

## **I. Chapter One: Introduction**

What is religion? How is it defined? Religion must say something about the world around us: Did God create it? How does He govern it? What is the meaning of life, of morality?

This issue is further complicated by the modern view of philosophy which seems to have replaced religion altogether (along with science). Yet, science and philosophy are not antithetical to each other. In this regard, what is a philosophy of religion?

### **A. Dogmatism (4)**

1. Examples within the philosophy of religion textbook world
2. Dogmatism as Revelationism

“The term *dogmatism* . . . designates that method of procedure which tries to systematize beliefs concerning God, science, immortality, etc. on the basis of information divinely revealed in the sacred writings.” [7]

3. Dogmatism and other sources of truth

Dogmatism does not conflict with other sources of truth because, according to Clark, there are no other sources of truth (cf. p. 8).

### **B. Rationalism (8)**

1. Defined

“Rationalism . . . is the theory that all knowledge, and therefore all religious knowledge, can be deduced from logic alone apart from both revelation and sensory experience. Anselm and Spinoza are the most perfect examples, with whom Hegel should also be mentioned.” [9]

2. Historical variations

- a. Augustine

Augustine was neither a strict dogmatist nor a strict rationalist. Yet, Clark hesitantly groups him with the rationalists.

- b. Two sources of knowledge (Scripture and empiricism)

- c. Conflicted knowledge of two-fold truth

Some in history, during the middle ages and Emil Brunner in more recent times, believed it possible to believe in theology what he proved false in philosophy or history.

#### d. Anselm

Anselm upheld biblical revelation and used a rationalistic approach not necessarily grounded in revelation. Cf. his *Proslogium* and *Cur Deus Homo*.

“Anselm believed that the whole Christian system could be deduced from and by the necessary principles of logic. . . . Of course, if all truths come from logic and none come by revelation, rationalism is the only possibility. Similarly if all truths are revelational and none come from logic alone, dogmatism is the only possibility. These two are the methods in their pure form. But in the history of the subject many men have asserted the existence of both kinds of truths. In this case there are five possibilities.” [11]

#### 3. Five possibilities as given by Clark (cf. above quote)

1. All the truths of revelation are truths of logic and *vice versa*.
2. All the truths of revelation are truths of logic, but not all truths of logic are truths of revelation.
3. Some truths of revelation are truths of logic, but not all truths of logic are truths of revelation.
4. All the truths of logic are truths of revelation, but some truths of revelation are not truths of logic.
5. There is no overlap between the truths of logic and revelation.

In all five cases the theologian or philosopher faces the problem of relating the two types of truth. How is it demonstrated that they do not conflict? Does one appeal to revelation or reason? If the former, then it is by the truth of revelation that reason is true; if by the latter, revelation is nullified.

#### a. Examples

- (1) Augustine probably belongs to type 3 (possibly type 2)
- (2) Medieval theory of two-fold truth is reflected in type 5
- (3) Occam kept the two sets of truth distinct
- (4) Thomas Aquinas (an Aristotelian) accepted the overlapping view

“Strictly these Aristotelians had not truths based on logic alone; they were not rationalists; they were empiricists; but they had two sets of truths revelational and, shall we call it, secular.” [12]

### C. A Comparison (13)

#### 1. Rationalism and dogmatism contrasted

Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz were renowned 17th c. rationalists, while Hegel was an example from the 19th (and early 20th) century.

The difference between rationalism and dogmatism centers on the source of their premises. The dogmatist takes his premise from Scripture, the rationalist from logic.

a. Rationalist Descartes

Descartes believed he discovered a premise from which he could deduce God and the world: “I think.” He gave as an example an omnipotent demon who has deluded man in all things. He even has convinced us that  $2+2=4$  when it is in fact 5. In order for us to be deceived we must think. It cannot be false that we think. If we did not think, we would not be deceived. Therefore, “I think” is a self-authenticating proposition. If I deny that I think, I must indeed be thinking! “I think” must be true.

b. Rationalist Spinoza

“He formulates definitions of substance, attribute, God, and some others, then he posits seven axioms (e.g. That which cannot be conceived through anything else must be conceived through itself; and, if a thing can be conceived as non-existent, its essence does not involve existence), from which after the fashion of geometry, he infers that God exists. This actual existence in the conclusion presumably justifies the truth of the definitions and axiom. Whatever validly implies existence, it may be said, must be true.” [15]

Clark points out that Spinoza falls into the fallacy of asserting the consequent. If he cannot refute this charge then his assumptions do not rest on logic alone.

“Rationalism therefore faces some embarrassment with respect to its first premises. Dogmatism applies logic to premises given in revelation.” [15]

c. Realism, conceptualism, and nominalism

Most dogmatists are realists, while rationalism is more explicitly realistic. Nominalism is empirical. Extreme nominalism posits that the sensory individuals are the only realities. Concepts and Platonic ideas are illusions. Cf. dogmatism which holds to concepts such as justification and atonement. The real universe cannot be restricted to individuals. Rationalists agree.

(1) Clark’s imaginary dialogue between a realist and an empiricist (pp 16-19) which illustrates the similarity between rationalism and dogmatism

d. Miracles not antithetical to rationalism (while mechanism rules them out)

**D. Empiricism (21)**

“If rationalism can produce no history, no physics, and possibly no religion either, most people would pin their hopes on finding another method. This third method is empiricism. In

antiquity Democritus and Aristotle, despite important differences, were empiricists. So too Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century and David Hume in the eighteenth. Most philosophers today are empiricists.” [21-22]

a. Empiricism bases all knowledge on sensation alone

(1) Sensation is a better term to define empiricism—experience is too vague

b. Variations

(1) Kant combined logic and sensation

Kant based his religion on moral principles which *a priori* had no sensory content.

“Empiricism holds that nothing can be more certain than what appears to our senses. Thus an assertion that a body is moving is the most certain statement that anybody ever made. Of course, this is precisely the reason Thomas began with it. But now, really, is it more certain that a body I see moves than I think? For Descartes the most certain of all assertions was, I think. Philosophies must be evaluated on the ground of what they begin with.” [23]

## II. Chapter Two: Rationalism

### A. Augustine (24)

#### 1. Not a pure rationalist

Augustine was not a pure rationalist, but combined a measure of dogmatism with rationalism. He began his philosophical system with the premise that knowledge was possible.

#### 2. Rise of the Skeptics

In the centuries that preceded Augustine, going back to the first century before Christ, skepticism had won the day among the Greeks. This skepticism went back to the Sophists who, in spite of Plato the Rationalist, had endured. Even Plato's Academy become skeptical. Augustine went through a skeptical stage in his pursuit of truth. Of course, the Skeptics rejected the idea that anything could be known.

#### 3. How can truth be known?

For the Rationalist (and the Dogmatist), the question becomes "if knowledge is possible, what is its origin?" Further, what truth is properly basic and is any proposition self-authenticating. Augustine believed so and began with logic. As an example, one knows if he is awake or asleep; he cannot help but know one or the other. The principle of complete disjunction cannot be doubted (cf. Descartes' *Cogito Ergo Sum*). Logic is basic.

#### 4. The Skeptic must exist in order to doubt his own existence

#### 5. Eternality of logic

"Logic never began and will never end. Mathematics and morality likewise. Such eternal and immutable truths cannot be abstracted from any mutable matrix. They are not the products of the subjective reason of any individual man. There must therefore be an eternal and immutable reason in which these truths have their origin. Either the truths themselves are God and God is truth; or if there be something superior to truth, then this higher being is God. In either case it is proved that God exists." [28-29]

### B. Anselm (29)

#### 1. Anselm (1033-1109) was the Archbishop of Canterbury

He was familiar with Augustine's thought and attempted to improve upon it. He adopted Augustine's axiom: *credo ut intelligam*. Anselm wanted to prove God's existence and wrote his *Monologium* to that end. He later developed the ontological argument for God's existence.

#### 1. Extended quotation on the ontological argument found on pp. 30-31

The crux of Anselm's argument is that God is the greatest possible being that may be conceived, for if any greater being could be conceived, that would be God. It would not be possible to conceive of a greater being who does not exist, or exists only in the mind, because that being would not be the greatest possible being that may be conceived to exist.

Descartes reduced Anselm's argument to a syllogism: 1) God, by definition, is the being who possesses all perfections; 2) Existence is a perfection; 3) Therefore, God exists.

### **C. Kant's Critique (32)**

#### 1. Kant's concept of an *idea*

Kant defined an *idea* as "a necessary conception of reason to which no corresponding object can be discovered in the world of sense." [cited on p. 32] So Kant views the ontological argument as an idea that has no corresponding object (i.e. God). However, God is not a sensory object.

"The laws of logic are necessities of reason, but they are rules for the conducting of argumentation. They are not external object. The idea of God as well might then be a necessary concept without having a corresponding object." [32]

#### 2. God as a heuristic principle for Kant

A principle by which inquiry is made into the realm of morality. But this falls sort of saying that God is an ontological reality.

#### 3. If God is removed from thought is He removed from existence?

a. Note the illustration of triangularity on page 34

#### 4. Three things that Kant did not accomplish (at this point in his argument)

It is truth that some things that cannot be annihilated in thought must then necessarily exist. But Kant needs to better define annihilate and demonstrate how God can be so annihilated. Second, Kant has not disproved God's existence; in fact, he said that this was impossible. Third, Kant at this point as not disproved the ontological argument.

#### 5. Kant's additional points

a. Analytic or synthetic?

Kant asks, is the judgement that God exists analytic or synthetic? Analytic means that the predicate adds nothing to the subject, and is identical with the thing itself (Eg. God exists).

"But if you confess, as every reasonable person must, that every existential proposition is synthetical, how can it be maintained that the predicate of existence cannot be denied without

contradiction—a property which is the characteristic of analytical propositions alone?” [Kant, cited on pp. 36-37]

With that Kant asserts that Being is not a real predicate, it is merely a copula of a judgement.

b. Kant’s “One Hundred Dollars” illustration (p. 37)

(1) Criticism (pp. 37-38)

Clark concludes that the validity of the ontological argument does not depend on Kant’s attempts to refute it.

6. The definition of *existence*

“Spinoza did not need to prove that God exists. His important point was that God is the universe. But if God is not the universe, if contrariwise, God is the Creator and Judge of all mankind, then we are dealing with substantial questions instead of non-sense syllables like existence.” [39-40]

#### **D. Subsidiary Theorems (40)**

There is no necessary connection between rationalism, Christianity, and dogmatism. After all, Spinoza was a rationalist but also a pantheist. Moreover, most rationalists have been non-dogmatists who are antagonistic toward Christianity.

“Dogmatism accepts revelation as it is. It then attempts to systematize it and draw out its unexpressed implications. Rationalism, on the other hand, does not accept an alleged revelation as written. It tests the document’s claim to be a revelation. This test consists in determining whether the contents of document (the Bible) are such that God could have revealed; for rationalism believes that it can deduce by its own method what God can and cannot say.” [40]

If the mind (rationalism) is sufficient to prove God’s existence, then why is it not able to deduce all things necessary for salvation? If the mind is not sufficient, is inherently defective, how can intelligence be trusted to prove God’s existence? Revelation is the axiom.

#### **E. Frederick Ferre’ (41)**

1. His “theological veto”

The fact that Calvinism makes Thomistic philosophy impossible is not to say that it makes all philosophy impossible. Ferre’ sees a philosophy of religion as being impossible due to total depravity, but he sets up a straw man in doing so.

Clark comments:

“The trouble lies not in man’s mind, depraved or innocent, but in the lack of premises. The usual dogmatist position is that the world as a whole, with man’s mind in it, does not have any resources from which those premises can be obtained. Thomas’ bifurcated view is an evidence or example of this. Although he insists on the cosmological argument, he admits that the universe does not contain premises from which the doctrine of the Trinity could be deduced; It is not that man is sinful, depraved, at enmity with God (however important this is in other respects); it is simply that the premises are not available.” [42-43]

Ferre’ seems to think that Barth agreed with his theological veto theory, but Barth was not a dogmatist; at least he did not embrace the laws of logic. Revelation has meaning because words have meaning. And words don’t have meaning apart from the laws of logic.

2. His ambiguous use of the word “reason”

#### **F. Edwin A. Burt (47)**

1. His argument was improved over that of Ferre’

2. His dilemma

If the mind of man is inherently incapable of deducing all it needs for his own good, then man could not prove the existence of God and, therefore, prove that there is a revelation. But, as Clark points out, Burt’s deduction is invalid. It lacks the necessary axioms.

3. Clark’s conclusion

“Aside from this practical consideration, the main point is the objections’ irrelevancy to dogmatism. The objection is irrelevant because it is a tautology. Its premise is: If the mind is competent . . .” One must always remember that *competent* means *without revelation*. But it is mere tautology to say that if the mind needs no revelation, it needs no revelation. Burt is not always careful to make explicit precisely what type of incompetency he means. The reader therefore may unwittingly think of a different type, such as: incompetent to produce a valid syllogism, incompetent to reason. Dogmatism does not assert man’s inability to construct valid syllogisms. It most assuredly asserts man’s inability to deduce theological content from non-revelational material. Therefore the dilemma is without force.” [48-49]

#### **G. Revelation (49)**

For the dogmatist, reason will not contradict what revelation has revealed. But the Bible is the axiom: belief comes first (*credo ut intelligam*) and then understanding follows. For the modern rationalist, understanding is first with revelation unnecessary.

1. Conclusions

- a. Different questions may overlap
- b. The substantial questions are decisive

## **I. Chapter Three: Empiricism**

There are two different types of religious empirical philosophy. The first originates with Aristotle and seeks to prove God's existence on the basis of sensory data. The second is mysticism, or religious experience.

### **A. Aristotle and Thomas (52)**

#### 1. Departure from Augustine

Aquinas rejected the rationalism of Augustine and Anselm and moved the theology of the Roman Catholic Church away from Augustine toward Aristotelian empiricism.

#### 2. Aquinas' cosmological argument

Based on the concept of motion. Every thing moved has been moved by something else. This motion cannot regress into infinity so there must be a First Mover which everyone knows to be God.

##### a. Observations

1. Contra Augustine, Aquinas does not allow innate ideas, all knowledge comes by way of sensation.
2. Thomas' argument depends on a line of syllogisms that infinitely regress. To prove God's existence, each one of them must be proven valid.
3. The conclusion itself occurs in the premise of the argument making it circular.
4. Aquinas has no univocal basis for words that apply to both God and man (he relies on analogical concepts).
5. Aquinas assumes that the First Mover is the Triune God of the Bible, but cannot prove it by his method.

### **B. Paley and Hume (57)**

#### 1. William Paley (1702-1805)

Paley used an illustration of a watch to promote the teleological argument for God's existence. His critics responded that the universe, for all we know, may be more like a vegetable that is alive. Ultimately, the teleological argument is based on experience.

#### 2. David Hume (1711-1776)

In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Hume outlines the teleological argument and points out that the cause need be no greater than the effect. His refutation of empiricism does not apply to dogmatism or rationalism as neither makes use of experience. It is noteworthy that Hume was a British Empiricist.

Hume was willing to admit that an argument from causation may prove the existence of a god undefined. In addition, the existence of evil in the world may only prove a god who is not omnipotent. Hume acknowledges that this may solve the problem of evil. However, this would also leave one with theistic skepticism. The Triune God of the Bible cannot be demonstrated empirically.

Someone may argue that all injustices will be balanced by rewards and punishments in the eschaton. This may be likened to a half-finished structure. Should we see a building half-finished we assume that the builder is going to return to complete it. That argument is based on observation. However, we have never witnessed a God (or gods) return to finish a half-completed world. In fact, we have no reason to believe that this world is half-finished in the first place.

### **C. Empiricism and Sensation (62)**

1. Empiricism depends on the knowledge of individual objects

For example, the argument from motion depends on objects that move. Occam insisted that reality is composed of individual objects. As Clark notes, “Surely empiricism must have a world of trees and stones.” [62]

“Now, if, as most people are unwilling to admit, if no laws of physics and no events of history can be so determined, if, that is, empiricism reduces to skepticism, then at least the cosmological argument does not alone crash into ruins. Empiricism as a whole crashes, and in this case rationalism becomes more plausible.” [62]

2. Sensations are different for everyone and gives no reliable information

### **D. The Greek Skeptics (64)**

1. Pyrrho (365-275) the father of the Hellenistic school of skepticism

In his writing against empiricism (sensation) Pyrrho proposed that living creatures do not receive the same impressions from the same sensations. Eg. some find pleasure in what others find painful. There is also a significant variation among the senses of different creatures, such as sense of sight and smell. Further, colors look different in various conditions (Eg. light).

Clark observes:

“The principle behind [these examples are] important: nothing is seen all by itself; everything is seen in relation to other things; these relationships alter the sensation; therefore our senses

do not present us with the object's inherent property. Of the object itself, we know nothing.”  
[65]

## 2. Arcesilaus (315-240)

Arcesilaus attacked the Stoics in their contention that self-authenticating sensations exist. For example, someone who is mentally impaired may have an experience that he believes to be true only to find out that he was mistaken.

## 3. Others

Other notable Greek Skeptics include Carneades (219-129) and Aenesidemus (circa 80 BC - AD 130).

## **E. A Contemporary Question (66)**

Clark lists as Evangelical Empiricists J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.; Edward John Carnell; John Gerstner, George Mavrodes; and John W. Montgomery.

## **F. Hume's Experience (67)**

1. Did not believe that material (external) bodies exist—if they did we could no nothing about them

After Berkeley, Hume contended that sensations such as sweet, sour, spicy, cold, hot are mental events. Therefore, they take place in the mind alone. A sensory quality can only resemble a sensory quality. No one has ever seen or touched a mind.

“[Selves] are nothing but a bundle of perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity . . . The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance.” [Hume, cited on p. 69]

Empiricism fails to prove the existence of God or the existence of external bodies and internal selves.

## **G. Brand Blanchard, an Exception (69)**

Blanchard, in his *The Nature of Thought*, attempts to arrive at knowledge empirically. He saw the simplest form of truth to be perception. He assumes sensation prior to perception. Perception is an inference.

## **H. Memory (71)**

Memories are essential if we are to apply knowledge to that object after the initial perception. However, the memory of an object may change after the initial perception. I may remember, from

three weeks ago, that my wife wore a blue dress to church. But perhaps I am mistaken. Perhaps it was red on that particular Sunday.

### **I. Religious Experience (71)**

Some religious philosophers exchange the necessity for strict empiricism for that of religious experience. For them, this experience satisfies all philosophical requirements. Clark points out that religious experiences are more doubtful than sensory experiences. The analysis of religious experience cannot arrive at any absolute, concrete conclusions.

Religious experience in modern times began with Schleiermacher who was wont to base his theology on the analysis of experience. Going back to Aristotle, however, the term experience has held a variety of meanings. However, experience, regardless of the nuanced definition imposed, cannot justify truth:

“One would like to see a detailed, step-by-step account of how experience justifies this or that truth in Hinduism.” [75]

### **J. Popular Religion (76)**

1. C.F. Potter: The most important thing is the evolving human personality

“Since the arts, sex, narcotics, and money are insufficient to remove the inevitable frustrations of life, says Dr. Potter, man turns to religion, and especially to the belief in immortality. But science has made the old doctrines of immortality untenable. Therefore some people redefine immortality to mean the impossibility of annihilating matter, or the begetting of future generations, or the permanence of social institutions. But now science can give us something better: evolution will produce the creative personality. ‘This bridge between the old religion or revelation and the new religion of science, between theism and humanism, is that kind of religious experience usually known rather unsatisfactorily, as mysticism, or, better, as cosmic-consciousness, which is achieved when the individual is both intuitively and rationally aware of the universe and his intimate relation to it.’” [76-77]

2. Mystic experience separates the enlightened (Jesus, Buddha) from the rest

a. This occurs when one achieves “cosmic-consciousness”

### **K. Comments (78)**

1. What scientific method exists for predicting the future course of evolution?
2. Was it good news to the animals when man evolved? Does this give peace?
3. How do we know that yesterday’s mystics had peace or that they were mystics?
4. Is cosmic-consciousness an evolutionary product?

- a. The most advanced creature is most likely to become extinct
5. Plotinus is cited as an outstanding example, but he failed to exhibit the nine characteristics of the enlightened according to Potter
6. As we “contemplate our death, burial, and decay, we can avoid frustration by knowing that our material particles will forever continue to vibrate with motion!
7. The hope that higher forms of matter will not perish is a fallacy
8. Evolution is a militaristic theory (Eg. Hitler; Stalin)

Clark then concludes this chapter:

“It is not surprising that religious experience *sui generis*, aesthetic response, hunches and trances should be useless and miserable, but the chapter has also show the futility of sensation. No one can make any progress until this conclusion is admitted. It is an unpopular conclusion. Physicists who have learned something of operationalism have begun to see that laboratory experimentation gives no knowledge of how nature moves. Religious authors and the general public still cling tenaciously to sensation. But if they do not meet the skeptical arguments in detail, if they refuse to examine them—mirages, hallucinations, circumstantial variations, and even Descartes’ demon—if they refuse to face their opponent squarely, skepticism must be adjudged the victor.” [81]

## **I. Chapter Four: Irrationalism**

Clark asks the question, “Why should experience be rational?” [82]

### **A. Hume to Hegel (82)**

1. In modern times, irrationalism began as a reaction to Hegel

Hume reduced empiricism to skepticism while Kant “tried to rescue a role for sensation by positing forms of the mind, innate or apriori, by which sense data could be organized.” [82]

Further,

“if sensory data can be known only as organized, one cannot know what is the nature of things-in-themselves before they have been altered by the forms of the mind. Thus Kant’s philosophy faced the paradox of confidently asserting the existence of something unknowable.” [82-83]

For Kant, God was indeed unknowable. However, he left open the possibility of a certain type of faith based on morality. For his part, Schleiermacher based his religion on irrational religious sensation, deriving theological position through the analysis of these experiences. This by-passed Hegel and served as the foundation for modernism.

Hegel argued that it is impossible to set a limit on knowledge. To do so would be like viewing a shore as the limit to an ocean—the shore itself is a further boundary to transverse. He also affirmed the difficulty of asserting an unknowable object (a tautology). Asserting that something unknowable requires some knowledge of what the unknowable is. This is self-contradictory.

Kant invented the unknowable *Ding an sich* (thing in itself) to account for what is given in experience. It follows, Clark argues, that “Since this account is now known to be impossible, it follows that the source of sensation, the given, must be located in the mind, not in something external.” [83]

Rationalism came to be looked on as impossible, and therefore irrationalism was accepted as the religious solution (so Kierkegaard).

### **B. Soren Kierkegaard and the Individual (84)**

1. The existence of the individual

The movement against Hegel took aim at the concept of the individual. His system of concepts was a system of universals. The concepts of Being, Quality, Cause, Life, Motion, Soul, and Reason are universals. But Hegel’s opponents argued that there is no motion in the concept of Motion.

“[M]y pen . . . cannot be deduced from the concept of Thing; and more important I myself cannot be found in Life or Reason. Individuals, both things and persons, do not occur in the System. Hegel could not explain *himself*.” [84]

Clark continues,

“Many people regard this circumstance as fatal to rationalism. Kierkegaard had a further reason for reacting against empty universals. He was a Christian . . .”

### **C. Historical Events (84)**

#### 1. History and its neglect

Kierkegaard, and existentialism in general, fail to show adequate interest in historical events. Yet Christianity is grounded in history.

It is at this point that Clark perhaps being facetious. He contends that it is impossible to discover historical truth as it's grounded in empiricism. The study of historical documents leads to approximations and approximations to despair. Scholarship is a never-ending discipline. Should historical scholarship prove the Bible this would not add to anyone's faith—or give anyone faith.

Hegel identifies truth with the unfolding of the Absolute in history. Since, for Hegel, truth is a continuing world process, each stage of that process is valid. Furthermore, the opinions of each age are true. History is in flux, therefore, no stage of history has final truth. Hegel is as relative as the Stoic Protagoras.

#### 2. Kierkegaard's irrationalism

Kierkegaard “is as dialectical, as relativistic, and as skeptical as he believes Hegel is.” [87]  
Kierkegaard accepts irrationalism openly. For him, “one truth evaporates into another.”

#### 3. Rome

In contrast, Roman Catholicism makes her final appeal not to a historical document, but to the church, a present reality that needs not be proven.

#### 4. It is ultimately impossible to prove Christian doctrines by way of empirical data

### **D. Skepticism (88)**

#### 1. Kierkegaard's skepticism

“The positive in the sphere of thought comes under the head of certainty in sense-perception, in historical knowledge, and in speculative results. But all this positiveness is sheer falsity. The certainty afforded by sense-perception is a deception, as one may learn from a study of the Greek skeptics, and from the entire treatment of this subject in the writings of modern

idealism, which is very instructive. The positiveness of historical knowledge is illusory, since it is approximation-knowledge; the speculative result is a delusion.” [S. Kierkegaard, cited on pp. 88-89]

### **E. Irrationalism (89)**

#### 1. Kierkegaard’s fatal objection to Hegelianism

“Reason is as illusory as sensation. Scattered through his writings are various attacks on reason or rationality. For example, reason cannot begin. It entails an infinite regress. If everything must be reasoned out, there can be no unreasoned first premise. Hence reason cannot begin.” [89]

#### 2. Kierkegaard’s proposal

In the place of objectivity, Kierkegaard proposes subjectivity, faith, and “infinite passion.” In this regard, he defines faith as “the objective uncertainty due to the repulsion of the absurd held by the passion of inwardness . . . intensified to the utmost degree.” [cited by Clark on p. 90]

### **F. Communication (90)**

Kierkegaard realized that he could not ultimately communicate anything. He relies on indirect means in which to attempt to communicate.

### **G. Absurdity (91)**

For Kierkegaard, passionate inwardness holds onto the absurd in faith. Without risk there is no faith and the greater the risk the greater the faith. According to Clark, Kierkegaard contended that (some? all?) doctrines of the Christian faith are self-contradictory. Clark quotes Kierkegaard on page 92: “What now is the absurd? The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth . . .”

### **H. Faith (92)**

#### 1. Kierkegaard’s faith as belief in contradictions

a. Example: God becoming man

### **I. Repudiation of Logic (94)**

For Kierkegaard:

“The Absolute Paradox . . . is the absolute contradiction. Kierkegaard, far from shrinking back at the thought of denying the laws of logic and becoming irrational, glories in it. The point is

important, not only for a correct understanding of Kierkegaard, but also for a correct understanding of Karl Barth . . .” [95]

### **J. Barth, Brunner, et al (95)**

Barth drew heavily from Kierkegaard, popularizing his thought in Europe, while Brunner did the same in America. Barth thought the law of contradiction to a very limited interpretation. He also favored, in this regard, paradox. Barth (and Brunner) ultimately slip into irrationalism.

### **K. Conclusion (99)**

1. Pascal (Pascal’s Wager) and Kierkegaard are poles apart
2. Kierkegaard makes faith impossible

Kierkegaard could hardly be in greater error than when he writes, “The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the what of Christianity, but by the how of the Christian. . . . This how can only correspond with one thing, the absolute paradox.” Clark states that Kierkegaard’s fatal flaw is his rejection of logic.

## **I. Chapter Five: Dogmatism \**

### **A. Suicide (102)**

#### 1. Van Gogh and epistemological angst

Irrationalism and empiricism are subject to Heraclitian flux (it was Heraclites who said you cannot put your foot in the same river twice). All other philosophies reduce to skepticism and nihilism. The futility of false philosophy drives many (cf. Van Gogh) to suicide—a death without moral meaning apart from a dogmatic worldview.

### **B. The God of Dogmatism (103)**

“The God of dogmatism is a sovereign Deity who determines all his creatures and their actions.”  
[103]

### **C. Similarities to Rationalism (103)**

Both dogmatism and rationalism point to a first principle (however, Kierkegaard accused Hegel of infinite regress). Aristotle claimed that a universal concept arises from repeated memories. Yet he fails to prove his point. He cannot demonstrate how a particular becomes a universal. However, every philosophy must have a first principle. William James rejected the idea that empirical description could come forth apart from prior assumptions.

Logical positivism held that a sentence has meaning only if it is verifiable by sensation. However, empiricism and logical positivism are unverifiable presuppositions.

Rationalism, on the other hand, does not produce first principles. They are innate. Dogmatism’s first principle is the Bible. Some may criticize this first principle, but all philosophies must have an axiom, even if they are unable to produce one.

### **D. Realism (107)**

#### 1. Rationalism and dogmatism are forms of realism—they both possess a non-representative epistemology

“Every thinker must decide for himself whether the X that is immediately in the mind is the real object or a representation of it. Those who base knowledge of on sensation have only two alternatives. They may, like Aristotle, assert that a sensory image is the result of and represents an external object. But in this case, as previously shown, there is no way to check the representation. Not only is it impossible to know whether or not the image is a faithful image; it is empirically impossible to know whether it represents anything at all. The second alternative is to deny the external object. Then we have images or sensations that represent nothing. They and they alone are the objects of knowledge. But in this case *you* cannot have *my* image any more than you can have my headache. No two of us can ever have the same

thought because every thought is a purely personal experience. This makes communication impossible.” [107-08]

Clark adds that “empiricism results in solipsism. Even worse, it results in a solipsistic individual who can never know what he thought yesterday.” [108]

2. Dogmatism is neither representational or non-representational nominalism

- a. Nominalism is the view that universals are mere names without any corresponding reality (only particular objects exist)

“Is a small stone on a mountain side the real individual, or is the mountain, or is it the mountain range? Those who take a firm stand on the stone run the risk of falling off when it crumbles into pebbles and then into atoms and then into protons or what not. Individuals are nowhere to be found.” [108-09]

3. The foundational role of propositional truth

4. Christian dogmatism must be realistic

“The real object of knowledge is itself present to the mind. One need not (one cannot) pass from an image to the truth. One knows the truth itself. . . . sensations exist only once.” [109]

Truth is not a sensation and is repeatable. Biblical propositions are immutable and exist in the mind of God. Through them we know God directly. In Him we live and move and have our being.

### **E. Alternative Principles (110)**

1. The dogmatist does not attempt to “prove” biblical revelation
2. How does one choose between religious first principles (Eg. the Bible vs. the Koran)?
  - a. False propositions
    - (1) Pascal’s Wager

Pascal’s Wager would apply equally to any religious philosophy. A Muslim could use it. Therefore, it’s useless to use in pointing men to the Triune God of the Bible.

### **F. K. E. Yandell (112)**

1. His book *Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion*

### **G. Another Example (114)**

## 1. WTS and CT

Clark refers to a deputation team from Westminster Seminary that visited Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to present a form of dogmatism. John Warrick Montgomery, an empiricist apologist, responded with an article in *Christianity Today*. The argument centered on whether one could prove via history the resurrection of Christ. After citing responses by some of the Westminster students to the article, Clark responds with a basic assertion that all inductive arguments are formal fallacies. Yet Montgomery begins with a first principle of evidences. Clark writes that “as such he must hold that sensory experience is more reliable than a divinely given revelation” and that “sensory experience is self-authenticating” while the Bible is not. [117]

## 2. Back to the question of how to convince an unbeliever starting with the Bible

Can you start with the very thing you wish to prove? However, how can an empiricist start with archeology (or history) if the subject in question does not accept either as a first principle? The secular process “never arrives at the validity of anything.” [118]

### **H. The End of Investigation (118)**

Kant complained that theism puts an end to further investigation. In other words, if an act is directly the will of God no room is left to examine mediate (concomitant or antecedent) acts. When one accepts a belief, or the resolution to a problem, further investigation is needed. Even in the act of God’s separating the waters of the Red Sea, one asks if there is room to investigate the cause of the winds He used? Somewhere in the “regressive series God acts directly and immediately, and there the regress ends.” [119]

If there is a final answer to a first principle investigation must cease somewhere. But if there is no final answer there is no knowledge out of which to form a criticism. Searching for truth is futile; we desire to discover truth. With dogmatism the search ends.

### **I. The End of Communication (121)**

#### 1. Critiques of dogmatism claim that it puts an end to communication (the possibility of convincing an opponent)

##### a. Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*

“As Anselm wanted to convert the Moslems, so today evangelical empiricists want to convert humanists by arguments based on some common principles, such as the trustworthiness of sensation. . . . Because dogmatism is an all inclusive system and has no propositions in common with any other system, its Christian opponents throw up their hands in despair and whimper, How then can we recommend it?” [121]

##### b. Dogmatism is the only solution

“Empiricism has been demolished. Unless therefore one chooses a dogmatic first principle, one must choose skepticism and irrationality.”

Critics may point out that an appeal to the Koran is as dogmatic as an appeal to the Bible.

“The answer to this question will also explain how a Christian can present the gospel to a non-Christian without depending on any logically common proposition in their two systems.

Since all possible knowledge must be contained within the system and deduced from its first principles, the dogmatic answer must be found in the Bible itself. The answer is that faith is the gift of God.” [122-23]

## 2. The sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration

This work is not based on any secular or empirical presuppositions. God uses the presentation of propositional truths (the gospel) as found in the Scriptures. Faith is the gift of God. The reason why one man has faith and another does not is that this is God’s doing.

### **J. Note on Ad Hominem Tactics (123)**

Christian dogmatists do not deny that there may be a place for empirical evidences. Dogmatism allows one to use *ad hominem* argumentation, if needed, such as against theological liberals who may need to be made aware of their own logical inconsistency.