

Epistemology<sup>1</sup> is the branch of philosophy that studies the theory of knowledge, its presuppositions, and its extent and validity. Although the term is seldom heard in the vernacular of modern American culture, I can think of few subjects that at present deserve more attention—especially by those who claim Jesus Christ as their Lord. The apostle Peter charges all Christians to be *faithful* apologists.<sup>2</sup> His command to each individual Christian is now more difficult to fulfill than it ever has been. With the onslaught of postmodernism and moral relativism, the complete authority and veracity of the Bible is rejected by many (even some who profess Jesus as their Lord).

Apologetics is inextricably related to epistemology. Christians, therefore, who wish to *faithfully* proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord, must be sure their epistemology comports with the message they are preaching. “Christian scholars and apologists must be thoroughly ‘self-conscious’ about the character of their epistemological position, letting its standards regiment and regulate every detail of their system of beliefs and its application.”<sup>3</sup> A friend of mine, who recently earned an upper-level theology degree from a reputable evangelical seminary, told me that professed Christians cannot know *with certainty*<sup>4</sup> that they are truly born

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1. Epistemology is the union of two Greek words: *episteme* meaning knowledge and *logos* meaning message, word, or statement. Epistemologists ask seemingly strange questions such as the following. How do you know what you claim to know? What justification do you have for claiming to know X? What is the “origin of knowledge”? (*The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1996), s.v. “epistemology.”)

2. “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts [emphasis mine], always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Pet 3:15, NASB)

3. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998), 4.

4. A proposition is certain when no doubt about its truth exists. There is no substantial difference between the two following statements.

again. His antibiblical belief stems from a seriously flawed understanding of the Scriptures and the presentation of Christian epistemology within them.

In section 10 of *Epistle* 120, Saint Augustine wrote “that [divine] illumination plays a role in believing, knowing, imagining, sensing, and every area of knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> Amen!

Following in the epistemological (and apologetic) footsteps of Augustine of the fourth century and John Calvin of the sixteenth century, Cornelius Van Til of the twentieth century further emphasized and expanded upon that which Augustine and Calvin heralded in their day—the conscious acknowledgement on the part of Christians of a revelational epistemology. I, along with many other Reformed believers in Christ, know of no other Christian in the history of the church who has so clearly presented the biblical method of defending and vindicating the truth of Yahweh. About Cornelius Van Til, David E. Kucharsky of *Christianity Today* wrote in 1977 “[Van Til] wanted to be a farmer. . . . Instead he became one of the foremost Christian apologists of our time.”<sup>6</sup> Respected author and theologian John Frame says “Van Til is perhaps the most important Christian thinker since Calvin”<sup>7</sup> and “that he has made the Christian community aware of its only appropriate epistemology, thus laying a necessary foundation that ought to be the basis for all subsequent Christian reflection.”<sup>8</sup> It must be noted here that Frame is *not* an uncritical disciple of Van Til.

To shame the wise and the strong, the Lord often uses the weak and lowly to accomplish great things in His kingdom. Van Til was born on May 3, 1895 in a farmhouse in

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“I know Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” “I am certain Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” In His Word, God tells His people that they may *know* they have eternal life. See 1 John 5:13 for one example.

5. Ronald H. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 153.

6. David E. Kucharsky, “At the Beginning, God: An Interview with Cornelius Van Til,” *Christianity Today* 22, 30 December 1977, 414; quoted in Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

7. John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1995), 44.

8. *Ibid.*, 47.

Grootegast, Holland. He was the sixth of eight children born to devout dairy farmers who worshiped with the Reformed *Afscheiding*<sup>9</sup> party. Having moved to America (Highland, Indiana) with his family in 1905, Van Til received all of his formal higher education in the United States. He completed his undergraduate studies at Calvin Preparatory School and College, the educational center of the Christian Reformed Church. In 1921 Van Til enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary where he studied for only one year. The remaining years of his seminary education were carried out at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was awarded a Th.M. in systematic theology in 1925. While a seminary student at Princeton, Van Til simultaneously studied at the institution's university. He was granted a Ph.D. in philosophy in 1927 for his dissertation on "God and the Absolute." Although he really wanted to pastor a small "country church," the Lord had other plans for the intellectually gifted Van Til. Van Til lectured at Princeton Seminary's apologetics department from 1928-1929. After much imploring from many close friends such as J. Gresham Machen and O. T. Allis, Van Til agreed to begin teaching at Westminster Seminary in the fall of 1929. He remained there for the next forty-plus years.

While commenting on John Calvin's teaching about "the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God" and analogical reasoning, Van Til lauds Calvin's insights by stating that "a definite advance is made in the direction of a consistently Christian theistic epistemology and a consistently theistic apologetics."<sup>10</sup> My overall purpose in writing this rather brief overview of Van Til's understanding of Christian epistemology is to bring his ideal of "'epistemological self-consciousness' to bear upon the theory and practice of defending the Christian faith."<sup>11</sup>

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9. This denomination denied the doctrine of the presumptive regeneration of baptized children.

10. Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, n.d.), 99.

11. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 4.

Grandiose biblical and philosophical theory that is not applicable to and reformational in the lives of believers is a theological abortion.

Wise Christians always employ the “analogy of faith” when determining the authorial intent of a particular Bible passage. Scripture always interprets Scripture because only God can speak for Himself. Sound theologians, therefore, always possess a broad knowledge of God’s Word. I have read the Bible. I have not read all of Van Til’s writings for they are too numerous. In his lifetime, he published over thirty books and syllabi and 220-plus articles, pamphlets, and reviews. Van Til’s friends and foes alike readily admit that he was not the clearest communicator at times. His analogies were sometimes obtuse. He redefined commonly-used philosophical terms. He often assumed his students and readers knew the history of philosophy much better than they actually did. For these and other reasons, I have utilized the priceless analyses of Van Til’s thought found in books by Greg Bahnsen and John Frame. Philosophy and theology scholars agree that these two men, having been former students and friends of Van Til, know (knew in the case of the late Dr. Bahnsen) Van Til best.

As I seek to provide an overview of Van Til’s theory of Christian epistemology, I will address several points or conditions that “any adequate theory of knowledge ought to satisfy.”<sup>12</sup> Above all things, every philosopher’s worldview should provide an answer to the question of “how humans attain knowledge about God.”<sup>13</sup> According to the apostle Paul, both believers *and* unbelievers, immediately and mediately, know God. The reality of Yahweh “is evident within” people for God has “made it evident to them.”<sup>14</sup> This crucial truth has often been neglected or denied by many Christian apologists. Van Til stressed it. The inherent knowledge of God that all men possess is immediate. (No medium is used to mediate man’s knowledge of God’s being

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12. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 267.

13. Ibid., 177.

14. Romans 1:19, NASB

and basic character.) Man's mediate knowledge of God, "His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature," is available through "what has been made."<sup>15</sup> Van Til affirms this biblical truth again and again. Every man has innate knowledge of God "by virtue of his creation in the image of God."<sup>16</sup> It must be noted here that knowledge of God, according to Van Til, is different for a believer versus an unbeliever. "There is a knowledge of God in faith and blessing (which the unbeliever wholly lacks), as well as a knowledge of God in unbelief and curse (which the unbeliever cannot avoid). The latter is truly knowledge, and in terms of it the unbeliever can gain limited knowledge about the world and arrive at intelligible interpretations of experience."<sup>17</sup> (Some erroneously teach that Van Til believed lost people cannot possess true knowledge.) In his *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til writes "Scripture clearly teaches that it [innate knowledge of God] is not a mere matter of form, but very definitely a matter of content. The heathen, according to Paul, deal with a certain thought-content that comes up in them."<sup>18</sup>

The quality and extent of a believer's knowledge of God is much greater than that of a lost man. Being Reformed in his soteriology, you would expect Van Til to teach that the believer's knowledge of God is given to Him via "the Holy Ghost, the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son," which "regenerates him."<sup>19</sup> All knowledge of God will conform to the perspicuous truths found in the Bible. Contrary to the Romish pontifications of many present-day Christian philosophers, Van Til taught that God is as epistemically certain for the Christian as He is metaphysically certain. No professed Christian denies the *reality* of God. But many believe the *knowledge* of Yahweh should not be viewed as indubitable. Intellectual autonomy precipitates

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15. Romans 1:20, NASB

16. Cornelius Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til* [CD-ROM] (New York: Labels Army Co., 1997). Original quotation is taken from Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*.

17. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 42n.19.

18. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*.

19. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 5.

this antibiblical notion. French mathematician and philosopher René Descartes developed the famous “Cogito ergo sum” aphorism—“I think (or doubt) therefore I am.” He was not sure about God, but he “knew” he existed (he thought). Is the Christian permitted to hold such a view of God and himself? Can any fact for the Christian be more sure than his knowledge of Yahweh’s existence if the existence of Yahweh is the necessary precondition of knowing anything? No. Van Til adamantly maintained “that to say there are some facts that can be known without reference to God, is already the very opposite of the Christian position.”<sup>20</sup>

Noted Christian philosopher and Cleveland Indians fan, Ron Nash, writes that one’s epistemology “must affirm the existence of universal and necessary truths that transcend sense experience.”<sup>21</sup> Van Til unashamedly affirmed one universal and necessary truth that transcends sense experience—the triune God of Christianity. One universal and necessary truth? Initially, this does seem like a great oversimplification of what must *be* in order for knowledge of facts to *be*. Van Til denied the possibility of several universals serving as the laws or principles by which particulars encountered in man’s concrete experience could be understood, organized, and interpreted. For Van Til, God and His revelation, namely special, is the universal to which man must “look” in order to comprehend the many observations he experiences each day. Brute facts do not exist. “Without the presupposition of the God of Christianity [the universal truth] we cannot even interpret one fact correctly.”<sup>22</sup> If the world is just a fortuitous concatenation of circumstances, “all particular facts would be random, have no classifiable identity, bear no determined order or relation, and thus be unintelligible to man’s mind.”<sup>23</sup>

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20. Ibid.

21. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 267.

22. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from Van Til, *Christian-Theistic Evidences*.

23. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 38n.10.

Van Til believed that the universal truths to which most people appeal when making sense of the universe exist in a concrete (not an abstract) fashion within the mind of the personal Creator Himself. Because God is God, He by default thinks “universally.” And this thinking paradigm is found in man, that one being which is made in God’s image, “analogically.” When a person (believer or unbeliever<sup>24</sup>) thinks God’s thoughts after Him, he is reasoning analogically. In this context, Van Til used the terms univocal, equivocal, and analogical differently than most philosophers. “Christian theism on the contrary [the contrary being the unbeliever’s philosophy that ‘It is entirely unnecessary to resort to God to furnish the connecting links between universals and facts.’] says that God is the one supreme object of knowledge. He is the most ultimate fact and the *most ultimate universal*. It is from him that all facts and all universals that we ordinarily deal with [sic] derive their meaning.”<sup>25</sup>

What about the necessity of the laws of logic, in particular, the orthodox Christian’s beloved law of noncontradiction? Did Van Til consider it to be a universal truth without which rational inquiry and discussion is impossible? Yes. This position is frequently stated in his writings. In *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Van Til writes “Christians should employ the law of contradiction<sup>26</sup>, whether positively or negatively, as a means by which to systematize the facts of revelation, whether these facts are found in the universe at large or in the Scripture.”<sup>27</sup> Why? Because Christians, if they desire to think God’s thoughts after Him and thereby attain true knowledge, must think coherently and logically. God’s mind, for Van Til, represents perfect coherence. All things cohere in God’s mind. “The law of contradiction . . . is

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24. Unbelievers do not knowingly, much less admittedly, think God’s thoughts after him since they hate God by nature (Romans 8:7). The lost will be held eternally responsible for not giving God the glory He is due for their being able to make sense of the world in which they live.

25. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 184.

26. Most people today refer to Van Til’s “law of contradiction” as “law of noncontradiction.”

27. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*.

but the expression on a created level of the internal coherence of God's nature.”<sup>28</sup> The law of noncontradiction is not, according to Van Til, some higher epistemological rule that is independent of God and man. It is rather a metaphysical reality that finds its being in the mind of its Maker. No God equals no laws of logic. God is only bound by the laws of logic inasmuch as He is bound to not deny Himself. In other words, “The logical constraints of God's thinking are the constraints of His own personal nature, which man is to emulate.”<sup>29</sup> Van Til radically opposed the absurd belief that the law of contradiction is “an arbitrary human law.”<sup>30</sup> Instead, he taught that “to talk about the law of contradiction without asking with respect to the metaphysical foundation upon [God's mind] which it rests is to talk in the air '[to reduce logic to countless formalities]'”<sup>31</sup>.<sup>32</sup>

To further define Van Til's understanding of Christian epistemology, we shall now see how it preserves “Kant's recognition of the need for an *a priori* structure of human rationality” while also examining his “explanation for why all humans contain the same [cognitive] categories, the same structure of rationality.”<sup>33</sup> Van Til's concise fulfillment of these criteria for a robust epistemology (according to Nash) may be found on the very first page of his *Survey of Christian Epistemology*. All men possess the same cognitive equipment because all men are made in the image of God. “God has created the human mind. In this human mind God has laid the laws of thought according to which it is to operate.”<sup>34</sup> Along with the laws of man's mind (his categories), God has created and is constantly maintaining the “laws of being

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28. Ibid.

29. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 236.

30. Ronald Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 140-41; quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 235n.174.

31. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic*, 236n.178.

32. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from Van Til, *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*.

33. Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 267.

34. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 1.

according to which” everything else in the universe functions. God purposely made man’s mind to operate in an “atmosphere of revelation.”<sup>35</sup> Man is therefore always dependent upon God’s revelation to make sense of the world in which He has placed him. It can therefore be said, as Van Til states in many places, that epistemology must be *revelational* if true knowledge of anything (spiritual or otherwise) is to be obtained. Apart from the revelation of God in nature and in His Word, man is unable to rightly interpret reality. His faulty interpretation inevitably leads him to an invalid, stated epistemology.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant is famous for teaching that all man possesses a universal set of mental categories that he imposes upon the phenomenal world about him to interpret and understand it. Van Til also believed in a universal category in the mind of man. He called it God—the “sole interpretative category of all reality.”<sup>36</sup>

According to Van Til, an ultimate “point” of omniscience is requisite for true knowledge of anything. Man himself must not know everything, but he must know the One who does know everything, if he is to possess even partial true knowledge about anything. “There must be comprehensive knowledge somewhere if there is to be any true knowledge anywhere but this comprehensive knowledge need not and cannot be in us; it must be in God.”<sup>37</sup> Van Til believed that only partial knowledge of the things in the world is achievable. God is the precondition for true knowledge of anything.<sup>38</sup> God cannot be known comprehensively, so man cannot hope to obtain comprehensive knowledge of the things in God’s world. The human categories of cognition are not ultimate; God in His revelation is. “God is the ultimate category of interpretation. . . . Every knowledge transaction has in it somewhere a reference point to

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35. Ibid.

36. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 102.

37. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from *Defense of the Faith*.

38. This one sentence summarizes all of Van Til’s epistemology. Knowledge claims can only be justified if God is presupposed.

God.”<sup>39</sup> Van Til’s assertion that things (including man himself) in the world are properly understood only as they are related to God is intellectually debasing for man. Rebellious, sinful man loves to claim he is self-sufficient. He praises his supposed independence from anyone and anything. It is no wonder why most Christian apologists are reluctant to utilize the presuppositional approach to defending the faith. It is built upon a revelational epistemology which destroys the intellectual pride of both saint and sinner. God gets all the glory in man’s ability to reason, perceive, and, in turn, attain knowledge. “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”<sup>40</sup> Autonomous theories of knowledge are riddled with problems. Is epistemological objectivity really possible in a subject-object relationship like knowing if man need not appeal to an infallible “knowledge base” outside himself? I think not.

The Fall, according to Van Til, did not obliterate the rational structure of man’s mind. I shall adapt one of my favorite professor’s illustrations to parallel one that Van Til used to explain man’s post-Fall mental state. If man’s mind were a sausage machine before the Fall, it continued to be a sausage machine after the Fall. The machine itself did not change. But lost man’s sausage machine, instead of producing quality Polish sausage, now produces Spam. The meats and spices put into the Christian’s machine are identical to those put into the lost man’s machine. Why then do the products differ so much? According to Van Til, man’s sinfulness results in an incorrect, ever-present,<sup>41</sup> machine-setting adjustment. Both machines (i.e., mental equipment) “see” the same stuff. But the bad settings (caused by depravity) of fallen man’s machine always distort what should be produced. The products of a properly adjusted machine

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39. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from *Defense of the Faith*.

40. Proverbs 1:7, NASB

41. apart from regenerating grace

could be likened to the conclusions that correspond to reality and cohere with all the other facts of the universe.

If philosophy were the world, epistemology would be the air in the world. Van Til's philosophy is a intricately knit web. It is impossible to extract his epistemology from the other elements of his philosophy without distorting or minimizing all of them. (This fact makes the task of writing a short fifteen page paper quite difficult.) Even a cursory reading of Van Til quickly reveals the close relationship between his view of reality (metaphysics) and his epistemology. Hopefully, this relatively brief paper still provides some idea of the interplay between the two areas of his thought. Man's mind is what it is because God is what He is. Knowledge is because God is. Reality is what it is because God is what He is. Facts are what they are only because God is what He is. Truly for Van Til, "all things hold together in Him."<sup>42</sup> Man is utterly dependent on God for all things "for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things."<sup>43</sup> If one rejects the existence of Yahweh, he must also reject the existence of facts. Unless God is, facts cannot be. Like a fact's existence, man's existence is impossible apart from God. All things would cease to be if God did not uphold them "by the word of His power."<sup>44</sup> The following two statements by Van Til establish my point here. "Our view of reality or being involves a view of knowledge and of ethics even as our view of knowledge and ethics involves and is based on our view of being."<sup>45</sup> "The important thing to observe is that the one is involved in the other."<sup>46</sup>

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42. Colossians 1:17, NASB

43. Romans 11:36a, NASB

44. Hebrews 1:3a, NASB.

45. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from *Defense of the Faith*.

46. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 29.

Kant's "wall of antinomy" between the phenomenal and noumenal world of his epistemology leads to the logically fallacious, self-refuting theory of skepticism. Like Plato, Kant posited there are two different worlds. Unlike Plato, however, he believed man only lives in one of them—the phenomenal world. This world is only the world as it appears to man, conceived in his mind according to common<sup>47</sup> categories with which he is born. For example, Kant believed the "law" of causality is only a category which one imposes upon the percepts of the world in order to understand the cause and effect relationships that he observes. Honest Kantians should admit that reality and knowledge (two of the five major areas of philosophy!) are only figments of man's imagination. As they always do, anti-Christian philosophies "according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ"<sup>48</sup> lead to the destruction of knowledge.

The noumenal world, on the other hand, is the real world outside of man's construct-bound mind. God, things-in-themselves, and immortality, among other rather important items, exist there, unmodified by the *a priori* categories of man's mind. According to Kant, all knowledge begins with that which we perceive. The raw data (of the real world) accumulated by our senses is then unavoidably massaged (i.e., distorted) by our inborn mental categories.

Van Til's theory of epistemology "avoids Kant's skepticism about the real world."<sup>49</sup> The Bible teaches that all men know the real world through conscience and creation. Men often disagree about the nature of the real world because many suppress the truth about it in unrighteousness. But, nevertheless, true knowledge of the real world is known and knowable by all men. As I have already mentioned in this paper, all people (believers and unbelievers) are made in God's image. Man's rationality is patterned after that of his Maker. Though bent toward

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47. He taught that all people are born with the same set of categories.

48. Colossians 2:8, NASB

49. Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 267.

conclusions that often condone his immoral behavior and “cover up” God (especially the reasoning of lost man), man’s discursive abilities can and do lead him to knowledge of the real world.

God has placed man in the real world and has endowed him with tools to come to a true knowledge of it. Although sin has adversely affected man’s ability to acquire knowledge via rational processes (e.g., deduction and induction) and empirical analysis, he is still able to do so according to Van Til. “Man’s knowledge of nature depends to a large extent upon the keenness of his sensations. Though we marvel that in his non-saving grace God has left to man such a large measure of ability in this respect, it is all too apparent that man is constantly making mistakes in his observations of the universe around him.”<sup>50</sup> Van Til did not teach that the Bible is the *only* source of knowledge. He did, however, teach that God’s revelation must be behind every knowledge claim for the claim to be *justified*. Do unbelievers rely on God’s revelation in nature and in His Word to know things? Yes! Do they admit it? No. Van Til believed unbelievers know things. Why then does the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, label their knowledge as pseudoknowledge? “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’.”<sup>51</sup> Only Christian epistemology, which is based on God’s revelation, provides the necessary presuppositions to justify knowledge claims. All non-Christian epistemologies are simply unable to support claims to knowledge, hence the reason for Paul’s description of unbelieving “knowledge.”

Van Til wrote “We do not go to the Bible itself for the facts with which we deal [in the laboratory or the field]. . . . We do not limit ourselves entirely to the Bible when we study

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50. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from “Revelation About Man From Man.”

51. 1 Timothy 6:20, NASB

anything.”<sup>52</sup> Man may appeal to sensory data for knowledge claims because God is the One who has “formed the eye” through which “He . . . teaches man knowledge.”<sup>53</sup> God has given to man his eyes, ears, nose, and hands “in order that he might experience His glory, wisdom, and power as it is manifested through the creation . . . and also that he might learn about the creation in order to exercise dominion over it in serving God’s ends.”<sup>54</sup> Another quotation of Van Til, embellished by his protege, Greg Bahnsen, should reiterate much of what has just been said. “The Bible does not rule out every form of empiricism any more than it rules out every form of *a priori* reasoning.”<sup>55</sup> “What is philosophically crucial is that rational and empirical reasoning [must] take place within the presupposed framework of God’s revelation or the Christian worldview”<sup>56</sup> if knowledge claims are to be justified. I hope these references and what I’ve written clearly demonstrate that Van Til’s affirmation of empirical science does not lead to an apologetic approach that requires Christians “to defend the authority of the Scriptures without making any appeal to logic or ‘facts’.”<sup>57</sup>

Van Til frequently stated that the Christian worldview alone provides man with the reasons he can trust his mind *and* senses during scientific inquiry. “Given the presuppositions of creation, providence, and revelation, empirical knowledge is both possible and important to man.”<sup>58</sup> In fact, the saint’s knowledge of the real world results in God’s glorification as His saints thank Him for what He has done for them in creation and in Christ. The end for which God created all things, including man’s knowledge, is His own glory.

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52. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*; quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 241.

53. Psalm 94:9-10, NASB

54. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 242.

55. Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*. Original quotation is taken from *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*.

56. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 245.

57. Ronald Nash, “Attack on Human Autonomy,” 349; quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic*, 246n.202.

58. *Ibid.*, 243.

What basis does the unbeliever have for believing that what he sees or deduces is knowledge (as opposed to mere belief)? Why does the unbeliever trust his senses for knowledge acquisition if they have ever misled him in the past? Or is the unbeliever really just a pragmatist, labeling beliefs as knowledge, only when they lead him to the conclusion he desires?

If true knowledge of God's world were not attainable, how could God hold men accountable for their evil deeds? If they did not at least know God's basic nature and their violation of His holy law, could God be just in eternally punishing them for their infractions? Is it possible that Kant erected his "wall" to give him an excuse for not bowing before his Creator who demands submission to Him?<sup>59</sup>

Using various illustrations and diverse expressions, Van Til consistently taught that knowledge of God is the context and prerequisite for true knowledge of anything. He took all of the apostle Paul's doctrine seriously. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.<sup>60</sup> Start with Him in all your thinking or become a fool in your attempt to rationally justify your knowledge claims.<sup>61</sup> Are not God's ways higher than our ways? When a sinner casts himself on Christ for salvation, Christ saves *all* of him. When a sinner loses his life for Christ's sake, he gains it. When a sinner surrenders his would-be autonomy to Christ, he gains the only basis for justified knowledge. Those who desire wisdom (true philosophers) should forever praise Yahweh for saving them from intellectual poverty and futility.

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59. All apologetic methods, save the presuppositional approach, eventually prove Yahweh's existence is only highly probable. Guess what? Mere probability leaves sinners with an excuse on judgement day. But the Bible says they are *without excuse*. Should not the Christian's apologetic, which is largely determined by his epistemology, reinforce this biblical truth?

60. Colossians 2:3, NASB

61. Romans 1:21-22, NASB