* verse might have kept them from making embarrassing statements like the following: “If the unregenerate do not ‘see’ it, it is only because they *will not*, not because they *cannot*” (p. 218, please note the italics are theirs). Note especially what the last part of 1 Cor 2:14 says: “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them (καὶ οὐ δύναται γινώσκειν), because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor 2:14)! Besides this straightforward assertion, the Spirit in other places reminds us that noetic inability is all the more complicated by Satanic blindness (e.g., 2 Cor 4:3–4).

On the crucial issue of autonomy, the authors accurately note Van Til’s key contribution: “Van Til thus rejects any element of neutrality in the non-Christian mind” (p. 232). What surfaces in this portion (pp. 231–40) are two definitions of autonomy: one derived philosophically and methodologically (i.e., theirs) and the other derived theologically (Van Til’s). Therefore, they argue from their definitional benchmark that “given Van Til’s notion of autonomy, it is agreed that autonomous humanity cannot accept any higher authority. As we have shown repeatedly [i.e., via philosophical and methodological extrapolation], however, that is not a proper usage of autonomy.”

(p. 234). We are seemingly confronted with a presuppositional deadlock in reference to an apologetically strategic definition; however, the concept which is based upon a biblical hamartiology is surely the acceptable one.

Now comes the Achilles' heel of the volume, chap. 13, "The Noetic Influence of Sin." Actually, their approach to this issue was unveiled in chap. 12; therefore, it would seem that this chapter is basically a summary-conclusion of a position which has already been delineated. Consequently, a detailed critique would be redundant. Interestingly, the authors note at the outset that "the subject we now consider—the presuppositionalist view of noetic influence of sin—is supposed to show *why* the nonpresuppositionalist errs" (p. 241). Although the authors fail to concede this, indeed it does; it is *their Achilles' heel!*

Once again at a strategic juncture scriptural exegesis is notably absent. Instead their defense commences with a section entitled "Classic Calvinists on the Noetic Influence of Sin" (pp. 241–43). Additionally, a retreat to the false anthropological dichotomy of "heart" and "mind" recurs: "We suggest that classic Reformed orthodoxy saw the noetic influence of sin not as direct through a totally depraved mind, but as *indirect* through the totally depraved heart" (p. 243). Selectively utilizing the data of Romans 1, the authors resist acknowledging the epistemological paradox of mankind's having knowledge in one sense and yet not having it in another. Nevertheless, they seem to feel quite comfortable in saying that mankind's mind is not reprobate; however, God has judicially delivered the race over to a reprobate mind (p. 244). Arguing practically, as they have done on occasion, is not applied herein, and a consistent hamartiology is not evident.

Chap. 15 (i.e., "The Attack on the Theistic Proofs") perpetuates the same line of argumentation as the two previous chapters but with a growing boldness—man's mind, apparently unscathed by the Fall, becomes an impartial judge (cf. pp. 257–58). This new boldness apparently feeds an invigorated vitriolic criticism of Van Til and other presuppositionalists. Guilt by association arguments abound with only a few disclaimers (cf., e.g., "Presuppositionalism's Agreement with Neo-Orthodoxy," pp. 253–59). Their conception of "Calvinistic tradition" is again brought in as the ultimate canon (pp. 256–57), and their ubiquitous dichotomy of "mind" and "heart" is coregent (pp. 257–58). Concerning this latter observation, the authors' boldness reaches an unabashed level when they accuse Rushdoony of "surreptitiously" confusing these key anthropological terms! He may be culpable, but their own confusion is much more dramatically obvious.

The last portion of this chapter is launched with the following castigation: "Having observed presuppositionalism's agreement on the theistic proofs (Van Til's in particular) with contemporary neo-orthodoxy and secularism, we will now observe its disagreement with traditional orthodoxy" (p. 259). It is in this portion that some of Van Til's inconsistencies (a few of which are justifiable in the light of Scriptural data) are manipulated and caricatured in a critique which reaches its ebb (cf. esp. p. 263).

As a point of order, this reviewer and many other presuppositionalists would strongly disagree with the authors' statement that Clark is "perhaps the most thoroughgoing presuppositionalist of them all" (p. 265; cf. their own delayed disclaimer on p. 334). In their subsequent discussion an important

concession surfaces: "It is true that people do not acquiesce in the God of natural revelation until they are illumined by the God of special revelation. But saying that there is no *acquiescence* in natural revelation apart from special revelation does not deny natural revelation" (p. 268). Quite true, but it does deny any apologetical compulsion inherent in a natural *theology*, contrary to previous suggestions by the authors.

A topic introduced in chap. 14 is summarized in chap. 15—"The Attack on Christian Evidences." Two different assumptions clash again in this chapter:

Supposedly, the Bible is the foundation of Van Til's thought. Actually, it is the foundation of the foundation. For what is crucial is not merely the Bible, but the way by which Van Til comes to the Bible. He claims a sound approach to the Bible; we think he has an unsound approach to the Bible [p. 277].

The authors' assumptions will never change unless they allow apologetics to become subservient to theology. Since they do not, they castigate Van Til's severe restrictions of Christian evidences: "For Van Til, the resurrection of Jesus Christ (which he believes fervently and preaches vigorously) proves absolutely nothing" (p. 283). It should be remembered that not only presuppositionalists object to unqualified evidentialism but so do many verificationists (i.e., the compromisers). Failing to recognize any limitation in reference to Christian evidences, the authors are compelled to substitute a strained and unconvincing argument (pp. 283–86).

The chapter concludes with Sproull, Gerstner, and Lindsley's most ironical critique which pertains to the absolutely vital issue of inerrancy. Presuppositionalism is not to be blamed for the darkening eclipse of inerrancy as they postulate. Rather the growing preoccupation with evidentialism is darkening the bibliographical horizon. Contemporary historical corroborations of bibliographical erosion come through institutional (e.g., Fuller Seminary) and personal (e.g., Pinnock) examples. Speaking from the perspective of human responsibility, the greatest sustainer of inerrancy is a humble-minded apologetic thoroughly dominated by the Word and the Spirit.

An allergy of the authors to anything paradoxical lies at the heart of their critique of presuppositionalism in chap. 16. Characteristically, they lead off with a sensationalistic statement concerning presuppositionalism. In this context it is its tenet of "the self-attesting God": "It makes Karl Barth look like the champion of 'system' and Emil Brunner the most consistent of theologians" (p. 287). They unfortunately illustrate their objections first through a discussion which has historically evolved beyond the exegetical data (i.e., the lapsarian controversy, pp. 287–91). With the exception of their valid criticism of Van Til's holding that Adam "was created only *posse peccare*" (p. 289), the rest of their objections are suspect due to misinterpretations of Van Til and/or the biblical data. For example, it is apparent that they interpret Van Til's reference to "the sovereign grace of God freely proclaimed" as "mere *arbitrary* grace" (p. 288). One might ask *who* is now bearing the earmarks of hyper-Calvinism? Similarly, they assert, "Of course, reprobation is a decree of God, as truly and therefore as ultimately as election" (p. 288). Not one exegetical insight is offered from Romans 9 nor from anywhere else, however. The primary irritant responsible for their allergy is

their failure to accept the practical implications of passages like Isa 55:8-9 and Rom 11:33. Instead, they leave the impression that they have thoroughly integrated the biblical data and so conclude that "Divine 'control' and significant human choices hardly constitute a rational difficulty or apparent contradiction, not to mention paradox" (p. 291). There is an apparent softening at the end of the chapter (p. 295); however, it indeed is only apparent when couched in the context of their whole argument.

Due to the hamartiological concessions which have permeated their whole treatise, chap. 17's discussion of "the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit" is anemic. It does begin, however, with a very accurate critique: "The testimony of the Holy Spirit is the heart of a heart of presuppositionalism" (p. 296). As one might anticipate by now, the authors' subsequent evaluation of this crucial constituent comes via their conception of "traditional Reformed doctrine" (pp. 296-98). Besides another appeal to the alleged heart/mind dichotomy as popularized by Edwards, the substance of their argumentation may be summarized in their appeal to Owen: "We allow, then, that every man with reason and understanding and having the regular use of them, may, *without the saving agency of the Holy Spirit*, according to the measure of his ability, find out the true sense of these propositions and retain their meaning" (p. 297). Unfortunately, the authors have emphasized the wrong portion of Owen's quotation. Rather, the words "according to the measure of his ability" ought to have been emphasized and evaluated by Scripture and even by "traditional Reformed doctrine." Then the measurement of that ability according to both of these yardsticks would total zero. This too abbreviated chapter concludes with a critique of Frame and Dooyeweerd. Their critique of Frame is defensive and borders on being tactless by any standard (pp. 299-303).

A previously discussed topic is reintroduced as the primary subject matter of chap. 18 (i.e., "Presuppositionalism and Verification"). Once again, an accurate critique introduces their discussion: "Verification is the hallmark of evidentialism and the antithesis of presuppositionalism. One tradition says that seeing is believing; the other, believing is seeing" (p. 304). Almost every other construct of presuppositionalism's stance in this chapter is accurate (cf., e.g., the conclusions relating to Bahnsen on p. 309); however, the authors will have nothing to do with presuppositionalism's scripturally corroborated reservations concerning evidences. In actuality, Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley are at times much more devoted to apriorism than most presuppositionalists. This becomes obvious when they make sensationalistic comments such as this: "We agree with the inerrancy doctrine of Van Til and Notaro, but we have more respect for the *augmentation effort* of Pinnock, Jack Rogers, and Barth, despite their *unsound reasoning*. The presuppositionalists arrive at a sound conclusion by a wrong method, the others, at an unsound conclusion by a right method" (p. 307). It has already been suggested that such axiomatic preoccupations have characterized contemporary departures from orthodox bibliography.

Chap. 19 (i.e., "Analogical Thinking") is a generally commendable evaluation of Van Tilian epistemological transcendence. Many incontestable evaluations surface: for example, "if God can say that finite knowledge is knowledge, then Van Til can never say that finite knowledge is not knowledge" (p. 315).

Also found in this brief chapter is the first disclaimer that Van Til came out of the same mold of epistemological nihilism as Kant (p. 313).

The volume concludes (i.e., chap. 20) with severe criticisms of "Circular Reasoning." Their *modus operandi* does not change in this last chapter (e.g., commencing with a section on "Reasoning in the Reformed Tradition"). However, their opening evaluation of presuppositionalism is not as credible as some of the previous ones: "In all systems of thought except presuppositionalism circular reasoning is considered demonstrative evidence of error. In presuppositionalism, instead of being a vicious circle, it is a sign of intellectual virtue" (p. 318). Their first sentence is suspect because many logicians obviously acknowledge the 'necessary evil' of commencing with nonverifiable assumptions, and for them it does not necessitate the presence of logical error. The second sentence needs to be amended in order to make it an acceptable assessment; it would be more accurate if the words "a sign of intellectual virtue" were changed to "a sign of *theological* virtue."

To the authors the unpardonable sin of presuppositionalists in this most crucial area is *petitio principii*: "With respect to the existence of God and the authority of the Bible, presuppositionalists frankly admit to the use of circular reasoning in precisely this sense" (p. 322). But the authors are just as guilty, although they vigorously but futilely strain to deny it (e.g., p. 323). In a section on "Rushdoony on Circular Reasoning" there is a statement which boomerangs on the authors, indicating that it is really Warfield's emperor who has no clothes (contra their accusation directed at presuppositionalists, p. 338):

As soon as the reason realizes that there is a God, it immediately yields itself to that God, and honors Him as the author of itself, unless the reasoner has a vested interest in suppressing this information, as *sinful people do have*. We are not arguing whether this approach of Warfield and the others is successful or not. We know that Rushdoony and others do not think that it is. We believe that they are wrong. We believe that Warfield is right (p. 327, italics added).

After having refused to accept the awesome hamartiological implications of a biblically exposed autonomy, the authors ultimately have proved themselves to be more fideistic than most presuppositionalists when it comes to their own system. Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley's whole system deviates at this crucial hamartiological juncture as is evident in their concluding appeal to Henry's appraisal. He and they assert that "presuppositionalist theology... 'exaggerates the noetic consequences of the fall of man'" (p. 337). Unfortunately, it is they who have *minimized* these consequences!

New Testament Essays

in Honor of

Homer A. Kent, Jr.

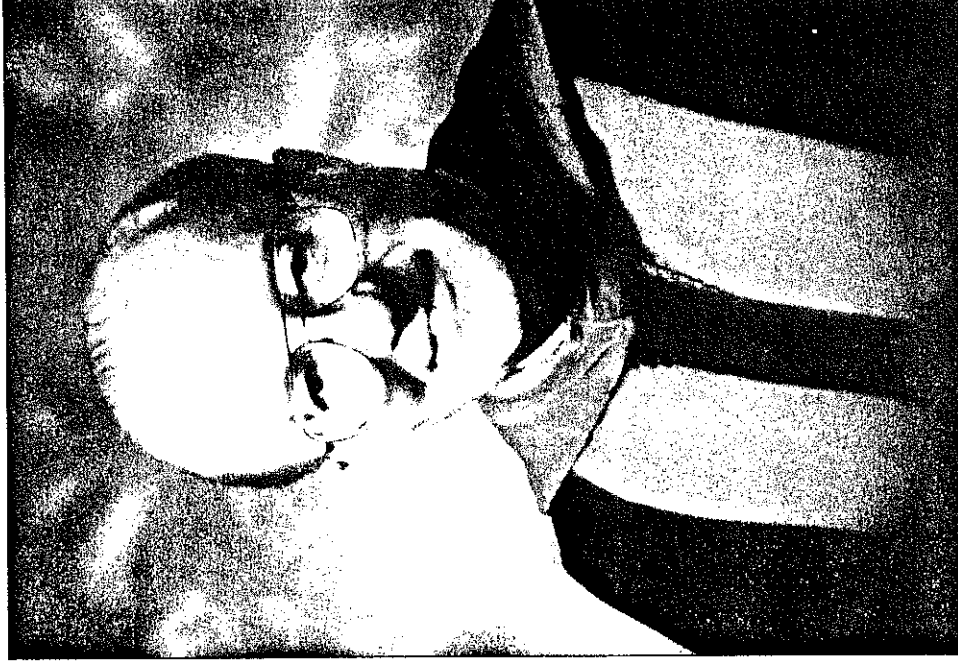
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I am honored, blessed, by your participation in this project. Thank you very much.

Amen

7-23-81

First Corinthians 2:1-5: Paul's Personal Paradigm for Preaching

George J. Zemek

INTRODUCTION

During his second missionary journey, Paul preached his way into Europe.¹ Proclaiming the Good News first in Philippi, then in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, he arrived at Corinth where he remained for about eighteen months.² Along the way, the Jews had harassed him, the gentiles often ridiculed him, and both of these major groups of God-resistant peoples regularly persecuted him. Needless to say, such circumstances presented to Paul, the preacher, many opportunities for concessions and compromises in both his message and method. However, he was always committed to doing God's business in God's way.³

Later, in writing to the Corinthians from Ephesus,⁴ Paul reminded them of his characteristic commitment to both God's message and method while he had functioned as the Lord's mouthpiece among them. But sharing the Gospel and making disciples in that city might have been the greatest test ever of Paul's ministerial integrity. Morally, "Paul's Corinth was at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world,"⁵ and intellectually, "the city shared the common Greek love of philosophy and speculation."⁶ From a mere scanning of 1 Corinthians it becomes obvious that these were lingering plagues within the professing Christian church at Corinth.

The opening chapters of this epistle especially target the latter of these plagues, the congregation's inordinate preoccupation with reason and rhetoric. Paul found himself being contrasted with various

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preachers of the Gospel, some of whom may have been giving the Corinthians more of what they wanted rather than what they needed. Not Paul! As A. T. Robertson has well noted about 1 Cor 2:1-5 in its multifaceted context, "Preaching was Paul's forte, but it was not as a pretentious philosopher or professional rhetorician that Paul appeared before the Corinthians."⁷

THE CONTEXT OF PAUL'S PARADIGM

Its Wider Theological Dimension

For Paul, theology always determined and regulated methodology. The *how* of his ministry in every area of Christian truth communication was governed by the *what* of his hamartiology and soteriology. Sin and self, often complicated by satanic operations,⁸ have left man, in and of himself, helpless and hopeless. Paul's conclusions concerning the unregenerate man are well summarized in 1 Cor 2:14, "Now an unspiritual person never welcomes the things of the Spirit of God, for, you see, they are nonsensical to him; furthermore, he does not even have the ability to begin to know them, since they are discerned spiritually."⁹ This means that "at no point does man, acting upon his adopted principle of autonomy, interpret or discern anything [in the eternal or spiritual dimension of reality] correctly."¹⁰ Biblically, it must also be acknowledged that the regenerate man reverts periodically from a theocentric to an anthropocentric mindset, and thereby he too enters into episodes of idolatrous autonomy.¹¹

In addition to understanding the utter helplessness and hopelessness of every form of human autonomy Paul acutely recognized the basic impotence of his own innate resources. Consequently, as he assumed his own personal position as a foot-soldier on the front lines of the great spiritual war he did so with only one battlecry: "But God!"¹² In a battlefield strewn with casualties and being attended by spiritual medics who are innately powerless:

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth (1 Cor 3:5-7, NASB).¹³

In light of this, the Commander's strategy must be carried out to the letter without any additions, subtractions, or alterations. For the spiritual soldier insubordination must become unthinkable.

Furthermore, the infantryman's armament must be of divine issue, and his military bearing should be characterized by divine dependence (cf. Eph 6:10-20). It is only then that he will be able to testify:

For although we live our lives still experiencing creaturely limitations and weaknesses (i.e., ἐν σαρκί) yet we are not carrying on the battle according to our own command or as measured by our own resources (i.e., κατὰ σάρκα), for the weaponry of our warfare is not powerless (i.e., ἀσπικία) but powerful because of its divine source (i.e., θουαρά τῷ θεῷ), so powerful that it is able to demolish fortresses; consequently, we, as mere infantrymen, but under God's command and outfitted with His weaponry, are bringing down human reasoning and every proud thing that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, also making every thought a POW with an objective of obedience unto Christ.¹⁴

In alluding to his divine armament, Paul especially had in mind his propositional weapon, the dynamic Word of God,¹⁵ and his Personal weapon, the powerful Spirit of God.¹⁶ Successful exploits (e.g., 1 Thess 1:5), both in Paul's time and in ours, are experienced only through the effectual synergistic operations of these divinely issued provisions.

Paul's methodological pattern, grounded upon these basic theological foundation stones, needs to be adopted by all Christian truth communicators.¹⁷ Briefly in review, when sharing with the natural man who is sold out to sin, self, and Satan, one must plug himself into the power source of the Word of God, praying that the Spirit of God might be pleased to use His Word to accomplish His sovereign pleasure. Potentially, this is the only antidote for "pride in the pagan." One's approach should not deviate radically from this pattern when conveying the truth to professing believers. Keeping in mind their inevitable struggle with man-centeredness, the one who shares truth exercises his scriptural obligations most faithfully when he draws his dynamic data from the Word and, lovingly but firmly, presents those truths in a straightforward manner, humbly submitting himself and the results to the sovereign Spirit. This approach to the very real hazard of "pride in the pew" bears the imprimatur of God upon it.

The task of methodological assessment, however, is not complete without one final and extremely important evaluation, a self-examination of the channel of truth. This is absolutely essential since far too frequently there exists a problem with "pride in the preacher." Consequently, a paramount issue is one's own heart attitude as he shares the truth. God's mouthpiece must be consumed with his primary prerequisite for ministry, a total dependence upon God and His resources.¹⁸ These basic theological realities will become progressively more concrete as the context and content of Paul's paradigm in 1 Cor 2:1-5 are unveiled.

Its Narrower Polemical Dimension

Their Problem

Symptoms of the problem at Corinth were visible. The church was plagued with ἐν ὑμῖν σὺνιστά (1:10); "divisions," "factions," "disensions," or "cleavages," were being evidenced "among them."¹⁹ The "watchwords"²⁰ of v 12 clearly document that problem.²¹ Various groups within the professing "body of Christ" had been gravitating to different leading personalities and/or preachers.²² However, that visible phenomenon constituted only the tip of the iceberg, since a larger and more basic problem lurked beneath the surface of the waters.

Stagg has done a commendable job of outlining the more basic problem that Paul faced at Corinth:

Two wisdoms confront each other in First Corinthians: the "wisdom" of the world and the wisdom of God. . . . The "wisdom" of the world may best be defined as self-centeredness: self-love, self-trust, and self-assertion. . . . Behind all their surface problems was one problem: the "wisdom" of the world. Behind the solution to any problem at Corinth he looked to the Wisdom of God. Thus, in First Corinthians may be seen its underlying motif: God's Wisdom over against the "wisdom" of the world, judging it and offering true answer to the foolish and futile strivings of egocentric man.²³

Consequently, one must follow Paul's argument carefully through all of its twists and turns especially since he "uses σοφία to mean rhetoric, human speculation and Christ."²⁴

Paul's probings

After a brief salutation (1:1-3) and prayer (1:4-9), Paul enters immediately into a polemically-charged paraenesis.²⁵ His theological burden is captured by Scroggs's paraphrastic overview of the apostle's argument: "Let him beware who puts his trust in human wisdom."²⁶ In confronting the symptoms of 1:11-12, his basic message for those in dissension was: "Stop thinking of Christianity as something in which ingenuity or impressiveness counts."²⁷

By employing ironical rhetorical questions (1:13) and briefly rehearsing the history of his ministry among them (1:14-16) he vindicates both his persistent attitude and previous actions with a strategic reference to his divine commission to preach (i.e., 1 Cor 1:17).²⁸ He had been commissioned not only to do God's business but to do it His way. Indeed, with this affirmation,²⁹

. . . Paul is fully launched on his epistle. . . . The present verse adds hints, which will be taken up in the ensuing paragraphs, about both the content of the Gospel Paul preaches, and the manner in which he preaches it. . . . Paul presents himself as a preacher, not as an orator.³⁰

Not only conceptual but also semantical and literary features glue 1:18ff. to the previous verse.³¹ Its most immediate connection "is as follows: 'For the preaching with which we are concerned—the preaching of the Cross—is the very antithesis to σοφία λόγου [i.e., that message and method rejected by Paul in v. 17]. . . .'"³² In the ensuing segment, "Paul discusses wisdom and foolishness in three stages: (a) 1:18-25 fundamentally; (b) 1:26-31 as exemplified by the community; (c) 2:1-5 as exemplified by himself and his preaching."³³ Or, subdividing 1:26ff. into its usual paragraph divisions, Paul outlines: (1) "The Paradox of God's Wisdom" (i.e., 1:26-28); (2) "The Purpose of God's Wisdom" (i.e., 1:29-31); and (3) "The Presentation of God's Wisdom" (i.e., 2:1-5).³⁴

Paul's "simple testimony"³⁵ in 2:1-5 is divided literarily into two segments as indicated by emphatic occurrences of καὶ γὰρ³⁶ in 2:1 and 2:3.³⁷ In vv 1-2, Paul affirms how he did not come to the Corinthians, while in vv 3-5 he reminds them about how he did come to them.³⁸ Also, by implication from his statements, he came to them, not as some of the other personalities had undoubtedly come, but contrastingly with great humility.³⁹

Concerning the substance of Paul's argument in 2:6ff., "the apostle presents [God's] wisdom as inaccessible to human wisdom, thus as revelatory, known only through the agency of God's own Spirit."⁴⁰ The verses which follow 2:1-5 also carry with them much apologetical freight. In them, "he turns . . . away . . . to make a personal defense."⁴¹ Apologetical and polemical variations, accompanied by theological flashbacks relating to the wisdom motif, continue throughout chapters 3 and 4.

THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S PARADIGM

Within this setting, 1 Cor 2:1-5 is positioned as the methodological gem stone. This one short paragraph constitutes Paul's personal paradigm for preaching, and by extension, covers the whole gamut of conveying God's truth to needy people. Consequently, the ultimate Christian communications seminar is compressed into the affirmations of these five verses.

Organizationally, the passage could be viewed as unfolding in various ways depending upon one's controlling analytical criterion (i.e., stylistic, syntactical, and/or thematic). It has already been noted that the passage divides into two segments stylistically (i.e., vv 1-2 and 3-5).⁴² It is obvious that these segments contain Paul's historical reminiscences about his arrival and stay among the Corinthians. Syntactically, his hypotactic⁴³ and paratactic⁴⁴ statements integrate very well into this twofold development.

In order to obtain full benefit from Paul's "seminar," however, it may be appropriate to particularize his various assertions viewing them from a thematic perspective. Therefore, in 1 Cor 2:1-5 Paul offers four personal disclosures which reflect the biblical paradigm for communicating God's truth.

Paul's Follow-up Disclosure Concerning His Commission (v 1)

Remembering that Paul's entrance into Europe had been accompanied by "a great deal of discouragement,"⁴⁵ he nevertheless came to Corinth ministering faithfully according to his commission. When Paul arrived, he arrived preaching⁴⁶ the gospel.⁴⁷ "He came as a man who simply announces (καταγγέλλων) a fact."⁴⁸ Among the many NT synonyms for preaching (cf., e.g., εὐαγγελίζομαι in 1:17,

and κηρύσσω in 1:23),⁴⁹ καταγγέλλω places the emphasis upon "proclamation or declaration."⁵⁰ "The thought of solemn proclamation is uppermost,"⁵¹ especially since this word group is normally associated with the mouthpiece's mission or commission.⁵²

However, his divine commission to preach, announce, or declare God's gospel allowed no room for man's measure and method of ministry. By the strong negation οὐ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας, literally "not in accordance with a superiority of word or wisdom," Paul bore witness that he did not do God's business man's way.⁵³ He would not allow himself to be, and consequently was not, drawn to culturally characteristic excesses⁵⁴ in the areas of articulation and argumentation. Paul was obviously employing the pair of genitives polemically in this context; λόγου ἢ σοφίας may respectively denote "oratorical form" and "philosophic depth,"⁵⁵ "rhetorical skill" and "human understanding,"⁵⁶ "eloquent and persuasive oration" and "worldly wisdom and philosophy,"⁵⁷ "effectiveness of language" and "skill of argumentation,"⁵⁸ "overpowering oratory" and "philosophical argument,"⁵⁹ or "rhetorical display" and "philosophical subtlety."⁶⁰ Paul rejected "elaborate diction and subtlety of argument" as his norm for communications since those vehicles "would only discredit his testimony."⁶¹ For Paul, this avoidance was not merely a matter of personal preference, but, as indicated by the parallel words of 1:17, it was absolutely essential if he were to carry out his commission as charged.

In order therefore to grasp the full significance of Paul's testimony in 2:1 it is necessary to capture the thrust of his affirmations about his divine commission in 1:17. He had not been commissioned by Christ⁶² to baptize,⁶³ but by contrast,⁶⁴ to proclaim the Good News.⁶⁵ In addition, how he would fulfill the obligation of a "gospelizer"⁶⁶ was an attendant, but extremely vital, element of his commission as indicated by the qualifying negative phrase οὐκ ἐν σοφία λόγου, "not by means of wisdom of word."⁶⁷ The genitive λόγου is best construed as qualitative⁶⁸ or "descriptive, and means something like 'not with a kind of *sophia* that is characterized by rhetoric (or perhaps reason or logic).'"⁶⁹ Consequently, the compounded phrase was intended to exclude from Paul's mission both a "display of rhetoric" and an exhibition "of logical subtlety."⁷⁰ This is quite understandable since:

to preach is not a *philosophy* to be discussed, but a *message of God* to be believed. . . . "To tell good news in wisdom of word" is an

implicit contradiction; "news" only needs and admits of plain, straightforward telling.⁷¹

The strategic importance of Christ's prohibition—and Paul's subsequent obedience to it (e.g., 2:1)—is indicated by the purpose clause which follows. Or, in the phraseology of Lenski, "What this mode of procedure results in, and what Christ's purpose is in forbidding it, Paul states with brevity and with force: 'in order that the cross of Christ may not be made empty.'⁷² Indeed, "to clothe the Gospel in σοφία λόγου was to impair its substance."⁷³ In other words, "to dress out the story of Calvary in specious rhetoric, or wrap it up in fine-spun theorems, would have been to 'empty (κενόθη) the cross of Christ,' to eviscerate the gospel," since "the 'power of God' lies in the facts and not in any man's presentation of them."⁷⁴

Morris admirably shows how 1:17 launches Paul's corrective teaching and paves the way for his culturally shocking disclosure of method⁷⁵ in 2:1ff.:

Some at least of the Corinthians were setting too high a value on human wisdom and human eloquence in line with the typical Greek admiration for rhetoric and philosophical studies. In the face of this, Paul insists that preaching *with wisdom of words* was no part of his commission. That kind of preaching would draw men to the preacher. It would nullify the cross of Christ. The faithful preaching of the cross results in men ceasing to put their trust in any human device, and relying rather on God's work in Christ. A reliance on rhetoric would cause men to trust in man, the very antithesis of what the preaching of the cross is meant to effect.⁷⁶

Quite obviously, "the manner of Paul's preaching was determined by its *matter*."⁷⁷ This truth is documented not only by the implications of Christ's commission as summarized in 1:17,⁷⁸ but also by Paul's subsequent disclosure about his subject matter in 2:2.

Paul's Undaunted Disclosure Concerning His Subject Matter (v 2)

With its explicit emphasis on subject matter, v 2 further explains Paul's style of ministry among the Corinthians (cf. v 1):⁷⁹ "For I did not determine (judge it fit) to know anything (or, know something) among you, except (or, only) Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."⁸⁰ This somewhat cumbersome syntactical package unfolds Paul's personal resolution⁸¹ in two phases, the negative phase, being radically sepa-

rated from the positive by the αὐτί, "except."⁸² When Paul says "for I did not decide to know anything among you,"⁸³ he was in effect eliminating anything that might have been perceived as man's message and/or method (cf. 2:1 and 1:17).⁸⁴ Paul "intentionally set aside the different elements of human knowledge by which he might have been tempted to prop up the preaching of salvation. He deemed that he ought not to go in quest of such means."⁸⁵ Contrastingly, after eliminating man's way, he emphatically elevated God's Way.⁸⁶ As the words "except Jesus Christ and this very one"⁸⁷ indicate, Paul's exclusive subject matter was the Person and provision of the Savior (i.e., Christology and soteriology).

For Paul, giving people what they needed (cf. 1:18b, 21b, 24) rather than what they wanted (cf. 1:22) was essential, and yet, it was not easy. Indeed, when Paul wrote about faithfully heralding a crucified messiah⁸⁸ (cf. 1:23a) he possessed not only a theoretical, but also a practical awareness of mankind's resistance and rejection (cf. 1:23b): "To the Jew . . . Χριστός ἐσταυρωμένος was a contradiction in terms; to the Greek it would be simply meaningless"⁸⁹ "Messiah meant power, splendor, triumph; *crucifixion* meant weakness, humiliation, defeat. Little wonder that both Jew and Greek were scandalized by the Christian message."⁹⁰

But, "instead of working miracles to satisfy the Jews, or propounding a philosophy to entertain the Greeks,"⁹¹ Paul remained undaunted in reference to the proclamation of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" for the sake of Christ, His commission, and the good of those God would be pleased to rescue from their own resistance. He avoided all forms of "human ostentation"⁹² because he was fully aware of the fact that that very same message was God's exclusive means for unleashing the power of God which leads to salvation (1:18b; cf. Rom 1:16).⁹³ In Paul's decision-making process (e.g., 2:2) the pressures of man, although formidable, were not formulative because of the reality of this divine dynamic. Such knowledge would allow no room for contemplations about concessions or compromises in method, message or matter.

Paul's Transparent Disclosure Concerning His Dependence (v 3)

When Paul admitted that he was with⁹⁴ the Corinthians "in weakness and in fear and in 'great trepidation,'"⁹⁵ he was denouncing any and all forms of "self-reliance."⁹⁶ His affirmation of weakness should

not be taken by itself as a reference merely to his physical stamina,⁹⁷ but needs to be taken "more broadly"⁹⁸ in concert with the other terms⁹⁹ and also in conjunction with his whole argument.

"Humanly speaking, he felt like one disarmed";¹⁰⁰ consequently, he ministered among them "as a frail insufficient human being."¹⁰¹ Polemically directed, "the weakness, fear and much trembling (2:3)," on the one hand, "are in direct opposition to the self-confident and boastful stance of the other [i.e., most] proclaimers of the Gospel in Corinth,"¹⁰² and on the other hand, the Corinthians, "who themselves are so haughty, are now informed that Paul performed his work without any spirit of self-sufficiency."¹⁰³

Divinely speaking, these same words of transparent testimony implicitly convey the preacher's declaration of dependence upon God and His resources. "In the sight of God"¹⁰⁴ and "in the light of the task committed to him,"¹⁰⁵ "who is equal to such a task?" (2 Cor 2:16b, NIV). 2 Cor 2:14ff., in dealing with the glory and the awesomeness of the Christian ministry,¹⁰⁶ makes it crystal clear that no mere man is "sufficient," "adequate," "able," "competent," or "qualified" (2:16b).¹⁰⁷ Indirectly, Paul's rhetorical question about human adequacy in 2 Cor 2:16b is answered negatively throughout the development of his second canonical epistle to the Corinthians. However, it is directly answered by the stark antithesis of 2 Cor 3:5-6a wherein Paul asserts on the one hand that we are absolutely devoid of adequacy (i.e., 3:5a),¹⁰⁸ while on the other hand, he affirms that sufficiency for ministry¹⁰⁹ is resident with God and graciously imparted to those who recognize that they are indeed innately devoid of it (i.e., 3:5b-6a). As Rengstorff well summarizes it, "Confession of personal incapacity is thus accompanied by confession of God as the basis of all personal capacity."¹¹⁰

Therefore, the words of Paul's transparent disclosure in 1 Cor 2:3 constitute another specific occasion when Paul was gaining insight into the paradoxical reality that "when I am weak, it is then that I am strong" (cf. 2 Cor 12:10b). The attitude which undergirds such declarations of dependence stands as a prerequisite for real power in preaching.

Paul's Panoramic Disclosure Concerning His Ministry (vv 4-5)

What Paul generalized in 2:1-2 he now makes more specific in vv 4 and 5. Verse 4 is a reaffirmation along with a documentation of

his approach as outlined in 2:1-2, which in itself was a confirmation of his faithfulness to commission as summarized in 1:17a. Verse 5 is a telic antithesis¹¹¹ which reveals Paul's understanding and subsequent motivation for ministry based upon the awesome potentiality of the revelation of 1:17b in its context. So Paul in the last two verses of this paradigmatic paragraph offers a panoramic disclosure of his ministry as viewed through power oriented (i.e., v 4) and purpose oriented contrasts (i.e., v 5).

His power-oriented contrast (v 4)

As Paul has done so frequently, he commences with a negative assertion, this time in reference to his λόγος, "word," and his κήρυγμα, "message" or "proclamation." Each of these terms is plagued by semantical fluidity, and furthermore, Paul's employment of them throughout this polemical context seems to make hermeneutical precision an elusive target.¹¹² Some argue that the respective emphases of λόγος and κήρυγμα seem to be on (1) content and (2) form.¹¹³ Others, emphasizing the primary force of a previous occurrence of λόγος at 1:18, opt for a double emphasis upon content.¹¹⁴ And still others, based both upon an appealing functional connection between the couplet λόγος and σοφία in v 1 paralleled with the couplet λόγος and κήρυγμα in v 4 and upon Paul's previous (and relatively unambivalent) use of κήρυγμα in 1:21 as "the contents of the preaching,"¹¹⁵ would argue that the respective emphases of these terms are on (1) speech¹¹⁶ and (2) the substance of such discourse. Consequently, λόγος in v 4 probably connotes "manner of presentation"¹¹⁷ while κήρυγμα "... refers ... to the subject, not to the manner of the preaching."¹¹⁸

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that a few, apparently frustrated by the subtle nuances of the terms, dub the collocation of λόγος and κήρυγμα "a case of rhetorical duplication."¹¹⁹ In the light of all these considerations, Morris's summary-conclusion regarding this significant couplet is safe and yet basically sound:

It is not easy to see the difference between *my speech* and *my preaching*. *Speech* is literally "word." We saw it used in 1:18. . . . The word rendered *preaching* is that denoting the message proclaimed in 1:21. Probably Paul is not differentiating between the two with any exactness. He employs both terms to stress both the message he preached and the way he preached it.¹²⁰

Irrespective of the nuances or proportions of the nuances of these two terms, the point that Paul was making via his employment of this collocation in 2:4 was very clear: "neither the one [i.e., his λόγος] nor the other [i.e., his κήρυγμα] has been corrupted in his work by the infiltration of human elements or by self-seeking."¹²¹

This conclusion is fully corroborated by the objectively negated propositional phrase which follows.¹²² Although the phrase is plagued by textual problems,¹²³ the correct reading "is probably πεθεῖς σοφίας λόγους,"¹²⁴ i.e., "persuasive words of wisdom."¹²⁵ The key to grasping the significance of Paul's negation is bound up with a proper understanding of his skillful employment of the adjective πεθεός in the sense of "enticing."¹²⁶ In reference to this adjective, Robertson says:

It seems to be formed directly from *peitho*, to persuade, as *phēidos* (*phidos*) is from *phēidomai*, to spare. The old Greek form *piñhanos* is common enough and is used by Josephus (*Ant.* VIII.9.1) of "the plausible words of the lying prophet" in I Kings 13. The kindred word *piñhanologia* occurs in Col. 2:4 for the specious and plausible Gnostic philosophers.¹²⁷

Of the related noun πεθεῖω in extrabiblical contexts, Bultmann has observed that it was used from the time of Aeschylus to denote "the gift or faculty of persuasion."¹²⁸

Polemically, Paul's phraseology, "persuasive words of wisdom," therefore, appears "to have some resemblance to Graeco-Roman rhetoric."¹²⁹ The combination refers to:

that specific, studied art of persuasive speech as was practiced by orators and rhetoricians of the Graeco-Roman world and by at least some of the Corinthian preachers. . . . Taken together as a phrase οὐκ ἐν πεθεῖς σοφίας λόγους explicitly means the setting aside of the art of persuasive speech. It is a phrase which rejects the discipline of what the Greeks called ῥητορικὴ.¹³⁰

Consequently, Paul "used no philosophic terms, categories of thought, or reasonings that were calculated to captivate his hearers and to persuade their minds to assent."¹³¹ Paul would not and could not have resorted to such tactics because, as the forthcoming positive member of this antithesis attests, both that prerogative and that power reside exclusively with the Spirit of God.¹³²

By means of strong contrast,¹³³ Paul declares that if his "words carried conviction, that conviction was produced, not by any eloquence or reasoning skill of his, but by the power of the Spirit applying the message to the hearers' conscience."¹³⁴ "The Holy Spirit and the power of God (1:18, 24) manifested themselves in his preaching. And in doing so they demonstrated thereby the truth of Paul's preaching."¹³⁵ The key word, ἀποδείξις, a "'demonstration' in the sense of 'stringent proof,'"¹³⁶ is vitally bound to and explained by πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεις, "of (the) Spirit and power."¹³⁷ Concerning the whole phrase, it

gathers up the δυνάμιν θεοῦ of i. 24 . . . ; the proof of the Gospel at Cor. was experimental and ethical, found in the new consciousness and changed lives that attended its proclamation: cf. vi. 11, ix. 1, 2 Cor. iii. 1 ff., I Thess. ii. 13 (λόγους θεοῦ ὅς κ. ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τ. πιστεύουσιν).—πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεις are not objective gen. . . . but subjective: the Spirit, with His power, gives the demonstration. . . .¹³⁸

Needless to say, such a visible evidence or proof¹³⁹ is "distinct from persuasion produced by mere cleverness."¹⁴⁰

Paul's burden is concisely conveyed through this power oriented antithesis of v 4: "Mere human σοφία may dazzle and overwhelm and seem to be unanswerable, but . . . it does not penetrate to those depths of the soul which are the seat of the decisions of a lifetime."¹⁴¹ Therefore, "to Paul the preaching of the Gospel is not dependent upon any human techniques of eloquence, but upon the demonstration of the Spirit and power."¹⁴² These incontestable negative and positive realities always governed Paul's methodology: "But precisely because his preaching was so simple and unpretentious its results convincingly demonstrated the power of God."¹⁴³ Applicationally, these same truths need to control all truth communicators; since "the preacher's task . . . lies, not in wishing to act in the place and stead of the Spirit with resources of his own eloquence and genius, but in opening up the way for Him by simple testimony rendered to Christ."¹⁴⁴

His purpose-oriented contrast (v 5)

According to contextual precedent, Paul employs another antithesis¹⁴⁵ which now magnifies the importance¹⁴⁶ of his adopted methodology: "in order that your faith¹⁴⁷ should not be grounded on¹⁴⁸ (the)

wisdom of men, but (contrastingly that it should be) grounded on (the) power of God."¹⁴⁹ With these words what has been implicit now becomes explicit. It was not only ministerially important for Paul to do God's business God's way, but more significantly from the (advantage) point of the Corinthians, it was eternally important. Indeed, "Paul was God's mouthpiece in declaring the Gospel; he therefore sought the very end of God Himself, viz., that God alone should be glorified in the faith of his hearers."¹⁵⁰

Verse 5 truly binds the major threads of his argument together. This is largely accomplished through placing the "wisdom of men" and the "power of God" in diametrical opposition.¹⁵¹ Obviously, the σοφία ἀνθρώπων of 2:5a is the σοφία τοῦ κόσμου, "the wisdom of the world," of 1:20. Paul will go on to label it ἀνθρώπινης σοφίας, "human wisdom," in 2:13.¹⁵² On the other hand, the δύναμις θεοῦ, the "power of God," of 2:5b is that salvific dynamic of God resident in the message of the Cross (cf. 1:18, 24), and more immediately in application (cf. 2:4b, 5b), it focuses upon "the preaching of Christ crucified, made effective in them by the Spirit."¹⁵³

Paul, therefore, is arguing that the trust of needy people must not be grounded on a finite foundation which will surely crumble,¹⁵⁴ but on an infinite foundation which will never crumble.¹⁵⁵ "The gospel is not a wisdom, but a power; not a philosophy, but a salvation."¹⁵⁶ Consequently,

right from the beginning, Paul had wished to ground his converts in the divine power, and to make them independent of human wisdom. That is why he had made no attempt to employ rhetorical arts, but had contented himself with the simplest approach. That was the reason for his concentration on that message which was so unpalatable to natural men, the message of the cross.¹⁵⁷

What a communications seminar! A better methodological paradigm for preaching is unimaginable.

CONCLUSION

Paul's example awaits our emulation. Today there is a great need, not for plausible pulpiteers, but for powerful preachers. Contemporary communicators, saturated with arrogance, given to humanistic tactics, and practiced in manipulation, abound. Yet there remains a real drought for the dynamic Word of God conveyed through humble

men of God by the powerful Spirit of God. Truth communicators, publish your declaration of dependence and then, according to Paul's paradigm, "Preach the Word!"

NOTES

¹For a good synopsis of Acts 16:11-18:17 see Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in the Book of Acts* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) 134-44.

²Cf. Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 283.

³A few interpreters look upon Acts 17:16ff. as an exception and therefore regard 1 Cor 2:1-5 as Paul's confession of a previously compromised message and method in the presence of the intelligentia at Athens. For some good refutations of these misunderstandings and misrepresentations see Johannes Munch, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, rev. by W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967) 174; Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens," *Ashland Theological Bulletin* 13 (Spring 1980): 7-9; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 59; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 92; and F. F. Bruce, *I and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 37.

⁴Probably in A.D. 55; cf. Bruce, *I and 2 Corinthians*, 25; Harrison, *Introduction*, 284, 291; and William F. Orr and James A. Wither, *I Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 81-83, 118-22, 129.

⁵Fee, *First Corinthians*, 2; it is a historical fact that the city "fostered a licentious spirit that was notorious even in Greece" (Harrison, *Introduction*, 283).

⁶Harrison, *Introduction*, 282.

⁷A. T. Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul, Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman, 1931) 76; cf. "Preaching was St. Paul's great work, but his aim was not that of the professional rhetorician" (A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914] 15).

⁸For some Pauline confirmations of these crucial biblical facts see: Rom 1:18-3:20, the subordinate concessive (or temporal) clauses of 5:6-10, 6:17a, v20a; 2 Cor 4:3-4, 11:3, Eph 2:1-3, 4:17-19; Col 1:21, Titus 3:3; etc.

⁹Author's interpretative rendering of 1 Cor 2:14; Boyer's illustration is appropriate: the natural man "is like a blind man in an art gallery, like a deaf man at a symphony" (James L. Boyer, *For a World like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians* [Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1971] 41). For exegetical documentations which confirm the theological thrust of 1 Cor 2:14, see Bruce, *I and 2 Corinthians*, 41; Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 73-74; F. Godet, *Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. by A. Cusin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 156-57; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) 76-77; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An*

Introduction and Commentary, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 60; and Fee, *First Corinthians*, 115-17.

¹⁰Jim S. Halsey, *For a Time Such as This* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976) 30 (bracketed statement added for contextual clarity).

¹¹Cf. Paul's development of *σῶψ*, "flesh," in hamartiological contexts. When the regenerated man's theocentric outlook is interrupted by his anthropocentric flashback, he temporarily functions much like the natural man, i.e., in blasphemous independence.

¹²For some Pauline confirmations of God's sovereign grace as the only antidote for man's hamartiological predicament, see: Acts 14:27 (cf. 16:14); Rom. 3:21-5:11, 8:28-30, 9:16; Eph 1:3-14, 2:4-10; Phil 1:6, 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; etc.

¹³Although Paul employs a different metaphor in this context the principle remains constant.

¹⁴Author's interpretive rendering of 2 Cor 10:3-5.

¹⁵Cf., e.g., Ps 19:7-8, 119:93; Jer 5:14, 20:7-10, 23:29; Rom 1:16; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12-13; James 1:12; 1 Pet 1:23.

¹⁶Cf., e.g., John 3:5-8, 16:8-11; 1 Cor 2:10b-11; Eph 6:17.

¹⁷I.e., whether "preachers," "teachers," "evangelists," "counselors," etc.

¹⁸Cf. 2 Cor 2:16b with 3:5, and the basic thrust of 1 Pet 3:15-16 in both its narrower and larger concentric circles of context.

¹⁹In the opening portion of the epistle (i.e., 1 Corinthians 1-4) these schisms involved an "attachment to individual leaders," and in the latter portion of his letter Paul had to deal with the *σῶψατα* which had unfortunately developed over the *χαρίσματα*, i.e., the "grace-gifts" for the Body (cf. TDNT, s.v. "σῶψω, σῶψια," by C. Maurer, 7:964).

²⁰Barrett's appropriate designation for the slogans of v 12 (*First Corinthians*, 43; cf. 42-46 for pertinent amplifications).

²¹For an excellent survey of this initial expression of factionalism within Paul's first epistle to the church at Corinth, see "The Problem—division over Leaders in the Name of Wisdom (1:10-17)" in Fee, *First Corinthians*, 51-66.

²²Largely due to this reason, Paul was forced to defend himself quite regularly in all of his correspondence to the Corinthians.

²³Frank Stagg, "The Motif of First Corinthians," *SWJT* 3 (October 1960): 15-16; cf. James's development in his epistle (3:13-18).

²⁴Timothy H. Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4), *Novum Testamentum* 29 (April 1987): 138, n. 6; from a strictly polemical angle, "in 1 Corinthians 1-4 . . . Paul reacts against two aspects of *sophia*, wisdom in speech as well as wisdom as the means of salvation" (Richard A. Horsley, "Wisdom of Words and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," *CBQ* 39 [April 1977]: 224). For some different and yet interrelated perspectives on the philosophical background, problem, paraenesis, and polemic of 1 Cor 1:10ff., see: Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 151-52; *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [NIDNTT], s.v. "λόγος," by G. Fries, B. Klappert, and C. Brown, 3:1081-1119; TDNT, s.v. "σῶψις κ.τ.λ.," by J. Schneider, 7:575-76; NIDNTT, s.v. "Wisdom, Folly, Philosophy," by J. Goetzmann and C. Brown, 3:1023-33; and TDNT s.v. "σοφία, κ.τ.λ.," by U. Wilchens, 7:519-22.

²⁵On the significance of *παρκαλέω* in Pauline paraenesis, see Hans Conzelmann,

1 Corinthians, trans. by James W. Leitch, *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 31-32, n. 8.

²⁶Robin Scroggs, "Paul: ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," *NTS* 14 (October 1967): 33.

²⁷C. Clare Oke, "Paul's Method not a Demonstration but an Exhibition of the Spirit," *ExpTim* 67 (November 1955): 35.

²⁸Fee correctly observes that 1:13-17 "serves as a means of shifting the focus from the problem of 'divisions over leaders' to the greater theological issue underlying its visible expression" (*First Corinthians*, 52).

²⁹Later, an exegetical excursus on 1:17 will be offered in conjunction with the more in-depth analysis of 2:1-5; however, for now, note the following synopsis of the great impact of 1:17 as the touchstone of Paul's overall argument: "Paul asserted that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach; further, what he was to preach is not a philosophy to be discussed, but a message of God to be believed" (G. G. Findlay, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970] 766-67); "Paul must avoid preaching which involves false synthesis in content and empty technique in form, lest the cross of Christ should lose its searching and saving content . . ." (TDNT, s.v. "κενός, κενός," by A. Oepke, 3:662); and finally, "St. Paul is eager to obviate any misapprehension which might arise from his exaltation of the ordinance of preaching. . . . It is not as a mere display of rhetoric, or of logical subtlety that he exalts it" (J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* [Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, n.d.] 156-57).

³⁰Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 49; i.e., v 1:18ff. "flow logically from the proposition of v. 17" (W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976] 194).

³¹E.g., "1 C 1:18 ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ appears to be a kind of anaphora to 17 ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ" (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. by Robert Funk [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961] 142 [para. 271]).

³²Lightfoot, *Notes*, 157; for an emphasis on the sovereignty of God as a thematic thread woven into the fabric of 1:18-4:20, see Scroggs, ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," 36-37; and Milton Ferguson, "The Theology of First Corinthians," *SWJT* 3 (October 1960): 27-29.

³³Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 39; Fee analyzes this section retrospectively: "With this paragraph [i.e., 2:1-5] Paul concludes his argument that the message of the cross and the Corinthians' very existence as believers stand in contradiction to their present stance. Along with 1:26-31 it demonstrates the point of 1:18-25, this time in terms of Paul's effective ministry among them despite his weakness and failure to rely on the kind of 'powerful' speech with which they are enamored. Thus, not only the means (the cross) and the people (the church in Corinth), but also the preacher (Paul) declared that God is in the process of overturning the world's systems" (*First Corinthians*, 89).

³⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *1 Corinthians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984) 49-57.

³⁵Barrett's characterization of 2:1-5 (*First Corinthians*, 28).

³⁶The *κῆρῶν* of 2:1 also functions retrospectively in a logical sense, since it ties back into the *ἡμεῖς* δε κηρύσσομεν of 1:23 (cf. Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament*

[Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976] 2:482). In the light of its immediately preceding context this *κἀγὼ* stresses a precedent; cf. "It was in line with this principle . . ." (Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 62; cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 29).

³⁷On this stylistic indicator, cf., e.g., Fee, *First Corinthians*, 89.

³⁸Cf., e.g., Findlay, "First Corinthians," 775.

³⁹Cf., e.g., Lightfoot, *Notes*, 120.

⁴⁰Scroggs, "ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," 33.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 36; Scroggs well adds that it was an apologetic enclosed within a polemic: "a personal defense . . . embedded in the midst of the apostle's attack" (*ibid.*).

⁴²Respectively based upon the introductory *κἀγὼ* with two verbals of *ἐρχομαι* standing at the head of vv 1-2 and *κἀγὼ* with explicit (i.e., *γινομαι*) and implicit connections with forms of the verb "to be" in vv 3-5.

⁴³Cf. the explanatory *γὰρ* of v 2 and the telic *ὅτι* of v 5.

⁴⁴Cf. the conjunctive *καὶ* which introduces the antithetical (i.e., *ὄλλ' ἄλλ'*) parallelism of v 4.

⁴⁵Morris, *First Corinthians*, 17, cf. 52; the previous historical survey made mention of some of the discouraging events which Paul had recently encountered.

⁴⁶I.e., *κἀγὼ ἔλεθον πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον . . . καταγγέλω ὑμῖν . . .* "and when I came to you, brethren, I came proclaiming . . ." [emphasis added to these two occurrences of *ἐρχομαι*].

⁴⁷Note that, e.g., Metzger (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1971] 545) and Orr and Waller (*I Corinthians*, 156) opt for the reading *μωρῶπιον* (cf. UBS³), "mystery," herein; while, e.g., Grosheide (*First Corinthians*, 58) and Morris (*First Corinthians*, 51) prefer *μωρῶπιον*, "witless." Orthographically, the variant seems to have arisen largely through a transposition (cf. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 62-63), and contextually, "the reading *μωρῶπιον* seems to be a recollection of 1.6, whereas *μωρῶπιον* here prepares for its usage in ver. 7" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 545). Both words may be used as conceptual synonyms for *εὐαγγέλιον*, the Gospel. Therefore, after examining the textual and contextual evidence, Bruce's both-and conclusion is appealing: "The gospel was both the message to which the apostles bore witness and the divine revelation, previously concealed, which they made known" (*I and 2 Corinthians*, 37).

⁴⁸Godet, *First Corinthians*, 124.

⁴⁹For helpful discussions which emphasize the interrelationship of *κηνύσω*, *εὐαγγέλιον*, *καταγγέλω*, etc., see: *NIDNTT* s.v. "στρατός," by E. Brandenburger and C. Brown, 1:397-402; *NIDNTT*, s.v. "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," by U. Becker, D. Miller, L. Coenen, and C. Brown, 3:47-54; and Victor Paul Furnish, "Prophecy, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching," *Interpretation* 17 (January 1963): 48-60. In this context the *καταγγέλω* of 2:1 builds upon the *κηνύσω* of 1:23 (cf. Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 775). On the essence of the latter term as the activity of a herald delivering a message (in this case from God), note Morris's comments (*First Corinthians*, 46).

⁵⁰*TDNT*, s.v. "καταγγέλω," by J. Schniewind, 1:71.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*, 1:71-72: "in their basic meaning these words always refer to the activity of the messenger who conveys a message which has been given to him either orally or in writing . . . and who in this way represents the sender of the message himself.

. . . This proclamation, the authority of which is derived from its ultimate source, enters deeply into the life of the messenger and makes total demands upon him" (*NIDNTT*, 3:45, 46). In the light of this there is not only a semantical connection with *κηνύσω* (cf. 1:23) and an implicit connection with *εὐαγγέλιον* (cf. 1:17) but also a conceptual connection with *ἀποστόλλω* (cf. 1:17 again).

⁵³On the significance of *οὐ καθ'*, Lenski aptly notes that it conveys "the norm which Paul repudiated when he was making his proclamation to the Corinthians" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943] 87); these words constitute "a rejection of the bombastic rhetoric that the Corinthians liked and the rhetorical art that was so common from Thucydides to Chrysostom" (A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman, 1934] 85; cf. 1206).

⁵⁴For some helpful observations pertaining to *ὑπεροχή* as excess, superiority, pre-eminence, etc., see: Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 840-41; Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 641 (cf. his rendering of "distinguished" in this context); Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 29; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:82; Lightfoot, *Notes*, 170; Morris, *First Corinthians*, 51; and Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 58-59.

⁵⁵Godet, *First Corinthians*, 124.

⁵⁶Fee, *First Corinthians*, 65.

⁵⁷Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 87.

⁵⁸Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 63; in another place he uses "rational talk" and "wordy cleverness" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁹Mare, "1 Corinthians," 198.

⁶⁰Lightfoot, *Notes*, 170.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 170-71.

⁶²Note the impact of the aorist indicative from *ἀποστόλλω*. Also note that grammatically, the negative *οὐ* governs this indicative verb not the infinitive (cf. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:76).

⁶³The explanation of v. 17a does not devalue baptism, but defines the personal commission to which Paul is subject" (Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 36).

⁶⁴I.e., *ἀλλά*.

⁶⁵*εὐαγγελίζεσθαι*, i.e., to be continuously engaged in the task of preaching the Gospel.

⁶⁶Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:76.

⁶⁷Note herein that *σοφία* and *λόγος* come packaged together; cf. Lenski's hyphenated rendering "word-wisdom" (*First and Second Corinthians*, 49-50). However, the two terms *λόγος ἢ σοφίας* of 2:1 incontestably dovetail back into this phrase in 1:17.

⁶⁸Cf., e.g., *ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁹Fee, *First Corinthians*, 64; cf. Bruce's "not with eloquent wisdom" (*First and Second Corinthians*, 17), i.e., not "in philosophical style" (Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 767). For argumentation that these words include "both the manner and the matter of the . . . preaching" (Morris, *First Corinthians*, 43), see, e.g., Fee, *First Corinthians*,

64, and Scroggs, "ΣΦΟΣ and ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," 36.

⁷⁰Lightfoot, *Notes*, 157; polemically, it abrogated any utilization of "the luxuriant rhetoric" and "the dialectic subtleties" (*ibid.*) which so characterized the Graeco-Roman orators and debaters. He was not commissioned "to proclaim the gospel with great oratorical talent" (Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 57); therefore, in 2:1ff. Paul evaluates his method as theological and practical rather than "professional" (*cf.* Lim, "Not in Persuasive Words of Wisdom," 139-40; however, Lim's thesis that Paul uses this concession as a manipulative device in this epistle is totally unacceptable).

⁷¹Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 767.

⁷²Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 51-52.

⁷³Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 16; *cf.* Schneider: "Paul refuses to use words of wisdom because these cannot grasp or expound the saving significance of the cross of Christ. Philosophical preaching which puts human wisdom in the place of God's wisdom robs the cross of Christ of its essential content" (*TDNT*, s.v. "σπουδος, κ.τ.λ.," by J. Schneider, 7:575).

⁷⁴Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 767; on the impact of κενωθῆναι in this context, *cf.* Godet and Lightfoot respectively: "the term κενωθῆναι denotes an act which does violence to the object itself, and deprives it of its essence and virtue" (*First Corinthians*, 89); herein, it means to "dwindle to nothing, vanish under the weight of rhetorical ornament and dialectic subtlety" (*Notes*, 157).

⁷⁵Remembering that Paul came to Corinth οὐ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας (2:1), "not with the bearing of a man distinguished for these accomplishments, and relying upon them for his success" (Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 775); his "humble mien and plain address presented a striking contrast to the pretensions usual in itinerant professors of wisdom" (*ibid.*).

⁷⁶Morris, *First Corinthians*, 42.

⁷⁷Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 775.

⁷⁸*i.e.*, "with such a commission he could not adopt the arts of a rhetorician nor the airs of a philosopher" (*ibid.*).

⁷⁹On the syntactical force of the γὰρ herein see Fee, *First Corinthians*, 92. It must be pointed out once again that 2:1-2 did not indicate a radical ministerial modification on the part of Paul immediately after his departure from Athens (*cf. ibid.*; Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 63-64; *et al.*).

⁸⁰Findlay's expanded rendering ("1 Corinthians," 775).

⁸¹*Cf.* Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 30; also, *cf.* Conzelmann: "κρίναι here means 'resolve'" (*1 Corinthians*, 54).

⁸²*Cf.* Orr and Walter, *1 Corinthians*, 156.

⁸³Robertson, *Word Pictures* 4:82. Syntactically, the negative οὐ must be taken with ἐκρίνα, "thus: 'I did not resolve to know. In smoother English this may be tr., 'I resolved not to know' or, 'I resolved to know nothing' (NIV)" (Mare, "1 Corinthians," 199, n. 2).

⁸⁴As a matter of fact τὸ εἰδέναι may have been employed by Paul deliberately in a polemical fashion: "to be a know-something" (*liquid scire*)—to play the philosopher—according to the well-known attic idiom of Plato's *Apol.*, paragraph 6, and *passim*, where οἱ τὰ εἰδέναι = δοκεῖ σοφός εἶναι . . ." (Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 775). The unfortunate perpetuation of such a humanistic obsession is not only documented quite directly in the Corinthian correspondence but also implicitly by Luke's parenthetical

cal comment in its context of Acts 17:21.

⁸⁵Godet, *First Corinthians*, 125-26.

⁸⁶*Cf.* respectively, Alford and Robertson and Plummer: "The only thing that I made it definitely my business to know, was" (*Alford's Greek Testament*, 2:483); "not only did I not speak of, but I had not thought for, anything else" (*First Corinthians*, 30).

⁸⁷Rendering the demonstrative emphatically (*cf.* Blass, Debrunner, Funk, *Greek Grammar*, paragraph 442, 229).

⁸⁸"Paul's *theologia cruxis*" (Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 138; *cf.* 145, n. 24); *cf.* *TDNT*, s.v. "σπουδος," by J. Schneider, 7:575-77.

⁸⁹Lightfoot, *Notes*, 162; *cf.* respectively, *TDNT*, s.v. "ἀκάνθων, κ.τ.λ.," by G. Stahlin, 7:354, and *TDNT*, s.v. "ἰσχυρός, κ.τ.λ.," by G. Bertram, 4:845-47; *NIDNTT*, s.v. "Wisdom, Folly Philosophy," by J. Goetzmann and C. Brown, 3:1023-33, esp. 1025-26. By referring to both "Jews" and "Gentiles" in 1:23, "Paul includes all mankind in the rejection of the crucified Messiah" (Morris, *First Corinthians*, 46).

⁹⁰Fee, *First Corinthians*, 75.

⁹¹Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 770.

⁹²Mare, "1 Corinthians," 194.

⁹³Morris appropriately comments: "Nor is it a message about God's power. It is God's power" (*First Corinthians*, 43).

⁹⁴"Taking ἐνεόχνην πρὸς ὑμᾶς as Paul's ongoing condition while at Corinth (*cf.* Fee, *First Corinthians*, 92-93) rather than merely his condition upon arrival (*cf.* Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:82). *Cf.* Acts 18:9-11.

⁹⁵Barrett's conceptual rendering of προφύ πολλα (*First Corinthians*, 64).

⁹⁶*Cf.* Fee, *First Corinthians*, 96; he well adds that this "is hard to teach in a course in homiletics, but it still stands as the true need in genuinely Christian preaching" (*ibid.*, 97).

⁹⁷*Cf.*, e.g., *ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁸Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 776; *cf.* Lightfoot, *Notes*, 171-72.

⁹⁹Note Conzelmann's "threefold characterization" of the preacher (I Corinthians, 54); for argumentation, *cf.* Godet, *First Corinthians*, 127-28, and Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 60.

¹⁰⁰Godet, *First Corinthians*, 127.

¹⁰¹Mare, "1 Corinthians," 198. *Cf.* 2 Cor 10:3-6.

¹⁰²Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 147.

¹⁰³Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 60.

¹⁰⁴Lightfoot, *Notes*, 172.

¹⁰⁵Morris, *First Corinthians*, 52; *cf.* Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 37, who argues that in 2:3 Paul conveys "a sense of complete personal inadequacy in view of the task of evangelizing such a city as Corinth."

¹⁰⁶A. T. Robertson's practical but yet profound treatment of this passage is a classic: *The Glory of the Ministry: Paul's Exultation in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967).

¹⁰⁷*Cf.* *NIDNTT*, s.v. "ικανός," by W. Von Meiring, 3:728-30; and *TDNT*, s.v. "ικανός, ικανότης, ικανόω," by K. Rengstorff, 3:293-97. Consequently, "cool complementarity is not the mood of the finest preaching" (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:83).

¹⁰⁸Note the objective negation with ἐμην and the force of the complementary prepositional phrases with the reflexive pronoun, *i.e.*, ἀπ' ἐαυτῶν and ἐξ ἐαυτῶν.

¹⁰⁹Cf. esp. 2 Cor 2:15-16a.

¹¹⁰TDNT, 3:295.

¹¹¹Cf. ἴνα . . . ἵνα . . .

¹¹²By way of example, the following comments illustrate the complexity of these phenomena: λόγος "has no uniform English equivalent, but suggests 'speech in rational form,' with the emphasis lying now on 'speech,' now on 'rational,' and now on 'form'" (Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 65); "there is a logos (speech) that belongs to wisdom and there is a logos (message) whose content is the cross; but they are mutually exclusive. . . . But unlike the Corinthians, who attached wisdom to logos, Paul attaches *kerygma* ('preaching' or 'proclamation')." (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 68, 94); and in reference to the more immediate context, λόγος is juxtaposed with σοφία in 2:1 and with κήρυγμα herein at 2:4. For a survey of other pertinent data, see Horsley, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," 229-31.

¹¹³Cf., e.g., Fee, *First Corinthians*, 94; Godet, *First Corinthians*, 128; Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 61; and Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 91-92. Lenski does however make his preference tentative by acknowledging that both terms "include the substance and the form of its presentation" (*ibid.*, 92).

¹¹⁴Cf., e.g., Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 776.

¹¹⁵Grosheide's accurate expanded rendering of κήρυγμα (*First Corinthians*, 57); cf. Boyer, *For a World like Ours*, 35.

¹¹⁶Cf. λόγος as "speech in progress" (James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 379), or as "continuous speaking, discourse, such as in the N.T. is characteristic of teachers" (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 380-81).

¹¹⁷Oke, "Paul's Method not a Demonstration but an Exhibition of the Spirit," 35.

¹¹⁸"Lightfoot's summary (Notes, 161) of τοῦ κήρυγματος of 1:21, although at times he seems reluctant to characterize λόγος and κήρυγμα in 2:4 respectively as "the form and matter of his preaching," he does admit that this distinction "is not far from the right distinction" (*ibid.*, 172); cf. Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament*, 2:484.

¹¹⁹Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 54.

¹²⁰Morris, *First Corinthians*, 52.

¹²¹Godet, *First Corinthians*, 128; i.e., "he did not use any illicit means with respect to either contents or form" (Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 61).

¹²²ὄχι ἔν . . . i.e., "not 'enforced by' . . ." (Barrett's appealing rendering of ἔν herein [*First Corinthians*, 65]).

¹²³For data surveys and/or interactions, see: UBS³ apparatus; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 546; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 55; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 37; Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 157; Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 146, n. 25, who tabulates 11 variants; and Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 156, who count 16.

¹²⁴Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 146, n. 25.

¹²⁵The genitive σοφίας is best construed as subjective, contextually being a reference to man's, i.e., worldly, "wisdom" (cf., e.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 65). It must be remembered that in the context of 1:17-2:16 "words of human wisdom" is a Corinthian value" (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 64).

¹²⁶Morris, *First Corinthians*, 52; he further comments that with this adjective following οὐκ ἔν "Paul roundly eschews the methods of human wisdom" (*ibid.*).

¹²⁷Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:83; cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 32, who subsequently conclude that "the cleverness of the rhetorician, which the apostle is disclaiming and combating throughout this passage, was specifically directed to the art of persuasion" (*ibid.*, 32-33).

¹²⁸TDNT, s.v. "πειθός, πειθῶ," by R. Bultmann, 6:9; therefore, based upon the utilization of the adjective in 2:4, he well concludes that "Paul is stating that his preaching does not derive its power to convince from the rhetorical art of human wisdom" (*ibid.*).

¹²⁹Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 137.

¹³⁰*ibid.*, 146-47.

¹³¹Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 92; i.e., Paul totally rejected any approach which was intended "to entice or force human minds by attractive or overwhelming rhetoric" (Oke, "Paul's Method not a Demonstration but an Exhibition of the Spirit," 36. "But his preaching did not thereby lack 'persuasion' [cf. v. 4b]. What it lacked was the kind of persuasion found among the sophists and rhetoricians, where the power lay in the person and his delivery" (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 94). "Paul's preaching" therefore, "carried conviction because of the power of the Spirit" (Morris, *First Corinthians*, 52); cf. v. 4b.

¹³²Some of the other preachers and the Corinthians desperately needed Paul's insight; i.e., "as it is all from God, why make a party-hero of the human instrument" (Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 33).

¹³³The antithetical parallelism which pivots on the ἀλλά has several facets; e.g., "ἀποδείξις 'demonstration' is opposed to πειθῶ (ἢ πειθοίς) 'plausibility'; and πνεῦμα καὶ δύναμις τοῦ λόγου σοφίας . . ." (Lightfoot, Notes, 173).

¹³⁴Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 37.

¹³⁵Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 61; cf. Godet, *First Corinthians*, 129, and Findlay, "Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers," 54-55.

¹³⁶Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 33; they continue, "in ἀποδείξις the premises are known to be true, and therefore the conclusion is not only logical, but certainly true" (*ibid.*). On the occurrences of this word in the LXX (cf. 3 Macc 4:20 and 4 Macc 3:19) and concerning its use as a technical rhetorical term in extrabiblical literature, see Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 147.

¹³⁷Although the terms are often closely associated (for examples and discussion, see Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 776, and Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 156), it is not necessary to view this collocation as a hendiadys, e.g., "powerful spirit" (Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 156; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 95).

¹³⁸Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 776; for some appropriate comments regarding the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, cf. *ibid.*, and Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 92.

¹³⁹Cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 95, on the force of ἀποδείξις herein.

¹⁴⁰Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 33.

¹⁴¹*ibid.*; cf. Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 147.

¹⁴²Lim, "Not in persuasive words of wisdom," 148; cf. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 65.

¹⁴³Morris, *First Corinthians*, 51.

¹⁴⁴Godet, *First Corinthians*, 130.

¹⁴⁵I.e., ἴνα . . . μὴ ἢ ἔν . . . ἄλλ' ἔν . . . Not only does this compounded purpose clause grammatically complete v 4 but it also serves as a telic summation for the first four verses of chapter two (cf., e.g., Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 92) and

conceptually relates back to 1:17b in particular (cf., e.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 49; and Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 777) and to 1:18ff. in general (cf., e.g., Fee, *First Corinthians*, 96; and Godet, *First Corinthians*, 130). Prospectively, it dovetails into the argument which follows, esp. 2:6-16 and 3:18-21.

¹⁴⁶Cf. TDNT, s.v. "δύναμις, δύναμις;" by W. Grundmann, 2:313.

¹⁴⁷I.e., "their Christian faith" (Mare, "1 Corinthians," 199); cf. Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 62.

¹⁴⁸The preposition marks the medium or sphere in which faith has its root" (Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 33), i.e., "to rest upon" (Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 66), "be grounded on,—owe its origin and stability to" (Allford, *Alford's Greek Testament*, 2:484).

¹⁴⁹Author's expanded rendering.

¹⁵⁰Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 777.

¹⁵¹Cf. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 55; and Godet, *First Corinthians*, 131.

¹⁵²Cf. his σοφία σαρκικῆ, "fleshy wisdom," i.e., "sinfully autonomous wisdom, in 2 Cor 1:12; for commentary on these syntheses, see Findlay, "1 Corinthians," 777.

¹⁵³Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 37.

¹⁵⁴As Barrett appropriately contends, "Preaching that depended for its effectiveness on the logical and rhetorical power of the preacher could engender only a faith that rested upon the same supports, and such a faith would be at the mercy of any superior show of logic and oratory, and thus completely insecure" (*First Corinthians*, 66).

¹⁵⁵Because "the real power does not lie in the person or presentation of the preacher but in the work of the Spirit as experienced by their own existence" (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 94).

¹⁵⁶Godet, *First Corinthians*, 130.

¹⁵⁷Morris, *First Corinthians*, 53.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRENT ISSUE

The 1980 issue of the ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL BULLETIN is comprised of a single article by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen, a Scholar-in-Residence at Ashland Theological Seminary for Spring Quarter, 1980. The focus of "The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens" is the exegesis of Paul's speech at Athens in Acts 17, and its relationship to Pauline texts (especially Romans 1) with respect to the theme of method in apologetics and witnessing. We are happy to present this learned and practical piece to our readers, both as a study of Scripture and as a memorial of the Bahnsen Lectureship among us. Dr. Bahnsen, a scholar, teacher and writer in the Reformed tradition, taught three courses Spring Quarter in the area of Christian thought: Philosophy of Christianity, Christian Ethics, and Christianity and Politics. The lecturer's learning, zeal for Scriptural truth and gentleness of manner were appreciated by students and faculty alike.

Rev. Greg L. Bahnsen, Ph.D., 32 years of age, ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is married and has four children. Formerly he was Assistant Professor of Apologetics at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. He is a graduate of Westmont College, B.A.; Westminster Theological Seminary, M. Div. and Th. M.; and the University of Southern California, Ph.D. in Philosophy. He has served as the Youth Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Manhattan Beach, California; Assistant Pastor, Calvary United Presbyterian Church, Wyncote, Pennsylvania; and Pastor, Trinity Chapel, Eagle Rock, California. Among his publications are *Theonomy in Christian Ethics; Homosexuality: A Biblical View*; and *A Biblical Introduction to Apologetics*. His articles include "Autographs, Ammannenses, and Restricted Inspiration" in *Evangelical Quarterly*, "Socrates or Christ: The Reformation of Christian Apologetics" and "Pragmatism, Prejudice, and Presuppositionalism" in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, "Inductivism, Inerrancy, and Presuppositionalism" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, and other articles, letters and reviews in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, *Presbyterian Guardian*, *Presbyterian Journal*, *Banner of Truth*, *Cambridge Fish*, and *Chalcedon Reports*. Dr. Bahnsen is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Evangelical Philosophical Society, and the Advisory Board of ICBI (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, at whose Chicago Summit in 1978, incidently, this editor met brother Bahnsen for the first time). At the present moment our author is a free-lance writer, and filling many pulpits, lectureships and seminars, especially in the areas of ethics and politics. He is currently residing in Orange, California.

This edition represents three firsts. Dr. Bahnsen is the Seminary's first guest lecturer to come for a whole quarter's residence, and we thank him for this spring issue which is appearing in the summer after the conclusion of this residence. Secondly, this 1980 issue is the first issue in the decade of the eighties. It is our hope, if Jesus tarry, that this decade will be the best one for the BULLETIN and its witness. Lastly, this issue is the first of my editorship. The BULLETIN and the Seminary wish to thank Dr. Owen Alderfer for his faithful work as editor, 1968-1979 (Vols. I-XII), and we affectionately wish him the Lord's very best in his new ministry this fall at Messiah College, Grantham, Pennsylvania.

—Joseph N. Kickasola, Editor

THE ENCOUNTER OF JERUSALEM WITH ATHENS

Greg L. Bahnsen, Ph.D.

Scholar-in-Residence, Spring 1980

Ashland Theological Seminary

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? . . . Our instructions come from "the porch of Solomon" . . . Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus. . . .!

So said Tertullian in his *Prescription against Heretics* (VII). Tertullian's question, what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?, dramatically expresses one of the perennial issues in Christian thought—a problem which cannot be escaped by any biblical interpreter, theologian, or apologist. We all operate on the basis of some answer to that question, whether we give it explicit and thoughtful attention or not. It is not a matter of *whether* we will answer the question, but only of *how well* we will do so.

What does Tertullian's question ask? It inquires into the proper relation between Athens, the prime example of secular learning, and Jerusalem, the symbol of Christian commitment and thought. How does the proclamation of the Church relate to the teaching of the philosophical Academy? In one way or another, this question has constantly been before the mind of the church. How should faith and philosophy interact? Which has controlling authority over the other? How should the believer respond to alleged conflicts between revealed truth and extrabiblical instruction (in history, science, or what have you)? What is the proper relation between reason and revelation, between secular opinion and faith, between what is taught outside the church and what is preached inside?

This issue is particularly acute for the Christian apologist. When a believer offers a reasoned defense of the Christian hope that is within him (in obedience to I Peter 3:15), it is more often than not set forth in the face of some conflicting perspective. As we evangelize unbelievers in our culture, they rarely hold to the authority of the Bible and submit to it from the outset. The very reason most of our friends and neighbors need an evangelistic witness is that they hold a different outlook on life, a different philosophy,

a different authority for their thinking. How, then, does the apologist respond to the *conflicting* viewpoints and sources of truth given adherence by those to whom he witnesses? What should he think "Athens" has to do with "Jerusalem" just here?

Christians have long disagreed over the proper strategy to be assumed by a believer in the face of unbelieving opinions or scholarship. Some renounce extra-biblical learning altogether ("Jerusalem versus Athens"). Others reject biblical teaching when it conflicts with secular thought ("Athens versus Jerusalem"). Some try to appease both sides, saying that the Bible and reason have their own separate domains ("Jerusalem segregated from Athens"). Others attempt a mingling of the two, holding that we can find isolated elements of supportive truth in extrabiblical learning ("Jerusalem integrated with Athens"). Still others maintain that extrabiblical reasoning can properly proceed only upon the foundation of biblical truth ("Jerusalem the capital of Athens").

The Biblical Exemplar

Now it turns out that the Bible has not left us in the dark in answering Tertullian's important question. Luke's account of the early church, The Acts of the Apostles, offers a classic encounter between biblical commitment and secular thought. And appropriately enough, this encounter takes place between a superb representative of "Jerusalem"—the apostle Paul—and the intellectuals of Athens. The exemplary meeting between the two is presented in Acts 17.

Throughout the book of Acts Luke shows us how the ascended Christ established His church through the apostles. We are given a selective recounting of main events and sermons which exhibit the powerful and model work of Christ's servants. They have left us a *pattern* to follow with respect to both our message *and* method today. Thus it is highly instructive for contemporary apologists to study the way the apostles, like Paul, reasoned and supported their message of hope (cf. I Pet. 3:15). Paul was an expert at suiting his approach to each unique challenge, and so the manner in which he confronted the Athenian unbelievers who did not profess submission to the Old Testament scriptures—like most unbelievers in our own culture—will be noteworthy for us.

We know that Paul's approach to such pagans—for instance, those at Thessalonica, where he had been shortly before coming to Athens—was to call them to turn from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His resurrected Son who would judge the world at the consummation (cf. I Thes. 1:1-10). In preaching to

those who were dedicated to *idols* Paul naturally had to engage in *apologetical* reasoning. Proclamation was inseparable from defense, as F. F. Bruce observes:

The apostolic preaching was obliged to include an apologetic element if the stumbling-block of the cross was to be overcome; the *keygema* . . . must in some degree be *apologia*. And the *apologia* was not the invention of the apostles; they had all "received" it—received it from the Lord.¹

The currently popular tendency of distinguishing witness from defense, or theology from apologetics, would have been preposterous to the apostles. The two require each other and have a common principle and source: Christ's authority. Paul's Christ-directed and apologetical preaching to pagans, especially those who were philosophically inclined (as in Acts 17), then, is paradigmatic for apologetics, theologians, and preachers alike today.

Although the report in Acts 17 is condensed, Luke has summarized the main points of Paul's message and method.

But Is This Paul at His Best?

Some biblical interpreters have not granted that Acts 17 is an exemplar for the proper encounter of Jerusalem with Athens. Among them there are some who doubt that Paul was genuinely the author of the speech recorded in this chapter, while others think that Paul actually delivered this speech but repudiated its approach when he went on to minister at Corinth. Both groups, it turns out, rest their opinions on insufficient grounds.

A non-evangelical attitude toward the Scripture allows some scholars a supposed liberty to criticize the authenticity or accuracy of its contents, despite the Bible's own claim to flawless perfection as to the truth. In Acts 17:22 Luke identifies the speaker of the Areopagus address as the apostle Paul, and Luke's customary historical accuracy is by now well known among scholars of the New Testament. (Interestingly, classicists have been more generally satisfied with the Pauline authenticity of this speech than have modernist theologians.) Nevertheless, some writers claim to discern a radical difference between the Paul of Areopagus and the Paul of the New Testament epistles. According to the critical view, the Areopagus focuses on world-history rather than the salvation-history of Paul's letters, and the speaker at Areopagus teaches that

all men are in God by nature, in contrast to the Pauline emphasis on men being in Christ by grace.²

These judgments rest upon an excessively narrow perception of the writings and theology of Paul. The Apostle understood his audience at Athens: they would have needed to learn of God as the Creator and of His divine retribution against sin (even as the Jews knew these things from the Old Testament), before the message of grace could have meaning. Thus the scope of Paul's theological discussion would necessarily be broader than that normally found in his epistles to Christian churches. Moreover, as we will see as this study progresses, there are conspicuous similarities between the themes of the Areopagus address and what Paul wrote elsewhere in his letters (especially the opening chapters of Romans). Johannes Munch said of the sermon: "its doctrine is a reworking of thoughts in Romans transformed into missionary impulse."³ Finally, even given the broader perspective on history found in the address of Acts 17, we cannot overlook the fact that it, in perfect harmony with Paul's more restricted salvation-history elsewhere, is bracketed by creation and final judgment, and that it finds its climax in the resurrected Christ. The speech before the Areopagus was a "plea for the Jewish doctrine of God, and for the specifically Christian emphasis on a 'Son of Man' doctrine of judgment"⁴ (not an "idealized scene" presenting a message about man's [alleged] "dialectical relation to God").⁵ The Paul on Areopagus is clearly the same Paul who writes in the New Testament epistles.

Did Paul suddenly shift his apologetical strategy after leaving Athens though? It has sometimes been thought that when Paul went on from Athens to Corinth and there determined to know nothing among the people except Christ crucified, repudiating the excellency of wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1-2), he confessed that his philosophical tactics in Athens had been unwise. Disillusioned with his small results in Athens, Paul prematurely departed the city, we are told,

²E.g., H. Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), pp. 217ff.; A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: H. Holt, 1931), pp. 6ff.

³Johannes Munch, *The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles*, revised by W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 173; cf. Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 383.

⁴Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 4 (Translation and Commentary) in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Part 1, ed. F. J. Roakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965 [1932]), pp. 208-209.

⁵Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles, a Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971 [German, 1965]), pp. 528, 529.

and then came to Corinth and became engrossed in the word of God (Acts 18:5), never to use philosophical style again.⁶ This outlook, while intriguing, consists of more speculation and jumping to conclusions than hard evidence.

In the first place, Paul is herein portrayed as a novice in Gentile evangelism at Athens, experimenting with this and that tactic in order to find an effective method. This does not square with the facts. For several years Paul had already been a successful evangelist in the world of pagan thought; moreover, he was not of an experimental mindset, and elsewhere he made plain that favorable results were not the barometer of faithful preaching. Besides, in Athens his results were *not* completely discouraging (17:34). And of a *premature* departure from Athens the text says nothing. After leaving Athens, Paul can hardly be said to have abandoned the disputing or "dialogue" for which he became known at Athens (cf. 17:17); it continued in Corinth (18:4), Ephesus (18:19), and Troas (20:7)—being a daily exercise for two years in the school of Tyrannus (19:8-9). It is further inaccurate to project a *contrast* between post-Athens Paul, engrossed in the word, and Athenian Paul, absorbed in extrabiblical thought. Some Greek texts of Acts 17:24-29 (e.g., Nestle's) list up to 22 Old Testament allusions in the margin, thus showing *anything but* a neglect of the Scriptural word in Paul's Athenian preaching!

Mention can again be made of the enlightening harmony that exists between Paul's writings, say in Romans 1 and I Corinthians 1, and his speech in Acts 17. The passages in the epistles help us understand the apologetical thrust of the Areopagus address, rather than clashing with it—as the subsequent study will indicate. Finally, it is quite difficult to imagine that Paul, who had previously declared "Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14), and who incisively taught the inter-significance of the death and resurrection of Christ (e.g., Rom. 4:25), would proclaim Christ as the resurrected one at Athens *without* explaining that He was also the crucified one—only later (in Corinth) to determine not to neglect the crucifixion again. We must conclude that solid evidence of a dramatic shift in Paul's apologetic mentality simply does not exist.

What Luke portrays for us by way of summary in Acts 17:16-34 can confidently be taken as a speech of the Apostle Paul, a speech which reflected his inspired approach to Gentiles without the Bible, a speech consistent with his earlier and later teachings in the epistles. His approach is indeed an exemplar to us. It was

⁶E.g., W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), p. 252; cf. P. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn, pp. 36-37.

specially selected by Luke for inclusion in his summary history of the early apostolic church. "Apart from the brief summary of the discourse at Lystra . . . , the address at Athens provides our only evidence of the apostle's direct approach to a pagan audience."⁷ With respect to the author's composition of Acts, Martin Dibelius argues: "In giving only one sermon addressed to Gentiles by the great apostle to the Gentiles, namely the Areopagus speech in Athens, his primary purpose is to give an example of how the Christian missionary should approach cultured Gentiles."⁸ And in his lengthy study, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, Gartner correctly asks this rhetorical question: "How are we to explain the many similarities between the Areopagus speech and the Epistles if the speech did not exemplify Paul's customary sermons to the Gentiles?"⁹ In the encounter of Jerusalem with Athens as found in Paul's Areopagus address, we thus find that it was genuinely Paul who was speaking, and that Paul was at his best. Scripture would have us, then, strive to emulate his method.

Intellectual Backgrounds

Before looking at Acts 17 itself, a short historical and philosophical background for the speaker of, and listeners to, the Areopagus address would be helpful.

Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, which was not an obscure or insignificant city (Acts 21:39). It was the leading city of Cilicia and famed as a city of learning. In addition to general education, Tarsus was noted for its schools devoted to rhetoric and philosophy. Some of its philosophers gained significant reputations, especially the Stoic leaders Zeno of Tarsus (who cast doubt on the idea of a universal conflagration), Antipater of Tarsus (who addressed a famous argument against Carneade's scepticism), Heraclides of Tarsus (who abandoned the view that "all mistakes are equal"), and Athenodorus the Stoic (who was a teacher of Augustus); Nestor the Academic followed Athenodorus, evidencing thereby the *variety* of philosophic perspectives in Tarsus. The city surely exercised an

⁷Ned B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus and Other New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 9-10.

⁸Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 79.

⁹Bertil Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Upsala: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955), p. 52.

academic influence on Paul, an influence which would have been broadened later in Paul's life when he came into contact with its culture again for some eight years or so, three years following his conversion. In his early years Paul was also educated by Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), where he excelled as a student (Gal. 1:14). His course of study would have included critical courses in Greek culture and philosophy (as evidence from the Talmud indicates). When we add to this the extensive knowledge of Greek literature and culture which is reflected in his letters, it is manifest that Paul was neither naive nor obscurantist when it came to a knowledge of philosophy and Gentile thought. Given his background, training, and expertise in Scriptural theology, Paul was the ideal representative for the classic confrontation of Jerusalem with Athens.

Athens, the philosophical center of the ancient world, was renowned for its four major schools: The Academy (founded ca. 387 B.C.) of Plato, the Lyceum (335 B.C.) of Aristotle, the Garden (306 B.C.) of Epicurus, and the painted Porch (300 B.C.) of Zeno.

The outlook of the Academy was radically altered by Arcesilaus and Carneades in the third and second centuries before Christ; respectively, they moved the school into utter scepticism and then probabilism. Carneades relegated the notion of god to impenetrable mystery. When Antiochus of Ascalon claimed to restore the "old Academy" in the first century B.C., in actuality he introduced a syncretistic dogmatism which viewed Stoicism as the true successor to Plato. The Platonic tradition is remembered for the view that man's soul is imprisoned in the body; at death man is healed, as his soul is released from its tomb.

This antimaterialist emphasis was somewhat challenged by Aristotle's Peripatetic school, which denied the possibility of immortality and invested much time in specialized empirical study and classification of the departments of knowledge. The influence of this school had greatly weakened by the time of the New Testament. However, its materialistic proclivity was paralleled in the atomism of Epicureanism.

Democritus had earlier taught that the universe consisted of eternal atoms of matter, ever falling through space; the changing of combinations and configurations of these falling atoms was explained by reference to chance (an irrational "swerve" in the fall of certain atoms). This metaphysic, in combination with an epistemology which maintained that all knowledge stemmed from sense perception, led the Epicurean followers of atomism to believe that a naturalistic explanation of all events could and should be given. By their doctrine of self-explanatory naturalism the Epicureans denied immortality thereby declaring that there was no need to fear

death. Moreover, whatever gods there may be would make no difference to men and their affairs. Epicurus taught that long-lasting pleasure was the goal of human behavior and life. Since no after-life was expected (at death a person's atoms disperse into infinite space), human desires should focus on this life alone. And in this life the only genuine long-term pleasure was that of tranquility—being freed from disturbing passions, pains, or fears. To gain such tranquility one must become insulated from disturbances in his life (e.g., interpersonal strife, disease), concentrating on simple pleasures (e.g., a modicum of cheese and wine, conversations with friends) and achieving serenity through the belief that gods never intervene in the world to punish disobedient behavior. Indeed, whatever celestial beings there are, they were taken merely as dream-like images who—in deistic fashion—care nothing about the lives of men. Thus Philodemus wrote: "There is nothing to fear in god/ There is nothing to be alarmed at in death." The Epicureans were, as is evident here, antagonistic to theology. Epicurus had taught them to appeal to right reason against superstition. Accordingly Lucretius denied any need for recourse to "unknown gods" in order to explain the plague at Athens or its alleviation.

Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, agreed that sensation was the sole origin of knowledge, and that the mind of man was a *tabula rasa* at birth. However, against Epicurean materialism, he taught that reason governs matter in both man and the world, thus making man a microcosm of the universal macrocosm. Man was viewed as integrated with nature—man's reason seen as being of a piece with the ever-living fire which permeates the world order. This was the "Logos" for the Stoics. As a kind of refined matter that actively permeates all things and determines what will happen, the Logos was the unchanging rational plan of historical change. Nature's highest expression, then, was reason or the world-soul, being personified eventually as god. In addition to this pantheistic thrust, Zeno expounded a cyclic view of history (moving through conflagration-regeneration sequences) which precluded individual immortality. Being subordinated to immanent forces (the divine world-soul and historical determinism) the individual was exhorted to "live in harmony with nature," not concerning himself with matters which were beyond his control. If life was to be conducted "conformably to nature," and reason was nature's basic expression, then virtue for man was to live in harmony with reason. The rational element in man was to be superior to the emotional. Epicetus wrote that men cannot control events, but they can control their attitude toward events. So everything outside reason, whether it be pleasure, pain, or even death, was to be viewed as indifferent. Stoicism gave rise to a serious attitude, resignation in

suffering, stern individualism, and social self-sufficiency. In turn, these achievements produced pride. Aratus and Cleanthes, two pantheistic Stoics of the mid-third century B.C., viewed Zeus as a personification of the unavoidable fate which governs man's life. Later Stoics either abandoned or modified much of Zeno's teaching. For instance, a century after Cleanthes, Panaetius essentially became a humanist who saw theology as idle chatter; and a century after Panaetius another Stoic leader, Posidonius (Cicero's instructor), opted for a Platonic view of the soul, the eternality of the world (contrary to the idea of conflagration), and the dynamic continuity of nature under fate. The famous Roman Stoic, Seneca, was a contemporary of Paul.

A final line of thinking which was influential in Athens in Paul's day (mid-first century A.D.) was that of the neopythagoreans. In the late sixth century B.C. Pythagoras had taught a mathematical basis for the cosmos, the transmigration of souls, and a regime of purity. Mixed with the thought of Plato, the Peripatetics, and Stoicism, his thought reappeared in the first century B.C. with the neopythagoreans, who emphasized an *efoteric* and mystical theology which took a keen interest in numbers and the stars. The neopythagoreans influenced the Essene community as well as Philo—Paul's other philosophical contemporary.¹⁰

In Paul's day Athenian intellectual life had come to be characterized by turmoil and uncertainty. Scepticism had made heavy inroads, which in turn fostered various reactions—notably: interaction between the major schools of thought, widespread eclecticism, nostalgic interest in the past founders of the schools, religious mysticism, and resignation to hedonism. Men were turning every which way in search for the truth and for security. On the other hand, over four hundred years of philosophical dispute with its conflicts, repetitions, and inadequacies had left many Athenians bored and thirsty for novel schemes of thought. Thus one can understand Luke's accurate and insightful aside to the reader in Acts 17:21, "Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." The curiosity of the Athenians was indeed proverbial. Earlier, Demosthenes had reproached the Athenians for being consumed with a craving for "fresh news". The Greek historian, Thucydides, tells us that Cleon once declared, "You are the best people for being deceived by something new which is said." With this background let us now examine Paul's apologetic to secular intellectuals.

¹⁰For further details on the philosophical schools of the Hellenic and Roman periods the reader can consult with profit the standard historical studies of Guthrie, Brehier, and Copleston.

Paul's Encounter with the Philosophers

Acts 17:16-21 (American Standard Version)

- (16) Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols.
(17) So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with them that met him.
(18) And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbling say? others, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.
(19) And they took hold of him, and brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee?
(20) For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.
(21) (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

In the early 50's of the first century Paul was on something of a "missionary furlough," waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy. (Luke's rehearsal of this situation, Acts 17:14-16, is confirmed by Paul's own account in I Thes. 3:1-2). However, his brief relief was broken when he became internally provoked at the idolatry of the city, being reminded anew of the perversity of the unbeliever who suppresses God's clear truth and worships the creature rather than the Creator (Acts 17:16; cf. Rom. 1:25). Paul's love for God and His standards meant he had a corresponding hatred for that which was offensive to the Lord. The idolatry of Athens produced a strong and sharp emotional disturbance within him, one of exasperated indignation. The Greek word for 'provoked' is the same as that used in the Greek Old Testament for God's anger at Israel's idolatry (e.g., at Sinai). The Mosaic law's prohibition against idolatry was obviously binding *outside* of Old Testament Israel, judging from Paul's attitude toward the idolatrous society of Athens. Paul was thinking God's thoughts after Him, and strong emotion was generated by the fact that this "city full of idols" was "without excuse" for its rebellion (Rom. 1:20)—as also had been Israel of old.

The profligate Roman satirist, Petronius, once said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man; the city simply teemed with idols. Visitors to Athens and writers (e.g., Sophocles, Livy, Pausanias, Strabo, Josephus) frequently remarked upon the abundance of religious statues in Athens. According to one, Athens had more idols than all of the remainder of Greece combined. There was the altar of Eumenides (dark goddesses who avenge murder)

and the hermes (statues with phallic attributes, standing at every entrance to the city as protective talismans). There was the altar of the Twelve Gods, the Temple of Ares (or "Mars," god of war), the Temple of Apollo Patroos. Paul saw the image of Neptune on horseback, the sanctuary of Bacchus, the forty foot high statue of Athena, the mother goddess of the city. Sculptured forms of the Muses and the gods of Greek mythology presented themselves everywhere around Paul.¹¹ What is today taken by tourists as a fertile field of aesthetic appreciation—the artifacts left from the ancient Athenian worship of pagan deities—represented to Paul not art but despicable and crude religion. Religious loyalty and moral considerations precluded artistic compliments. These idols were not "merely an academic question" to Paul. They provoked him. As Paul gazed upon the Doric temple of the patron goddess Athena, the Parthenon, standing atop the Acropolis, and as he scrutinized the Temple of Mars on the Areopagus, he was not only struck with the inalienable religious nature of man (v.22), but also outraged at how fallen man exchanges the glory of the incorruptible God for idols (Rom. 1:23).

Thus Paul could not keep silent. He began daily to reason with the Jews in the synagogue, and with anybody who would hear him in the agora, at the bottom of the Acropolis, the center of Athenian life and business (where years before, Socrates had met men with whom to discuss philosophical questions) (v.17). Paul's evangelistic method was always suited to the local conditions—and portrayed with historical accuracy by Luke. In Ephesus Paul taught in the "school of Tyrannus," but in Athens his direct approach to the hearers was made in the marketplace. Paul had already approached the unbelieving Jews and God-fearing Gentiles at the synagogue in Athens. Now he entered the marketplace of ideas to "reason with" those who met him there. The Greek word for Paul's activity recalls the "dialogues" of Plato wherein Socrates discusses issues of philosophical importance; it is the same word used by Plutarch for the teaching methods of a peripatetic philosopher. Paul did not simply announce his viewpoint; he discussed it openly and gave it a reasonable defense. He aimed to educate his audience, not to make common religious cause with their sinful ignorance.

Paul was well aware of the philosophical climate of his day. Accordingly he did *not* attempt to use premises agreed upon with the philosophers, and then pursue a "neutral" method of argumentation to move them from the circle of their beliefs into the circle of his own convictions. When he disputed with the philosophers *they* did not find any grounds for agreement with Paul at any level of

¹¹Cf. Oscar Broneer, "Athens: City of Idol Worship," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 21 (February, 1958):4-6.

their conversations. Rather, they utterly disdained him as a "seed-

picker," a slang term (originally applied to gutter-sparrows) for a peddler of second-hand bits of pseudo-philosophy—an intellectual scavenger (v. 18). The word of the cross was to them foolish (I Cor. 1:18), and in their pseudo-wisdom they knew not God (I Cor. 1:20-21). Hence Paul would not consent to use their verbal "wisdom" in his apologetic, lest the cross of Christ be made void (I Cor. 1:17).

Paul rejected the assumptions of the philosophers in order that he might educate them in the truth of God. He did not attempt to find common beliefs which would serve as starting points for an uncommitted search for "whatever gods there may be." His hearers certainly did not recognize *commonness* with Paul's reasoning; they could not discern an echo of their own thinking in Paul's argumentation. Instead, they viewed Paul as bringing *strange, new* teaching to them (vv. 18-20). They apparently viewed Paul as proclaiming a new divine couple: "Jesus" (a masculine form that sounds like the greek *iasis*) and "Resurrection" (a feminine form), being the personified powers of "healing" and "restoration." These "strange deities" amounted to "new teaching" in the eyes of the Athenians. Accusing Paul of being a propagandist for new deities was an echo of the nearly identical charge brought against Socrates four and a half centuries earlier.¹² It surely turned out to be a more menacing accusation than the name "seed-picker." As introducing foreign gods, Paul could not simply be disdained; he was also a threat to Athenian wellbeing. And that is precisely why Paul ended up before the Areopagus council.

In the marketplace Paul had apologetically proclaimed the fundamental, apostolic *kyrgma* which centered on Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18; cf. Acts 4:2). This summed up God's decisive saving work in history for His people: Christ had been delivered up for their sins, but God raised Him for their *justification* (Rom. 4:25) and thereby constituted Him the Son of God *with power* (i.e. exalted Lord; Rom. 1:4). As mentioned previously, Paul's approach to those who were without the Scriptures was to challenge them to turn from their idolatry and serve the living God, whose *resurrected* Son would finally *judge* the world (cf. I Thes. 1:9-10). This was the burden of Paul's message at Athens.

Paul was determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. . . . In His resurrection through the power of the Creator there stood before men the clearest evidence

¹²For a comparison of the apologetical methods of Socrates and Paul see G. I. Bahnsen, "Socrates or Christ: The Reformation of Christian Apologetics," in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, ed. Gary North (Vallejo, CA.: Ross House Books, 1976).

that could be given that they who would still continue to serve and worship the creature would at last be condemned by the Creator then become their Judge (Acts 17:31) No one can be confronted with the fact of Christ and of His resurrection and fail to have his own conscience tell him that he is face to face with his Judge.¹³

It was specifically the aspect of Christ's resurrection in Paul's gospel that elicited a challenge from the philosophers. At this they hauled him before the Areopagus Council for an explanation and reasoned defense of the hope that was in him (cf. I Peter 1:3, 3:15).

Luke tells us that Paul was "brought before the Areopagus" (v.19). The *Areios pagos* literally means "the hill of Ares" (or "Mar's hill"); however, his referent is not likely a geographical feature in the local surrounding of the agora. The *Council of the Areopagus* was a venerable commission of the ex-magistrates which took its name from the hill where it originally convened. In popular parlance its title was shortened simply to "the Areopagus," and in the first century it had transferred its location to the Stoa Basileios (or "Royal Portico") in the city marketplace—where the Platonic dialogues tell us that Euthyphro went to try his father for impiety and where Socrates had been tried for corrupting the youth with foreign deities. Apparently the Council convened on Mar's hill in Paul's day only for trying cases of homicide. That Paul "stood in the midst of the Areopagus" (v.22) and "went out from their midst" (v.33) is much easier understood in terms of his appearance before the Council than his standing on the hill (cf. Acts 4:7).¹⁴

The Council was a small but powerful body (probably about thirty members) whose membership was taken from those who had formerly held offices in Athens which (due to the expenses involved) were open only to aristocratic Athenians. This Council was presently the dominating factor in Athenian politics, and it had a reputation far and wide. Cicero wrote that the Areopagus assembly governed the Athenian affairs of state. They exercised jurisdiction over matters of religion and morals, taking concern for teachers and public lecturers in Athens (and thus Cicero once induced the Areopagus to invite a peripatetic philosopher to lecture in Athens). A dispute exists over the question of whether the Areopagus had an educational subcommittee before which Paul likely would have appeared.¹⁵ But one way or another, the Council would have found it necessary to keep order and exercise some control over lecturers

¹³Cornelius Van Til, *Paul at Athens* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: L. J. Grotenhuis, n.d.), pp. 2,3.

¹⁴Contrary to Haenchen, *Acts Commentary*, pp. 518-519, 520.

¹⁵For the affirmative position see Gartner, *Areopagus Speech*, pp. 64-65, for the negative see Haenchen, *Acts Commentary*, p. 519.

in the agora. Since Paul was creating something of a disturbance, he was "brought before the Areopagus" for an explanation (even if not for a specific examination toward the issuance of a teaching license.) The mention of "the Areopagus" is one of many indicators of Luke's accuracy as a historian. "According to Acts, therefore, just as Paul is brought before the *strategoi* at Philippi, the *politarchai* at Thessalonica, the *anthupatos* at Corinth, so at Athens he faces the Areopagus. The local name for the supreme authority is in each case different and accurate."¹⁶

Paul appeared before the Areopagus Council for a reason that probably lies somewhere between that of merely supplying requested information and that of answering to formal charges. After indicating the questions and requests addressed to Paul before the Areopagus, Luke seems to offer the motivation for this line of interrogation in verse 21—the proverbial curiosity of the Athenians. And yet the language used when Luke says in verse 19 that "they took hold of him" is more often than not in Acts used in the sense of *arresting* someone (cf. 16:19; 18:17; 21:30—although not always, as in 9:27, 23:19). We must remember that Luke wrote the book of Acts while Paul had been awaiting trial in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30-31). His hope regarding the Roman verdict was surely given expression in the closing words of his book—that Paul continued to preach Christ, "none forbidding him." An important theme pursued by Luke in the book of Acts is that Paul was continually appearing before a court, but never with a guilty verdict against him. Quite likely, in Acts 17 Paul is portrayed by Luke as *again* appearing before a court without sentencing. Had there been the legal formality of charges against Paul, it is inconceivable that Luke would not have mentioned them or the formal verdict at the end of the trial. Therefore, Paul's appearance before the Areopagus Council is best understood as an informal exploratory hearing for the purpose of determining whether formal charges ought to be formulated and pressed against him. Eventually none were.

In the same city which had tried Anaxagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates for introducing "new deities," Paul was under examination for setting forth "strange gods" (vv. 18-20). The kind of apologetic for the resurrection which he presented is a paradigm for all Christian apologists. It will soon be apparent that he recognized that the *fact* of the resurrection needed to be accepted and interpreted in a *wider philosophical* context, and that the unregenerate's *system* of thought had to be placed in *antithetic contrast* with that of the Christian. Although the philosophers had used disdainful name-calling while considering Paul in the marketplace (v. 18),

¹⁶Lake and Cadbury, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 213.

verses 19-20 show them expressing themselves in more refined language before the Council. They politely requested *clarification* of a message which had been apparently incomprehensible to them. They asked to be made acquainted with Paul's strange new teaching and to have its meaning explained. Given their philosophical presuppositions and mindset, Paul's teaching could not even be integrated sufficiently into their thinking to be understood. This in itself reveals the underlying fact that a conceptual paradigm clash had been taking place between them and Paul. Given their own worldviews, the philosophers did not think that Paul's outlook *made sense*. As Paul stood in the midst of the prestigious Council of the Areopagus, with a large audience gathered around from the marketplace, he set himself for a defense of his faith. Let us turn to examine his address itself.

Paul's Presuppositional Procedure

Acts 17:22-31 (American Standard Version)

- (22) And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious (margin: somewhat superstitious).
- (23) For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.
- (24) The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
- (25) neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
- (26) and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation;
- (27) that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us:
- (28) for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even even of your own poets have said,
- For we are also his offspring.
- (29) Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.
- (30) The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent:
- (31) inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

It must first be noted that Paul's manner of addressing his audience was *respectful* and gentle. The boldness of his apologetic did not become arrogance. Paul "stood" in the midst of the Council, which would have been the customary attitude of an orator. And he began his address formally, with a polite manner of expression: "Ye men of Athens." The *magna carta* of Christian apologetics, I Peter 3:15, reminds us that when we offer a reasoned defense of the hope within us, we must do so "with meekness and respect." Ridicule, anger, sarcasm, and name-calling are inappropriate weapons of apologetical defense. A Spirit-filled apologist will evidence the fruits of the Spirit in his approach to others.

Next we see that Paul's approach was to speak in terms of *basic philosophical perspectives*. The Athenians had specifically asked about the resurrection, but we have no hint that Paul replied by examining various alternative theories (e.g., Jesus merely swooned on the cross, the disciples stole the body, etc.) and then by countering them with various evidences (e.g., a weak victim of crucifixion could not have moved the stone; liars do not become martyrs; etc.) in order to conclude that "very probably" Jesus arose. No, nothing of the sort appears here. Instead, Paul laid the presuppositional groundwork for accepting the authoritative word from God, which was the source and context of the good news about Christ's resurrection. Van Til comments:

It takes the fact of the resurrection to see its proper framework and it takes the framework to see the fact of the resurrection; the two are accepted on the authority of Scripture alone and by the regenerating work of the Spirit.¹⁷

Without the proper theological context, the resurrection would simply be a monstrosity or freak of nature, a surd resuscitation of a corpse. Such an *interpretation* would be the best that the Athenian philosophers could make of the fact. However, given the monism, or determinism, or materialism, or the philosophy of history entertained by the philosophers in Athens, they could intellectually find sufficient grounds, if they wished, for disputing even the *fact* of the resurrection. It would have been futile for Paul to argue about the facts, then, without challenging the unbelievers' *philosophy of fact*.¹⁸

Verses 24-31 of Acts 17 indicate Paul's recognition that between his hearers and himself two complete *systems of thought* were in conflict. Any alleged fact or particular evidence which was introduced into the discussion would be variously seen in the light

¹⁷Van Til, *Paul at Athens*, p. 14.

¹⁸Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), p. 293.

of the differing systems of thought. Consequently, the Apostle's apologetic had to be suited to a philosophical critique of the unbeliever's perspective and a philosophical defense of the believer's position. He was called upon to conduct his apologetic with respect to *worldviews* which were in collision. The Athenians had to be challenged, not simply to add a bit more information (say, about a historical event) to their previous thinking, but to renounce their previous thoughts and undergo a thorough change of mind. They needed to be converted in their total outlook on life, man, the world, and God. Hence Paul reasoned with them in a presuppositional fashion.

The basic contours of a biblically guided, presuppositional approach to apologetical reasoning can be sketched from scriptures outside of Acts 17. Such a summary will give us sensitivity and insight into Paul's argumentation before the Areopagus.

(1) Paul understood that the unbeliever's mindset and philosophy would be systemically contrary to that of the believer—that the two represent in *principle a clash of total attitude and basic presuppositions*. He taught in Ephesians 4:17-24 that the Gentiles "walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding" because of their "ignorance and hardened hearts," while a completely different epistemic condition characterizes the Christian, one who has been "renewed in the spirit of your mind" and has "learned Christ" (for "the truth is in Jesus"). The "wisdom of the world" evaluates God's wisdom as foolishness, while the believer understands that worldly wisdom "has been made foolish" (1 Cor. 1:17-25; 3:18-20). The basic commitments of the believer and unbeliever are fundamentally opposed to each other.

(2) Paul further understood that the basic commitments of the unbeliever produced only ignorance and foolishness, allowing an effective internal critique of his hostile worldview. The *ignorance of the non-Christian's presuppositions* should be exposed. Thus Paul refers to thought which opposes the faith as "vain babblings of knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20), and he insists that the wise disputers of this age have been made foolish and put to shame by those called "foolish" (1 Cor. 1:20, 27). Unbelievers become "vain in their reasonings"; "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21, 22).

(3) By contrast, the Christian takes *revelational authority* as his *starting point and controlling factor* in all reasoning. In Colossians 2:3 Paul explains that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are deposited in Christ—in which case we must be on the alert against philosophy which is "not after Christ," lest it rob us of this epistemic treasure (v. 8). The Old Testament proverb had put it this way: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of know-

ledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). Accordingly, if the apologist is going to cast down "reasonings and every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God" he must first bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5), making Christ pre-eminent in *all things* (Col. 1:18). Upon the platform of God's revealed truth, the believer can authoritatively declare the riches of knowledge unto believers.

(4) Paul's writings also establish that, because all men have a clear knowledge of God from general revelation, the unbeliever's *suppression of the truth* results in *culpable ignorance*. Men have a natural and inescapable knowledge of God, for He has made it manifest unto them, making his divine nature perceived through the created order, so that all men are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20). This knowledge is "suppressed in unrighteousness" (v. 18), placing men under the wrath of God, for "Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God" (v. 21). The ignorance which characterizes unbelieving thought is something for which the unbeliever is morally responsible.

(5) Given the preceding conditions, the appropriate thing for the apologist to do is to set his worldview with its *scriptural presuppositions* and authority in *antithetical contrast* to the worldview(s) of the unbeliever, explaining that in principle the latter destroys the possibility of knowledge (that is, doing an internal critique of the system to demonstrate its foolishness and ignorance) and indicating how the biblical perspective alone accounts for the knowledge which the unbeliever sinfully uses. By placing the two perspectives in contrast and showing "the impossibility of the contrary" to the Christian outlook, the apologist seeks to expose the unbeliever's suppression of his knowledge of God and thereby call him to *repentance*, a change in his mindset and convictions. Reasoning in this presuppositional manner—refusing to become intellectually neutral and to argue on the unbeliever's autonomous grounds—prevents having our "minds corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ" and counteracts the beguiling philosophy used by the serpent to ensnare Eve (2 Cor. 11:3). In the face of the fool's challenges to the Christian faith, Paul would have believers meekly "correct those who are opposing themselves"—setting biblical instruction over against the self-vitiating perspective of unbelief—and showing the need for "repentance unto the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).¹⁹

¹⁹For further discussion of the presuppositional method see G. L. Bahnsen, "A Biblical Introduction to Apologetics" (syllabus distributed by the Fairfax Christian Bookstore, 11121 Pope's Head Road, Fairfax, VA 22030).

As we look further now at Paul's address before the Areopagus philosophers, we will find that his line of thought incorporated the preceding elements of biblically presuppositional reasoning. He pursued a pattern of argument which was completely congruous with his other relevant New Testament teachings. They virtually dictated his method to him.

The Unbeliever's Ignorance

As Paul began his Areopagus apologetic, he began by drawing attention to the *nature of man* as inherently a religious being (v. 22; cf. Rom. 1:19; 2:15). The term used to describe the Athenians in verse 22 (literally "fearers of the supernatural spirits") is sometimes translated "very religious" and sometimes "somewhat superstitious." There is no satisfactory English equivalent. "Very religious" is too complimentary; Paul was not prone to flattery, and according to Lucian, it was forbidden to use compliments before the Areopagus in an effort to gain its goodwill. "Somewhat superstitious" is perhaps a bit too critical in thrust. Although the term could sometimes be used among pagans as a compliment, it usually denoted an *excess* of strange piety. Accordingly, in Acts 25:19 Festus refers to Judaism, using this term as a mild reproach for its religiosity. It is not beyond possibility that Paul cleverly chose this term precisely for the sake of its ambiguity. His readers would wonder whether the good or bad sense was being stressed by Paul, and Paul would be striking a double blow: men cannot eradicate a religious impulse within themselves (as the Athenians demonstrate), and yet this good impulse has been degraded by rebellion against the living and true God (as the Athenians also demonstrate). Although men do not acknowledge it, they are aware of their relation and accountability to the living and true God who created them. But rather than come to terms with Him and His wrath against their sin (cf. Rom. 1:18), they pervert the truth. And in this they become ignorant and foolish (Rom. 1:21-22).

Thus Paul could present his point by making an illustration of the altar dedicated "To an Unknown God." Paul testified that as he "observed" the Athenian "objects of worship" he found an altar with an appropriate inscription. The verb used of Paul's activity does not connote a mere looking at things, but a systematic inspection and purposeful scrutiny (the English term 'theorize' is cognate). Among their "objects of religious devotion" (language referring to idol worship without any approbation) Paul finally found

one which contained "a text for what he had to say."²⁰ Building upon the admission of the Athenians themselves, Paul could easily indict them for the ignorance of their worship—that is, any worship which is contrary to the word of God (cf. John 4:22). The Athenians had brought Paul before the Areopagus with a desire to "know" what they were missing in religious philosophy (vv. 19,20), and Paul immediately points out that heretofore their worship was admittedly of the "unknown" (v. 23). Paul did not attempt to supplement or build upon a common foundation of natural theology with the Greek philosophers here. He began, rather, with their own expression of theological inadequacy and defectiveness. He underscored their *ignorance* and proceeded from that significant epistemological point.

The presence of altars "to unknown gods" in Athens was attested by writers such as Pausanias and Philostratus. According to Diogenes Laertius, such altars were erected to an anonymous source of blessing. For instance, once (ca. 550 B.C.), when a plague afflicted Athens without warning and could not be mitigated by medicine or sacrifice, Epimenides counseled the Athenians to set white and black sheep loose on the Areopagus, and then to erect altars wherever the sheep came to rest. Not knowing the specific source of the plague's elimination, the Athenians built various altars to *unknown* gods. This sort of thing was apparently common in the ancient world. The 1910 excavation at Pergamum unearthed evidence that a torchbearer who felt under some obligation to gods whose names were unknown to him expressed his gratitude by erecting an anonymous altar for them. Deissmann's conclusion bears repeating:

In Greek antiquity cases were not altogether rare in which "anonymous" altars "to unknown gods" or "to the god whom it may concern" were erected when people were convinced, for example after experiencing some deliverance, that a deity had been gracious to them, but were not certain of the deity's name.²¹

The Athenians had a number of such altars on Mar's hill alone. This was testimony to the Athenian conviction that they were lorded over by mysterious, *unknown* forces.

Yet these altars were also evidence that they assumed enough *knowledge* of these forces to worship them, and worship them in a particular manner. There was thus an element of subtle, internal critique in Paul's mention of the Athenian worship of that which

²⁰F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, in the New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), p. 356.

²¹Adolph Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1926), pp. 287-291.

they acknowledged as unknown (v. 23). Moreover, Paul was noting the basic schizophrenia in unbelieving thought when he described in the Athenians *both* an awareness of God (v. 22) and an ignorance of God (v. 23). The same condition is expounded in Romans 1:18-25. Berkouwer notes, "There is full agreement between Paul's characterization of heathendom as ignorant of God and his speech on the Areopagus. Ever with Paul, the call to faith is a matter of radical conversion from ignorance of God."²² Knowing God, the unregenerate nevertheless suppresses the truth and follows a lie instead, thereby gaining a darkened mind. Commenting on our passage in Acts 17, Munck said:

What follows reveals that God was unknown only because the Athenians had not wanted to know him. So Paul was not introducing foreign gods, but God who was both known, as this altar shows, and yet unknown.²³

The unbeliever is fully responsible for his mental state, and this is a state of *culpable ignorance*. That explains why Paul issued a call for *repentance* to the Athenians (v. 30); their ignorant mindset was immoral.

The Authority of Revelational Knowledge

Having alluded to an altar to an unknown god, Paul said, "That which you worship, acknowledging openly your ignorance, I proclaim unto you." There are two crucial elements of his apologetic approach to be discerned here. Paul started with an emphasis upon his hearers' ignorance and from there went on to declare with authority the truth of God. Their *ignorance* was made to stand over against his unique *authority* and ability to expound the truth. Paul set forth Christianity as *alone* reasonable and true, and his *ultimate starting point* was the authority of Christ's revelation. It was not uncommon for Paul to stress that the Gentiles were ignorant, knowing not God. (e.g., I Cor. 1:20; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 4:18; I Thes. 4:5; 2 Thes. 1:8). In diametric contrast to them was the believer who possessed a knowledge of God (e.g., Gal. 4:9; Eph. 4:20). This antithesis was fundamental to Paul's thought, and it was clearly elaborated at Athens.

The Greek word for 'proclaim' (set forth) in verse 23 refers to a solemn declaration which is made with authority. For instance, in the Greek papyri it is used for an announcement of the appoint-

ment of one's legal representative.²⁴ It might seem that such an authoritative declaration by Paul would be appropriate only when he dealt with Jews who already accepted the scriptures; however, whether dealing with Jews or secular philosophers, Paul's epistemological platform remained the same, so that even in Athens he "proclaimed" the word of God. The verb is frequently used in Acts and the Pauline epistles for the apostolic proclamation of the gospel, which had direct divine authority (e.g., Acts 3:18; I Cor. 9:14; cf. Gal. 1:11-12). Therefore, we see that Paul, although ridiculed as a philosophical charlatan, presumed unique authority to provide the Athenian philosophers with that knowledge which they lacked about God. This was far from stressing common ideas and beliefs. How offensive the Pauline antithesis between their ignorance and his God-given authority must have been to them!

They were sure that such a God as Paul preached did not and could not exist. They were therefore sure that Paul could not "declare" this God to them. No one could know such a God as Paul believed in.²⁵

Paul aimed to show his audience that their *ignorance* would no longer be tolerated; instead, God *commanded* all men to undergo a radical *change of mind* (v. 30). From beginning to end the unbeliever's ignorance was stressed in Paul's apologetic, being set over against the revelational knowledge of God.

Culpable Suppression of the Truth

Paul reasoned on the basis of antithetical presuppositions, a different starting point and authority. He also stressed the *culpability* of his hearers for that ignorance which resulted from their unbelief. Natural *revelation* certainly played a part in his convincing them of this truth. However, there is no hint in Paul's words that this revelation had been handled properly or that it established a common *interpretation* between the believer and unbeliever. Rather, Paul's references to natural revelation were made for the very purpose of *indicting* the espoused beliefs of his audience.

His allusion to their religious nature has already been discussed. In addition, verses 26-27 show that Paul taught that God's providential government of history was calculated to bring men to Him; they should have known Him from His works. Paul's appeal to providence was conspicuous at Lystra as well (Acts 14:17). The

²²J. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), p. 145.

²³Munck, *Anchor Bible: Acts*, p. 171.

²⁴J. H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 324.

²⁵Van Til, *Paul at Athens*, p. 5.

goodness of God *should* lead men to repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4). Acts 17:27 indicates that God's providential governance of history should bring men to seek God, "if perhaps" they might feel after Him. The subordinate clause here expresses an unlikely contingency.²⁶ The natural man's seeking and finding God cannot be taken for granted. Citing Psalm 14:2-3 in Romans 3:11-12, Paul clearly said: "There is none that seeks after God; they have all turned aside and together become unprofitable." Returning to Acts 17:27, even if the unregenerate should attempt to find God, he would at best "feel after" Him. This verb is the same as that used by Homer for the groping about of the blinded Cyclops. Plato used the word for amateur guesses at the truth. Far from showing what Lightfoot thought was "a clear appreciation of the elements of truth contained in their philosophy"²⁷ at Athens, Paul taught that the eyes of the unbeliever had been blinded to the light of God's revelation. Pagans do not interpret natural revelation correctly, coming to the light of the truth here and there; they grope about in darkness. Hence Paul viewed men as blameworthy for not holding fast to the knowledge of God which came to them in creation and providence. The rebellious are left without an excuse due to God's general revelation (Rom. 1:19-23).

Paul's perspective in Acts 17 is quite evidently identical with that in Romans 1. In both places he teaches that unbelievers have a knowledge of God which they suppress, thereby meriting condemnation; their salvation requires a radical conversion from the ignorance of heathendom. G. C. Berkouwer puts it this way:

The antithesis looms large in every encounter with heathendom. It is directed, however, against the maligning that heathendom does to the revealed truth of God in nature and it calls for conversion to the revelation of God in Christ.²⁸

So it is that Paul's appeals to general revelation function to point out the guilt of the unbeliever as he mishandles the truth of God. He is *responsible* because he possesses the truth, but he is *guilty* for what he does to the truth. Both aspects of the unbeliever's relation to natural revelation must be kept in mind. When evidence is found of the unbeliever's awareness of the truth of God's revelation around and within him, Paul uses it as an indicator of the unbeliever's culpability, and the apostle shows that it needs to be understood and interpreted in terms of the special revelation which is

brought by Christ's commissioned representative. Where natural revelation plays a part in Christian apologetics, that revelation must be "read through the glasses" of special revelation.

In Acts 17:27, heathen philosophers are said at best to grope in darkness after God. This inept groping is not due to any deficiency in God or His revelation. The philosophers grope, "even though God is not far from each one of us." Verse 28 begins with the word, "for," and thereby offers a clarification or illustration of the statement that God is quite near at hand even for blinded pagan thinkers. The unbeliever's failure to find God and his acknowledged ignorance is not an innocent matter, and Paul demonstrates this by quoting two pagan poets. The strange idea that these quotations stand "as proof in the same way as biblical quotations in the other speeches of Acts"²⁹ is not only contrary to Paul's decided emphasis in his theology upon the unique authority of God's word, but it simply will not comport with the context of the Areopagus address wherein the groping, unrepentant ignorance of pagan religiosity is declared forcefully. Paul quotes the pagan writers to manifest their guilt. Since God is near at hand to all men, since His revelation impinges on them continually, they *cannot escape* a knowledge of their Creator and Sustainer. They are without excuse for their perversion of the truth. Paul makes the point that *even* pagans, contrary to their spiritual disposition (I Cor. 2:14), possess a knowledge of God which, though suppressed, renders them guilty before the Lord (Rom. 1:18ff.).

Paul supports this point before the Areopagus by showing that even pantheistic Stoics are aware of, and obliquely express, God's nearness and man's dependence upon Him. Epimenides the Cretan is quoted from a quatrain in an address to Zeus: "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28a; interestingly, Paul quotes another line from this same quatrain in Titus 1:12). The phrase "in him" would have denoted in idiomatic Greek of the first century (especially in Jewish circles) the thought of "in his power" or "by him." This declaration—"By him we live . . ."—is not at all parallel to Paul's theology of the believer's mystical union with Christ, often expressed in terms of our being "in Christ." Rather, Acts 17:28 is closer to the teaching of Colossians 1:15-17, "in him were all things created . . . and in him all things consist." The stress falls on "man's absolute dependence on God for his existence,"³⁰ even though the original writing which Paul quoted had aimed to prove that Zeus was not dead from the fact that *men* live—the *order* of which thought is fully reversed in Paul's think-

²⁶Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament* (Boston: Lee and Shepherd Publishers, 1872), 2:198.

²⁷J. B. Lightfoot, "St. Paul and Seneca," *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1953), p. 304.

²⁸Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, p. 145.

²⁹Haenchen, *Acts Commentary*, p. 525.

³⁰Gartner, *Areopagus Speech*, p. 188.

ing (viz., men live because *God* lives). Paul's second quotation is in-
 produced with the words, "as certain of your own poets have said."
 His use of the plural is further evidence of his educated familiarity
 with Greek thought, for as a matter of fact the statement which is
 quoted can be found in more than one writer. Paul quotes his fel-
 low Cilician, Aratus, as saying "for we are also his offspring" (from
 the poem on "Natural Phenomena," which is also echoed in
 Cleanthes' "Hymn to Zeus"). Paul could agree to the formal state-
 ment that we are God's "offspring"; however, he would certainly
 have said by way of qualification what the Stoics did not say,
 namely that we are children of God merely in a natural sense and
 not a supernatural sense (John 1:12), and even at that we are quite
 naturally "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Yes, we can be
 called the offspring of God, but certainly *not* in the intended pan-
 theistic sense of Aratus or Cleanthes! Knowing the historical and
 philosophical context in which Paul spoke, and noting the polemical
 thrusts of the Areopagus address, we cannot accept any inter-
 preter's hasty pronouncement to the effect that Paul "cites these
 teachings with approval unqualified by allusion to a 'totally differ-
 ent frame of reference.'"³¹ Those who make such remarks eventual-
 ly are forced to acknowledge the qualification anyway: e.g., "Paul
 is not commending their Stoic doctrine," and he "did not reduce his
 categories to theirs."³²

Berkouwer is correct when he says "There is no hint here of a
 point of contact in the sense of a preparation for grace, as though
 the Athenians were already on the way to true knowledge of
 God."³³ Paul was well enough informed to know, and able enough
 to read statements in context to see, that he did *not* agree with the
intended meaning of these poets. He was certainly *not* saying that
 these philosophers had somehow arrived at unqualified, isolated,
 elements of the truth—that the Zeus of Stoic pantheism was a con-
 ceptual step toward the true God!

This is to be explained only in connection with the fact that the
 heathen poets have distorted the truth of God. . . . Without this
 truth there would be no false religiosity. This should not be
 confused with the idea that false religion contains *elements* of the
 truth and gets its strength from those elements. This kind of
 quantitative analysis neglects the nature of the distortion carried

³¹Gordon R. Lewis, "Mission to the Athenians," part IV, *Seminary Study Series* (Denver: Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, November, 1964), p. 7; cf. pp. 1, 6, 8, and part III, p. 5.

³²*Ibid.*, part III, p. 2; part IV, p. 6.

³³Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, p. 143.

on by false religion. Pseudo-religion witnesses to the truth of God
 in its apostasy.³⁴

Within the ideological context of Stoicism and pantheism, of
 course, the declarations of the pagan philosophers about God were
 not true. And Paul was surely not committing the logical fallacy of
 equivocation by using pantheistically conceived premises to sup-
 port a biblically theistic conclusion. Rather, Paul appealed to the
 distorted teachings of the pagan authors as evidence that the pro-
 cess of theological distortion cannot fully rid men of their natural
 knowledge of God. Certain expressions of the pagans manifest this
 knowledge *as suppressed*. Within the philosophical context *es-*
posed by the ungodly writer, the expressions were put to a false
 use. Within the framework of God's revelation—a revelation clear-
 ly *received* by all men *but hindered* in unrighteousness, a revela-
 tion renewed in writing in the scriptures possessed by Paul—these
 expressions properly expressed a truth of God. Paul did not utilize
 pagan ideas in his Areopagus address. He used pagan expressions
 to demonstrate that ungodly thinkers have not eradicated all idea,
 albeit suppressed and distorted, of the living and true God. F. F.
 Bruce remarks:

Epicureanism and Aratus are not invoked as authorities in their
 own right; certain things which they said, however, can be under-
 stood as pointing to the knowledge of God. But the knowledge of
 God presented in the speech is not rationally conceived or
 established; it is the knowledge of God taught by Hebrew
 prophets and sages. It is rooted in the fear of God; it belongs to the
 same order as truth, goodness, and covenant-love; for lack of it
 men and women perish; in the coming day of God it will fill the
 earth 'as the waters cover the sea' (Is. 11:9). The 'delicately suited
 allusions' to Stoic and Epicurean tenets which have been dis-
 cerned in the speech, like the quotations from pagan poets, have
 their place as points of contact with the audience, but they do not
 commit the speaker to acquiescence in the realm of ideas to which
 they originally belong.³⁵

Paul demonstrated that even in their abuse of the truth pagans
 cannot avoid the truth of God; they must first *have* it in order that
 they might then distort it. As Ned B. Stonehouse observed,

The apostle Paul, reflecting upon their creaturehood, and upon
 their religious faith and practice, could discover within their pa-
 gan religiosity evidences that the pagan poets in the very act of
 suppressing and perverting the truth presupposed a measure of
 awareness of it.³⁶

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁵F. F. Bruce, "Paul and the Athenians," *The Expository Times* 88 (Oc-
 tober, 1976): 11.

³⁶Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus*, p. 30.

Their own statements unwittingly convicted the pagans of their knowledge of God, suppressed in unrighteousness. About the pagan quotations Van Til observes:

They could say this adventitiously only. That is, it would be in accord with what they deep down in their hearts knew to be true in spite of their systems. It was that truth which they sought to cover up by means of their professed systems, which enabled them to discover truth as philosophers and scientists.³⁷

Men are engulfed by God's clear revelation; try as they may, the truth which they possess in their heart of hearts cannot be escaped, and inadvertently it comes to expression. They do not explicitly understand it properly; yet these expressions are a witness to their inward conviction and culpability. Consequently Paul could take advantage of pagan quotations, not as an agreed upon ground for erecting the message of the gospel, but as a basis for calling unbelievers to repentance for their flight from God. "Paul appealed to the heart of the natural man, whatever mask he might wear."³⁸

Scriptural Presuppositions

In Acts 17:24-31 Paul's language is principally based on the Old Testament. There is little justification for the remark of Lake and Cadbury that this discourse used a secular style of speech, omitting quotations from the Old Testament.³⁹ Paul's utilization of Old Testament materials is rather conspicuous. For instance, we can clearly see Isaiah 42:5 coming to expression in Acts 17:24-25, as this comparison indicates:

Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it. . . . (Isaiah 42:5).

The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth . . . giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:24,25).

In the Isaiah pericope, the prophet goes on to indicate that the Gentiles can be likened to men with eyes blinded by a dark dungeon (42:7), and in the Areopagus address Paul goes on to say that if men seek after God, it is as though they are groping in darkness (i.e., the sense for the Greek phrase "feel after Him," 17:27). Isaiah's development of thought continues on to the declaration that God's praise ought not to be given to graven images (42:8), while

³⁷Van Til, *Paul at Athens*, p. 12.

³⁸Ibid., p. 2.

³⁹Lake and Cadbury, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 209.

Paul's address advances to the statement that "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by the art and device of men (17:29). It surely seems as though the prophetic pattern of thought is in the back of the apostle's mind. F. F. Bruce correctly comments on Paul's method of argumentation before the Areopagus:

He does not argue from the sort of "first principles" which formed the basis of the various schools of Greek philosophy; his exposition and defence of his message are founded on the biblical revelation of God. . . . Unlike some later apologists who followed in his steps, Paul does not cease to be fundamentally biblical in his approach to the Greeks, even when (as on this occasion) his biblical emphasis might appear to destroy his chances of success.⁴⁰

Those who have been trained to think that the apologist must adjust his epistemological authority or method in terms of the mindset of his hearers as he finds them will find the Areopagus address quite surprising in this respect. Although Paul is addressing an audience which is not committed or even predisposed to the revealed scriptures, namely educated Gentiles, his speech is nevertheless a *typically Jewish* polemic regarding God, idolatry, and judgment! Using Old Testament language and concepts, Paul declared that God is the Creator, a Spirit who does not reside in man-made houses (v. 24). God is self-sufficient, and all men are dependent upon Him (v. 25). He created all men from a common ancestor and is the Lord of history (v. 26). Paul continued to teach God's disapprobation for idolatry (v. 29). His demand for repentance (v. 30), and His appointment of a final day of judgment (v. 31). In these respects Paul did not say anything that an Old Testament prophet could not have addressed to the Jews. As the Lord Creator (cf. Is. 42:5), God does not dwell in temples made by hand—the very same point spoken before the Jews by Stephen in his defense regarding statements about the Jerusalem temple which God himself commanded to be built (Acts 7:48). Both Paul and Stephen hearkened back to the Old Testament, where it was taught that the heavens cannot contain God, and so neither could a man-made house (I Kings 8:27; Is. 66:1). And if God is not limited by a house erected by men, neither is He served by the sacrifices brought to such temples (Acts 17:25). Paul undoubtedly recalled the words of God through the Psalmist, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Psalm 50:12-13). The Areopagus address stresses the fact that "life" comes from God (v. 25), in whom "we live" (v. 28); such statements may have been subtle allu-

⁴⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament*, pp. 38, 46-47.

sions to the etymology of the name of Zeus (*zao* in Greek, meaning 'to live')—the god exalted in the poetry of Aratus and Epimenides. The genuine Lord of life was Jehovah, the Creator, who in many ways was self-sufficient and very different from the Zeus of popular mythology or of pantheistic speculation. God has appointed the various seasons (or epochs) and boundaries of men (Acts 17:26)—even as the Psalmist wrote, "Thou hast set all the borders of the earth; Thou hast made summer and winter" (Psalm 74:17). Paul's mention of "appointed seasons" referred either to the regular seasons of the year (as in Acts 14:17, "fruitful seasons") or to the appointed periods for each nation's existence and prominence.⁴¹ Either way, his doctrine was rooted in the Old Testament—the Noahic covenant (Genesis 8:22) or Daniel's interpretation of dreams (Daniel 2:36-45). Another point of contact between the Areopagus apologetic and the Old Testament is obvious in Acts 17:29. Paul indicated that nothing which is produced *by* man (i.e., any work of art) can be thought of as the producer of man. Here Paul's polemic is taken right out of the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Is. 40:18-20). No idol can be likened to God or thought of as His image. God's image is found elsewhere, in the work of His own hands (cf. Genesis 1:27), and He thus prohibited the making of other pseudo-images of Himself ("Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image . . ." Exodus 20:4). Paul's reasoning was steeped in God's special revelation.

Consistent with his teaching in the epistles, then, Paul remained on solid Christian ground when he disputed with the philosophers. He reasoned from the Scripture, thereby refuting any supposed dichotomy in his apologetic method between his approach to the Jews and his approach to the Gentiles. In any and all apologetic encounters Paul began and ended with God. "He was himself for no instant neutral."⁴² "Like the biblical revelation itself, his speech begins with God the creator of all, continues with God the sustainer of all, and concludes with God the judge of all."⁴³ He had previously established his hearers' ignorance, so they were in no position to generate knowledgeable refutations of Paul's position. He had also indicated his authority to declare the truth; this was now reinforced by his appeal to the self-evidencing authority of God's revelation in the Old Testament scriptures. Finally, he had established his audience's awareness and accountability to the truth of God in natural revelation. Paul now provides the interpre-

tive context of special revelation to rectify the distorted handling of previous natural revelation and to supplement its teaching with the way of redemption.

Pressing the Antithesis

The themes of Paul's address in Acts 17 parallel those of Romans I: creation, providence, man's dependence, man's sin, future judgment. Paul boldly sets the revelational perspective over against the themes of Athenian philosophy. The statements of Paul's Areopagus address could hardly have been better calculated to reflect Biblical theology while contradicting the doctrines of pagan philosophy. Paul did not appeal to Stoic doctrines in order to divide his audience (a ploy used in Acts 23:6).⁴⁴ Rather he philosophically offended both the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in his audience, pressing teaching which was directly antithetical to their distinctives.

Against the monism of the philosophers Paul taught that God had created all things (v. 24; cf. Ex. 20:11; Ps. 146:6; Is. 37:16; 42:5). This precluded the materialism of the Epicureans and the pantheism of the Stoics. Against naturalistic and immanentistic views Paul proclaimed supernatural transcendence. As his listeners looked upon the parthenon, Paul declared that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (1 Kings 8:27; Is. 66:1-2).

God needs nothing from man; on the contrary man depends on God for everything (v. 25; cf. Ps. 50:9-12; Is. 42:5). The philosophers of Athens should thus do all things to God's glory—which is inclusive of bringing every thought captive to Him, and thereby renouncing their putative autonomy. Paul's teaching of the unity of the human race (v. 26a) was quite a blow to the Athenians' pride in their being indigenous to the soil of Attica, and it assaulted their felt superiority over "barbarians". Paul's insistence that God was not far from any would deflate the Stoic's pride in his elitist knowledge of God (v. 27b). Over against a uniform commitment to the concept of fate Paul set forth the biblical doctrine of God's providence (v. 26b; cf. Dt. 32:8); God is not remote from or indifferent to the world of men.

Upon the legendary founding by Athena of the Areopagus court, Apollo had declared (according to Aeschylus): "When the dust drinks up a man's blood, Once he has died, there is no resurrection." However, the apostle Paul forcefully announced the resur-

⁴¹Compare Gartner, *Areopagus Speech*, pp. 147-152, with Haenchen, *Acts Commentary*, p. 523.

⁴²Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, pp. 142-143.

⁴³F. F. Bruce, "Paul and the Athenians," p. 9.

⁴⁴Contrary to E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Historical Commentary*, in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 140-141.

rection of Jesus Christ, a fact which assures all men that He will judge the world at the consummation (Ps. 9:8; 96:13; 98:9; Dan. 7:13; Jn. 5:27; Rom. 2:16)—a doctrine which contravened the Greek views of both cyclic and eternal history. The Epicureans were deceived to think that at death man's body simply decomposed, and that thus there was no fear of judgment; the resurrection refuted their ideas, just as it disproved the notion that the body is a disdainful prison. Throughout Paul's address the common scepticism about theological knowledge found in the philosophic schools was obviously challenged by Paul's pronounced authority and ability to openly proclaim the final truth about God.

Calling for Repentance and Change of Mindset

One can hardly avoid the conclusion that Paul was *not* seeking areas of agreement or common notions with his hearers. At every point he set his biblical position in *antithetical contrast* to their philosophical beliefs, undermining their assumptions and exposing their ignorance. He did not seek to add further truths to a pagan foundation of elementary truth. Paul rather challenged the foundations of pagan philosophy and called the philosophers to full *repentance* (v. 30).

The new era which has commenced with the advent and ministry of Jesus Christ has put an end to God's historical overlooking of nations which lived in unbelief. At Lystra Paul declared that in past generations God "allowed all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), although now He was calling them to turn from their vanities to the living God (14:15). Previously, God had shown forbearance toward the sins of the Jews as well (cf. Romans 3:25). However, with the advent of Christ, there has been a new beginning. Sins once committed in culpable ignorance have been made even *less* excusable by the redemptive realities of the gospel. Even in the past God's forbearance ought to have led men to repentance (Romans 2:4). How much more, then, should men *now* respond to their guilt by repenting before God for their sins. The lenience of God demonstrates that His concentration of effort is toward the salvation rather than judgment of men (cf. John 3:17). This mercy and patience must not be spurned. Men everywhere are now *required* to repent. In Paul's perspective on redemptive history, he can simply say by way of summary: "*Now* is the acceptable time" (II Cor. 6:2). As guilty as men had been in the past, God had passed over confrontation with them. Unlike in Israel, messengers had not come to upbraid the Gentiles and declare the punishment they deserved. God had "overlooked" (not "winked at" with its inappropriate con-

notations) the former times of ignorance (Acts 17:30). Whereas in the past He had allowed the pagans to walk in their own ways, *now* with the perfect revelation which has come in Jesus Christ, God commands repentance (a "change of mind") of all men and sends messengers to them toward that end. Paul wanted the philosophers at Athens to not simply refine their thinking a bit further and add some missing information to it; but rather to abandon their presuppositions and have a complete change of mind, submitting to the clear and authoritative revelation of God. If they would not repent it would be an indication of their love for *ignorance* and hatred of genuine knowledge.

Paul's appeal to them to repent was grounded not in autonomous argumentation but the presupposed authority of God's Son (v. 31), an authority for which there was none more ultimate in Paul's reasoning. Paul's hearers were told that they must repent, for God had appointed a day of final judgment; if the philosophers did not undergo a radical shift in their mindset and confess their sinfulness before God, they would have to face the wrath of God on the day of final accounting.

To whom would they have to give account? At this point Paul introduced the "Son of Man eschatology" of the gospels. The judgment would take place by a man (literally, a 'male') who had been ordained to this function by God. This man is the "Son of Man" mentioned in Daniel 7:13. In John 5:27, Christ spoke of himself, saying that the Father "gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." After His resurrection Christ charged the apostles "to preach unto the people and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). Paul declared this truth in his Areopagus apologetic, going on to indicate that God had given "assurance" or proof of the fact that Christ would be mankind's final Judge. This proof was provided by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To be accurate, it is important for us to note that the resurrection was evidence in Paul's argumentation, it was *not* the conclusion of his argumentation. He was arguing, not for the resurrection, but for final judgment by Christ. The misleading *assumption* made by many popular evangelical apologists is that Paul here engaged in an attempted proof of the resurrection—although nothing of the sort is mentioned by Luke. Proof *by means* of the resurrection is mistakenly seen in verse 31 as proof of the resurrection.⁴⁵ Others know better than to read such an argument *into* the text

⁴⁵E.g., R. C. Sproul, tape "Paul at Mars' Hill," in the series Exegetical Bible Studies: Acts (Pennsylvania: Ligonier Valley Study Center), tape AX-13.

and hold that detailed proof of the resurrection was *cut short* in Paul's address.⁴⁶ He *would* have proceeded to this line of reasoning, we are told, if he had not been interrupted by his mocking hearers. Once again, however, such an interpretation gains whatever plausibility it has with an interpreter in terms of preconceived notions, rather than in terms of textual support. F. F. Bruce remarks, "There is no ground for supposing that the ridicule with which some of his hearers received his reference to Jesus' rising from the dead seriously curtailed the speech he intended to make."⁴⁷ Haenchen says, "There is no hint that Paul is interrupted"; the speech as it appears in Acts 17 "is inherently quite complete."⁴⁸ Paul proclaimed that Christ had been appointed the final Judge of mankind, as His resurrection from the dead evidenced. The Apostle did not supply an empirical argument for the resurrection, but argued theologically from the fact of the resurrection to the final judgment. For Paul, even in apologetical disputes before unbelieving philosophers, there was no authority more ultimate than that of Christ. This epistemological attitude was most appropriate in light of the fact that Christ would be the ultimate Judge of man's every thought and belief.

The Outcome of Paul's Apologetic

Acts 17:32-34 (American Standard Version)

(32) Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again.

(33) Thus Paul went out from among them.
(34) But certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Had Paul spoken of the immortality of the soul, his message might have appeared plausible to at least some of the philosophers in his audience. However all disdained the idea of the resuscitation of a corpse. When Paul concluded his discourse with reference to the resurrection of Christ, such an apparent absurdity led some hearers to "sneer" in open mockery of Paul. There is some question as to what should be made of another reaction mentioned by Luke—namely, that some said they would hear Paul again on this mat-

ter. This may have been a polite procrastination serving as a brush-off,⁴⁹ an indication that this segment of the audience was confused or bewildered with the message,⁵⁰ or evidence that some wistfully hoped that Paul's proclamation might prove to be true.⁵¹ One way or another, it should not have been thought impossible by anybody in Paul's audience that God could raise the dead (cf. Acts 26:8), but as long as this philosophical assumption controlled their thinking, the philosophers would never be induced to accept the fact of the resurrection or allow it to make a difference in their outlook.

Until the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner and brings him to repentance, his presuppositions will remain unaltered. And as long as the unbeliever's presuppositions are unchanged a proper acceptance and understanding of the good news of Christ's historical resurrection will be impossible. The Athenian philosophers had originally asked Paul for an account of his doctrine of resurrection. After his reasoned defense of the hope within him and his challenge to the philosopher's presuppositions, a few were turned around in their thinking. But many refused to correct their presuppositions, so that when Paul concluded with Christ's resurrection they ridiculed and mocked.

Acceptance of the facts is governed by one's most ultimate assumptions, as Paul was well aware. Paul began his apologetic with God and His revelation; he concluded his apologetic with God and His revelation. The Athenian philosophers began their dispute with Paul in an attitude of cynical unbelief about Christ's resurrection; they concluded the dispute in cynical unbelief about Christ's resurrection. However, Paul knew and demonstrated that the "closed system" of the philosophers was a matter of dialectical pseudo-wisdom and ignorance. Their view that God dwelt in impenetrable mystery undermined their detailed teaching about Him. Their view that historical eventuation was a matter of irrational fate was contravened by their conviction that all things are mechanistically determined, and so on. In their "wisdom" they had become utterly ignorant of the ultimate truth.

Paul knew that the explanation of their hostility to God's revelation (even though they evidenced an inability to escape its forcefulness) was to be found in their desire to exercise control over God (e.g., v. 29) and to avoid facing up to the fact of their deserved pun-

⁴⁹Harrison, *Acts*, p. 273.

⁵⁰Lake and Cadbury, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 219.

⁵¹J. S. Steward, *A Faith to Proclaim* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 117.

⁴⁶E.g., Blaiklock, *Acts, Historical Commentary*, p. 142; Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 272.

⁴⁷F. F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, p. 362.

⁴⁸Haenchen, *Acts Commentary*, p. 526.

ishment before the judgment seat of God (v. 30). They secretly hoped that ignorance would be bliss, and so preferred darkness to light (John 3:19-20). So Paul "went out from among them" (v. 33)—a statement which expresses nothing about his apologetic being cut short, and which gives no evidence that Paul was somehow disappointed with his effort. Such thoughts must be read into the verse.

The minds of the Athenian philosophers could not be changed simply by appealing to a few disputed, particular facts, for their philosophical presuppositions determined what they would make of the facts. Nor could their minds be altered by reasoning with them on the basis of their own fundamental assumptions; to make common cause with their philosophy would simply have been to confirm their commitment to it. Their minds could be changed only by challenging their whole way of thought with the completely different worldview of the gospel, calling them to renounce the inherent foolishness of their own philosophical perspectives and to repent for their suppression of the truth about God.

Such a complete mental revolution, allowing for a well-grounded and philosophically defensible knowledge of the truth, can be accomplished by the grace of God (cf. II Tim. 2:25). Thus Luke informs us that as Paul left the Areopagus meeting, "certain men clave unto him and believed" (v. 34). There is a note of triumph in Luke's observation that some within Paul's audience became believers as a result of his apologetic presentation. He mentions conspicuously that a member of the Areopagus Counsel, Dionysius, became a Christian, as well as a woman who was well enough known to be mentioned by name, Damaris. These were but some converts "among others." Ecclesiastical tradition dating from around 170 A.D. says that Dionysius was appointed by Paul as the first elder in Athens. (In the fifth century certain pseudepigraphical works of a neoplatonic character made use of his name.) However Luke himself mentions no church having been planted in Athens, as we would have expected an educated Gentile to mention if a church had been started in Athens. Indeed, a family residing in Corinth was taken by Paul as the ecclesiastical "firstfruits of Achaia" (I Cor. 16:15). Apparently no church was immediately developed in the city of Athens, even though patristic writers (especially Origen) mention a church being in Athens—eventually getting under way sometime after Paul's ministry there, so it seems. The earliest post-apostolic apologists, Quadratus and Arisides, wrote during the time of Emperor Hadrian, and both were from Athens. However we choose to reconstruct the ecclesiastical history of the city, it is plain that Paul's work there was not futile. By God's grace it did see success, and his apologetic method can be

a guide and goad for us today. Would that we had the boldness in a proud university setting, enjoying the highest level of culture of the day, to proclaim clearly to the learned philosophers, with their great minds, that they are in fact ignorant idolaters who must repent in light of the coming judgment by God's resurrected Son.

Observations in Retrospect

(1) Paul's Areopagus address in Acts 17 has been found to set forth a classic and exemplary encounter between Christian commitment and secular thinking—between "Jerusalem and Athens." The Apostle's apologetic method for reasoning with educated unbelievers who did not acknowledge scriptural authority turns out to be a suitable pattern for our defending the faith today.

(2) Judging from Paul's treatment of the Athenian philosophers, he was not prepared to dismiss their learning, but neither would he let it exercise corrective control over his Christian perspective. The two realms of thought were obviously dealing with common questions, but Paul did not work to integrate apparently supportive elements from pagan philosophy into his system of Christian thought. Because of the truth-distorting and ignorance-engendering character of unbelieving thought, Paul's challenge was that *all reasoning* be placed within the presuppositional context of revelational truth and Christian commitment. The relation "Athens" should sustain to "Jerusalem" was one of necessary dependence.

(3) Rather than trying to construct a natural theology upon the philosophical platform of his opponents—assimilating autonomous thought wherever possible—Paul's approach was to accentuate the antithesis between himself and the philosophers. He never assumed a neutral stance, knowing that the natural theology of the Athenian philosophers was inherently a natural idolatry. He could not argue from their unbelieving premises to biblical conclusions without equivocation in understanding. Thus his own distinctive outlook was throughout placed over against the philosophical commitments of his hearers.

(4) Nothing remotely similar to what is called in our day the historical argument for Christ's resurrection plays a part in Paul's reasoning with the philosophers. The declaration of Christ's historical resurrection was crucial, of course, to his presentation. However he did not argue for it independently on empirical grounds as a brute historical—yet miraculous—event, given then an apostolic interpretation. Argumentation about a particular fact would not force a shift in the unbeliever's presuppositional framework of

thought. Paul's concern was with this basic and controlling perspective or web of central convictions by which the particulars of history would be weighed and interpreted.

(5) In pursuing the presuppositional antithesis between Christian commitment and secular philosophy, Paul consistently took as his ultimate authority Christ and God's word—not independent speculation and reasoning, not allegedly indisputable eyeball facts of experience, not the satisfaction or peace felt within his heart. God's revelational truth—learned through his senses, understood with his mind, comforting his heart, and providing the context for all life and thought—was his self-evidencing starting point. It was the presuppositional platform for authoritatively declaring the truth, and it was presented as the sole reasonable option for men to choose.

(6) Paul's appeal was to the inescapable knowledge of God which all men have in virtue of being God's image and in virtue of His revelation through nature and history. A point of contact could be found even in pagan philosophers due to their inalienable religious nature. Paul indicated that unbelievers are conspicuously guilty for distorting and suppressing the truth of God.

(7) In motivation and direction Paul's argumentation with the Athenian philosophers was presuppositional. He set two fundamental worldviews in contrast, exhibiting the ignorance which results from the unbeliever's commitments, and presenting the precondition of all knowledge—God's revelation—as the only reasonable alternative. His aim was to effect an *overall* change in outlook and mindset, to call the unbeliever to repentance, by following the twofold procedure of internally critiquing the unbeliever's position and presenting the necessity of the Scripture's truth. Through it all, it should also be observed, Paul remained respectful yet earnest. His manner was one of humble boldness.