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A Defense of Christian Presuppositions in the Light of Non-Christian Presuppositions

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It is truly a pleasure to be here and see such a large and attentive audience. I hope you will not all go to sleep by the end of the lecture, but nonetheless I enjoy it. You know, well there's a reason. When a college professor retires, as I did some three or four years ago, and achieves a certain amount of senility and other qualities, he is sometimes invited in his remaining days and feeble strength to go here or there to give a lecture.

On one occasion, a gentleman was in that situation and he was able to keep going for an hour much to the delight of at least some people in the audience. For at the conclusion a woman came up to him and said, "O professor, your lecture was simply superfluous." And he bowed and said, "I'm glad you enjoy it madam." "Oh yes," she said, "and I do expect that it will be published." "Yes, madam, I have arranged to have it published posthumously." "Oh good," she says, "I hope it comes out soon."

Now you may either go to sleep or decide whether this should be published posthumously.

The basic question in the philosophy of religion is how we can know God. Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof give some sections in their volume to this question. And for that matter it goes back to the very dawn of Christian theology. The Jewish philosopher Philo, who was struggling with its difficulties in the very years in which Jesus was walking in Palestine. The Jewish philosopher Philo spent quite a little time trying to answer this question. In very recent days the question has been rephrased. Instead of asking whether we can know God and how we can know God, the philosophy of analysis, or so-called language philosophies, have asked, how can we talk about God. Language is supposed to be an evolutionary development out of the practical needs of survival and is therefore inadequate and inapplicable for theological matters. In fact, the main body of language philosophers, especially in their earlier works, assert that language about God is meaningless.

Not only do the secular empiricists make this claim (Wittgenstein, A. J. Ayer, and the Logical Positivists) but also the liberal theologians of the Neo-orthodox school. In more polite terminology perhaps, but nevertheless they accept essentially the same viewpoint.

While the question, how can we know God?, is a fundamental question in the philosophy of religion, there lies behind it in general philosophy a more ultimate question: how can we know

anything at all? If we cannot talk intelligibly about morality, about our own ideals, about art, and politics, can we even talk about science?

It is a pleasure to mention the recent publication or two volumes with two more to follow by Carl F. H. Henry. In volume 1 of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Dr. Henry shows with considerable clarity that the logical positive theory of language prevents them even from speaking about science, thus the fundamental question is inescapable: how can we know anything at all? The answer to this question, or the answers, the general theory technically called, is the theory of epistemology. It concerns all subject matter claiming to be intelligible or cognitive. The present lecture will canvass three such theories and will emphasize their implications for religion, for Christianity, and for God.

The first of these is empiricism. The theory of knowledge that on first sight accords best with common sense, is the theory that we learn by experience. Through our sense of pain we learn that bees sting and that rattlesnakes can kill. By sight we learn that roses are red and violets are blue. All our knowledge therefore must come through sensation. This type of epistemology is not merely the theory most in accord with common opinion, it is the view of distinguished philosophers also. Among whom are such famous thinkers as Aristotle, Aquinas, and John Locke. These three men, among others, tried to explain how we perceive a chair, how a law of physics can be discovered, and finally, how, by complicated arguments, we could prove the existence of God.

However plausible this theory may be, it raises some exceedingly difficult questions. For the moment let us set aside the complexities in trying to rise from fleeting sensations to the knowledge of incorporeal eternal God. Instead let us first attend to the most simple parts of empiricism. Let us start with the red of a rose and the blue of a violet.

Now first a description of sensation will show that it does not give knowledge so readily as common sense imagines. Speaking of red and blue, there is a certain defect among some people called colorblindness. It has various degrees. Some people cannot distinguish between the blue of a violet and the yellow of a daffodil. More serious degree would be the inability to distinguish between red and green. What a time you would have at Christmas.

And besides this there are color illusions. The particular colors that you may see depend, well they depend considerably on the condition of your eyes. If you have some eye trouble, some disease, or even some temporary sickness, or just a headache, you will not see properly. Or, on the other hand, you may have exceedingly sensitive eyes, extreme sensitivity and see some things that are not there.

Let me give you a little example that will be familiar to all those of you who like to paint beautiful pictures and hang them in the pastor's study. If you will take a piece of canvass and paint one color on the top half of it, red or whatever you want and then paint another color on the bottom half. Maybe blue, it doesn't make much difference. Two different colors. Then dip a clean brush

into gray paint and just draw it from top to bottom on the canvass. You will see that this gray paint is really two different colors after you have put it on against these two backgrounds. For the background makes the color look different. And since nothing appears in isolation, since everything has a background, you have no idea what colors you are looking at at all. Which I suppose is the key to modern art.

Now besides this there are some phenomena that go by the name of optical illusions. I'll just give you one as an example. This is all taken from the first chapter of a general psychology book which you read some years ago but have of course all forgotten. If you will take a piece of white cardboard, a nice any white, and paint any half of it with black india ink as black as black can get and then on the white half just put a few black squiggles here and there just. And then rotate it at so many RPMs, a good many per second. Rotate it, look at it. What do you think you'll see. What colors do you think you will see? Well of course, if you've done this in a psychological laboratory you perhaps know the answer. But I rather suspect that if you haven't done it you won't get the answer right. What colors do you get out of white and black? Well its not gray. Its blue, green, red, purple, and many shades. What color is india ink. Do you learn the color of india ink by looking at it when it is still or do you get the correct color when it is moving? How do you know what the correct color can be? Well it is not so easy to be sure of knowledge that is based on sensory experience. There are too many slips, too many difficulties. And the theory that you learn by sensation alone is not such a good theory as it seems to be on common sense.

Next point, maybe a little step in advance. There was a great Christian philosopher who lived in the early 5th century. His name was Augustine. And he held, in discussing sensation, he held that there really isn't any pure sensation at all. No one ever has just a sensation. Nothing enters your mind through the eyes or through the ears either without intellectual interpretation. You don't get anything pure and simple. It is already interpreted by the time you are conscious of it.

One day before the interstate went between Indianapolis and where I taught for thirty years and St. Louis where I was having some business, I was driving home on the two-lane highway that connected those two cities and I looked ahead about a thousand feet or twelve-hundred feet roughly, it was going through a country area, and I saw a truck standing alongside of a barn. It was just a little bit off the road. But there was the barn quite visible and the truck standing right beside it. Of course I knew it was a truck because it didn't have a low hood and then the top didn't come down and back that way, you know, this way. It was a truck, and I looked at it for a moment or two. And then suddenly the truck, instead of being a truck a thousand feet away became a mailbox about a hundred and fifty feet away. Now what was I looking at? A truck or a mailbox on a post? Well maybe I ought to go back there and see if it is still there see if I can tell the difference. This example shows that nothing is just given in sensation. It is interpreted and depending on where you are you interpret it one way as a truck, and from another point of view you interpret it as a mailbox. And one does not simply see trees or buildings, one constructs them. Maybe out of sensations, but one must construct them. Out of a hundred present sensations.

Now as you are in this room you may have easily fifty or a hundred sensations all at the same time. Not only do you hear my voice but there may be just another little sound, or you see the lights, and possibly if you are chewing some chewing gum you have a taste, and there are various colors that the walls. Various shades and tints. And you're sitting in your seat, you feel the seat. And the industrious students have pencils in their hands, they feel the pencil. There are all sorts of sensations you have at one time. Now then answer this question if you can. Out of a hundred sensations which you have at a given moment, how do you decided which six of them you will combine to make a thing? Because a thing is a combination of sensation. It is white, it has an odor, it has a taste and so on. You put six together and you have a thing. You can take the hardness of a pencil and the whiteness and call that a pencil then. But why don't you take the whiteness of the pencil, the perfume that one of these lovely girls is wearing, and if there were a truck or a train scooting around here making a terrible noise we could use that. And put those sensations together and call it a boojum. Instead of putting some other things together and calling it a pencil. Out of a hundred sensations that you have all at the same time, how in the world do you decide which ones to put together and call it a thing? Well there are examples without end. Every perception is an example. And soon the argument against empiricism becomes overwhelming.

But in the second place, the empirical theory, after beginning with sensation requires a theory of images to account for the retention of knowledge after the sensation has ceased. And in this case there are at least two difficulties. See you are thinking about things you saw yesterday aren't you? This is memory or image ability. Now if you wish to learn from sensation you have to have images. Later on, after the sensation has ceased.

Here is one difficulty. If perception is an inference from sensation and images, how can one determine whether the inference is valid or not? I don't think I will adumbrate that point. You know adumbrate means to throw clouds around, disguise it, so as to not answer questions. But there is a much more serious difficulty than trying to find out how perceptions arise from sensations.

It is this. Some people, and especially well-educated scientists, don't have any images. And this is a fatal flaw in empiricism. Because if you have to learn from sensations through perceptions and then on to visual and auditory imagery and you find out that there are a number of a well-educated people that have no imagery, I think this is a very serious objection to the theory you learn by experience.

I have asked questions of my students for over thirty years. I have not kept an accurate record, but roughly 95% of the population has visual imagery. About 75%, maybe 80%, has auditory imagery. Gustatory and olfactory imagery drop below 50%. And tactual imagery comes up perhaps to maybe 60%. But there is 5% of the population that has no imagery at all. And those people certainly can't be empiricists.

Now, for another point. If knowledge is to be based on experience, there is one type of knowledge which as Christians we should be particularly interested in that cannot be so arrived at. And that is normative statements. Statements of ethics particularly, but also of mathematics and logic and so on. No norms, no normative statements can be developed from any experience whatever. The concept of "ought" cannot be deduced from the verb "is." Experience may tell you that some things are or that some things have happened. But experience will never tell you that something ought to happen or that something ought not to happen. A norm is always beyond experience. And as this is true of ethical norms, it is also true of logical norms. The law of contradiction. It is even true of laws of science because scientific laws are supposed to state universal truths that are true all the time. True a thousand years ago, true another thousand years. But nobody, if you are talking about freely falling bodies or a pendulum, nobody has ever experimented on all the pendulums in the past that swung in China and Africa and certainly nobody has experimented on any pendulum that is going to swing tomorrow. Tomorrow isn't here yet, and yet a law of physics is supposed to be a universal statement applying to all times and all places. But a statement applying to all times and all places can never come from an observation or a set of observations that is restricted both in time and in space.

No logic is a very important example for that. And if the evolutionary theory implies the rejection of logic as John Dewey and Sigmund Freud say, if John Dewey and Sigmund Freud reject logic, the law of contradiction, then their theory has not been established by logic and every statement is both true and false, when every statement is both true and false, they are all nonsense so that empiricism never gets started.

I shall now turn to the second attempt to know something, eventually to know. Now it is surprising enough that some secular philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, John Dewey, and the Freudian psychologists, it is surprising enough that they reject the law of contradiction. But it is more that some professing Christians hold similar opinion. The anti-logic movement within the visible Christian church seems to have originated, not with Tertullian on antiquity, one of whose phrases has been misquoted and misinterpreted, but with the nineteenth century theologian Soren Kierkegaard, the father of neo-orthodoxy or the dialectical theology.

Kierkegaard insisted that in order to be a Christian it is necessary to believe contradictions. His chief example is the doctrine of the atonement. In the incarnation, the eternal God entered history and became a temporal human being. Now, we understand and it is obvious that the eternal can never be temporal. What is temporal has had a beginning before which it did not exist. What is eternal has had no beginning. Obviously, therefore a being that had no beginning cannot have had a beginning. What has always existed cannot now come into existence. But to be Christians we must believe this logical impossibility. We must recognize and understand the absurdity, but we must believe what is absurd because Christianity is itself irrational and absurd.

At this point is natural to wonder how our salvation and everlasting blessedness can be guaranteed by absurdity. Can contradictions do what historical information cannot do? And

Kierkegaard and others say we need no historical information at all. History has nothing to do with salvation. Can contradictions do what historical information cannot do? To this question Kierkegaard has an answer. Since we must believe the absurd, he says, and not rely on intelligible historical information, it really makes no difference what we believe. The what is unimportant. All that counts is the how. This point he stresses in his famous illustration of the orthodox Lutheran and the pagan Hindu. The orthodox Lutheran, no doubt in Denmark - that was his country - had a very orthodox notion of God, but when he was in church praying he prayed in well not too good a spirit. You know, just a formal prayer. And so he wasn't praying to God. As a Hindu in Indian who certainly had no Christian notion of God and was kneeling and praying to an idol, was nonetheless with an infinite passion and so the Hindu was really praying to God, the orthodox Lutheran was not.

This illustration might have been a good one, had Kierkegaard intended to commend sincerity and condemn hypocrisy. Christ would have condemned a hypocritical Lutheran as much as a hypocritical son of Abraham. But hypocrisy is not the point of this Hindu illustration. Kierkegaard intended to convince us that it makes no difference what a man believes only the *how*, the passion, is of value. It is far from clear however that Christ condemning Lutheran hypocrisy, and I might say when Kierkegaard made such a fuss about Bishop Martensen, I discovered I had a book by Martensen in my private library and I read the thing and he wasn't such a bad fellow after all. I really believe he was a very pious Christian. He didn't deserve the castigation that Kierkegaard loaded on him. But Kierkegaard's illustration means that the Hindu idol is a full replacement for Jehovah.

There is another implication that might have impressed Kierkegaard even more strongly. If, as he said, it makes no difference what one believes, one can legitimately believe in rational philosophy, at least if one is passionately rational. Hence, logical system, like Jehovah, is a full replacement for Hindu irrationalism.

Although Kierkegaard's main disciples, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Rudolf Bultmann in a certain way, although these disciples retain their faith in paradox and absurdity, they seem to make some effort to disguise the futility of believing contradictions. The infinite passion of Kierkegaard becomes the encounter of Barth and Brunner. Men become Christians by having an encounter with God. Of course, this encounter neither contains nor is produced by any historical information. The resurrection, for example, was not a dated event that occurred three days after the crucifixion. The resurrection is an existential experience in men today. For that matter, the written gospels contain little or no accurate history. They are fables, like Aesop's.

Aesop's fables are unhistorical, they are literally false, but they are existentially true. They are good description of widespread human traits. The fox flatters the crow on its beautiful voice. And the cheese falls down and the fox goes away with it. But this is what the gospels are. They are parables, or fables. They are true existentially, they are false historically. Furthermore, for Barth and Brunner the encounter can do what history cannot. There is no need to surmount two thousand years of history and find events that happened long ago. Easter happens now. The

encounter cancels the time span and makes us contemporaneous with Christ. Or if it sounds absurd to bring Easter into the twentieth century, if it sounds absurd to say that we today can be contemporaneous with Christ, so be it. Christianity consists in contradicting ourselves. Nothing intelligible can be said about God.

Brunner very explicitly states, "God and the medium of conceptuality are mutually exclusive." To quote him again, "all words have only an instrumental value. Neither the spoken words nor their conceptual content are the Word itself, but only its framework." Truth is unimportant, for finally he says, and this is another quote, "God can speak His Word to a man even through false doctrine."

Paradox and self-contradiction are nonsense. And such nonsense is the logical outcome of replacing logic with paradox. When the law of contradiction is deliberately repudiated, the distinction between truth and error vanishes. The words *God* and *Satan* come to mean the same thing. A minister may preach that Christ atoned for sin, and in the same sermon also maintain that Christ did not atone for sin. Not only does this make all preaching futile, we can't even invite a person to lunch. For when I say "have lunch with me," I also say "don't have a lunch with me." Lunch and no lunch are the same thing. Lunch and no lunch are the same thing unless they are logically different.

We come to the third possibility. Which might be called dogmatism or any other disagreeable name you might think of. To avoid the utter ignorance of empiricism and to escape the insanity of irrationalism, one must seek a secure refuge in a third possibility. It could be called rationalism, if the word were not confused with Hegelianism on the right and Deism on the left. It could equally be called dogmatism unless the popular opprobrium thereby incurred is too much to bear. A more recent term is presuppositionalism. Take your choice. The name is relatively unimportant if the idea is understood.

The idea is really very easy to understand, though many people are confused by reason of their empirical background. But the idea is simple. Simply this, every philosophy, whether logical positivism, Platonism, Thomism, whatever type of philosophy you mention, every philosophy must have a first principle laid down dogmatically. Even the logical positivism has their principle of verification laid down dogmatically. They never prove it by their method of empirical observation. Or take geometry. Geometry could never get started unless it had axioms. And the axioms cannot be demonstrated. Empiricism itself requires a first non-empirical presupposition. This is particularly obvious in that extreme form of empiricism called logical positivism. To say that statements are nonsense unless verifiable by sensation, is itself a statement that can not be verified by sensation. Observation can never prove the reliability of observation. Since, therefore, every philosophy must have its first indemonstrable axioms, the secularist cannot deny the the right of Christianity to chose its own axiom. What axiom then shall Christianity choose for its apologetic task? Shall we chose God as our basic axiom? No, this would be useless. From some bare concept of deity nothing of importance can be demonstrated. It would

be better to say “the God of the Bible.” It would be still clearer and more comprehensive just to say “the Bible.”

This is the reformation principle of Sola Scriptura. The Scripture alone. The reformers repudiated the notion that theology has several sources, such as the Bible and experience, and other things — the Bible and tradition, or the Bible and philosophy, science, religion, psychology. The reformation had but one source — Scripture alone. It is in the Scripture alone we find truth. With this word “truth” we also find logic, in opposition to the irrationalism of neo-orthodoxy. The Bible exemplifies logic and the law of contradiction. Whatever contradicts itself is not truth. Truth must be consistent and it is clear that Scripture does not both affirm and deny the atonement. God is truth. Christ is the wisdom and logos of God. And the words he has spoken to us are spirit and are life. The truth of Scripture, rather than the existence of God, is the best Christian supposition, because a bare concept of deity implies nothing much about theology or anything else. On the other hand, the axiom of Scripture not only implies a particular view of the nature of God, it also implies a definite theory of the nature of man. Subsidiary to the Biblical concept of God, the decision between the irrationalism of the neo-orthodox on the one hand, and on the other hand the intelligibility, the logic, the law of contradiction of Calvin and Hodge depends on one’s view of the nature of man. Christianity maintains that there is a common human nature. Oswald Spengler denied it by saying, “there are men, there is no man.” The French existentialists deny it by saying that existence precedes essence. The Freudians, dare I say it, are more Christian. At least Freud makes a judgment concerning all men universally and that judgment sounds something like the doctrine of total depravity. Of course the remainder of Freud is as anti-Christian and as irrational can possibly be. Life and mind for Freud are emergent evolutionary products of physico-chemical structures. The dominant force in man is not his intelligence shared as he fondly supposes with God, but hoard of subconscious drives and sexual urges. Admittedly we consider this a false judgment, but at least it recognizes a common human nature. And if we take it as a description of man in his fallen estate, it contains some truth, however distorted that truth may be.

In opposition to Freud, to Sartre, to Wittgenstein, the others, the Christian view is that man was created in the image of God. Man, not the animals. And what that image is, is to be determined not by empirical observation, but by an exegesis of biblical passages.

The first passage for exegesis is the first passage in the Bible. God created man after his image and likeness. This image cannot be man’s body for two reasons. First, God is spirit and has no body. Second animals have bodies but they are not created in God’s image. Therefore the body cannot be God’s image. The divine image then must be man’s spirit, for the two elements which compose man are body and spirit. Genesis says that God formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and these two components made man a living soul. If the dust or clay is not God’s image, the breath or spirit must be. No other possibility. Scripture goes further. To talk of the image of God is man slightly inaccurate. The image is not something that man has, it is not something in him, man himself is the image. Or the image is itself man. For First Corinthians 11:7 says “man is himself the image and glory of God.” No doubt animals

too have or are spirits, the Bible says so in several places. Hence the divine image must be those characteristics of the human spirit that are not shared by the lower creation. These are the characteristics of rationality. Animals cannot do arithmetic and geometry. The Baltimore oriole, I don't mean the players, I mean the little bird, the Baltimore oriole builds a magnificent nest. But one oriole does not differ from another in its architectural style. There is no inventiveness. They do not figure out other forms. Then too, animals cannot understand the commandments of morality. Is this not what Psalm 32:9 means when it says "be not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding." The animals are incapable of sinning because they are non-rational. Hence the very fact of human sinfulness shows that man is rational as opposed to the animals.

Then finally on an even more elementary plane than morality, animals have no knowledge of history, they cannot possibly know that Christ died and rose again. Since therefore reason distinguishes the spirit of man from the spirit of animals, rationality is the image of God. This identification of the divine image, argued to this point mainly from the creation account in Genesis, seems also to be required by what Paul says in Ephesians and Colossians. These epistles speak of regeneration as a renewing of the original image. And the points at which the renewal takes place are knowledge and righteousness. Paul therefore, presupposes that the image of God is rationality. And this is not the place for a lengthy study of all the Bible says on the subject. But the mention of a few verses will hint at the pervasiveness of the support for this position. These suggestive passages have to do with the nature of God as well as the nature of man. One may begin with Deuteronomy 32:4 which refers to God as a God of truth. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth who will guide us into all truth. Christ is not only the way, he is the truth, and the life. He is the logos. He is the mind and wisdom of God. He told his disciples, ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Not to reproduce all the material in John's Gospel on words, Scripture, and truth, let us recall the apostle Peter also in his second epistle, said that all things pertaining to life and godliness God gives us by means of knowledge. God is rational. His truth is rational. And we must be rational to receive it. The horse and the Baltimore oriole cannot.

But beyond individual verses such as these, the Bible in its entirety enforces this lesson, "all scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness." If all Scripture is thus profitable, then the following verses are profitable for instruction. Reuel her father gave Moses Zipporah her daughter. When Sanballat heard we build the wall he was wrought. And for a final verse, when they had passed through Ampipholis and Apollonia they came to Thessalonica. These verses have been deliberately chosen because they seem to have no bearing on the image of God or any other profound theological doctrine. But Paul said all verses in the Bible were profitable for doctrine. And the doctrine these verses enforce is the doctrine of the divine image. These verses were written for us to understand. This is history. That is not for the birds. It is for our edification. And to be edified requires understanding. Recall that Paul prohibited uninterpreted tongues in the Corinthian church. He prohibited them because they did not edify. And they did not edify because they could not be understood. How can we say "amen" to another person's prayer if we do not understand it. The whole Bible, every part of

it, is revelation because it is rational and because we are rational. Deny the law of contradiction, abandon logic, insist that we must believe the absurd, and nothing in the Bible retains any meaning whatever.

Because this whole subject is so complicated with many facets, details are complex, the conclusion can canvass only one objection. The objection is this. If every system of philosophy depends on its own unique, and derives from, its own unique set of axioms, it becomes impossible for those who accept one set of axioms to hold a meaningful discussing with those who hold another set. The two parties to the dispute have nothing in common. Hence neither has any basis for convincing the other. This is an ancient objection. It does not require genius to think it up. But, though common, indeed because it is so common, it needs a clear answer. An historical reference will serve as a starting point. Well, no, we'll skip this historical reference.

How can we approach an unbeliever if our axioms differ from his? The answer is simple. It is the Christian's duty to preach the gospel. The unbeliever will more or less understand what we say even though he does not believe it. We must present the gospel as fully as possible. We must explain the historical details, and the logical connections, so long as our prospect will listen to us. But sermons, arguments, explanations will not convert him. The Christian worker can never convince him of the truth of the gospel. The reason is clear. Faith is the gift of God. The evangelist does not work faith in the unbeliever. That's what God does. Accordingly, after we present the gospel as fully as we can, we then pray the holy ghost to convince him to accept the presupposition of Scripture. That is, we pray that God will change his mind. Which in Greek means, grant him repentance. And in so doing, resurrect from the death of sin to a new life in Christ Jesus our lord. And now may the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Questioner 1: What light does that shed on the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord? And second, why did John and Pete, I think he means Peter, place so much stress on the fact that they both saw and heard.

I guess that is what it says. Now the question is, if empiricism is indeed unreliable, what might or what implications does that have for the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord. And why did John and Pete place so much stress on the fact that they both saw and heard. Well, that's a question that often comes up. The visual experiences of John and Pete were not pure sensations, they were not even perceptions, but they certainly were interpreted with a great deal of previous intellectual material. Now, I, that would be given in the general Scriptural discussion, or the Scriptural material about John and Peter. But in one place in the gospels what is said, it is rather said explicitly the point that I would like to make. When Peter was asked, "whom do you think I am?" And the other disciples were asked too. Peter said, "thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." And then Jesus answered him and said, "Peter, you didn't learn that from any empirical observation, that was a direct revelation from the heavenly Father." It wasn't empiricism, it was a revelation. Then in the case of the post-resurrection appearances, the

disciples obviously had a great knowledge of the Old Testament. They had Jesus' own teaching. Then you remember that they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand these. When the women saw the empty tomb they just didn't know what it was, they just couldn't understand, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus they had to have had a great deal of intellectual teaching to see the significance of it. It wasn't just a visual experience. That wouldn't have taught them anything about the nature of Christ or the nature of salvation. And so that is the way I'd answer both parts of this question.

Yes sir, let's speak out loud so I can hear, that I might hear you better than I can read the writing, but anyhow.

Questioner 2: My name is Pete.

Your name is Pete. Are you first Pete or second Pete?

Questioner 2: Repeat.

Repeat.

Questioner 2: The question I wanted to ask you is a follow up, and that is, if our presupposition is that the Bible is really God's word but if empiricism is not viable isn't it true that we only know the Bible through empiricism? We read the Scriptures with our eyes. And, how do you reconcile this problem? How do we receive the Bible accurately without receiving what we read?

Well, let me ask you. How do you know you have a Bible in your hand.

Questioner 2: Do you want me to answer.

Yes, I'd like an answer. The question was, if empiricism is so bad as I say it is, how comes you open the Bible and read it. Something like that, isn't it?

Questioner 2: Well, since it is our presupposition that the Bible is God's word, we have to know what the Bible is to know what we are presupposing. How we know the Bible read is we read it, we hear it. So my question is how do we know the Bible?

I'm trying to sharpen the answer by making you think of something. How do you know you have a Bible in your hand?

Questioner 2: If what you say is true about empiricism, I don't know I have a Bible in my hand.

Exactly, that is right. Now if you can't convince everybody that you have a Bible in your hand, then your question falls to the ground. Doesn't it. But I'll answer it a little bit more than that. You know, it is like the truck that was beside the barn, or the paint. You can't trust your eyes, your

ears. They are very doubtful witnesses. But we are illumined by the Holy Spirit to understand God's truth, and further than this, when Paul spoke to the people in Athens he said, "In him we live and move and have our being." So that there is a conjunction of God's mind and our mind by which we know. And so this is a revelation from God. I know some people who say "well now you can't know anything in God's mind. Human knowledge is one thing and God's knowledge is another." You've heard this some time or other. And my reply is that God is omniscient. He has all knowledge. And unless we know some of God's knowledge, we just don't know anything because there isn't anything else to be known. And to repeat again, Paul's position that "In him we live and move and have our being." And the Holy Spirit enlightens us and teaches us these truths. It's not simply a matter of reading ink marks off a page. Now someone else. Yes.

Questioner 3: I'd like you to clarify something you said earlier in your lecture. Because we're familiar with the term cross-cultural communication. If we could somehow coin a phrase cross-presuppositional communication. We have to preach the gospel. We don't want to kid ourselves. We want to communicate. How do we go about preaching from our presuppositions. It sounds like foreign language. He tunes us out because we don't really get through. How do we do that?

Well, if a person wants to tune you out I don't know that you can do much about it. You have to take people as they come. And if you try to talk to someone who turns away and says he won't listen, you can hardly grab him by the back of the neck and say "now you stand here until I finish." But if it is something else, if the person is willing to listen to you, well then what you do I said is to try to explain the gospel to him. And this is relatively easy to do. I explain lots of things, or at least I try to explain a number of things to my students that I don't at all believe, I can lecture on Spinoza all night long. And give a relatively good account of Spinoza. Maybe I make some mistakes. But I can give a good account of Spinoza when I don't believe a word of it. And so you believe the Bible and you will preach it to this person and he will come to understand it. He perhaps won't believe it, but he'll understand it. And then, as I said at the end of the lecture, we pray the Holy Spirit that he would cause the person to assent to the truth of it. Not simply understand it, but believe it. Now, it is not the duty of the evangelist to give a person faith. Faith is the gift of God. Our job is to preach the gospel. To explain the truth. He wouldn't think it's truth, but we explain the truth, we explain the gospel. And that's where our job ends. Then we pray and ask God to do something. Someone else? Yes?

Questioner 4: Yes sir. What is the barrier between this intellectual understanding and assent. Is it a barrier to man's mind? Is it an inherent defect in man's mind, is it a suppression of righteousness or a combination of both?

The question is what is the difference between understanding and assent.

Questioner 4: What is the barrier that prevents a man from moving from understanding to assent?

Oh, What is the barrier that prevents a man from moving from understanding to assent? Well, of course, it is sin.

Questioner 4: But in what respect does sin affect the mind of man? Does man inherently defective or does he simply not like what he is told, or both?

Sin affects people in various ways. To different degrees. And there isn't any general statements you can make. But I'll give you some. For example, not everybody commits murder. Even worse criminals don't do it except on Saturday night. There are, you know. they have different ways of doing this. But one of the effects of sin, is the inability to correctly add up your columns on your income tax blanks. You make a mistake in arithmetic. That's due to original sin. It might not be the worst sin in the world, but it is a common one. And we have this effect of sin in our lives. And so we make mistakes in arithmetic. Now when it comes to the gospel, men have very good opinions of themselves. They don't think they need salvation. They have, well some people think they're all going to go to heaven anyhow. And so they're not much interested in what you have to say. But this differs from person to person. Of course, the basic effect of sin is to make a person at enmity with the gospel, with God. But it manifests itself in various ways. It is not necessarily a defect, not a defect in human nature as such. And it certainly not a defect in arithmetic. We may make mistakes in arithmetic but that doesn't mean arithmetic is mistaken. The effect of sin in various human lives differs from person to person. But there is a general reluctance to accept grace. And to admit that you need to be saved. Does that answer your question or doesn't it? Not quite. Well, ask it over again.

Questioner 4: Well, I understand perfectly as far as sin does affect the mind. My question is simply is how does it affect the mind? Is unregenerate man able to reason up to brink of faith, to understand cognitively all the aspects of the gospel in its fullest sense and the problem is he doesn't come to faith simply because he doesn't like the implications of what he sees? Or does he not really have a full cognitive awareness of what the gospel is? Does he have a 98% understanding of it?

Did everybody hear all this long question? I don't mind you asking a second time and making it long, I just want everybody to hear the question. I can hardly repeat it. But you're again asking why a man doesn't accept the gospel. Doesn't he understand it, or so on. Again, it varies from person to person. I think the person in the first century of our era after the death and resurrection of Christ, the one person who understood the doctrines of Christianity better than anybody else was the persecutor Saul. He had a better Christian theology in his understanding than any of the Christians had. That's why he was so mad, that is why he wanted to persecute them. There was no defect in his understanding. If you want defects in understanding why you better look to the apostles. Or some of that at any rate. Or the other Christians. But Paul understood the implications of the gospel. He hated it. Then Christ met him on the road to Damascus and changed his mind. That's change of mind, *metanoia*, that's repentance. But not everybody is as brilliant as the apostle Paul and they have various difficulties. Does someone else wish to. Yes sir.

Questioner 5: Yes sir, you ordered faith, and I think Sam's question was in the same area, if you define faith as *notitia*, *assentia*, and *fiducia*. I think you're saying the essence of faith is *assentia*, assent, agreement with fact.

Yes I am

Questioner 5. Ok. How about *fiducia*? How does that enter into your definition of faith?

It doesn't. And I'll tell you why. The word *fiducia* is the same root as the word faith, *fides*. Repeat the question I thought everybody heard.

Moderator: Pronounce the Latin word correctly. It is *assensus* and not *assentia*.

Yes, its *assensus*. The gentleman's question was if you define faith as *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia quae, et fiducia* or something like that, what do you do with *fiducia*? This student correctly saw what I was saying: that faith was a matter of assent. And not understanding by itself, but understanding plus assent. Then he wants to know about fiducia. Now *fiducia* is the same root as *fides*, and what has happened is this. A person has asked you to define faith, and you say faith is understanding, assent, and faith. Well, that doesn't add anything at all. You're simply repeating the word for which you previous asked for the definition. And I prefer John Calvin who talks about assent itself being pious. It is not something else added to the assent that is pious, the assent itself is pious. And so believing, and I really prefer the word believing, because the word faith is Latin, and I don't like Latin, I like the Greek *pistueo*. And belief is assent. It is assent to an understood proposition. And it is a voluntary assent to something you understand and being voluntary and the nature of assent it is nothing hypocritical. It must be sincere, that is what assent is. Now, the trouble, I think in contemporary civilization is, at least for the last couple centuries, is that some people have begun to think that assent is merely something verbal that you say out loud but perhaps you don't mean. Of course, that is not assent, that is hypocrisy. But assent in its theological meaning is simply the fact that to believe you accept this proposition. As the Scripture says, you believe that Christ is Lord, you believe that he rose from the dead, and if you believe those things you are saved. That's it. Now, I'll repeat it, now the reason I don't like that threefold analysis of faith is that the third part of it is just the word that you asked the definition for. And hence the addition of the word *fiducia* doesn't add anything to your understanding of it. You want to make some rejoinder to that? Oh, I don't mind, you know, I love a brawl.

Questioner 5: I think the problem is that in the modern day people think this is a mechanical, I believe, mechanical understanding, $1 + 1 = 2$ and I think you've answered my part of the question real assent involves a change in life.

Well, maybe, that isn't always the case. You mentioned $1 + 1$ is 2. If you believe $1 + 1$ is 2, that is your assent to that proposition, but difference between believing that $1 + 1$ is 2 and believing

that Christ rose from the dead is the difference in the proposition believed. Its not a difference in the psychology of assent. And you ought to keep clearly distinguished the psychology of assent and the objects of various assents. Because you can assent to mathematical principles or some botanical information or something or other, these are all assent if you really believe what you say, but they are not saving faith. They are faith, but they are not saving faith. Saving faith is a species of faith. All faith is assent but not all faith is saving faith.

Questioner 6: Are you saying that the problem with the unbeliever is basically *notitia* and not ...?

No, just the opposite.

Questioner 6: It is basically the *assenus* and not the *notitia*.

Yes, I have been saying to repeat the question in answer form. The trouble with the unbeliever is that he doesn't believe. He doesn't assent. Now, of course, some unbelievers don't understand either. But there are some people who understand, as Saul the persecutor. He understood perfectly well but he did not assent.

Questioner 6: Is there any positive content to *assensus*?

Yes, the proposition you assent to.

This is a question of the difference between understanding and assenting. And you ask if there is any difference between them. Is that what you ask?

Questioner 6: What I'm getting at is, kinda back to Sam's questions over there, I keep thinking part of the problem with the unbeliever is not only *assensus* but also *notitia*.

Well that is often the case, but it isn't always. To repeat the question in answer form, the trouble with the unbeliever may be a matter of understanding. It may not be. I would suppose that most of the time it is also a question of not understanding. This would be very frequently the case. Let me, I don't want to take up too much time giving little stories. But, I was once, I once had a Roman Catholic amongst some other students who came to our home for Bible study for a period of time and we were going through Romans and justification by faith, and I thought he knew what I was saying, but after six weeks, when we were discussing in our little group, it dawned on me that he just hadn't understood a single word I had said. His mind was full of Romanism. Everything I said was misinterpreted and he didn't understand. Well, I guess I made a bad job of it. But there are other people, as I say with the Apostle Paul or the persecutor Saul, he understood. If Saul had not understood the claim of Christ to be God, he wouldn't have been so angry. It was because he understood that he was a persecutor. I hope that meets your question.

Questioner 6: Carry this further would you explain your understanding on Ephesian 4:17-19 where it talks about the darkened mind, the darkened understanding of the gentiles. And I understood in the universal sense all men have the darkening in their understanding so that they don't perceive the truth. And yet you're saying it is conceivable that they understand truth with clarity, just not believe it because the work of the Holy Spirit is not upon him. How would you understand Ephesians 4.

The question has to do with Ephesian 4 where it speaks of man's mind being darkened. Well, I would include in the functions of mind the assent as well as the notitia, but I distinguish between the two functions. This is not faculty psychology, but it is two functions of the same spirit. of course, men's minds are darkened by sin. The word darkened of course is a figurative expression and you have to try to figure out just what is meant. It might mean that man is proud and doesn't want to acknowledge that God is sovereign. It may mean that man loves his sin and doesn't want to reform. Different things to different people. But I can only repeat what I said two or three times, that it seems quite obvious that Paul understood very well. But I gave you this illustration of the Roman Catholic fellow. This would be a good illustration. His mind was preoccupied by Romanism. He had been instructed in it from his earliest days. And if I use the term grace, well if you look up in the Roman Catholic encyclopedia, you'll find there are sixteen different kinds of grace. And if I use the word grace, I have no idea what he was thinking of. But he has this background, and of course this is what you have to meet on the foreign mission field. When you have an audience of very different civilization, a very low degree of civilization. Savage tribe or something. They just don't understand what you say. And it takes a long time to explain and make things clear. I could give some other stories, but maybe not. Yes.

Questioner 7: Would you comment on 1 Corinthians 2:14 it says the natural man does not accept the things of God, they are hidden to him. He is not able to understand them because ??? of Christ.

The verse in 1 Corinthians, what is it, 2 something or other, that says the natural man is not able to understand. Well, I don't exactly know what he means. Because Paul did understand. If he had not understood he wouldn't have persecuted the church. So I would rather emphasize the word there that he is opposed to them, he is disinclined to accept them. We use understand in perhaps a looser way. In ordinary English we may use understand in a looser way than strict way. But, if a person says, if a person says that Jesus' death on the cross was a propitiation to satisfy the justice of the Father, well some people would understand the language, but other people wouldn't. And some people who very non-Christian, who hated Christianity, would still understand it. They wouldn't assent to it. Yes.

Questioner 8: I'm looking for clarification of your first axiom please. In other words, you said its revelation or the Bible. Do you mean just that noun, or is it a cognition such that the Bible is true, or the Word of God is true.

The question he asked me to explain the notion of an axiomatic system. What about the axioms I was talking about? I'll repeat just a little bit first. Every system of philosophy or theology, every system is based on some axiom or some set of axioms, whatever they might be. It is impossible to demonstrate everything because if you tried to maintain a demonstration of everything you would have no starting point and you wouldn't get started. You must always start. And if you start, and if you start you cannot have begun previously. Hence, as in Geometry, there are certain things set down which are indemonstrable, they cannot be proved. And unless you have something that cannot be proved, you can never prove anything. Now then, since these are not demonstrable, you do not argue for them, you argue from them. And, if you take the logical positivists axiom that a sentence is meaningless unless it can be verified by sensory experience, this is something that is not verified by sensory experience, it is not proved. It is accepted as an axiom. Now every system must have its axioms. And hence Christianity cannot be faulted for insisting on certain axioms. Now it is my opinion that we must accept the truth of the teaching of the Bible as the set of axioms from which we deduced everything else. Now, we don't ... someone in the other room talked about evidences for Christ's resurrection or in the Old Testament. There is no possibility of proving the truth of the Bible on the basis of archaeology or any such historical investigation. That is utterly impossible. The best that archaeology would be able to do would be to give evidence that certain parts of the Bible, maybe the date of a King or something or other, would be corroborated by some inscription you would find on a rock in Egypt, Assyria, or somewhere. But, read the 36th chapter about the Dukes of Edom. How in the world would you prove that those statements are true? No evidence at all for them. Lots of things in the Bible you'll never have any evidence for. And besides that in addition to the historical material, you have a lot of doctrinal material, what evidence can you give for the doctrine of justification by faith. It is absolutely impossible to demonstrate the inerrancy of Scripture. This must be an axiom. You accept it begin there. Now if you want to irritate the liberals, you can always twist them up and say "you people never said there was a Hittite nation, but if you go the Oriental Institute in Chicago they'll teach you Hittite today." And you can embarrass them to no end. But that is only a certain point. That only says that the Bible was true in saying there was a Hittite nation. It doesn't say anything about justification by faith or the Trinity or so on. Hence, I, it is my position that we must begin with the truth of Scripture, and then from the various propositions of Scripture deduce whatever implications may be deduced therefrom.

Questioner 9: I have a slight different question. I understand the concept of presuppositions and the beginnings of a system. I go along with that. A moment ago you said what you're trying to do is clarify, if you would please. put your particular axiom in a sentence or a statement. Earlier you said, my axiom is the Bible, the Bible, revelation. Can you say just that noun?

He wants me to put my axioms in a statement. It would take me about 60 hours to read the statement.

Questioner: Your axiom is all the teaching of the Bible

All the teaching of the Bible is true, yes. That is true. That is right. You see, there would be thousands of propositions. Now, if, this is a side point maybe, if from 6 Euclidean axioms you can deduce hundreds of thousands of geometrical theorems, just think how much truth you can deduce from the teaching of Scripture if you keep at it long enough. Yes ma'am.

Questioner 10: I have a question in regards to your explanation of the idea of choosing axioms. That sounds an awful lot like Kierkegaard's leap of faith. Are you meaning to imply that we need to take leap of faith. ??? this axiom of Christianity ????? supportive of the truth.

Kierkegaard wasn't at all interested in deducing theorems from axioms. He asked us to believe contradictions. I am asking that we use logical deductions from the teachings of Scripture. The other part of the question, which is very legitimate, you say you pick it from the blue, or the red or the yellow or something, my answer is this: Every system of philosophy must begin with something that cannot be demonstrated. And hence Christianity just as well as Platonism or Stoicism or Hegelianism cannot be faulted because it picks certain axioms. But you cannot demonstrate or prove axioms. You prove other things by using the axioms.

Questioner 10: What reason do we have to pick Christianity then.

You have no reason to pick one axiom rather than other.

Questioner 10: So ??? ??? pick our axiom?

Exactly, of course. Isn't that true of logical positivism, and Hegelianism and so on. All your theorems have to come from the axioms, do they not? Where else would you get them? Let me ask you this, sort of a rhetorical question, not to putting you on the spot at all, like Pete or whoever it was. Why do you use the Bible to prove anything at all? Why not use Thucydides? He's a nice fellow?

Questioner 10: Because the combination of historicity, I've seen ??? and also the ???

Give me the historical evidence for the doctrine of justification by faith.

Questioner 10: Ok.

Ok. Let me ask you perhaps a more embarrassing question if you'll permit it. What historical evidence is there that the names of the Dukes of Edom in the 36th chapter of Genesis are correct? Read that chapter. I picked out some other verse, you know, in my lecture that sounded facetious, but I was serious. See, there is no evidence, that I know at any rate, there is no evidence that the 36th chapter of Genesis tells the truth.

Questioner 10: So ???

Yes, and unless you assume something, you'll never get anything. Now, if you want to try some other assumptions, and be an empiricist for a while, and be a neo-orthodox or something, well try it. I don't recommend it. Yes in the back.

Questioner 11: Do you agree ??? the the Holy Spirit ?????? I'm wondering if we are on the same basis as something else ??? some axiom?

Theoretically and psychologically, that is true. Of course, as I said, the evangelist, the preacher, never gives anybody and faith. No evangelist can cause a person to change his mind, or assent to the truth of Scripture. Faith is a gift of God. But this doesn't alter the fact that the system of theology must be axiomatized and depend on presuppositions from which you get your theorems. The Holy Spirit does various things. He has a number of functions, and if you read that big fat thick book of Abraham Kuyper on the work of the Holy Spirit, you'll be surprised at how much he has to say about the Holy Spirit. But, we must indicate in certain instances, what it is the Holy Spirit does. And he would cause us to believe certain things. Now, he might not cause us to believe in axiomatization, at least not right away. Many, simple, I use simple not in any pejorative sense, many ordinary Christians don't believe in very much. They haven't had very much instruction and yet they are regenerate. But if you are going to have an apologetic in which you are going to meet the objections of the philosophic system of 2 or 3 thousand years, then you've got to become a little technical. Now you depend on the Spirit, but you have to be technical. And this is my way of trying to do it. Yes.

Questioner 12: Do you have examples other than the man Saul who persecuted the church? Individuals who would be known to all of us, who understood the claims of Christianity and yet refused to assent. The question that has been asked several times tonight, does the unregenerate man have the ability to understand the claims of Christianity? And your answer has evidently been yes. So in support of that yes would you give another example.

Bertrand Russell. He asked for another example of a man who understood Christianity at least better than most people who didn't accept it. Bertrand Russell.

Questioner 13: What is the qualitative distinction between the knowledge of regenerate man and the unregenerate man?

None. He asked, what was the qualitative distinction between the knowledge of an unregenerate man and regenerate man. Well if they both know that David was the King of Israel they both know David was the King of Israel. No difference. In the quality I don't like that word. You see Aristotle tried to, Aristotle tried to make a distinction between quantity and quality, so let me ask you, when a man is obese is that quantity or quality? I'm afraid he's going to cut me off.

Moderator: We are on the requirements of finishing our time and it is 9:30 at the present time and we're going to have an opportunity to quiz Dr. Clark again tomorrow and tomorrow night. And incidentally, we do appreciate, both of us, I know I speak for him, the interest that you are showing. And the questions. Some of which are obviously very very significant and very very good questions. If you have a question that you do not want, are afraid to stand up and ask. A number of the seminary students it's obvious are not afraid to stand up and ask. They've asking a lot of the question. But if you are afraid to stand up and ask just give the question.

Write it legibly, particularly the word that.

Moderator: Write it legibly and we'd be happy to turn it over to Dr. Clark and have him answer the question. I think it would be proper now to for us to close now with a word of prayer and then give you an opportunity to leave. Remember, in the morning the subject will be Contemporary Apologetics and then tomorrow night the Problem of Evil and Human Responsibility. Let's close with a word of prayer. Father, we are grateful to thee for the privilege of being together tonight. We recognize that there are many important questions that have come before us. And we do pray that thou would give us understanding with regard to them.