

**TOWARDS A REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE**

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## Abstract of Thesis

This thesis examines Reformed epistemology as it finds expression in the writings of Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til and Alvin Plantinga. It seeks to develop three main themes of this kind of approach in order to see whether they constitute an adequate foundation for a coherent account of faith and to examine their significance for educational theory.

The themes studied are: belief in God may be properly basic in a rational noetic structure; divine revelation can be self-authenticating; and sin has noetic effects. Discussion of the third of these is focused upon rational autonomy and, in particular, upon the form it takes in the pancritical rationalism of W. W. Bartley. The position developed is a moderate form of foundationalism which seeks to ground belief in God in an immediate awareness of him speaking through the propositions of scripture. It opposes an ideal of theonomous response to divine revelation to that of unlimited rational autonomy.

The study of educational issues commences with an examination of the relationship between a Reformed Christian worldview and educational (or other) theory construction and argues for the transformation from within of the areas of knowledge through the introduction into them of Christian presuppositions. In accordance with this strategy for the integration of faith and learning, a study is made of the implications of the Reformed critique of autonomy for educational aims and methods and for discussions of the issue of indoctrination. The final issue dealt with is that of whether or not it is right or necessary to set up separate schools of Reformed Christian and other outlooks in our contemporary pluralist society. The conclusion reached is that there is a place for good Reformed Christian schools but nevertheless the Reformed Christian teacher may, in good conscience, teach in a state school.

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## INTRODUCTION

Possibly the single most discussed development in philosophy of religion in the eighties has been the coming to prominence, through its advocacy by several fairly well-known American writers, of what is usually termed 'Reformed Epistemology'. Some have described it as an important new approach to the philosophy of religion but in fact, although in the hands of these writers it has acquired a particular form, it is by no means a completely novel approach and the writers in question associate themselves with a tradition that goes back through several influential philosophers and theologians of the past century or so to John Calvin and other leaders of the sixteenth century Reformation.

With a distinctive view of the nature of faith and knowledge there has been associated a particular kind of approach to education. This is well represented in the United States and Canada in movements to set up Reformed Christian schools and a number of the new independent Christian schools coming into existence in increasing numbers in Britain are also Reformed in their basic outlook.

This study is an attempt to develop three main themes of Reformed epistemology in order to see whether they constitute an adequate foundation for a coherent account of knowledge and faith and to examine their significance for educational theory. The study begins with a brief look into the writings of some philosophers who have advocated forms of Reformed epistemology and in whose work these themes can be identified. This is followed by more detailed study of each of the three themes in turn. The first of them is that belief in God may be properly basic in a rational structure of knowledge and belief. This is the theme that has received most attention in recent discussions, so much so that it has almost become synonymous for Reformed epistemology, and it will therefore receive fairly extended treatment in this study. However, the other themes, although neglected in recent discussions, would seem no less important and they too will be examined in their turn. They are that divine revelation can be self-authenticating and that sin has noetic effects. Discussion of the second of these will focus upon what is often taken

to be a particularly significant aspect of the effects of sin in the area of knowledge - that of rational autonomy.

The study of educational issues will commence with an examination of the relationship between a Reformed Christian worldview and educational (or other) theory construction. This issue is related to a further theme of Reformed epistemology - that of what has been termed 'the pluralism of the academy' whereby it is held that a person's worldview shapes the products of his scholarship. Following this, some implications of the Reformed critique of autonomy for educational aims and methods and for discussions of the issue of indoctrination will be examined. This will lead into the final area for discussion: that of the issue of whether or not it is right or necessary to set up separate schools of Reformed Christian and other outlooks in our contemporary pluralist society.

**SOME EXAMPLES OF REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY**

Nicholas Wolterstorff, one of the foremost contemporary advocates of Reformed epistemology, has identified five theses on the nature of faith and of reason, and on the relation between them, which seem to be characteristic of the Reformed tradition.<sup>1</sup> They are so in the sense that they are usually associated with the Reformed tradition but not in the sense that all who locate themselves in the tradition would accept all five of them or that only those in the tradition would accept any of them.

First, Wolterstorff says that it has characteristically been maintained within the Reformed tradition that one can be rationally justified in believing in God without doing so on the basis of any reasons or evidence. Belief in God can be justified immediately rather than mediately through reasons or evidence. It can itself form the basis for mediate justification and so is 'properly basic' to a rational structure of knowledge and beliefs.

Secondly, according to Wolterstorff, it has characteristically been maintained that belief that the Christian Scriptures are revealed by God can also be justified immediately rather than on the basis of argument from reasons or evidence. Divine revelation is not externally authenticated - it is self-authenticating.

Thirdly, he says, it has characteristically been held that the effects of sin extend to our rational capacities for acquiring beliefs and knowledge. Sin not only affects our wills - it has noetic effects also.

A fourth thesis identified by Wolterstorff concerns the pluralism of the academy. It has characteristically been maintained that a competent specimen of science may well not be neutral with respect to the Christian faith and that, in the event of conflict, the science should be re-done rather than that the faith should be given up. The fifth characteristic thesis is closely related to this but is put in the more positive terms that a Christian's engagement in scientific activity should be directed in appropriate ways by his faith. These



last two theses could be brought together into one which maintains not only the inevitability but also the desirability of worldviews affecting theory construction in science.

Through the centuries since the Reformation and up to the present day, there have been a number of philosophers and theologians of note within the Reformed tradition whose writings give evidence of their maintaining most if not all of these characteristic theses. Several of these have had particular emphases in their thought which have given rise to various sub-traditions within the broad stream of Reformed thought<sup>2</sup> and these are also related to varying emphases and sub-traditions in the application of that thought to education.

It is impossible within the confines of this study to do more than look briefly at just a few of these writers and any selection will inevitably leave out others of equal and arguably greater significance. I have chosen to give a brief outline of Abraham Kuyper's theory of knowledge since what he wrote around the turn of the present century has been widely influential in a range of sub-traditions. I shall also outline the main details of the approach of Cornelius Van Til as a writer from the earlier and middle decades of this century who represented a particular sub-tradition and who held to particularly strong versions of the characteristic theses of Reformed epistemology. My main focus will be on the work of Alvin Plantinga since he is a very well-known contemporary philosopher of religion and he has been largely responsible for the remarkable upturn of interest in Reformed epistemology in the past decade.

### **1.1 THE REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY OF ABRAHAM KUYPER**

Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Free University of Amsterdam and Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905, must rank as one of the foremost Reformed thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and one of the most quoted in later attempts to develop a Reformed account of knowledge and faith. The fullest account that he has given of his approach is to be found in his 'Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerheid', a major portion of which exists in English translation as 'Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology'<sup>3</sup> and it is mainly upon this that the following brief outline relies.

### 1.1.1 THE NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN

Kuyper says that faith is of crucial importance within knowledge and by this he means not faith in God or in Christ or, indeed, faith with any particular content but "a function of the life of our soul which is fundamental to every fact in our human consciousness".<sup>4</sup> By this faith function, we obtain certainty directly and immediately rather than by demonstrative argument, and faith is therefore opposed not to knowledge but to demonstration. Knowledge may be the result of either faith or demonstration. Even demonstration itself is ultimately grounded in faith because we cannot demonstrate the axioms of thought. Among the other certainties are those of our own existence, the general reliability of our senses, the existence of natural laws and the existence of other minds. By faith we know the ego exists and by faith we "vault the gap" from the ego to the non-ego in every area of knowledge. Without faith, says Kuyper, there is no other bridge to be built from the phenomena to the noumena.<sup>5</sup>

Kuyper uses the word 'science' in a way that is roughly equivalent to 'form of knowledge' and he distinguishes between those sciences which he variously refers to as "material", "ponderable", "exact" and "natural" and those which he terms the "spiritual" sciences. The former are concerned with the perception of objects through the senses but the latter have to do with the intellectual, ethical, social, juridical, aesthetic and theological aspects of reality. In relation to these spiritual realities of love and of right and the like, of which we may often be more certain than of physical realities, Kuyper proposes a psychic sense whereby, as he puts it, "in entire independence of our senses and of any middle link known to us, the elements of the spiritual world affect our subject spiritually and thus to our apprehension appear to enter immediately into our consciousness."<sup>6</sup>

The starting-point of Kuyper's theory of knowledge is in the state of affairs that he believes would exist if there were no disturbance caused by sin. If there were no sin, the cosmos would be "an open book" for the universal human consciousness, not that we would know everything instantaneously and exhaustively but that there would be nothing without or within us to frustrate our human consciousness in entering more and more deeply into the cosmos in representation and conception.<sup>7</sup>

Subjective factors would not in themselves constitute a problem in science because there would be a natural harmony between individual subjects. For Kuyper it is evident that no such harmony exists universally or necessarily; it is lacking both within the subject and within the object - the cosmos of which man is a part - and, indeed, between subject and object. As evidence of this, he lists the following: the presence of falsehood in the world; unintentional mistakes; the phenomena of self-delusion and self-deception; the possibility of confusion at the boundary of the real and the imaginary; the fact that falsehood within finds a "coefficient" in falsehood transmitted from without through education, language and general culture; the effects of bodily illness on the spirit; the influence of "the sin-disorganised relationships of life"; and the influences of falsehood and inaccuracies in one area of our individual consciousness upon other areas even to the extent of affecting one's "life-and-world-view". All of these relate to what Kuyper terms "the formal workings of sin on our minds" but he goes on to discuss in addition the workings of sin on our consciousness through moral motives and especially the influence of self-interest, the "darkening of our consciousness" through estrangement from the object of our knowledge so that love of child or nature or whatever is replaced by absence of the sympathy or affinity that formerly aided understanding, and the loss of harmony within ourselves in the plurality of conflicting motives and emotions.<sup>7</sup>

Kuyper sees sin as something that disrupts the otherwise harmonious relationships that would exist among people as the knowing human subjects and between them and the objects of knowledge. It is this estrangement that frustrates humankind's deepening grasp of what is there to be known and understood. It is not that personal holiness can be correlated with scientific progress on the part of the individual or its absence with lack of such progress on his part for this would be to take an individualistic and atomistic view of the whole process of knowledge. For Kuyper, knowledge and understanding are to be sought by humankind collectively and co-operatively. Furthermore, Kuyper maintains,<sup>8</sup> the noetic effects of sin do not include loss of the capacity for logical thought and this capacity can be developed by training and is presumably something which varies from individual to individual independently of their personal holiness or sinfulness. Kuyper also allows that the noetic effects of sin are

less evident where the subjective factor in knowing is less prominent, i.e., less evident in the material sciences than in the spiritual sciences, and he suggests that it is most evident in the science of theology because of its distinctive object, that of God himself, and the importance for it of the distinctive relationship between object and subject.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.1.2 'TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE AND TWO KINDS OF SCIENCE'

One of most controversial aspects of Kuyper's thought is his development of the thesis that sin has noetic effects into the proposal that there are two kinds of people and two kinds of science. Regeneration or, as he terms it, 'palingenesis', is taken by Kuyper to be a change of man in his very being which leads to a change of consciousness. What this means for science is described by him as follows:-

"Both parts of humanity, that which has been wrought upon by palingenesis and that which lacks it, feel the impulse to investigate the object, and, by doing this in a scientific way, to obtain a scientific systemization of that which exists. ... But however much they may be doing the same kind of thing formally, their activities run in opposite directions because they have different starting-points; and because of the difference in their nature they apply themselves differently to this work, and view things in a different way."<sup>10</sup>

It might be claimed, in response to such an account, that this alleged difference is not evident in science and that, if it were, co-operation and even communication between the two kinds of people over matters scientific would be impossible but Kuyper makes a number of points in response to such objections:-

(i) there is a very broad realm in which the difference between the two kinds of people exerts little or no influence and this includes matters of sense observation as the raw material of natural science, the facts of history and of other spiritual sciences and the laws of logic;

(ii) palingenesis is a continual process so that there is not at once a radical and complete change in the content of consciousness;

(iii) the Christian framework of creation, fall and redemption was for many centuries a common framework of thought for both groups; and

(iv) those who are regenerate remember and can appreciate the viewpoint of the unregenerate.<sup>11</sup>

There is therefore a large area in which both groups may work together and even attain academic laurels together without the difference of principle becoming involved; and even when the lines divide, it is still possible to appreciate mutually the reasons for the divergence and, taking into account the differences of premise or starting-point, to criticise logically the other's progress. This should not be taken to mean that there will be a uniform set of results obtained by each of the two groups. Subjective factors will operate for both because in both groups individuals differ from one another and because no individual has mastery of the field so that, in both groups, different schools of thought will emerge. A starting-point in Christian premises will not wholly determine the outcome any more than will one in naturalistic premises.<sup>12</sup>

If there are two kinds of people and two kinds of science and this difference is most strongly felt in theology, then it is likely to issue in two views of the very nature of theology itself. Indeed, Kuyper argues that naturalistic premises and the premises of palingenesis do logically lead to two different views of theology. He claims that to omit the facts of sin and of palingenesis from science means that everything must be considered normal as it is, so that man is not alienated from God, his being and his consciousness are not influenced by sin and he needs no restorative power from without and no special revelation to his consciousness in order to attain to a true view of the cosmos.<sup>13</sup> The existence of God must then become questionable simply because in this 'normal' world there are those who deny it and those who question whether God can be known even if he exists. The consequence is that the object of theological thought becomes uncertain as to its existence and so theology cannot be a science since, argues Kuyper, theological science requires an object in a God who certainly exists. Naturalistic premises lead inevitably to the conclusion that theology is not a science. Kuyper allows that, on such premises, there is still the possibility that religion may be studied scientifically but, he argues, this is not theology but religious studies.

Since for Kuyper science is the study of the cosmos under its various aspects and theology is a science, he says that divine revelation must lie not outside of but within the cosmos and always present itself in cosmical form.<sup>14</sup> Further, he maintains, revealed knowledge of God

belongs to spiritual science and is analogous to man's knowledge of his fellow man both in that it must be disclosed by the other and also in that man must begin from the knowledge he has of himself. Therefore, if God is to reveal knowledge of himself within the cosmos, it must be revealed within man himself for him even to begin to grasp it and, since God is pure Spirit, within his psychic existence and not in his body. So, just as our self-knowledge is linked with and the basis of our knowledge of others, it must also be the case that knowledge of God "coincides" with man's own self-knowledge and be "given 'eo ipse' in his own self-consciousness ... not as discursive knowledge, but as the immediate content of self-consciousness".<sup>15</sup> As the image of God, man is in his inner being a revelation of God so that, as Kuyper puts it:-

"If the cosmos is the theatre of revelation, in this theatre man is both actor and spectator."<sup>16</sup>

This constitutes in man that part of an innate theology which, according to Kuyper, is what Calvin meant by his talk of the "seed of religion", that spiritual eye within, the lens of which may be dimmed but always so that lens and eye remain even in fallen man. The faith function of the inner being, which bridges the gap from the ego to the non-ego of other minds, to the data of our perceptions, to the axioms of thought and the like, operates too in relation to the revealed knowledge of God and is "but the opening of the spiritual eye and the consequent perception of another Being, excelling us in everything, that manifests itself in our own being".<sup>17</sup> By the "logical action" of our minds - another part of the image of God within - we turn this perception into (scientific) knowledge of God.

### 1.1.3 REVELATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Kuyper claims that man can never rid himself of the seed of religion, the sense of deity within, but, because of the nature of sin, the manifestation of God within the inner being of man as sinner must be no longer of a God with whom he has an affinity but rather of one who is antipathetic to him. Kuyper claims that the sinner can never rid himself of faith either but it must turn into unfaith in attaching itself to something other than God and therefore something creaturely which the sinner finds sympathetic or, at least, not antipathetic. Man as sinner seeks something to which he can cling by faith. Logical action remains in the sinner as long as he is not insane but

it leads not to the knowledge of God but to his denial in the intellect. We retain the power of thought but, says Kuyper, "the pivot of our thought becomes displaced".<sup>18</sup>

The effects of sin are such as to make the knowledge of God impossible apart from modifications in the way in which God is revealed. In the intermediate state of the cosmos in which, because of God's 'common grace', "the wheel of sin is revolving but the brakes are on", man is in a state in which palingenesis is still possible. In palingenesis, the revelation of God comes from without rather than from the seed of religion within and is of a sympathetic God in the incarnate Christ of the scriptures. In palingenesis, recovery of the original working of faith is possible "by bending right again, from the root up, the direction of his psychical life".<sup>19</sup> Logical action regains its power in relation to divine things through what Kuyper takes to be the illumination of the Holy Spirit in palingenesis. This does not imply anything for the acuteness of the action of logical thought since this differs from person to person regardless of the effects of sin or palingenesis. What it does is to restore the displacement of the "pivot of our thought".<sup>20</sup>

Because of sin, natural theology is unable of itself to give what Kuyper terms "any pure knowledge of God". On the other hand, special theology presupposes natural theology and cannot be conceived apart from it. Kuyper argues that this is necessarily so because grace creates no single new reality and no new component part is added to man in palingenesis. Palingenesis is a re-creation and not a creation of something new, otherwise the organic nature of the cosmos would be destroyed. Miracles should be seen not as magical incidents but as integral to the palingenesis of all things; and to see them out of this relation is "to debase the Creator of heaven and earth to a juggler".<sup>21</sup> The miracle of the incarnation is such that our own human nature becomes the revelation of God. The same God reveals himself to the same ego of man in the same consciousness through natural revelation before the fall and special revelation in this present temporary age between the fall and the complete renewal of all things. If man had not been created capable of receiving knowledge of God in the first place, he could not now know him by means of special revelation. Kuyper writes of the relationship between natural and special revelation in the following terms:-

"It is upon the canvas of this natural knowledge of God itself that the special revelation is embroidered".<sup>22</sup>

Kuyper denies that the reality and reliability of special revelation can be demonstrated "at the bar of human reason" because it is not a matter of rational demonstration and, even if it were, the natural is so affected by sin that it cannot judge the special. This does not mean that reason may be ignored so that we can believe anything we like. Kuyper suggests that it is important that the believer be able to see for himself the reasonableness of his beliefs and be able to prove this to those who share his premises and even be able to show to somebody else that with the assumption of the believer's premises he can accept his conclusions. Kuyper is also pessimistic as to the value of apologetic attempts to bring forward positive evidences for faith in the form of miracles, the fulfilment of prophecies, the majestic style of the scriptures and the like. The divine character of the scriptures will shine out from them but not to the person who will not see. Evidences may be of value to those within the faith in order to combat doubt but no giving of reasons, refuting of objections, adduction of evidence is of value either as the ground of the believer's confession of faith or as a means to compel another to such confession. Certainty concerning special revelation is given only by the witness of the Holy Spirit just as the witness of our own spirits - which coincides with the witness of the Creator - gives certainty concerning the natural revelation of the sense of our own ego, the laws of thought and the existence of others.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2 THE REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY OF CORNELIUS VAN TIL

Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia was strongly influenced by Abraham Kuyper in his development of what he termed "a Christian theory of knowledge".<sup>24</sup>

Van Til is one of the most forthright and controversial of recent Reformed writers but his writings are often somewhat lacking in clarity of expression and in the analytical rigour that can be expected of most of the best of modern philosophers. He gives much space to the repetition of what sound like bold and extravagant claims without always fully explaining what he means and he does not always clearly justify steps in his arguments. In spite of these problems,



the main thrust of his thought seems fairly clear and provides an example of one of the boldest versions of the characteristic theses of Reformed epistemology.

### 1.2.1 TWO BASIC PRESUPPOSITIONS

Van Til's position on the subject of the place of argument and evidence in relation to belief in God is often termed 'presuppositionalist'. He makes the startling claim that "God cannot be proved to exist by any method other than the indirect one of presupposition"<sup>25</sup> and he boldly asserts that man presupposes either God or himself as "the final reference point in all human predication".<sup>26</sup> If the God believed in by Christians exists then he is self-sufficient and if he is self-sufficient then, Van Til argues, he alone is self-explanatory and so must be the final reference point in human predication. On the other hand, if man assumes himself to be "autonomous", he thereby takes himself to be the final reference point and he virtually negates the Christian God. The issue between these two presuppositions cannot be settled by direct appeal to facts or laws because the question is as to what is the final reference point required to make facts or laws intelligible. The only way to proceed is by an indirect method of reasoning by presupposition, i.e., the Christian must adopt the non-Christian position for argument's sake in order to show that on its presupposition "the 'facts' are not facts and the 'laws' are not laws" and he must also ask the non-Christian to adopt the Christian position for the sake of argument "in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do 'facts' and 'laws' become intelligible".<sup>27</sup>

A recurring theme throughout Van Til's writings is that to take man as final reference point is a sinful assumption of autonomy. He does not define clearly what he means by 'autonomy' but the following are typical of what he says about it:-

"Man has set aside the law of his Creator and therewith has become a law to himself. He will be subject to none but himself. He seeks to be autonomous. He knows that he is a creature and ought to be subject to the law of his Creator."<sup>28</sup>

"There is no autonomy of theoretical thought as such. There is a would-be autonomous man, who thinks about his entire environment in terms of his thought as legislative and as determinative of the structure of the temporal world."<sup>29</sup>

It would seem that Van Til means by 'autonomy' some kind of radical

independent-mindedness whereby man takes his reason to have the final say on what he can accept as true, meaningful or good. The alternative for Van Til is to take what God reveals to man as the final authority as to what is true, meaningful or good. This seems to amount to a broadening to extend to the whole of knowledge of the particular thesis in ethics that good is what God is and what he commands. In that particular context, autonomy is often discussed over against such arguments as that the basis of the obligation to recognise God's commands as our duties lies in the fact that he is our Creator.<sup>30</sup> Van Til may be seen as presenting an epistemological analogue of the divine command theory of ethics.

Van Til distinguishes between what he terms "the ultimate starting-point" and "the proximate starting-point" and he argues that "the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting-point" but that "God is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate or final reference point in human interpretation".<sup>31</sup> This seems to mean that it is the self which makes the decisions in thought and practical life but that the standard for such decisions is in an authoritative divine revelation.

A person's thinking should therefore be authentically his own.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, he should obey God's authority but not as that of an expert whose credentials he has first autonomously accepted for, as he writes:-

"If we must determine the foundations of the authority, we no longer accept authority on authority. Authority could be authority to us only if we already knew that it had the right to claim authority. Such could be the case only if we knew in advance the nature of that authority. Thus we would have a theory of being already taken for granted at the outset of our investigation."<sup>33</sup>

Van Til believes that ontology can and should have priority over epistemology and claims that his theory of knowledge is what it is because his theory of being is what it is. 'What is there to know?' or, rather, 'Who is the original knower?' must be asked before we ask 'How do we know?'.<sup>34</sup> The Creator-creature distinction is central to Van Til's theory of being so that he claims he does not start with being in general but with God's being as self-contained and created being as dependent upon God.<sup>35</sup> To the objection that the epistemological question can and must be asked without saying anything

with respect to the ontological question, Van Til has the ready response that to assume this already excludes one answer to the question of knowledge itself.<sup>36</sup> Such a being as God could not speak otherwise than with absolute authority and to assume that man has either the capacity or the right to judge what God says is to deny both his authority and his being. The assumption of autonomy reflects a prior ontological commitment which itself prejudices epistemological issues.

### 1.2.2 SELF-AUTHENTICATING REVELATION

Van Til holds that there is a two-fold revelation of God in nature and in the scriptures and these form a unity in which general and special revelations presuppose and supplement one another. He follows Calvin, Kuyper and others in holding that there is a sense of deity within man whereby self-knowledge and knowledge of God are given together. Man's mind cannot be conscious of itself without being conscious of its creatureliness so that man cannot truly know himself without knowing himself for what he is, that is, unless he knows himself as a creature made in the image of God. In this way, Van Til claims, self-consciousness presupposes God-consciousness but this sense of deity within must be distinguished from man's reaction to it as a sinner whereby he seeks to suppress it.<sup>37</sup>

Van Til holds that the Creator's revelation to man as creature must be authoritative and self-authenticating because otherwise such a revelation would be subject to an authority and test for validity which would have to be held to be more certain than that which it tests. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that results in the knowledge that the scriptures are the Word of God but, says Van Til, this testimony of the Holy Spirit does not give additional information alongside that which the revelation contains. Witness to truth cannot be by way of further truth, otherwise the truth is not self-authenticating and if there were further truth it would need yet further truth to testify to it and so on 'ad infinitum'.<sup>38</sup>

This testimony of the Spirit is a divine activity that "opens (men's) eyes to see things as they truly are".<sup>39</sup> The metaphor Van Til uses here is that used by Calvin of sight being needed to distinguish light

from darkness. The need is of sight, not of further light. The work of the Spirit is immediate even though it may use argumentation and take place in the presence of the evidence of "the heavenly content of the Word".<sup>40</sup> Preaching and reasoning are therefore not in vain, according to Van Til, because it is the sense of deity within along with all the evidence of nature and scripture that provides "a background and foundation" for the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, reason is not competent to judge revelation because it is from revelation that reason learns its proper function as created by God and properly subject to the authority of God.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.2.3 THE NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN

Van Til makes a distinction between intellectual understanding of the issues between Christian and non-Christian presuppositions and the knowledge that is the result of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This knowledge is "ethical" and he writes:-

"Though he is dead in sins, this deadness of the natural man is an ethical deadness, not a metaphysical escape from God. As the image of God and therefore endowed with the sense of deity, man can very well understand intellectually what is meant when the preacher tells him that he is a sinner and that he ought to repent. He knows God as Paul says so specifically in his letter to the Romans. Yet ethically he does not know God. His mind is darkened and his will is perverted, as Paul says with equal clarity. ... As a consequence of this darkness of mind, this spiritual blindness, the natural man does not know truly that which, in the sense above defined, he knows and cannot help but know."<sup>43</sup>

Here and elsewhere in his writings, Van Til merges ethical and epistemological aspects of man's activities so that, for example, he defines an "epistemological reaction" as a "reaction as an ethically responsible creature of God".<sup>44</sup> For Van Til, man's assumption of his own autonomy is a manifestation of his own sinfulness. His ethical rebellion consists, at least in part, of the choice of the wrong epistemological principle. In seeking to interpret the universe without reference to God, man sets himself an ideal which is inconsistent with his own creatureliness and, in taking the right to decide on such issues, he actually decides these issues about the final reference point in a certain way.

Of the effects of sin upon man's use of his intellectual powers, Van Til writes:-

"The saw may be very shiny and ever so sharp; if the set is wrong it cannot but do damage. So the intellect of fallen man may be ever so brilliant, but since the set of his person, as a covenant-breaker, is wrong, it will in the ultimate sense do all the more damage. It may also at the same time, because of God's common grace, do all the more good for the progress of culture."<sup>45</sup>

Although the gulf between ultimate presuppositions is very wide and, as he puts it, "epistemologically the believer and non-believer have nothing in common",<sup>46</sup> Van Til is often at pains to point out that the difference is in principle only and, because of God's common grace, is not fully worked out in practice. Fallen man in his scientific activity makes use of what Van Til terms "borrowed capital" and makes positive contributions "in spite of his principles and because both he and the universe are the exact opposite of what he, by his principles, thinks they are."<sup>47</sup> His discoveries of truth are adventitious as far as his principles are concerned but, from the point of view of Christian presuppositions, the evidence of God's common grace to all.

### 1.3 THE REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY OF ALVIN PLANTINGA

It was in the eighties that contemporary analytical philosophers first began to take notice of Reformed epistemology. Their interest in the subject was sparked off by the publication around the beginning of the decade of three seminal papers by Alvin Plantinga.<sup>48</sup> It was in these papers that Plantinga first began to set forth his version of the first of the characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology but it can be viewed as a development of his earlier studies of rationality and religious belief. In particular, it follows on from the conclusions of his book 'God and Other Minds' which was published about twelve years earlier,<sup>49</sup> in which he examined the traditional arguments for and against the existence of God and decided that both natural theology and natural atheology were unsuccessful. He went on in that book to explore various analogies between belief in God and belief in other minds and concluded that these two beliefs were on epistemological par so that, he says, since we hold belief in other minds to be rational, we must say the same for belief in God. It is but a step from this to the argument that it is perfectly rational to accept belief in God without accepting it on the basis of evidence or argument from other beliefs. In other words and using the phrase that Plantinga has successfully implanted into the language of

philosophical discussion of the rationality of religious belief, it is but a step to the argument that belief in God is 'properly basic'.

Although most of the work that Plantinga has published to date on Reformed epistemology<sup>50</sup> - and most of the discussion that it has engendered<sup>51</sup> - has been concerned with this theme of the proper basicity of belief in God, he has also indicated his acceptance of the other characteristic themes identified by Wolterstorff. He accepts that in reading the Bible a person may find himself with the properly basic belief that God is speaking to him and refers to "the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit" as being "a source of reliable and perfectly acceptable beliefs about what is communicated (by God) in Scripture".<sup>52</sup> He also says that if it were not for the existence of sin in the world we would all wholeheartedly and spontaneously believe in God.<sup>53</sup> His inaugural address contained advice to Christian philosophers to exhibit more autonomy and integrality and maintained that they have a perfect right to start with the views they hold as Christians rather than from the naturalistic perspective from which, he says, most contemporary philosophers do in fact start.<sup>54</sup> However, since to date Plantinga has not really developed these comments on the other themes, this outline of his version of Reformed epistemology will be focussed mainly on the first theme - that of the proper basicity of belief in God.

Nicholas Wolterstorff is another analytical philosopher who has been associated with Plantinga in this interest in Reformed epistemology. They jointly edited the published essays that arose out of a yearlong project of the Calvin (College) Center for Christian Studies, a project on the topic of "A Reformed View of Faith and Reason"<sup>55</sup> and Wolterstorff has made his own contribution in work on the criteria of rationality, of which I shall give some more detail in the next chapter.<sup>56</sup> William Alston has also been associated with Plantinga in this development. He says that he almost entirely agrees with Plantinga's position<sup>57</sup> and he has attempted to develop it further particularly in his work on religious experience and on what he terms "the perception of God".<sup>58</sup> I shall also refer to this in the next chapter.<sup>59</sup>

### 1.3.1 FAITH, EVIDENTIALISM AND CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONALISM

A major element of Plantinga's Reformed epistemology is his rejection of what he terms "the evidentialist objection to belief in God". He cites a number of philosophers - notably W. K. Clifford, Bertrand Russell, Brand Blanshard, Michael Scriven and Anthony Flew - who have argued that belief in God is, in some sense of the term, irrational because, they claim, there is a lack of evidence or reasons for it.<sup>60</sup> Although the philosophers he mentions have all concluded that belief in God is irrational, it would seem that Plantinga is opposed to all forms of the thesis that belief in God should be based on reasons or evidence even when it is held by those who do believe in God. He allows that, when he began writing 'God and Other Minds', he himself had taken it for granted that the right way to approach the question of the rationality of belief in God was by way of considering the evidence for and against such belief but he had subsequently come to regard this approach as mistaken.<sup>61</sup> The issue between Plantinga and those he opposes is not over whether there is or could be adequate evidence for belief in God but over whether the rationality of such belief depends upon there being such evidence.

Plantinga says that evidentialism is of at least two distinct kinds which are distinguished by what is meant by describing a belief as rational or irrational.<sup>62</sup> The first of these is the position of what he calls "the deontological evidentialist" who thinks of rationality in terms of intellectual duties, norms or obligations and who claims that the person who believes in God without adequate evidence or reasons is guilty of failing in these duties. According to this form of evidentialism, there is at least a prima facie obligation not to accept belief in God without sufficient evidence. The second form of evidentialism is "axiological evidentialism" or "value evidentialism" which takes irrationality to be a matter of some flaw or defect in a person's structure of beliefs. Belief in God without adequate evidence is seen as such a flaw or defect.

Plantinga takes the former of these views of rationality to be more problematic than the latter because of the difficulty of talking about intellectual duties if, as it seems plausible to suggest, our beliefs are not within our control. However, he challenges adherents of both

forms to show why it is that, on their view of rationality, belief in God without adequate evidence is irrational. He writes:-

"The crucial question here is this: Why does the objector think these things? Why does he think there is a prima facie obligation to try not to believe in God without evidence? Or why does he think that to do so is to be in a deplorable condition? Why is it not permissible and quite satisfactory to believe in God without any evidence - proof or argument - at all? Presumably the objector does not mean to suggest that no propositions can be believed or accepted without evidence, for if you have evidence for every proposition you believe, then (granted certain plausible assumptions about the formal properties of the evidence relation) you will believe infinitely many propositions; and no one has time, these busy days, for that. So presumably some propositions can properly be believed and accepted without evidence. Well, why not belief in God? Why is it not entirely acceptable, desirable, right, proper, and rational to accept belief in God without any argument or evidence whatever?"<sup>63</sup>

Plantinga holds that the explanation for the evidentialist assumption that evidence is required to justify belief in God and not to justify certain other beliefs lies in "the fact that the evidentialist objection is typically rooted in some form of classical foundationalism".<sup>64</sup> Foundationalists agree that there are propositions that can be rationally held without being believed on the basis of any other propositions at all, i.e., that there are propositions that are properly basic. They disagree as to what kinds of proposition are properly basic. Plantinga says that the "ancient and medieval foundationalism" - of Aristotle and Aquinas, for example - accepts only self-evident propositions and propositions evident to the senses whereas the "modern foundationalism" - of Descartes, Locke and Hume, for example - accepts only self-evident propositions and incorrigible propositions directly about one's experience. Ancient, medieval and modern foundationalisms are all forms of what Plantinga terms "classical foundationalism" and, because the belief that God exists is neither self-evident nor evident to the senses nor an incorrigible belief about one's own immediate experience, it is not acceptable as a properly basic belief. Classical foundationalism in all its forms therefore holds that belief in God cannot rationally be accepted without adequate evidence.

Plantinga defines foundationalism in terms of a "rational noetic structure" where a person's noetic structure is taken to be the set of propositions he believes together with the epistemic relations that



hold among these propositions and between him and them. In a rational noetic structure, the relation of support of beliefs for other beliefs is both asymmetric and irreflexive so that if belief A is based on belief B then belief B should not be based on belief A and belief A should not be based upon itself. Also a rational noetic structure has a foundation in basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs derive their support from basic beliefs. It might seem that the more basic a belief is in a noetic structure the more firmly it should be held but Plantinga suggests that basicity and degree of belief can vary independently of one another as can basicity and depth of ingression and also degree of belief and depth of ingression - "depth of ingression" he takes to be a matter of distance from the "periphery" of a noetic structure and of the consequent "reverberations" through the structure of change in a belief.<sup>65</sup>

Against this background Plantinga rejects classical foundationalism and, with it, the evidentialist objection to belief in God insofar as it is rooted in this form of foundationalism, and he does so on the grounds that foundationalism of this kind is not true or, even if it is true, it is probably self-referentially incoherent. His argument against the truth of classical foundationalism is that it would exclude many propositions that are generally taken to be basic and dismiss as irrational much of what we all in fact believe, e.g., propositions that entail that there are persons distinct from myself or that the world has existed for more than five minutes.<sup>66</sup> This is a fairly common objection to classical foundationalism. The Scottish philosopher of 'common sense', Thomas Reid - a writer who seems to have been particularly influential upon Wolterstorff and Alston as well as upon Plantinga<sup>67</sup> - had advanced it in the eighteenth century and G. E. Moore and many others have echoed it in the present century.

Plantinga's second objection to classical foundationalism is more unique to him. This is to the effect that classical foundationalism is probably self-referentially incoherent. His argument here is that the classical foundationalist accepts something like the following statement of rational acceptability but his acceptance of it does not meet its own requirements:-

"p is rationally acceptable for S only if either (a) p is self-evident or evident to the senses or incorrigible for S, or (b) there are paths in S's noetic structure from p to propositions  $q_1 \dots q_n$  that (i) are basic for S, (ii) are self-evident,

evident to the senses or incorrigible for S, and (iii) support  
p."68

Plantinga says that this statement itself is neither self-evident, evident to the senses nor incorrigible so, if the classical foundationalist is to be rational in accepting it, he must believe it ultimately on the basis of propositions that are self-evident, evident to the senses or incorrigible and that support it. Plantinga claims that no foundationalist has ever produced a successful argument for this statement from propositions that meet this condition and, further, that it is very difficult to see how such an argument could go. From this he concludes that such a statement of classical foundationalism is probably self-referentially incoherent. He adds that he believes that the classical foundationalist, without any reason for doing so, commits himself to reason or to self-evidence as an acceptable means of acquiring, fixing and sustaining belief.<sup>69</sup>

### 1.3.2 FAITH, EVIDENTIALISM AND COHERENTISM

Plantinga allows that the evidentialist objection to belief in God is not usually explicitly linked with a classical foundationalist stance and that it need not be based therein but he insists that it is plausible to claim that it is typically rooted in it and it is, after all, "a powerful and pervasive epistemological tradition". Indeed, he says that it was "a kind of incipient classical foundationalism" that led him to adopt the approach to rationality that he took when he began to write 'God and Other Minds'.<sup>70</sup> In spite of this and noting that Brand Blanshard was both an evidentialist objector to belief in God and clearly not a foundationalist of any kind but a coherentist, Plantinga also presents a fairly detailed argument to the effect that coherentism does not provide any more viable basis for evidentialism.<sup>71</sup>

In fact, Plantinga's argument is two-fold: not only does he find little hope for a coherentist version of the evidentialist objection to belief in God, he also argues that coherentism itself should be rejected as neither necessary nor sufficient for rationality of belief. First, he argues that, for what he calls the "pure coherentist", what matters is not really whether some beliefs provide reasons or evidence for holding other beliefs but rather whether these

other beliefs cohere with the rest of a person's noetic structure. It is not that 'B coheres with the rest of my noetic structure' is one's evidence for B but that coherence is itself the "source of warrant" just as self-evidence, perception, introspection, memory and the like may be sources of warrant for various kinds of foundationalism. A belief is rational if it coheres with the rest of one's structure of beliefs and it is not necessary that it have the evidential support of any of these other beliefs. So, as Plantinga puts it, the pure coherentist "holds that all warranted propositions in a noetic structure are properly basic in that structure"<sup>72</sup> and he cannot therefore object to belief in God on grounds of lack of evidence.

Even if the coherentist objects to theistic belief on the grounds that it does not cohere with the rest of the theist's noetic structure - what Plantinga terms a transposition of the evidentialist objection into the coherentist key - it does not follow that it is belief in God that has to be replaced. Revision in other beliefs to make them cohere with belief in God could do just as well. Plantinga points to the example of the incoherence between belief in a personal God and the belief that it is impossible for there to be a person who has no body. Coherence - and, therefore, rationality of belief - could be achieved here not by giving up belief in God but by giving up instead those beliefs that imply that every person must have a body.<sup>73</sup>

Having argued thus that the evidentialist objection to belief in God can not easily be rooted in coherentism, Plantinga goes on to reject coherentism itself on the grounds that it is neither necessary nor sufficient for rationality. Against its sufficiency, he makes use of the familiar argument that coherent structures of belief may be inconsistent with one another so that at least one of them cannot be true. He also argues that coherence is not necessary for warrant nondefectiveness. One example he gives here is of an unduly impressionable student who is convinced by an eminent but idiosyncratic epistemologist that no one is ever appeared to redly and who goes away with a noetic structure that coheres with this belief. The student could later be appeared to redly and notice that he is thus appeared to and, assuming his noetic structure does not undergo instant change, his belief that he is being appeared to redly will not

be warrant defective even though it does not cohere with the rest of his noetic structure.<sup>74</sup>

Neither coherentism nor classical foundationalism can therefore provide a basis for the evidentialist objection to belief in God. Plantinga suggests too that some other forms of foundationalism will prove no more adequate in this respect; for example, the inclusion of memory beliefs or beliefs about the mental states of other people in the set of properly basic beliefs does not help because, he says, the self-referential argument will hold equally against these forms.<sup>75</sup>

### 1.3.3 THE PROPER BASICITY OF BELIEF IN GOD

To argue that the evidentialist objection to belief in God does not have an adequate epistemological basis does not, of course, establish that belief in God is properly basic. All it does is to remove an objection to taking it as such. Plantinga goes on to tackle the problem of the need of a criterion for proper basicity.

His approach is not to propose criteria from the start but to advocate a particularistic method for arriving at them, as he puts it, "from below rather than above". We do not need to have an explicitly formed criterion to hand to replace the classical foundationalist criterion in order to be able to recognise examples of properly basic beliefs or to recognise the conditions under which they are properly basic, just as, he says, we do not need a replacement of the positivists' verifiability criterion of meaning in order to recognise which statements are meaningful and which are not. He accordingly suggests a broadly inductive method whereby we assemble examples of beliefs and conditions and frame hypotheses as to the necessary and sufficient conditions of proper basicity, hypotheses which can be tested against these examples. The sample set of belief-condition pairs should be revisable as theories are formed and argument continues and Plantinga admits that this process may well be fairly inconclusive. It may yield only some necessary and/or sufficient conditions of proper basicity and, indeed, the best that can be done may well be to give some sufficient conditions of prima facie, not ultima facie, justification. Further, he writes:-

"There is no reason to assume, in advance, that everyone will agree on the examples. The Christian will of course suppose that belief in God is entirely proper and rational; if he does

not accept this belief on the basis of other propositions, he will conclude that it is basic for him and quite properly so. Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hare may disagree; but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community conform to their examples? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to its set of examples, not to theirs."<sup>76</sup>

Plantinga goes on to suggest some examples of properly basic beliefs and their justifying conditions. The perceptual belief, 'I see a tree', is typically taken as basic when a person is being appeared treely to. It is not held on the basis of other beliefs but at the same time it is not groundless. Being appeared to in this characteristic way plays a crucial role not only in the formation of the belief in question but also in its justification. The memory belief, 'I had breakfast this morning', is properly basic under the circumstance of having a certain "past-tinged experience". The belief ascribing a mental state to another person, 'That person is in pain', is properly basic under the circumstance of seeing a person displaying typical pain behaviour - it is not inferred from other beliefs. Each of these are cases of properly basic beliefs with their grounds and the grounds are circumstances or conditions that ground the beliefs rather than evidence from which the beliefs may be inferred.

Plantinga says that similar things can be said about belief in God and he points to conditions that may "trigger the tendency or disposition" to believe in God. For example, one may be impressed with a sense that God is speaking to him upon reading the Bible, with a sense of guilt in God's sight upon having done something wrong, with a sense of being forgiven by God upon repenting and confessing sin or with a spontaneous sense of gratitude to God in some deeply satisfying circumstance. Strictly speaking, he says, it is not the belief that God exists that is properly basic. Rather it is such beliefs as 'God is speaking to me', 'God disapproves of what I have done', 'God forgives me ' and 'God is to be thanked and praised' that are properly basic in the relevant circumstances. They self-evidently entail 'God exists' just as 'I see a tree' entails 'Trees exist'.<sup>77</sup>

Because of the importance of such grounds for the justification of properly basic beliefs, Plantinga says that the person who holds that belief in God is properly basic is not thereby committed to the view

that just about any belief is properly basic in any circumstances or even that just about any belief is properly basic in certain circumstances. This is his response to what he calls 'The Great Pumpkin Objection'. The Reformed epistemologist can properly deny that belief in the Great Pumpkin is properly basic even though he does not have a fully developed criterion of proper basicity. The differences between belief in God and belief in the Great Pumpkin have to do with the conditions that ground belief in God. Plantinga writes:-

"Thus, for example, the Reformed epistemologist may concur with Calvin in holding that God has implanted in us a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us; the same cannot be said for the Great Pumpkin, there being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept beliefs about the Great Pumpkin."<sup>78</sup>

Some would say that this is a rather too easy dismissal of the Great Pumpkin objection. Both the objection and Plantinga's response to it will be dealt with in greater detail in later chapters of this present study.

#### 1.3.4 THE PLACE OF ARGUMENT AND APOLOGETICS

Plantinga denies that accepting belief in God as basic entails accepting it dogmatically. The person who accepts belief in God as basic will not necessarily hold this belief in such a way that no argument could move him to give it up. It could be, Plantinga says, that such a person also accepts as basic some propositions from which it follows that God does not exist. When this is pointed out to him, some change in his noetic structure will be called for but it may be other beliefs - rather than belief in God - that have to be given up. Where the change should be made will depend on the relative strengths of the beliefs in question.<sup>79</sup>

Further, even if belief in God is not only basic but also properly basic for a person in certain conditions, it does not follow that he would remain justified in this belief no matter what arguments are produced against his belief in God. Plantinga holds that the conditions under which belief in God is properly basic confer prima facie justification upon that belief and not ultima facie or all-things-considered justification. Prima facie justification can be overridden and Plantinga, adopting the usage of John Pollock, says

that a condition that overrides a person's prima facie justification for a belief is, for that person, "a defeating condition or defeater". An argument against the existence of God is a potential defeater of the proper basicity of a person's belief in God but such a defeater is itself a prima facie defeater and may itself be defeated by an argument that refutes that argument. An "undercutting defeater" is all that is required for the person to be justified in continuing to accept his belief in God as basic. Plantinga claims that it cannot be required of him that he produce a "rebutting defeater" by way of an argument for the existence of God. Further, a successful counterargument to an argument against the existence of God does not constitute evidence for the existence of God.

Even the conditions themselves that justify a properly basic belief may be sufficient to overcome the challenge put by the potential defeaters and so it is not necessary to have as "defeater-defeaters" reasons which are independent of a person's belief in God. Plantinga accordingly considers what happens when potential defeaters arise such as the probabilistic argument from evil or Marxist and Freudian theories of religious belief and he writes:-

"Two questions then arise. First how does the degree of nonpropositional warrant enjoyed by your belief in God compare with the warrant possessed by the alleged potential defeater? It could be that your belief, even though accepted as basic, has more warrant than the proposed defeater and thus constitutes an intrinsic defeater-defeater. When God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, the belief that God was speaking to him, I daresay, had more by way of warrant for him than would have been provided for its denial by an early Freudian who strolled by and proposed the thesis that belief in God is merely a matter of neurotic wish-fulfilment. And secondly, are there any extrinsic defeaters for these defeaters? Someone argues that the existence of 10<sup>13</sup> turps of evil is inconsistent with the existence of God; I may then have an extrinsic defeater for this potential defeater. The defeater-defeater need not take the form of a proof that these propositions are indeed consistent; if I see that the argument is unsound, then I also have a defeater for it. But I needn't do that much to have a defeater. Perhaps I am no expert in these matters but learn from reliable sources that someone else has shown the argument unsound; or perhaps I learn that the experts think it is unsound, or that the experts are evenly divided as to its soundness. Then too I have or may have a defeater for the potential defeater in question, and can continue to accept theistic belief in the basic way without irrationality."<sup>80</sup>

In all this, Plantinga is making the claim that all that is needed to respond to potential defeaters that threaten the propriety of basic

belief in God is negative apologetics in the form of attempts to refute the arguments brought against theism. Positive apologetics in the form of attempts to develop arguments for the existence of God are not needed.<sup>81</sup>

He further claims that it is not required for knowledge that something is the case that a person should be able to demonstrate to another that it is. This he opposes to the classical foundationalist picture of knowledge according to which a necessary condition for knowing that something is the case is being able to prove it from beliefs common to all reasonable persons. Against this, Plantinga says "surely it could be the case (in fact it is the case) that many Christians know that God created the world even if they cannot convince the Bertrand Russells of this world".<sup>82</sup> Plantinga denies that this commits him to a relativism whereby, at the same time, it could be the case that Bertrand Russell could know that God did not create the world.

Properly basic beliefs do not have to be common to all rational persons and, at one level, it would seem that there can be epistemological deadlock between those who have belief in God as a basic belief and those who do not. This does not mean that the person who holds that belief in God is properly basic and the person who denies that it is can both be right. Plantinga insists that at least one of them is mistaken.<sup>83</sup> However, this is by no means the end of the matter for him for he evidently sees great point in attempting to convince others that belief in God can be held to be properly basic. This discussion is at the meta-level of epistemic principles rather than at that of first-order religious beliefs. If belief in God is properly basic it does not follow that the belief that this is so is also properly basic so, at this level, there is plenty of space for discussion and argument. Reasons why belief in God can be held to be properly basic do not constitute reasons for belief in God and so do not undercut the claim that it is properly basic. So, for Plantinga, although apologetics may be limited to the negative task of refuting arguments against the existence of God, there is much that is positive in elucidating and arguing for the rationality of the Reformed epistemologist's claim that belief in God is properly basic.



### 1.3.5 SIN AND COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

Plantinga holds that it is the existence of sin in the world that, for many, interferes with belief in God. He denies that it follows that if a particular person finds it particularly difficult to believe in God that he is particularly sinful any more than saying that disease is a result of sin means that the person who is diseased is any more sinful than the one who is not. Referring to Thomas Reid's account of belief-producing mechanisms and Calvin's of a "sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all", Plantinga refers to a disposition to believe in God under certain conditions that has been implanted in us and he writes:-

"The disposition to form these beliefs, then, is really a capacity for grasping certain truths about God. This capacity is part of our native intellectual endowment. It has been distorted and partially suppressed by sin, but it is present nevertheless; it is among the epistemic powers and capacities with which God has created us. Of course, in creating us he has also given us other capacities for grasping truth: perception, memory, and the capacity to apprehend certain truths as self-evident. As a result of sin these capacities and powers sometimes malfunction. Sometimes they fail to work as God intended them to. Furthermore (also as a result of sin), human beings sometimes don't employ these capacities as God intended them to be employed. The result is error, confusion, fundamental wrong-headedness, and all the other epistemic ills to which humanity is heir. But when our epistemic powers are employed the way God meant them to be, and when, furthermore, they work in the way God intended them to work, the result is knowledge."<sup>84</sup>

What Plantinga says here is rooted in his account of the nature of epistemic justification.<sup>85</sup> He prefers to speak of 'positive epistemic status' rather than to use the deontological term 'justification' since he does not regard epistemic dutifulness as being sufficient for such status and doubts whether it is even necessary.<sup>86</sup> As we have seen, he also doubts that coherence is either necessary or sufficient for positive epistemic status. A third popular contemporary account of the nature of positive epistemic status is that of the reliabilist but Plantinga sees his own approach as being sufficiently different from this kind of account to merit a separate category. He talks not of 'belief-producing mechanisms' being 'reliable' but of our 'epistemic powers' being in a condition where they are 'working properly'.<sup>87</sup>

Plantinga proposes three necessary conditions for positive epistemic status. The first of these is that a belief has positive epistemic status for a person only if his faculties are 'working properly', i.e., working in the way that God had designed that they should, in producing the belief in question. Typically, we do not decide to hold or form such beliefs but, even when it is a matter of considering evidence, we "simply find ourselves" with them. Plantinga insists that this notion of working properly is to be sharply distinguished from that of working normally in a broadly statistical sense of the term. Wishful thinking may be widespread among human beings but to give way to it may not be to employ our cognitive equipment the way it was designed to be employed by God. Plantinga points out that the idea of one's faculties working properly is no more problematic for the person who believes that a good God has created us according to a plan than the idea of any human creation working in the way it was designed to work.

A second necessary condition is that our cognitive faculties be properly attuned to their environment. They might have to be attuned differently if they were to cope with invisible elephants on Alpha Centauri. A car might be in perfect working order but it will not run well under water. A belief has positive epistemic status for a person only if his cognitive environment is sufficiently similar to the one for which his faculties were designed.

The third necessary condition has to do with the degree of inclination or impulse a person has to accept a certain proposition rather than another. Here Plantinga suggests that experience has a role to play but not that of the variable experience of sensuous imagery. Rather it is a matter of "feeling impelled, or inclined, or moved towards a certain belief" and he says "there is a sort of inevitability about it".<sup>88</sup> Thinking of  $2 + 1 = 3$  feels different, Plantinga suggests, from thinking about  $2 + 1 = 4$  and not only because of the sensuous imagery of Descartes' clarity and distinctness but because of feeling impelled to believe the first proposition rather than the second. So, he claims, when a person's cognitive equipment is working properly and is correctly attuned to its environment, the strength of the inclination towards believing a given proposition will be related to the degree of positive epistemic status it has for the person.

In this chapter the characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology have been introduced and the ways in which they have been developed by notable Reformed writers have been outlined. Abraham Kuyper deals with all of the themes identified but that of the proper basicity of belief in God, although present, was not dealt with in quite as explicit a manner as in the case of Van Til and, especially, Plantinga. All the themes are present in Van Til's theory of knowledge but the ideas of opposing basic presuppositions and of the sinfulness of the assumption of autonomy were more prominent with him than with either of the others. Although Plantinga has indicated his support for all the themes identified, most of his work in the area of Reformed epistemology has been focussed on that of proper basicity. The noetic effects of sin have also received some attention at his hands. Because he is a contemporary writer and largely responsible for contemporary interest in Reformed epistemology, what he has had to say on these subjects has been given rather more space in this chapter than what has been said by either Kuyper or Van Til. The three chapters that follow will be concerned with exploring further the first three themes.

**BELIEF IN GOD IS PROPERLY BASIC**

Of the three characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology that are being discussed in this chapter and the following two, that of the proper basicity of belief in God is the one that has received most attention in recent discussions, i.e., by such as Plantinga, Wolterstorff and Alston. It may be that a too exclusive concern with this one theme may lead to a somewhat distorted view of Reformed epistemology as a whole, an imbalance that I shall seek to redress in the following chapters. However, in this present chapter I shall be mainly concerned to present a particular account of how belief in God could be held to be properly basic which differs in some important respects from that of the contemporary writers and which also seeks to go beyond them - or, at least, beyond that of Plantinga - to a fuller account of the way in which a properly basic belief in God may be grounded in experience. The resulting account is by no means free from fairly substantial philosophical problems but it does represent an attempt to come up with an account of this first theme which is as coherent and complete as possible.

I shall first briefly outline what I mean by belief in God since this is what is being taken to be properly basic. To say that this belief is properly basic is to make a claim about its justifiedness or rationality so I shall also give a brief outline of what I am taking to be the nature of epistemic justification. To talk of a belief being basic and properly so is to espouse some version of foundationalism so I shall attempt to develop a case for foundationalism against its main contemporary alternatives. Foundationalism comes in various forms but I shall focus mainly on an intuitionist form which makes much of the idea of immediate awareness and I shall seek to develop this with relation to belief in God. Finally I shall indicate some ways in which it may be possible to respond to some major objections to this kind of account of properly basic belief.

## 2.1 BELIEF IN GOD

I shall assume in what follows a traditional orthodox Christian view of the nature of God as, apparently, have the majority of Reformed epistemologists. In other words, I shall assume that God is, among other things, personal, infinite, the self-existent Creator of everything outside of himself, both transcendent and immanent, holy, omnipotent, omniscient and loving. Philosophical problems concerning many of these attributes and the relations among them I shall leave to one side for the purposes of this study.

'Belief in God' is ambiguous between 'belief that God exists' and 'trust in God'. Belief that God exists is belief that 'God exists' is a true statement. Trust in God, on the other hand, involves commitment, reliance, dependence and other such personal relations between the believer and God. The ambiguity is between propositional belief and what might be termed 'personal' belief.

Two opposite kinds of reduction are possible because of this ambiguity. On the one hand, it is possible to reduce belief in God to its cognitive component in a way that equates it with purely empirical belief so that belief that God exists is on a level with belief that an object in the universe exists. The opposite position reduces belief in God to its conative component and guts commitment of its cognitive elements altogether. Belief in God is certainly more than assenting to or accepting the proposition 'God exists' but I shall assume that it is at least that. I shall assume that one cannot trust in God or commit oneself to God without believing that he exists. The converse may not hold since the Bible tells us that the devils believe that God exists but it would seem odd to suggest that they trust in God. The Bible adds that they also tremble so perhaps the belief that God exists is of such a kind that it is usually, if not always, accompanied by a certain affective attitude towards God, if not trust then perhaps fear.

Plantinga, Wolterstorff and other present-day Reformed epistemologists insist on this cognitive aspect of belief in God.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it would seem that this is at least one important respect in which their position differs from that of many philosophers of religion who propose varieties of what has come to be termed Wittgensteinian

contextualism. Reformed epistemologists generally seem to take belief in God to be an existential belief rather than, say, a commitment to an attitude or policy or way of living which does not have any entailment of the existence of God.

It would appear to be this cognitive core that is to the fore in talk of the proper basicity of belief in God so I shall generally use 'belief in God' as a shorthand for 'belief that God exists'.

## 2.2 EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

If a belief is properly basic for a person then, it would seem, he is epistemically justified in taking it to be basic. This is not the same as being morally justified or being prudentially justified in doing so. Epistemic justification is usually taken to have something to do with the aim of maximising truth and avoiding falsity in a large body of beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Replacing the aim of maximising truth and minimising falsity by that of maximising moral goodness and minimising moral badness could serve to demarcate the area of moral justification.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the aim of maximising physiological, psychological, social and other forms of non-moral well-being and minimising their opposites could do the same for the area of prudential or pragmatic justification. The relationships and order of priority among these aims are themselves problematic<sup>4</sup> as is also the issue of the justification of the aims themselves. However, in what follows, I shall be concerned with epistemic justification and I shall take its sphere to be defined approximately along the lines indicated.

Epistemic (and other kinds of) justification would also seem to be a matter of degree. A belief may be more or less strongly or weakly justified. An acceptable degree of justification would seem to be less than absolute because to insist otherwise would be to restrict the set of justified beliefs over much.

Prima facie justification is to be distinguished from ultima facie or all-things-considered justification. Here 'prima facie justified' is to be taken not in the conditional sense of 'justified provided certain conditions are met and otherwise not at all justified' but in the sense of 'having some degree of justification and justified on

balance if the justification is not defeated'.<sup>5</sup> This distinction is independent of that between strong and weak justification and a prima facie justified belief may well be strongly justified in that its grounds may be more than adequate for rational acceptance.

A further distinction of importance is that between the state or condition of being justified in believing something and the activity of showing that one is so justified. I shall take it that it is possible to be justified in a belief without engaging in the activity of showing to another or even to oneself that one is. I suggest too that being able to show that one is justified in believing something is distinct from being so justified and that it is unnecessary for being so justified since, after all, most people are unable to carry out a justification of any of their perceptual or introspective beliefs.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2.1 NORMATIVE AND EVALUATIVE JUSTIFICATION

Justification in general and epistemic justification in particular is, in a broad sense, an 'evaluative' notion. In this sense, it contrasts with 'factual' in that it refers to a condition which is considered desirable, valuable or commendable from an epistemic point of view, i.e., from that of the aim of maximising truth and minimising falsity. However, there is a narrower sense of 'evaluative' as well in which it is contrasted with what is usually termed 'normative', and sometimes 'deontological', justification.

Prominent among the epistemologists that make this distinction is William Alston. He says that normative justification "has to do with how we stand vis-a-vis our intellectual duties or obligations, obligations that attach to one qua cognitive subject, qua truth seeker" whereas evaluative justification has to do with the assessment of a person's condition "as a desirable or a favourable one from an epistemic point of view, vis-a-vis the aim of the attainment of truth and the avoidance of error".<sup>7</sup> Alston adduces examples of cases where practices of belief formation could be justified in one sense but not in the other. He suggests that a naive member of an isolated, primitive tribe who, along with his fellows, unhesitatingly accepts the traditions of the tribe is normatively justified in doing so if he has no reasons for doubting the reliability of these traditions but he

might not be evaluatively justified since this might not in fact be a reliable method of maximising truth and minimising error. Alston's second example is of a person who has been presented with evidence that is overwhelming but entirely spurious that for about half the time over the previous ten years he has been in a physiological laboratory where his sensory experience was artificially produced. In such circumstances the person in question would be evaluatively justified in taking his perceptual belief-forming mechanism to be reliable because as a matter of fact it is reliable but he would not be normatively justified in doing so because he has stronger reasons for not taking it to be reliable.

In spite of the presence of a normative element in the very use of the term 'justification', some have claimed that it does not make sense to talk of intellectual obligations or duties since our believings are not, they say, subject to our direct voluntary control. The "'ought' implies 'can'" principle would require that they be so but it is generally, if not always, the case that we cannot simply will, decide or choose to believe something. We cannot help believing something if we have sufficient grounds or evidence and we cannot refrain from believing what we already believe unless we are persuaded by an amount of contrary evidence or grounds. There is, however, an effective response to this and that is to appeal to the possibility of indirect voluntary control over our beliefs. Unless we take a wholly determinist point of view, it would seem plausible to suggest that we can choose to engage in activities that influence the conditions under which our beliefs are formed and maintained. A useful analogy is with the obligation to be in good health and the steps we can take to influence the conditions that make for good or bad health.<sup>8</sup> So, if we can do something to influence our beliefs, it would seem that it does make sense to talk of intellectual obligations.

In view of the conceptual link between 'justification' and 'obligation', it would seem plausible to suggest that meeting one's intellectual obligations is necessary for justified belief. But is it sufficient? Certainly, some specifications of a normative criterion of rational belief seem to leave one looking for more. An example is Nicholas Wolterstorff's proposal of such a criterion:-

"A person S is rational in his eluctable and innocently produced belief Bp if and only if S does believe p and either:



(i) S neither has nor ought to have adequate reason to cease from believing p, and is not rationally obliged to believe that he does have adequate reasons to cease; or

(ii) S does have adequate reason to cease from believing p but does not realize that he does, and is rationally justified in that."<sup>9</sup>

An 'eluctable' belief here is one that the person could have refrained from believing through the exercise of voluntary control whether direct or indirect. The main problem with this criterion is that it rests on an 'innocent-until-proved-guilty' principle and is essentially negative, making rationality a matter of not being obliged not to hold a belief. Believing is therefore rational as long as it is not irrational but this seems a fairly minimal notion in the light of the epistemic aim of maximising truth and minimising falsity. Taking normative justification as a matter of merely being rationally permitted to go on believing something in the absence of negative considerations seems somewhat inadequate and leaves many people wanting something more.

Perhaps, the 'something more' is the strengthening of what seems a weak principle. This could be a replacement of the 'innocent-until-proved-guilty' principle by a 'guilty-until-proved-innocent' principle. This distinction derives from a famous debate in the ethics of belief between W. K. Clifford and William James and the harsher principle can be seen to underlie the objections to belief in God brought by Clifford and some other evidentialists opposed by Plantinga. But this stronger requirement seems too strong since it would exclude as irrational many of our beliefs that are generally accepted. We can not surely be expected to refrain from believing anything unless we have evidence or reasons for doing so. Perhaps it can reasonably be asked of us in relation to certain doubtful or controversial beliefs but surely not in relation to most of our everyday beliefs, e.g., our ordinary perceptual beliefs. If so, strengthening the normative principle to this extent cannot satisfy our demands for something more for rational acceptability.

Perhaps, the something more is also something else - something other than a purely normative criterion. Evaluative justification was defined above as having to do with the assessment of a person's condition as a desirable or a favourable one from an epistemic point of view. A person may have done all that could be required of him in

relation to the formation and maintaining of his beliefs and still be in a very unfavourable position with regard to the aim of maximising truth and minimising error, as, for example, the case of the culturally isolated mentioned by Alston. The analogy with health could be used here again since the ill effects of some kind of physical handicap could be totally outside a person's control. This is a different concept of epistemic justification and some would argue that 'justification' is not a wholly appropriate term to apply to favourable status from an epistemic point of view where there is no reference made to intellectual obligation. However, its usage in this way seems fairly well established in the literature and provided it is being understood in this wider sense it seems sensible to continue with it.

Of course, how precisely this kind of concept might be 'filled out' is not specified in merely formulating it in terms of favourable status from the point of view of maximising truth (any more than the normative one is without specifying intellectual obligations). Plantinga's 'working properly' notion would be one way of specifying an evaluative concept more precisely as would various versions of reliabilism where to say that a belief was formed in a reliable way is, more or less, to say that it was formed in a way that can generally be relied upon to form true rather than false beliefs. Without being more specific at this stage, I shall assume that for a belief to be justified - or, more particularly, for a belief to be properly basic - it is necessary not only that the believer fulfil his intellectual obligations but also that he be in a favourable position from the point of view of maximising truth and minimising falsity. For the present, I leave open the basis on which this evaluative status may 'supervene'.

### **2.2.2 INTERNALIST AND EXTERNALIST JUSTIFICATION**

The distinction between internalist and externalist approaches to epistemic justification has only come to prominence in the post-Gettier age of epistemology. Internalist approaches held sway from the time of Descartes until such as D. M. Armstrong began to talk of an alternative.<sup>10</sup>

The internalist holds that the believer's perspective upon a situation is of central importance for the justification of his beliefs. Epistemic justification of a belief depends upon what support or ground is available for it from within the believer's perspective so that it is based on matters which are in some significant sense internal to that perspective. Internalist accounts differ in relation to acceptable kinds of support or grounding relations and what can be regarded as being within the believer's perspective. Some limit the support relationship to inference and the believer's perspective to his other beliefs or, more narrowly, to his other justified beliefs. Others include a grounding relationship which is not inferential and they extend the believer's perspective to include his experiences in variously broad or narrow senses of 'experience'. Alston suggests that what a belief is based upon could even include psychological states and what goes on below the conscious level, e.g., subconscious processes in the formation of short-term perceptual beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the externalist holds that what matters for the justification of a belief is the obtaining of a relation between the believer and the world which is such as to make it at least probable that his belief is true. This relation has been characterised in a number of ways: Armstrong wrote of a 'nomological relation', others of a causal relation and many make reference to the reliability of belief-forming mechanisms. What is radical about externalist approaches is that the relation between the believer and the world which justifies his belief may be entirely external to his own perspective upon the world. No awareness of this relation is required of the believer for him to be justified in believing as he does.

At first sight, it might seem that this could be better termed a subjectivist/objectivist distinction. However, the distinction between subjective and objective can be made among internalist approaches themselves. Indeed, most internalist approaches would be (at least partly) objectivist in that they make much of logical relations among propositions as determinants of whether beliefs are justified as against (purely) subjectivist considerations of, say, personal whim or fancy. It would seem better therefore to use the internalist/externalist terminology.

A common objection to externalist justification is that it provides for the justification of 'epistemically irresponsible' believings in that a belief may be justified simply on the basis of relations between the believer and the world which are external to his perspective and regardless of evidence or grounds he may have against the belief or, simply, in the absence of any evidence or grounds for or against it.<sup>12</sup> The case where the believer has evidence against the belief can be met by the addition to any statement of an externalist criterion of a non-undermining condition: a belief is justified only if it is not undermined by other beliefs already accepted by the believer. The case of complete absence of evidence or grounds seems rather more difficult to meet and, I think, constitutes an insuperable objection to externalism. If it is conceivable that a belief could be produced by some reliable mechanism of which the subject is completely unaware so that, as far as he is concerned, they simply pop into his mind, it seems counter-intuitive to say that such beliefs are justified. I shall therefore assume that justified beliefs must be based on adequate grounds from within the subject's perspective on the world. This excludes unfounded hunches, mere wishful thinking or what are from his point of view accidentally true beliefs.

I am therefore taking for granted that justification should be regarded from a broadly internalist point of view. I shall not restrict the grounds to other beliefs a person may hold but rather, at least for the present, I shall hold open the possibility of experiences providing grounds for justified beliefs, including those experiences that are religious or aesthetic and not only what we usually term 'sense experience'. I shall therefore be assuming that the believer's perspective upon the world is of importance at least insofar as it is necessary for a belief of his to be justified that he have some awareness of the conditions that justify it.

### **2.3 FOUNDATIONALISM**

Talk of the proper basicity of belief in God assumes a foundationalist view of the structure of a person's beliefs. Foundationalism comes in a number of different forms, some of which have been identified, as we have seen, by Alvin Plantinga. All share a view of a person's justified beliefs and knowledge as of an

architectonic structure in which there is an asymmetric relation of physical support between floors and a foundation which supports them all but which is supported by none of them. Foundationalists disagree as to what the foundations consist of, how fixed and certain they are and how precisely the floors are supported by them.

Coherentism is a leading alternative to foundationalism or, as Ernest Sosa puts it, the choice of metaphors for the structure of justified beliefs is between the pyramid and the raft.<sup>13</sup> The raft metaphor - suggested by Otto Neurath - sees the structure of justified beliefs as floating free of any link to an external point by tie or anchor. Any part can be repaired or replaced but to do so the person must take his stand on other parts. The relation of support between parts is mutual or symmetric - unlike that between the parts of the foundationalist's pyramid.

There are other alternatives which show that foundationalism and coherentism may 'shade off' into one another. Quine's metaphor of the 'web of beliefs' is an example of this for, as he puts it, the fabric "impinges upon experience only along the edges" although it is "underdetermined by its boundary conditions, experience".<sup>14</sup> In this figure, there is both the idea of anchoring, albeit of a loose and adjustable kind, and also a distinction between central and peripheral beliefs and both of these elements tend to give something of a foundationalist shade to the picture. Imre Lakatos' talk of the hard core and protective belt of his 'scientific research programmes' also presents something of an in-between metaphor.

In what follows I shall take it that pure coherentism does not provide an adequate account of epistemic justification. I do not have space to do much more than mention the arguments involved. The first of them is that, if coherence is to be a sole criterion for acceptability of a structure of beliefs, this would seem to provide for the possibility of a plurality of internally coherent structures with nothing to choose between them. A second main and related objection is often referred to as 'the isolation objection' and this arises from the belief structure's detachment from the empirical world or, more generally, from reality. The problem arises at the periphery of the fabric of coherent beliefs and beliefs there may be replaced by different and inconsistent beliefs without affecting the coherence of

the whole structure. For example, replacement of 'There is an armchair before me' by 'There is a three-legged milking-stool before me' may not affect the coherence of my belief structure but it is impossible that both be true or justified in the same circumstances. The point about such beliefs is that they may be at the periphery of the system of coherent beliefs but nevertheless require justification and the justification provided by their coherence with the rest of the structure may be rather weak whereas it would seem plausible to claim that such perceptual beliefs could be very strongly justified. Both of these objections arise from the fact that pure coherence makes justification a matter which is wholly internal to the system of beliefs and totally unaffected by what lies beyond. Admittedly this is the response of a realist and this itself is a far from uncontroversial philosophical position but, again, it is one that I do not have space to defend against anti-realist alternatives and I shall therefore have to take it for granted in what follows.

Further problems with pure coherentism include the difficulty of defining coherence and of justifying the adoption of coherence as the sole criterion of rationality. In taking pure coherentism to be an unacceptable alternative to foundationalism, I am not dismissing coherence altogether as of no relevance to epistemic justification. On the contrary, it would seem that significant lack of coherence must count against the overall perspective of a belief-system being accepted as true. How much incoherence is acceptable or in what respects it may be present is difficult to say but at some point it would seem irrational to continue to accept the hard core or basis of an incoherent 'system'.

### **2.3.1 THE REGRESS ARGUMENT**

The case for the necessity of properly basic beliefs has its starting-point in what has become known as 'the regress problem'. If a belief is justified by inference from another belief or set of beliefs, then this belief or set of beliefs requires in turn further beliefs for its justification and a chain of justification is set up. There are four possible alternatives for this chain:-

- (i) It continues infinitely;
- (ii) It forms a circle or loop;

(iii) It terminates with beliefs that are groundless or unjustified; or

(iv) It terminates with beliefs that are justified otherwise than by being inferred from other beliefs.

The first of these is often dismissed very quickly as if no reason were required for ruling out an infinite regress of justification but such a ready rejection can be questioned.<sup>15</sup> Arguments against the rejection of an infinite justificatory regress tend to consist in attempts to produce actual counter-examples and these are usually mathematical. Ernest Sosa makes a distinction between actual justificatory regresses and those that are merely potential.<sup>16</sup> A potential justificatory regress is one of conditional justification so that each member of the chain is justified if its successors are justified. An actual justificatory regress differs in that not only can each member be justified on the basis of its successors but it is also the case that each member is actually justified.

The example Sosa gives of an actual justificatory regress is as follows:-

There is at least one even number  
There are at least two even numbers  
There are at least three even numbers  
....

If the second of these beliefs is justified then the one above it in the chain, the first, is justified, and if the third is justified then the second is, and so on ad infinitum. So it is a justificatory regress. And it is an actual one since it is the case that every one of these beliefs is justified.

Sosa's example of a potential justificatory regress is as follows:-

There is at least one perfect number > 100  
There are at least two perfect numbers > 100  
There are at least three perfect numbers > 100  
....

Again if the second is justified then so is the first, and if the third then so is the second, and so on. Again this is a justificatory regress but where it differs is in that, if a person has no other belief about perfect numbers apart from the belief that a perfect number is an integer equal to the sum of its whole factors -

so that, for example,  $28 = 14 + 7 + 4 + 2 + 1$  and is therefore perfect - then he is not justified in believing any member of the sequence in spite of the fact that each member is conditionally justified by its successor.

However, I do not think Sosa has shown that there is an actual justificatory regress where the only way of justifying beliefs in the chain is on the basis of their successors. There is a proof of the denumerably infinite cardinality of the set of even numbers but not, as far as is known, of that of the set of perfect numbers. In the absence of external information, any infinite justificatory regress is merely potential rather than actual. This is the essence of proof by mathematical induction where the establishment of the potential justificatory regress is readily seen to be insufficient for proof of a conjecture for all positive integers unless the regress can be terminated by independent demonstration of its truth for the first integer in the chain.

Until an incontrovertible example of an actual justificatory regress is produced then it seems plausible to follow the intuition that rules out an infinite regress of justification. In addition, it seems questionable to generalise from the rather specialised area of mathematical justification to that of empirical or other beliefs.

The second alternative above was that of the justificatory chain forming a circle or loop. This seems relatively easy to dispose of since it amounts to the claim that a belief can be ultimately justified by itself. If the other three alternatives were ruled out, it would mean that all justified beliefs must lie somewhere along circular chains of justification and it would be true of all beliefs that they are ultimately justified by themselves. It is very difficult to see how all beliefs could be ultimately self-justifying in any straightforward sense of 'justifying'.

The third alternative is to claim that the justificatory chain terminates with beliefs that are groundless or unjustified. Something along these lines is the alternative preferred by those who share an outlook that has come to be labelled 'contextualist'. A very wide range of philosophical viewpoints have had this label applied to them - viewpoints as diverse as those of Pierce, Dewey, Quine, Kuhn



and Michael Williams - but perhaps the best known and most influential, not least in relation to religious belief, is that of the later Wittgenstein and such as Norman Malcolm and D. Z. Phillips. Roughly speaking, the common core of all these approaches is that they make epistemic justification relative to some context of human action and social life.

The solution that contextualism provides for the regress problem is the claim that the justificatory chain terminates with beliefs that are unjustified. But to sum up the position in such terms, as some indeed do,<sup>17</sup> does not really do justice to the subtleties of the contextualist viewpoint when expressed by someone of the stature of Wittgenstein or many of his interpreters. For to say of such terminating beliefs that they are unjustified is to suggest from the outset that they lack something that they ought to possess. But this is a long way from what Wittgenstein probably meant when he said that "at the foundation of founded belief lies belief that is not founded"<sup>18</sup> or when he asked "Why shouldn't one form of life culminate in an utterance of belief in the Last Judgement?".<sup>19</sup> These beliefs are not like the beliefs for which they provide grounds for it is meaningless to say of them that they are true or false and it follows from this that it cannot be said of them that they are justified or unjustified. As Wittgenstein himself said, "If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false".<sup>20</sup> Malcolm and others follow in describing such beliefs not as ungrounded but as groundless, because they require no grounds. Truth, meaning and justification are all interwoven with the practices of a way of life of a human group and religion is a form of such life. There are no standards of justification, conditions of truth or criteria of meaning that overarch forms of life and 'language-games'. Justification is internal to practices of different kinds which are embedded in forms of human life. Statements of belief are justified by reference to the paradigm-cases in which the use of such statements has been learned. The framework beliefs which give their distinctive shapes to social and linguistic practices or 'language-games' are therefore not beliefs for which it makes sense to require evidence. Wittgenstein asserts that evidence for religious belief "would destroy the whole business" and goes on to castigate a certain Father O'Hara for adducing evidence saying "if this is religious belief then it is all superstition".<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein rejects as foolish the demand for

evidence for beliefs such as 'I have two hands' because of the role such beliefs play in our form of life.<sup>22</sup> Scepticism about framework beliefs is meaningless.

It seems very far from adequate to summarise the relevant features of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion as briefly as this. An adequate account would merit a complete study in itself and an adequate response rather more. All one can do is to point very briefly to reasons why a Reformed epistemologist might opt instead for his account of basic belief. Both Wittgensteinian and Reformed epistemology have in common a rejection of the evidentialist challenge to religious belief, the former on the basis of an appeal to groundless framework beliefs that constitute the religious form of life and the latter on that of appeal to properly basic beliefs that are grounded in experience. The Wittgensteinian position is bound up with what Bernard Williams calls its 'transcendental idealism'<sup>23</sup> whereas Reformed epistemology generally takes the form of a version of theological realism. Alston, writing on the subject of the differences between Plantinga's position and that of the Wittgensteinian, says that Plantinga differs in his insistence that "belief in God is either true or false in a perfectly straightforward sense of these terms, the same sense in which it is either true or false that snow is white".<sup>24</sup> Alston insists that he himself takes an "objective" view of the existence and reality of God and that he finds it meaningful in relation to religion to ask the question "Is this language-game in touch with reality?", a question which the Wittgensteinian would not find at all meaningful.<sup>25</sup> The gulf between these two kinds of outlook is both deep and wide. The differences are not only in the area of epistemology but, perhaps more fundamentally, in those of ontology and metaphysics. They are from the point of view of Reformed epistemology differences in basic belief or, if it can be so stated, from that of the Wittgensteinian contextualist, differences in framework belief.

An adequate defence of the foundationalism of Reformed epistemology would have to show why it is preferable to the position of Wittgenstein and why realism is preferable to idealism and anti-realism. It can hardly be simply a matter of digging in one's heels and saying 'Here I stand' but to go into these issues now is impossible. Assuming the adequacy of a realist perspective and

finding that, because of this, the contextualist response to the regress problem is inadequate, we are now left with only the fourth alternative, the foundationalist response.

The foundationalist says that justificatory chains terminate with beliefs that are justified otherwise than by being inferred from other beliefs. But as it stands this statement is negative and relatively uninformative about these basic beliefs. A part of the task of showing why Reformed epistemology might be preferable to its alternatives is that of providing some account of how its basic beliefs are grounded. After all, it was presumably dissatisfaction with foundationalism in the first place that made people turn to its alternatives so perhaps the task of providing a more satisfactory account of foundationalism is prior to that of showing flaws in its alternatives.

#### 2.4 INTUITIONISM

Mention in philosophical discussion of intuition in general - and of religious intuition in particular - is likely to be met by a 'knee-jerk' reaction that kicks it out of court immediately. Such ready dismissal of a position seems so uncharacteristic and unworthy of philosophers that it is puzzling. Perhaps the reasons for it are to do with a lack of definition of what might be meant by 'intuition' and the assumption that what is being claimed for it is rather more extravagant than is necessarily the case. I shall attempt to develop a case for a relatively modest version of religious intuitionism as a way of filling out what might be meant by claiming that belief in God is properly basic and, in doing so, I shall try to formulate a more moderate form of foundationalism than that which claims some kind of Cartesian certainty.

Intuition is a rather ambiguous term. Anthony Quinton distinguishes three senses of the word.<sup>26</sup> First, there is what he terms 'vernacular intuition'. This is the ability to form correct judgements in circumstances where the kind of evidence usually required to justify them is not available. This is what ordinary language usage takes intuition to be as, for example, when someone predicts impending disasters without having or being able to point to any evidence for their prediction. Such intuition entails the truth

of that which is intuited so that 'intuit' belongs to the same class of words as 'know' and 'remember'. A second sense of the word refers to what Quinton calls 'psychological intuition' and this covers particular beliefs formed by a particular person and accepted by him as justified where such acceptance is not based on inference from other beliefs that he holds. These beliefs may or may not be true and may or may not be justified although the subject takes them to be justified. The third sense is Quinton's 'logically intuitive beliefs' and he writes of them:-

"The terminal intuitive beliefs that are needed to bring the regress of justification to a stop need not be strictly self-evident in the sense that they somehow justify themselves. All that is required is that they should not owe their justification to other beliefs. ... (L)ogically intuitive beliefs ... do not need support from others (but) are not necessarily excluded from such support."<sup>27</sup>

On the matter of support, Quinton distinguishes between 'essential' and 'accidental' support. A logically intuitive belief may have accidental support but it does not require it for justification. A belief that is not logically intuitive does require support to be justified and this support is therefore essential. He suggests the example of a case where, in poor light conditions, a book is asserted to have a red cover not because the cover can be seen but because it is known to belong to a particular person, all of whose books have red covers. The belief that the book is red is logically intuitive to the extent that it does not need the support of the general statement that all this person's books are red and can be seen to be red under the right light conditions. In this case, the support of the general statement is accidental.<sup>28</sup> Logically intuitive beliefs will normally be psychologically intuitive as well but they do not have to be so because they may have (accidental) support which is recognised as such by the subject. On the other hand, we may accept beliefs without reasons and only later find that they have essential support - so psychologically intuitive beliefs need not be logically intuitive.

Quinton's 'logically intuitive' corresponds to Plantinga's 'properly basic' and his 'psychologically intuitive' to being taken as 'basic'. Other contemporary foundationalists use 'immediately justified' for the former category. Whether they be termed 'properly basic', 'logically intuitive' or 'immediately justified', the definitions of this category of beliefs that we have had so far share a negative

character that does little to say how they are justified apart from excluding their requiring the support of other beliefs. I shall attempt to sketch out a positive account of one way in which they might be justified. This is through their grounding in an experience of immediate awareness.

#### 2.4.1 IMMEDIATE AWARENESS

If a basic belief is to be properly basic (or immediately justified or logically intuitive, according to the terminology preferred), then it must be at least prima facie justified and grounded, not groundless. I have chosen to take a route to epistemic justification which requires not only that the believer's intellectual obligations be fulfilled but also that his position be a favourable one from the point of view of the aim of maximising truth and minimising falsity. This differs from the notion of rationality used by Wolterstorff. I am also assuming that the believer's own perspective on the world is of importance for the justification of his basic beliefs at least insofar as he has some awareness of the conditions that ground or justify his belief. This differs from the approach of Plantinga insofar as it is correct to regard his account of 'working properly' as externalist. The question now is whether the notion of immediate awareness can help to provide an adequate account of proper basicity when it is understood in these terms.

Philosophers of both past and present have sought to base their foundationalism in immediate awareness. A cluster of related terms have been used with 'immediate' sometimes replaced by 'direct' and 'awareness' by 'consciousness', 'apprehension' or 'experience'. Others have talked of objects (the content of perceptual experience, physical objects, sense-data, the meanings of some linguistic terms, etc.) being 'given' or 'presented' to the awareness. All seem to be trying to get at the same kind of idea but it has proved very difficult to analyse. One example of an attempt to analyse it is found in Russell's definition of what he termed 'knowledge by acquaintance':-

"I say that I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, i.e. when I am directly aware of the object itself. When I speak of a cognitive relation here, I do not mean the sort of relation which constitutes judgement, but the sort which constitutes presentation."<sup>29</sup>

Among recent and contemporary attempts to analyse immediate awareness, one of the most careful and thorough is that of Paul K. Moser.<sup>30</sup> He puts it forward as a proposed account of empirical justification. Can it be of help to Reformed epistemology in providing for the grounding of basic beliefs like Plantinga's 'God is speaking to me'? I suspect that Moser would not approve of the application of his account to beliefs that are not empirical in the usual sense of the word but I think an adaptation of it can help to provide one possible account of how basic belief in God can be grounded in experience. It will have its own weaknesses and limitations but I shall seek to present as adequate an account as possible. If it is not really adequate for the task, then the tenability of this version of Reformed epistemology's theme of the proper basicity of belief in God may seem rather doubtful. But I do think that it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of this notion of immediate awareness, if anywhere, that a basis for this theme of proper basicity is to be found. It seems to be an immediate awareness of God and his speaking to people and the sufficiency of the justification provided by this awareness to the corresponding beliefs that is at the heart of what Calvin, Kuyper, Van Til and other Reformed writers attempted to formulate.

Moser treats immediate apprehension as an occurrent psychological state which has phenomenological content without being a belief-state. This immediate apprehension provides the basis for the immediate justification of a foundational belief without being identical with that belief. Examples of this kind of awareness include the hearing of a particular tone rather than the hearing of a bell, the smelling of a particular smell rather than the smelling of a rose, the seeing of a bright yellow sphere rather than the seeing of the sun and the tasting of some particularly bitter taste rather than the tasting of vinegar. It is what we experience when our attention is attracted by a completely novel perceptual object or when we hear two sounds in such quick succession - say, a gunshot followed by the loud ringing of a bell - that we do not have time to conceptualise the first as the sound of a gunshot.

Immediate apprehension is non-propositional, i.e., it does not involve a judgement that something is the case. It is also non-conceptual, i.e., there is no conceptual relation between the perceiver and the content of his immediate apprehension whereby he engages in any "act

of classifying, categorizing, or attributing a property to this content in accordance with some classificatory scheme".<sup>31</sup> Moser suggests that something like this non-conceptual awareness occurs when one counts objects or images without describing them or subsuming them under concepts, e.g., counting sounds rather than counting the chimes of a clock. Moser argues that if apprehension required conceptualisation then an endless regress of conceptual events would seem to threaten. The mental activity of classifying an object under a concept requires a (logically) prior awareness of the object to be classified and if this awareness itself required classification then this further mental act of classifying would require a further awareness and so on ad infinitum. But ordinary perceptual experience would be impossible if such an infinite series of mental acts were required so, whatever apprehension is, it cannot be conceptual.

Moser also argues that the given in the case of immediate apprehension is not some "mere homogenous this" but determinate perceptual content having definite ostensible empirical properties. This does not require conceptualisation for, he says, "it is possible to apprehend some determinate appearance of blue, for example, without engaging in the additional activity of classifying what one is apprehending, i.e., of deciding whether the appearance being apprehended is an instance of blue".<sup>32</sup> This is because immediate apprehension may be taken to have a cognate accusative of a quality or content rather than an objective accusative of an object or property. Apprehension differs from conceptualisation then in that it has no object but a content in the determinate nature of the event of apprehending whereas conceptualisation has that content as its object. The appearance of blue is not an object of one's current visual experience, a sense-datum, but rather it is a kind of visual experience: Moser says that "to sense blue is to sense 'bluey' just as to dance a waltz is to dance 'waltzily'".<sup>33</sup> The fact that 'bluey' is an adverbial description rather than an adjectival ascription of a property to an object does not make it any less determinate. In addition, because the content of immediate apprehension is determinate, it is not ineffable, i.e., it is not inexpressible in language.

In order to get from immediate apprehension characterised in this way to the immediate justification of beliefs about the given, Moser proposes the following principle of immediate justification:-

"A person, S, is immediately justified in believing that he seems to see an F at a time, t, if and only if at t:

- (i) S immediately apprehends an ostensibly presented F, and
- (ii) S understandingly believes in light of this event of apprehending that he seems to see an F."<sup>34</sup>

Moser adds that talk of seeming to see could be replaced in this formulation by that of seeming to taste, smell, hear or feel without raising any special problems.

In this principle, the key justifying condition for the given belief that I seem to see an F is that I immediately apprehend an F. This apprehension does not, as it were, lie side by side in the mind with the given belief in an unrelated way. It is related to it by way of an immediate apprehension of an immediate apprehension of F and Moser proposes that this awareness of the apprehension of F is involved in the given belief - hence his use of the phrase 'in light of'. This satisfies the requirements of a broadly internalist approach to justification because there is an awareness of the justifying condition.

Moser includes the word 'understandingly' in his principle to meet an objection that could otherwise be put: one could only be justified in the belief that one seems to see an F if one has the independent information necessary to enable one to distinguish seeming to see an F from seeming to see a G. Moser meets this very effectively by arguing that the information in question is only "semantic information ... necessary for the understanding of what it means to claim that one is in a certain perceptual state rather than another".<sup>35</sup> This information is necessary in order that the believed proposition be intelligible - so that it is required for its existence rather than for its justification. The kind of objection being met here is a fairly common one against properly basic beliefs and its weakness is that it confuses, in thinking about the 'basis' of a belief, what makes it acceptable with what makes it possible.<sup>36</sup>

I think that Moser's principle could be strengthened by the inclusion of a non-undermining clause such as 'S does not have adequate reason to believe that he is not seeming to see an F'. Moser himself considers and rejects the possibility of adding such a clause and he does so mainly on the grounds that it leads to a circular account of



justification. But, since the principle itself is designed to apply to immediately justified beliefs and such a non-undermining clause refers to having reasons for doubt, I think it avoids this danger. It also serves to emphasise the prima facie nature of immediate justification of basic perceptual beliefs.

There does seem to be another weakness with this account but I am not sure how to overcome it. This has to do with the relationship between an immediate apprehension and the belief it justifies. Moser is quite insistent that apprehension and belief must be related and he talks of believing 'in light of' the immediate apprehension but he accounts for this by saying that a "key component" of the given belief is another immediate apprehension - an immediate apprehension of the immediate apprehension that justifies the belief.<sup>37</sup> But since he has defined an immediate apprehension as being both non-conceptual and non-propositional, it remains unclear how it can be involved in the given belief as a de re component. He has to insist that it is non-propositional or else it would seem to stand in need of justification and the experience of immediate apprehension would become evidence rather than grounds or a justifying condition for the given belief. At the same time, unlike the justifying immediate apprehension itself, the second-order immediate apprehension does have an object (the first-order justifying immediate apprehension) so it cannot be a case of apprehending apprehending-ly. If so, does it make sense to regard this second-order apprehension as non-conceptual? There does seem to be some sleight of hand involved here and yet the kind of thing Moser wants to say somehow seems right. He does go on to say that this second-order apprehension does not require justification since it is a level-confusion to insist that if we justifiably believe something we must also justifiably believe that we justifiably believe it and here he does seem to be correct.<sup>38</sup> According to a broadly internalist point of view, what is required of a believer is an awareness of the conditions that ground his belief but not necessarily a justified belief that these conditions provide adequate grounds for the belief.

Whether or not this is an adequate response to the apparent weakness to which I have referred I am not sure. Assuming that it is and that Moser's account is a more or less adequate one of the justification of basic empirical beliefs, can it be adapted to provide an adequate account for the justification of basic religious beliefs?

#### 2.4.2 IMMEDIATE AWARENESS OF GOD?

Appeal to an immediate awareness of God as grounds or a justifying condition for properly basic belief in God is not at all the same as appeal to such an experience of awareness as either sufficient evidence for the existence of God or as part of a 'cumulative case' for his existence. The Reformed epistemologist denies the necessity of such evidence or any evidence for belief in God but he does not necessarily deny the possibility of its existence. It may be available but, like Quinton's 'accidental support', it is not required for justified belief in God.

If the account in the last section of an immediate awareness providing justification for basic empirical beliefs is along the right lines, then a significant step towards showing that it could be adapted to cover religious experiences is to show that religious experience is sufficiently like sense experience. Obviously there are very great differences between experiences that purport to be of objects in the world and those that purport to be of its Creator but they can be disregarded if they can be shown to be epistemically irrelevant.

Religious experience comes in a wide range of varieties and, indeed, it is possible to talk of any and all experiences as having a religious dimension. I shall be concerned with those experiences that purport to give an immediate awareness of God and, of these, only with those that are mediated through finite things. That is, I am concerned with the experiences of the ordinary believer who claims an awareness of God through the Scriptures, the words of a preacher, a hymn or prayer, the beauty of nature, and so on rather than with the special experiences of the mystic, i.e., mainly with those experiences which fall into the first (and possibly the second) of the classes of religious experiences identified by Richard Swinburne.<sup>39</sup> Insofar as mystical experiences are really inexpressible in an absolute sense, they do not help for present purposes since it is difficult to see how they can be the grounds of an expressible justified belief. It is difficult, anyhow, to see how the object of an absolutely ineffable experience could be individuated as an object of worship. The comparative rarity of such experiences is another reason for disregarding them in this attempt to show that the beliefs of the ordinary person-in-the-pew could be properly basic.

The experiences with which I am concerned here have what H. P. Owen terms a "mediated immediacy".<sup>40</sup> They are psychologically direct but, at the same time, there is an indirect process which is in some sense responsible for the experiences in question. They differ therefore from the direct unmediated experiences which Alston has recently taken to be the basis of what he terms "the perception of God" in which "this presentation (of God) is not via any sensory qualities or sensorily perceivable objects".<sup>41</sup> I think it can rightly be said of such an account that it amounts to an appeal to mystical experience minus ineffability.<sup>42</sup> I do not wish to deny that such experiences could take place or that they could ground justified basic belief in God but I am simply concerned with what seem to me the more usual types of religious experience. An account of immediately justified belief would seem to be of less value if it does not cover the beliefs and experiences of as wide a population as possible although, of course, by no means all religious believers would claim that their belief in God is properly basic.

One feature shared by these purported experience of God and those of objects in the world is that they both seem to be of something separate from and independent of oneself - unlike the experience of, say, dizziness. Obviously the Creator is not an object in the world and, therefore, not perceivable by the senses. But is it not what Alston terms 'epistemic chauvinism',<sup>43</sup> to assume that we can only be aware of something that is directly presented to the senses? If such an assumption were correct, it would also exclude the possibility of the direct but mediated knowledge of other minds. So the fact that God is not an object in the world is not epistemically relevant to the extension of our account of immediate awareness to include experience of God. This is perhaps rendered more plausible by focussing, as we are, on the mediated immediacy of this awareness - God is perceived through things observable to the senses and, Christians believe, was even present in the world as incarnate in Jesus Christ,

Another difference is that sense experience is public and experience of God is private. As far as phenomenological content is concerned, both are private but, being objects in the world, the objects of sense experience are open to public gaze whereas it would seem that God is not open in this way. But why should this be thought relevant to the matter of epistemic justification? Presumably, at least part of what

is meant by this objection is that there are standard ways of checking a truth grounded in sense experience and, it is assumed, nothing equivalent in the case of purported experience of God. We can check the evidence of one of our senses against that of the others and we can check further against the experiences of others and so on. But one does not need to engage in this process of checking in order to be justified in believing that things are as they seem to be through the operation of one of our senses just as long as others of our senses or the experiences of other people do not defeat this justification. In other words, what we are concerned with here is *prima facie* justification and there are defeaters (and 'checks' - with what scriptures say, with fellow-believers, etc.) for the justification of religious belief just as there are for empirical belief. Since God is not an object in the world, the unavailability of confirmation by other senses does not defeat the justification of belief that one is immediately aware of him. Other considerations might do so but why should it be thought strange that these particular checks are unavailable? Indeed, it would be thought strange if one engaged in a checking procedure for every belief based on sense experience so why should I need to do so for what purports to be an awareness of God?

Moreover, the checks available for sense experience ultimately rely on sense experience itself. There are no external checks so why should it be thought necessary that there should be external checks on religious experience? Perhaps this is also an example of the use of what Alston terms a double standard on the part of those who argue on such grounds that these differences are epistemically relevant.<sup>44</sup>

This kind of objection may be put in terms of a certain lack of predictability in the case of experience of God as compared with sense experience. Again, I think that the point about the justification of properly basic beliefs being *prima facie* meets this objection adequately. In addition, insofar as it is true that experiences that purport to be of God do not have this predictable regularity, surely this is only to be expected given the nature of God as he is traditionally believed to be. Although, for example, the Bible invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good" and to "seek and we shall find", there is still no tight lawlike regularity in religious experiences but the traditional Christian view of the nature of God does not provide grounds for expecting it to be otherwise.<sup>45</sup>

It is therefore difficult to see why this should be thought to be epistemically relevant. \*

Another version of the same kind of objection could be to the effect that we all know what we mean when we say that we see or hear something but we do not know what is meant by talking of hearing or seeing God. However, is it so obvious that we do know what we mean by saying that we see something or hear something or what we mean when we say we are aware of another person? The previous section of this study surely illustrates how difficult it is to analyse perception. Perhaps the concept of seeing is a bit like the concept of time - we all know what it is until somebody asks us what it is. Could the same not be true of the notion of hearing or seeing God? A person may know what it is like to experience "in the mind's ear", as Robert Audi puts it,<sup>46</sup> the voice of God and yet find it difficult, if not impossible, to say what it is. Furthermore, this difficulty is quite understandable in the light of what is believed about the nature of God.

Perhaps the most commonly quoted objection to basing religious belief upon religious experience in this way is from the facts that the latter does not appear to be universal and that there is no universal agreement on the former. This lack of universality is apparently Quinton's main reason for rejecting fairly summarily the possibility of religious intuition (which he seems to identify with mystical experience without recognising the possibility of a more common non-mystical kind of awareness of God - not that this distinction really lessens the force of the objection to any significant extent).<sup>47</sup> But the sheer fact of the numbers who believe or disbelieve seems epistemically irrelevant. What might be of more importance is the issue of whether such experiences or beliefs are found distributed across cultures and time and it is not obvious that this is not so.

However, apart from this, there is the question of the conditions that have to be satisfied in order to have a particular experience of any kind - including sense experience. These conditions are both subjective and objective: the observer must be in the right place under the right conditions, e.g., in the case of sight, the light conditions must be right. It would seem understandable that the same kind of thing be true of experiences that purport to be of God and

especially so as it seems to make sense that these should include the meeting of moral conditions and others that involve the whole person. As Alston puts it, "God is not available for 'voyeurs'".<sup>48</sup> And a further point made by Alston in this regard has to do with the learning of skills so that whereas we are almost all masters of perceptual practice in relation to the ordinary objects of sense perception, it may be plausibly maintained that we are by no means masters in the perception of God.<sup>49</sup> There is also the fact that in the case of mediated experiences, one person may be aware only of the medium while another perceives something else through the medium.<sup>50</sup> A technician examining a telescope mirror may see only the condition of the mirror whereas an astronomer sees an interesting galaxy. In a similar way, two people may listen to the same sermon but one is aware only of the eloquence of the preacher while the other hears the voice of God in his words - and Saul of Tarsus heard the voice of Jesus while his companions apparently only heard a sound.

It might seem that this argument - that the differences between sense experience and religious experience are quite understandable in view of what is traditionally believed of the Christian God - shows that the Christian account has built into it a kind of unfalsifiability or criticism-deflecting device. Is there not the possibility of a kind of pseudo-rational dogmatism<sup>51</sup> whereby a theory has built into it an explanation-schema to cope with the fact of it not being universally accepted? But the kind of reply that I have used to the objections in question is an appeal to the nature of religious belief as traditionally held prior to the formulation of any modern epistemological theory or of the particular objections under discussion, so it can at least be argued that this is not an ad hoc building in of a kind of irrefutability.

If the foregoing responses are adequate then the differences mentioned above between sense experience and experience that purports to be of God can be set aside as epistemically irrelevant. However, there is a much stronger objection to grounding the justification of belief in God in an immediate awareness of him. It starts from the plurality of conceptual schemes through which religious experiences are understood and it is to it that I now turn.

### 2.4.3 ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUAL SCHEMES

As a kind of prima facie justification, proper basicity grounded in an immediate awareness of God is defeasible. But the Christian who forms a belief that he seems to be having an experience of God in light of an immediate awareness which is non-conceptual may come to face the fact that there are alternative conceptual schemes available. Not only is it the case that there are significant differences in conceptual scheme among Christians themselves to say nothing of those between adherents of the different world religions some of which do not take God to be personal, but there are also naturalistic alternatives. Aware of this, can the intellectually sophisticated adult be justified in holding belief in God as a basic belief? Does not the existence of such a range of alternatives held by other intellectually sophisticated adults not defeat his properly basic belief? In his response to the Great Pumpkin objection, Plantinga may be right in pointing out that there simply is no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to believe in the Great Pumpkin. But this present objection cuts much deeper. It could be argued that there is a natural tendency to conceptualise religious experiences in terms of beliefs that are clearly inconsistent with Christian beliefs, e.g., the belief that the object of religious experience is an impersonal God.

At first sight, at least, this seems to be a respect in which there is an epistemically relevant difference between sense experience and religious experience, a difference which is related to the argument from non-universality mentioned in the last section. Against this, it could be claimed that, in fact, there may be no difference here since, in the view of some anthropologists, not all cultures do objectify their sense experience in the same way. But, if so, this is of little comfort to the Reformed epistemologist as it may be more of an argument against the proper basicity of beliefs grounded in sense experience than one for that of belief in God.

Leaving doubtful theses about sense experience to one side, how can the Reformed epistemologist respond to this argument from the existence of alternative conceptual schemes? I shall take a particular version of it which has been put forward by William Hasker.<sup>52</sup> He claims that the existence of such a range of "non-

discredited alternatives" to the Christian practice of forming Christian beliefs on the basis of purported experiences of God implies that the Christian practice cannot even be weakly justified. If he is right, basic Christian beliefs cannot be properly basic.

Hasker says the situation is like that in a game of 'hide-and-seek' in which the person who is 'it' is hiding in one of four rooms and a seeker has no particular reason for choosing one room rather than another and, because of the presence of other seekers, only has time to search one room. Hasker argues that in choosing a room to search, since the seeker has no particular reason to prefer the room he chooses, he is not strongly justified in his choice and, being more likely to be wrong than not, he is not even weakly justified. Hasker goes on to conclude that the Christian who conceptualises his experience in terms of a Christian scheme is in no better position if we assume that there are different conceptual schemes which are (i) equally comprehensive in how they deal with the experience, (ii) inconsistent with each other and (iii) all 'live options' for the believer. If, in addition, like the player who does have reason to believe that the person who is 'it' is hiding in one of the rooms, the believer has reason to believe that some member of the set of non-discredited alternatives is the right one to choose although he knows not which one, he may be very weakly justified in taking a gamble and opting for one. Belief in God would not then be properly basic in any strong sense of 'properly'. Hasker goes on to suggest that if we desire some stronger form of justification, we shall have to engage in an intellectual quest with the goal of reducing the number of non-discredited alternatives to one. By that time, our belief in God would be based on argument and, presumably, no longer basic.<sup>53</sup>

However, Hasker's version of the argument we are dealing with seems to make some questionable assumptions. For a start, there seems to be a problem with Hasker's apparent insistence that at least 50% probability of reliability is required even for weak justification. This is seen in the following extract from his argument:-

"If B and C are non-discredited alternatives to A, then if either of them is reliable A is not. But since B and C are 'non-discredited', either of them is as likely to be reliable as A is; so the likelihood of A's being reliable is less than one-half, and A is not weakly justified."<sup>54</sup>

Surely it is not the fact that the likelihood is less than one-half



that matters here but rather that, in accordance with the set of assumptions he makes, each of the three alternatives is equally likely to be reliable. Consider the situation in which A, B, C and D are alternatives such that  $pr(A):pr(B):pr(C):pr(D) = 40:20:20:20$ . Here belief that A is reliable, now that it is twice as likely as any one of its alternatives, and assuming that one of the four is reliable, seems to be fairly strongly justified in spite of its being less than 50% and there being more alternatives than before. If probability is to enter into the matter then it is the relative probability of an occurrence and not its absolute value that matters.

The problem just mentioned can be easily dealt with by a rephrasing of what Hasker says but there is a deeper assumption here which is rather more significant and, I think, likely to characterise other versions of this argument. This is of a questionable doxastic voluntarism. At times it may be that, as Hasker says, "life makes gamblers of us all"<sup>55</sup> but it seems questionable to suppose ourselves caught in a state of suspended judgement about to choose between rival conceptual schemes for our experiences in a way that is analogous to his hide-and-seek illustration. We do not find ourselves outside on the landing but actually within one of the rooms so it would seem sensible to search that one first before deciding to go on to one of the alternatives and we would only do that if we found that the person we were seeking was not there.

What I am suggesting here is that although there is a logical distinction between an immediate awareness and the belief that it grounds, i.e., the belief that conceptualises that awareness in accordance with a particular conceptual scheme, it seems questionable to assume that this distinction leaves a gap in which there is generally room for choice. Rather, it is normally the case that we find ourselves with our experience conceptualised in a certain way - the process is spontaneous. There may even be a kind of inevitability or irresistibility about it. In such circumstances, the question is whether we have adequate grounds for trying to resist this process or to adopt an alternative conceptual scheme, whether we should consciously decide not to search the room we are in and instead go outside and choose another one. There seems no strong argument for doing so.

But perhaps the metaphor should be changed to one that provides time for reflection. Instead of talking in terms of rooms to search, we could see the situation as more analogous to finding an apartment in which to live. Do we stay in the one in which we find ourselves and take it to be the most comfortable - in spite of that rather menacing-looking piece of black furniture called 'the atheological argument from evil' - or, hearing that others find other apartments to be comfortable, go and try one of them? The intellectually sophisticated adult is aware that others like where they live and regard it as the most comfortable place to be and he can move if he wishes. The upheaval in his life caused by having to move may be more than offset by the greater comfort of the new apartment. There is room for choice now, the choice of whether or not to change, but in the absence of strong reason to do so, it would still seem that he is justified in continuing to live where he is. Indeed, he may find himself strongly attracted towards his present surroundings and may even have reason to believe that the cupboard of the argument from evil can be accommodated there.

In Plantinga's terms, what we have here are potential defeaters and defeater-defeaters. The belief grounded in an immediate awareness is properly basic and continues to be so as long as there is no overriding or undercutting argument of which the believer is aware and which provides adequate reason for him to consciously cast off his conceptual scheme and conceptualise the belief in another way. The knowledge that there are alternative conceptual schemes is not sufficient. The knowledge that there are other sophisticated adults who find them acceptable is not sufficient either. The justification of his belief is *prima facie* and it may well be very strong. Only when he actually finds it to be defeated is he no longer justified in holding his belief to be basic.

This response to the argument in question comes quite close to appeal to something like Swinburne's "Principle of Credulity".<sup>56</sup> With "seems epistemically" used to describe what the subject is inclined to believe on the basis of his present sensory experience and in opposition to the claim that religious experience is evidence for nothing beyond itself, Swinburne writes:-

"So generally, contrary to the original philosophical claim, I suggest that it is a principle of rationality that (in the absence of special considerations) if it seems (epistemically)

to a subject that x is present, then probably x is present; what one seems to perceive is probably so. How things seem to be is good grounds for a belief about how things are."<sup>57</sup>

His application of this principle to religious experiences leads him to suggest that:-

"a religious experience apparently of God ought to be taken as veridical unless it can be shown on other grounds significantly more probable than not that God does not exist."<sup>58</sup>

This is certainly similar in some respects to some of the things Plantinga, Alston and others say. Is Swinburne also among the Reformed epistemologists? I think not. In the first place, the whole enterprise of the book from which these quotations come is to show that, on our total evidence, theism is more probable than not and he claims that it is the evidence of religious experience that finally - after considering other arguments and evidence - proves sufficient to make theism over all probable.<sup>59</sup> The whole context of Swinburne's appeal to his principle of credulity is therefore evidentialist in relation to the existence of God and consequently radically different from that of the project of Reformed epistemology. A further respect in which it differs is in the very status of this and other principles of rationality. Swinburne describes his principle as "ultimate" and as "a basic principle not further justifiable".<sup>60</sup> I shall shortly deal with the justification of epistemic principles and I shall suggest that they may be ultimately based on beliefs which include belief in God. This represents a second way in which the approach I am adopting - and I am assuming it to be generally in line with that of Reformed epistemology - differs from that of Swinburne.

Apart from these contextual differences, there is the content of the principle itself. Swinburne is taking the fact that it seems to a person that God is present as evidence for the conclusion that God is probably present. I was attempting to ground a person's belief that he seems to be having an experience of God in an immediate awareness when it would seem that there are other ways in which that awareness could be conceptualised. The logical gap I was attempting to bridge is from awareness to belief that something seems to be the case whereas Swinburne is concerned with that between belief that something seems to be the case and something (not the belief that something ...) actually being the case. So there are differences both in starting-point and finishing-point and Swinburne's starting-point seems to be my finishing-point. Swinburne is trying to establish a conclusion

about the existence of God. I was trying to establish one about the justification of a particular person's beliefs under certain circumstances and, in particular, the belief 'I seem to be having an experience of God'.

#### 2.4.4 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL GAP

What then of the gap between 'I believe that I seem to be having an experience of God' and 'I believe that I am having an experience of God'? That the gap is there is evident since the first belief does not commit the believer to accept that God exists while the second assumes his existence. The first belief, as stated, leaves open the possibilities that the experience is drug-induced, hallucinatory, produced by a deceiving demon or some such cause other than by the presence of God. The gap is logical and epistemological and it seems substantial.

Can Swinburne's principle be used to bridge this gap? I think not, because even if it can be invoked, its conclusion would be something along the lines of 'I believe that I am probably having an experience of God'. In other words, the belief would be tentative and this is not the same as the prima facie justified belief stated in 'I believe that I am having an experience of God' or 'I believe that God is speaking to me'. The evidentialism assumed in Swinburne's principle warrants at best a statement which is held to be probably true.

I think a better way forward is to look at the beliefs that we normally find ourselves with, the actual beliefs that have the inevitability or irresistibility mentioned earlier. When we are immediately aware of being appeared to in a certain kind of way, the beliefs we find formed in us are not 'I seem to see something red' or 'I am being appeared to red-ly' but 'I see something red' or the like. Likewise, not even the intellectually sophisticated adult believer is very likely to say 'I believe that I seem to be having an experience of God'. The sceptic might say it but the believer seems to have vaulted the gap to 'I believe that I am having an experience of God'. He has not taken his experience as evidence for a belief which is probably true nor has he inferred his belief from other beliefs that he holds. His belief that God is speaking to him is therefore basic but is it properly so?

Suppose that my response to the Hasker-type objection still applies at this point and that I do not need to search another room or move to a different apartment unless I have adequate grounds for doing so. My belief that God is speaking to me is basic and I do not require inferential justification for it so it is properly basic for me. But something seems wrong here. If a study of the complexities of the relationship between immediate awareness and a 'seems to be the case' belief was required earlier to make that small step, how can the apparently greater step of crossing this epistemological gap be taken so easily? Does appeal to immediate awareness add anything after all to the discussions of proper basicity of Plantinga, Alston and others? I think it does because it attempts to show how a belief may be grounded in an immediate awareness. The immediate awareness of this immediate awareness is not generally involved in the belief 'I am being appeared to redly' but actually in the occurrent belief 'I see something red'. And the adverbial description (red-ly) rather than the adjectival description (red) applies to the immediate awareness rather than to the belief that it grounds. The point is that this is conceptualised spontaneously in the belief 'I am having an experience of God' rather than in 'I seem to be having an experience of God' and my response to the Hasker-type argument from alternative conceptual schemes applies to this belief just as effectively as to the other.

This matter of the spontaneity of conceptualisation takes us back to the objection from alternative conceptual schemes. As Plantinga says, there is no natural tendency, under conditions like those under which basic belief in God is formed, to form beliefs like 'I am having an experience of the Great Pumpkin'. But, as mentioned earlier, it may be argued that there is a natural tendency, under the same conditions, to spontaneously conceptualise one's experience in terms of, say, an impersonal God. But, again, whether and to what extent the Christian finds this to be a defeater of his belief in a personal God depends upon whether he finds there are convincing counter-arguments available to him. If, indeed, it could be shown to be the same experience that is being conceptualised spontaneously in inconsistent beliefs and that his own belief-producing mechanism is not functioning reliably or working properly, e.g., in that his beliefs are due to Freudian wish-fulfilment or self-delusion or the like, he would have grounds to revise his belief. In the absence of

reason to believe that either or both of these circumstances apply, he is justified in holding to his basic belief in God.

## 2.5 THE BASIS OF META-JUSTIFICATION

At this point - if not before - there is another objection to the proper basicity of belief in God that can arise. It has to do with the status of the foregoing discussion of criteria for rationality and principles of justification. It has to do with what I shall term 'meta-justification', the justification not of first-order beliefs but of second-order epistemic principles.

The objection is to the effect that in the foregoing there is more than a whiff of the threat of circular reasoning. It was perhaps most noticeable when I suggested that the Reformed epistemologist may differ from Swinburne in holding that epistemic principles stand in need of justification. Then, just now, I mentioned an externalist element for positive epistemic status, that of reliable functioning and, as we saw earlier, Plantinga and other Reformed writers have linked this with the idea of man being a planned creation of God.<sup>61</sup> It would therefore seem that the discussion of the justification of an epistemic principle takes for granted the existence of God but this is the very belief that is being held to be properly basic. So the principle assumes the truth of the belief, the justification of which is in question!

The situation seems to be as follows. The foregoing discussion is intended to show that belief that God exists may be properly basic. It makes use of a number of epistemic principles, e.g., religious experience is a reliable source of religious beliefs. This example - and others that could be adduced - derives at least part of its mediate justification from the belief that man is created by God with reliable belief-forming mechanisms. This assumes that God exists. So 'God exists' appears both at the beginning and the end of this line of statements and the process appears circular.

The Reformed epistemologist is not without ways of responding to this charge of circularity. For a start, he can point out that, if a belief is properly basic, then its justification is not derived from any other beliefs that the subject holds - including his beliefs that

his epistemic principles are correct. The subject is immediately justified in his properly basic beliefs. It is unreasonable and a levels confusion to require of him not only that he be justified in his basic beliefs but also that he be justified in a belief that he is so justified. It is a levels confusion because there is an 'epistemic ascent' from the level of first-order justification to that of meta-justification (and, it would seem, if this is required for justification then there is nothing to stop the demand for meta-meta-justification and so on ad infinitum). It is unreasonable because it would require of the ordinary person at least the sophistication of an able epistemologist if he is to have any justified beliefs at all. This meets the demand of what Moser terms the "JJ thesis", his analogue in terms of justified belief of Hintikka's "KK thesis" that requires not only that a person knows something but that he knows that he knows it.<sup>62</sup> It is not therefore the justification of basic beliefs that is at issue but the whole basis of the discussion at the meta-level of this kind of first-level justification.

Secondly, the kind of circularity involved here is not the straightforward logical circularity of the conclusion of an argument appearing in its premises. The conclusion here is that the belief that God exists may be properly basic under the appropriate conditions. It is not an argument for the existence of God from premises that include the statement 'God exists'. It is not intended to produce rational conviction of this conclusion - for, if it could, belief in God would not be properly basic at all - nor is it even intended to produce rational conviction of the conclusion that belief in God is properly basic. The intention is to show the coherence of the case for this conclusion rather than to convince of its truth. The circularity is not vicious but, rather, something like what Alston terms "epistemic circularity".<sup>63</sup>

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have approached the question of whether belief in God can be properly basic by making use of a concept of justification which is linear rather than wholistic, normative but not purely normative, reliabilist but not purely reliabilist and broadly internalist rather than externalist. From this standpoint, the epistemic regress problem appeared to be a real problem and the need

to show how the epistemic supervenes on the non-epistemic a real need. This led on to an account of some reasons for the elimination of various alternatives to moderate foundationalism.

I went on to attempt to set forth the main details of an intuitionist account of empirical justification and of arguments to the effect that the differences between sense experience and religious experience were no obstacle to the development of an analogue of empirical intuitionism which grounds belief in God in an immediate awareness of him. I then set forth possible responses to three kinds of objection to this particular version of the first theme of Reformed epistemology. The first of these was an argument from the plurality of schemes for conceptualising one's experience and the response appealed to the spontaneous nature of conceptualisation under conditions of proper functioning of the mechanism of forming basic beliefs and to the prima facie nature of justification. The second problem was of the epistemological gap between statements of phenomenological belief and of those of beliefs expressed in object-language and here I argued that the beliefs that are actually formed in light of immediate awareness are on the object-language side of the gap and I suggested that these could involve the immediate awareness in a similar way to that being postulated for phenomenological beliefs. The third problem was of the circularity involved in the justification of epistemic principles and I suggested that there were reasons to view this as non-vicious.

This chapter therefore attempts to explore the notion of immediate awareness and to apply it to experience of God. This may help to account for a way in which it could be that, as Reformed epistemology claims, belief in God is properly basic for some people. Nevertheless, in addition to the problems mentioned in the chapter, it seems likely that it also suffers from a limitation due to its dealing with one theme of Reformed epistemology largely to the exclusion of the others. In particular, I feel that it tends to approach matters rather too much from the manward side and tends to take God to be relatively passive in relation to man's experience of him. The possibility of his actively revealing himself to people is almost completely ignored. The following chapter will represent an attempt to make up for this.



### REVELATION IS SELF-AUTHENTICATING

It is the second, and arguably the most central, tenet of Reformed epistemology that God has given to man a self-authenticating revelation.

Wolterstorff writes:-

"It has characteristically been held that one may well be within one's rights in believing immediately that the Christian Scriptures are the revelation of God, or the Word of God. This ... does not have to be believed on the basis of reasons, arguments. One is not doing something intellectually irresponsible if one believes it immediately. Scripture, it was often said, is self-authenticating. It does not require external authentication. Indeed, such prominent Reformed thinkers as John Calvin and Karl Barth suggested it would be dangerous to believe on the basis of arguments that Scripture is the Word of God."<sup>1</sup>

There is the suggestion in this quotation that Reformed thinkers have held that the only locus of revelation from God is in the Christian Scriptures. I am not sure that this is what Wolterstorff intends but it is certainly the case that many in this tradition of thought have held and do hold that God has revealed himself elsewhere than in the Bible, notably, in Jesus Christ and in nature, including the nature of man himself. Further, as we have seen earlier, the like of Kuyper and Van Til held that all divine revelation is self-authenticating, whether in the Scriptures or elsewhere. This particular theme of Reformed epistemology might therefore be better summarised in the statement: divine revelation is self-authenticating. However, my main concern in this chapter will be with scriptural revelation, albeit always with an eye to this more general statement.

I shall first attempt an analysis of what is meant in ordinary language by talk of revelation. I shall then apply this to our knowledge of other persons as this seems particularly relevant to the idea of God revealing knowledge of himself. I shall next attempt to respond to some arguments that could be directed against the possibility of divine revelation. Then to the heart of the study in a look at the question of the authentication of divine revelation and at four types of approach. I shall look in more detail at those of them which make revelation self-authenticating in some sense of the

term and from them I shall attempt to move on to develop a positive account of how a revelation of God could be self-authenticating.

### 3.1 THE CONCEPT OF REVELATION

The word 'reveal' and its cognates are used both in ordinary language and in the language of theology. Of course, theological usage may well enter into the ordinary language of religious believers but even among them such usage may not exclude the possibility of a wider usage as well, one in which the activity of revealing is not predicated of God, and it is with this more general usage that I shall start.

For a start, I shall take it that revelation, in the sense of the term with which we are concerned, is a matter of personal communication. Admittedly, the term can also be used in a sense that does not require communication from one person to another, e.g., circumstances or the experiences of life may be said to reveal things to us, but talk of divine revelation seems to be about communication from God to people.

I shall start with a paradigm-case of revelation through personal communication. Any choice of paradigm is likely to be less than perfect and open to question because of the way in which it can restrict subsequent discussion. However, one that I find helpful in that for me at least it seems to bring out the main features of our use of words like 'reveal' is that of the kind of situation often portrayed in the closing scene of a murder mystery. The scene in which 'all is revealed' typically shows the all-seeing, all-knowing good lady detective in the drawing-room surrounded by all the suspects who have survived to this point and by other interested participants, among whom the reader or viewer projects himself.

The first feature of this situation of importance for our analysis is that the activity of the revealer is necessary if a revelation is to take place and, in relation to this activity, those to whom the revelation is given are relatively passive. The detective must act in order for a revelation to take place and the waiting group are just that - they are waiting for her to speak. They are not necessarily wholly passive because, as the details of the crime are being revealed to them, they may well be attempting to keep one step ahead or putting their own construction upon events. However, insofar as revelation

is to take place, something is being uncovered rather than discovered and, for the clever reader who has already worked out for himself all the details of how the butler did it there is no revelation of the details of the crime.

Secondly, it is normally the case that the activity of the revealer is intentional, although, of course, it is possible that the butler might well in the course of the proceedings 'let slip' the accidental revelation of some detail that clinches the case against him. Thirdly, the object of this intentional activity - or the effect of the accidental revelation - is to bring about a learning experience, i.e., an experience of acquiring knowledge of something new or not already known. However, it may not be altogether unknown. It could be a matter of coming to see 'in a new light' or with a fresh significance facts already known or it could be a matter of coming to 'face up to' something already known. In any case, there has to be some 'newness' about the knowledge revealed and this placing of the facts in a new light is fairly typical of what the detective does in the last chapter. It also seems unnecessary for revelation that the facts revealed could not have been otherwise known, say, by discovery on the part of the clever reader. For such a person who had worked it out already there is no revelation but for the others who could have done so but did not there is the possibility of revelation. From this it would seem to follow that every revelatory experience is a learning experience although not every learning experience need be a revelation - and this at least partly because they are not brought about directly as a result of the activity of the revealer.

What if nobody actually learned anything new from the activity of the detective? Could the mere making available of the new knowledge in itself constitute a revelation? It would seem not, for to reveal something is to make it seen or known rather than merely to make it visible or knowable. So, fourthly, reveal is an achievement verb. Gilbert Ryle distinguished 'achievement verbs' from 'task verbs',<sup>2</sup> and the essence of the distinction is that it is not enough for such verbs as 'cure', 'teach', 'remind', 'win' that certain tasks be performed but also that the goals of these tasks be achieved. For something to be revealed in the events of the last chapter of our novel, it is necessary that at least one person should come to know something that he did not know before or, at least, to come to see things in a light

in which he had not seen them before. Until then, the detective's revelations may be potential but they are not actual.

Fifthly, certain things follow from the nature of the goal that is achieved. Assuming that what is acquired is knowledge, the conditions for knowledge must apply. I shall take it that knowledge is at least justified true belief (although Gettier may have shown that something more may be required and others may argue that knowledge is something other than justified true belief). If revelation brings about new knowledge or places what was already known in a new light then it is necessary that the person to whom it is revealed should believe what has been revealed to him. It is also necessary that it be true - it does not make sense to say that it was revealed that the parlourmaid did the deed if, in fact, she did not do it. This is because it does not make sense, in these circumstances, to say that somebody knew that she did it.

But is this all that is required for revelation - that a new belief is acquired as a result of the revelatory activity and that this belief is true? I think not because if revelation must result in knowledge then something more than accidentally true belief is required and this something more must consist, at least in part, in that the person given the revelation is justified in believing that which has been imparted. Further, it would seem necessary that the justification of the belief be a direct consequence of the revelation. If it is the case that the detective revealed to me that the butler carried out the foul deed then I thereby know that he did it. My further consideration of the evidence might make me more certain that he did it but it would not affect the truth of the fact that I knew as a result of his revelation that he did it. In other words, although revelation may not be necessary for knowledge - I might have discovered it for myself - it is sufficient for knowledge if and when it takes place. If it is sufficient for knowledge then it is sufficient for justified belief.

A sixth and final point I would make in this analysis of the concept of revelation is that revelation is an example of what is sometimes termed a polymorphous concept.<sup>3</sup> It does not pick out a particular activity but it is rather something that is accomplished through a variety of activities such as speaking, writing, gesturing, miming,

etc. Having said this, it remains the case that verbal communication must occupy a central place in revelatory activity. Indeed, it might be argued that non-verbal communication is insufficient for revelation for, as Paul Helm says, "actions without propositions are dumb".<sup>4</sup> This question of actions and propositions is of particular relevance to recent theological discussions of revelation and one to which I shall return later. Also, there are certain kinds of activity through which revelation can hardly take place if it is to result in justified belief. For example, it would seem strange to suggest that the detective made his revelation to us by means of a purely causal process, e.g., while we were under hypnosis or in the course of a brainwashing session.

Revelation therefore takes place when one person imparts knowledge to another of something which is not already known by that person and which becomes known to him as a direct consequence of the activity of the revealer. This leaves somewhat hazy the line of demarcation between revealing and an activity like teaching which at first sight seems to meet all my conditions for revelation. I would suggest that the two ideas overlap in the area of bringing about learning and that the distinction between them lies in the newness of the knowledge gained by revelation which is not so much to the fore in the idea of teaching. Teaching could well be a confirming or reinforcing of something already known whereas revelation has a strong connotation of something new ("What a revelation!"), an element of surprise or unpredictability (which, perhaps sadly, is not necessary for teaching!). Surrounded by the bright-eyed and keen students of the Fourth Form group of my dreams, I might teach them the good old-fashioned and, to them, partly familiar method of proving Pythagoras' Theorem or, instead, I might reveal to them the steps of a novel approach I read about in a recent issue of the 'Mathematical Gazette'.

### **3.2 REVELATION AND PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE**

My discussion of the paradigm situation of the detective's revelations has at least one major limitation: it focuses fairly exclusively on revelation which leads to one kind of knowledge, that of facts. But there is not only knowing that such and such is the case but also knowing followed by a direct object. Similarly, we may use 'reveal' followed by a direct object as well as 'reveal that ...' statements.<sup>5</sup>

In particular, we may talk of self-knowledge and of knowing other people and of self-revelation that leads to others knowing us. Here we are concerned with personal knowledge and the kinds of relationships between persons that bring it about, with coming to know the detective herself as a person in and through her words and actions.

In fact, the distinction between personal and impersonal knowledge does not at all correspond to that between knowing followed by a direct object and 'knowing that ...'. Impersonal knowledge is not coextensive with propositional knowledge. In the first place, the direct object of knowing can be impersonal as well as personal. We may know Murphy and Flanagan but we may also know a town, a house, a horse or a rocking-chair. In all these cases, knowing is relational in that 'Murphy knows Dublin' can be presented as 'MkD' whereas 'Murphy knows that Dublin is a fair city' would be presented as 'Mkp'. Secondly, although knowing in this relational sense and especially when applied to persons cannot be reduced without remainder to a set of 'know that ...' statements, however large that set, some but not any particular propositional knowledge is necessary to relational knowledge. It would be odd if I could claim to know Murphy and not be able to state a single proposition about him beyond that but it would not be odd if the propositions I stated were not identical with those stated by Flanagan who also knows him. Thirdly, there is an appropriateness as well as a necessity about the relation between propositional knowledge and knowledge of persons and things in that, if it is the case that I do know Murphy or his rocking-chair, the more I know about him or it the better I know him or it.<sup>6</sup> So relational knowing and propositional knowing cannot be sharply distinguished as mutually exclusive kinds of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> It follows that what I have said in the previous section about 'revealing that ...' is also of importance for revelation that leads to personal knowledge.

Personal knowledge and impersonal knowledge are therefore both forms of relational knowledge and, as such, both involve propositional knowledge. If so, what more is there to personal relational knowledge than the knowledge of certain propositions that are true of the person who is the object of the relation? Whatever it is seems to make personal knowledge non-transferable. I may reveal everything I know about a friend to another person but this is not sufficient to

make it the case that this other person now knows my friend.<sup>8</sup> I shall suggest that the extra that is required for personal knowledge is that at some time there must have been mutual immediate awareness between persons if they can claim to know one another. However, this raises questions about situations like that between penfriends who have never met or even spoken to one another on the telephone. Here the immediate awareness - if it can be called that - is certainly mediated, even through the miles that intervene. This brings us to that paradoxical phrase used by several writers in relation to knowledge of persons - 'mediated immediacy' - which I referred to in the previous chapter<sup>9</sup> and which I think may be helpful at this point.

Awareness of persons is immediate in that it is psychologically direct and non-inferred but it is also mediated in that it comes to us through words and actions. This is certainly paradoxical. If I am only aware of another person in or through his bodily movements etc., surely I must be inferring his existence as a person and his attitudes, intentions and the like from these movements with the assistance of some kind of analogy with my own self-consciousness? And if the process is non-inferential, surely it must involve some extra sense or telepathic ability which enables me to bypass the media of actions and words to go directly to their source in the mind and its thoughts?

It is not easy to resolve this paradox. To take first the sense in which this awareness is 'mediated', I take it that what we observe through the use of our senses is the bodily movements and actions of another person but not his mental activities, his thoughts, feelings and intentions or his 'subject self'. On the other hand, we would have no awareness of that which is mental apart from the physical and observable so, if we are to have such an awareness, it must come to us 'through' the physical and observable. This is what I mean by saying it is 'mediated' and this seems to concur with what writers such as Owen have intended.<sup>10</sup> There seems no reason why this should not also include the second-order mediation of reflection in mirrors or transmission by radio, television or telephone. There would seem to be no great difference between the 'live' and the 'recorded' in this respect so that letters or video-recordings could also form part of the mediating process but, of course, this provides a knowledge of the person as he was at the time of writing or recording rather than as he

is at the time of reading or viewing. Admittedly, when we move out into the area of reported speech or actions the position becomes less clear as far as knowledge is concerned but as regards revelation - my main concern in this chapter - it seems evident that we do not have a case of revelation or self-disclosure by the person whose speech or actions are reported.

Turning from the mediateness of our awareness of other persons to its immediacy, it seems plausible to claim that we do not normally infer - either formally or informally - the existence of another's person as a thinking, feeling, subject self, an 'I', from his observable actions and words. We immediately experience others not just as objects or moving bodies but as selves. It may well be the case that we have had to learn to experience them in this way but that does not make the present activity inferential any more than it does in the case of any other immediate awareness.<sup>11</sup> It is the awareness of the other person as such or the other mind as mind that is immediate; it is the fact of his mental activity rather than its content that is immediate, albeit mediated through his words and actions. The content of his mental activity seems more likely to be inferred from his words and actions.

I am suggesting that it is by no means obviously wrong - indeed, can be quite plausibly maintained - that it is normally the case that we are as immediately aware of the self of the other person as we are of his body, his actions or his words, i.e., as of that in which the self is mediated. I say 'normally' because there may be circumstances in which, say, in a fog, we are unsure whether we see a man or a man-shaped tree or, after an accident, we see a man or just his body.

But, it may be objected, is not this knowledge of other selves based upon analogical reasoning from our knowledge of our own selves? If so, it cannot be immediate, can it? But why should we assume that genetically this is how it has been in the growth of personal knowledge or how it has to be in any reasoning we engage in or ought to engage in about the objects of personal knowledge? Must we follow Descartes in beginning with ourselves? It is surely arguable that we could just as easily reason analogically from the existence of other minds to that of our own without assuming a logical priority of the latter. Perhaps there is no logical priority of either - perhaps they both grow together so that neither need be used to justify the



other. Of course, this could be extended to include the knowledge of God. From Calvin on there have been Reformed thinkers who have argued for such a relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of God. Thomas F. Torrance, for example, writes of "a profound mutuality" between them.<sup>12</sup> Some talk of our awareness of other persons as being of that which is both 'other' and 'not-other'.<sup>13</sup> It is not therefore obvious that we do infer knowledge of others from our self-knowledge. And if an inferential process is not normally present in such situations of coming to be aware of another person as such, it would seem reasonable that it should not be required. Otherwise a lot of generally accepted beliefs are not justified.

Personal knowledge is not a matter of being all the time immediately aware of the other person but, at some time, there has to be a 'directness' about the relationship which is summed up in the element of immediacy in this idea of mediated immediacy. This mediated immediacy is necessary for there to be any awareness of the other person as a person. Knowledge of his thoughts, attitudes, intentions, character and the like are gained progressively in the relationship. And for this knowledge of another self we are dependent upon his self-revealing activity. To a great extent - apart from resort to hypnosis or torture or such like - we cannot know the other against his will. As far as knowledge of his thoughts is concerned we have to submit to his authority. Granted, inference from involuntary actions and also inferential building upon what he chooses to reveal of himself can help to build up the picture, but, in the final analysis, there is a sense in which the knower is dependent upon the to-be-known for so much that cannot be inferred. There may be knowledge of him available to be discovered - a 'general revelation' of him - but for much that matters there has to be the 'special revelation' given in the other's activity and, especially, in his words. It is this that makes the concept of revelation so appropriate to persons rather than things or events. The observer is not confined to conjectures based on what he observes in a passive object but the object is active and capable of engaging in dialogue, enabling us even to make some checks on the accuracy of our apprehensions.

The striking disjunction is not between personal knowledge and propositional knowledge but between personal knowledge and knowledge

of things. The person can normally by means of language enable another to become acquainted with or better acquainted with him by revealing himself and his thoughts and feelings, especially by the use of propositions. Of course, it is true that the propositions can never fully describe but this does not mean that the person cannot be truly known at all. Even the simplest object in the natural world can perhaps never be exhaustively known but it seems counter-intuitive to take this to mean that there could be no knowledge of it at all.

### **3.3 THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVINE REVELATION**

Assuming that the foregoing analysis of the idea of revelation and of its application to our knowledge of persons is on the right lines, I turn now to its application to divine revelation and man's knowledge of God. If it can be so applied so that it is possible to speak of God revealing himself and revealing truths expressed in propositions to people, and that this is such that they can be immediately justified in believing that God is speaking to them, then the whole view of the proper basicity of belief in God is radically transformed. It is this that makes the content of the previous chapter incomplete in itself, dealing as it did with religious experience in a way that tended to treat God as a passive object in relation to the activity of man's perceiving of him. Persons are not appropriately dealt with in this way and if God is personal - as is assumed in this study - then it would seem just as inappropriate in relation to him. It would seem particularly inappropriate if it were the case that, as George Mavrodes puts it, "every experience of God is a revelation"<sup>14</sup> and even more so if it were the case, as at least some Reformed writers seem to hold, that every human experience is revelatory of God. However, it is not necessary to make such claims to establish the possibility of divine revelation.

I have talked of revelation taking place through a person's actions and especially his words. Against the application of this account to divine revelation, it is sometimes argued that God cannot be detected by the senses and so cannot be experienced or that he does not have a body and so he cannot act in the world and speak to people. These arguments raise quite a number of theological and philosophical issues about the meaningfulness of saying that God is personal, the nature of divine action and speech, the nature of divine inspiration and other

related issues. Most of these are beyond the scope of this present study so I shall merely point towards how a response might be made to the particular arguments mentioned, some of which has been touched upon already in the previous chapter.

For a start, it is possible to question whether allowing that God cannot be seen or directly detected by any of the other senses does indeed rule out detection of his presence by the senses. It would seem quite conceivable that there should be beings who cannot be perceived by the senses but who possess a power to produce effects which can be detected by the senses and which indicate that these beings are present. Robert Oakes suggests that there might be such beings whose presence has an invariant effect of generating a very strong magnetic field so that they attract all light-weight objects within a radius of about fifteen feet.<sup>15</sup> In a similar way, Basil Mitchell responds to arguments about action requiring a body with his development of Wisdom's Parable of the Invisible Gardener. He writes:-

"... we could make sense of the notion of his doing things in the garden even though we could not trace the 'actions' to any bodily behaviour on his part, so long as there were unexpected alterations in the appearance of the garden as only a gardener would intend to produce. To infer a particular gardener, we should only need to have some idea of the sort of effects he as an individual generally sought to produce."<sup>16</sup>

In such situations, observers could see that a being was present or had done something in spite of their inability to see the being in question. This is not to suggest that God's presence creates a magnetic field but simply that it is possible in principle that there occur cases in which the presence of God is detected by the senses and that, if God exists, he has the power to bring about whatever it is possible in principle for him to bring about and that he can do this when and where he wishes to.

At this point it might be objected that, not having a body, God is as incapable of direct verbal communication as he is of body-language. Obviously, God's speaking cannot be a matter of producing sounds by expelling air through vocal cords but I see no problem in suggesting that God may 'speak' by causing the person addressed to have an experience of the kind he would have if a human being were speaking to him or even by bringing about some kind of direct telepathic communication.<sup>17</sup> I am not sure that it matters very much precisely

what vehicle or vehicles God may use to speak to men as long as there is no reason why it should be held to be impossible that there should be anything analogous to human speaking in the way he communicates with human persons. In addition, it could be pointed out that God, being incarnate in Christ, does have a body in which "the Word became flesh"<sup>18</sup> - a full audio-visual presentation of God - and that he is also claimed to have appeared in human form in the Old Testament theophanies.

It is sometimes objected that the idea of revealed truths is of something timeless, abstract or static as against that which would be more appropriate to the dynamic, concrete and ever-changing nature of personal relationships. But it is difficult to see why talk of divinely revealed truths should be rejected on such grounds unless we also jettison talk of any person revealing a true proposition to another. Such activity may well include assertions of generalisations and abstractions but this does not necessarily make the encounter less personal. Indeed, as Paul Helm points out in one of his responses<sup>19</sup> to this kind of argument against propositional revelation, not only are statements like 'God is good' timelessly true but so also are dated historical statements like 'God led the Israelites out of Egypt at 1280 B.C.'. If they are true, they are true at all times, and if true they are truths about God and can therefore be revelatory of him. If the essence of this kind of objection is, as seems to have been intended by Bultmann for example,<sup>20</sup> that to know God is not a theoretical matter and that revelation is response-demanding, then again it is not clear that this rules out the idea of propositional revelation. Indeed, as Helm says,

"... there is good reason to think that in many if not all cases, for a sentence to be 'response-demanding' it must have a truth-value."<sup>21</sup>

Helm gives the example of the statement 'There is a bull in the next field' which could in certain circumstances be regarded 'neutrally' but not if the person given the information intended to cross the field.

The foregoing is a very brief account of some objections to the idea of God acting and speaking to reveal himself to people but I hope that I have at least indicated ways in which they might be met. This may

do a little to establish the possibility of divine revelation but it says nothing about how it might be known or, rather, justifiably believed to be actual. To this issue I now turn.

### 3.4 THE AUTHENTICATION OF DIVINE REVELATION

In this section, as indicated earlier, I shall be concerned mainly with what might be required of a set of propositions if they are to be held to be a self-authenticating revelation of God. As I said earlier, I think it is characteristic of Reformed epistemologists to hold that all divine revelation is self-authenticating and that they do not limit divine revelation to the propositions of the Christian scriptures. But since the idea of propositional revelation seems to be a central ingredient of this theme, the main focus of what follows will be upon this aspect.

The idea of propositional revelation has not been at all popular with many theologians of the present century. The claim has been made by a number of them that God reveals himself not propositions. This has been in part a reaction to the sort of emphasis that talked of revelation as being essentially propositional and which, allied to a crude dictation theory of inspiration, tended to give the impression of an impersonal transmission of information and orders as, say, in an official handbook. But to say that divine revelation is essentially personal is not to say that it is not propositional. Indeed, on the basis of the earlier analysis of the idea of revelation and of how it can give knowledge of persons, it would seem surprising that personal revelation to any significant extent could take place without propositions. It is therefore a false antithesis to oppose personal revelation to propositional revelation.<sup>22</sup> They are not mutually exclusive, for a person may and, indeed, normally does reveal himself by means of propositions expressed in words. In a sense, the propositions are not the revelation for they point to the reality beyond of the person's thoughts, intentions, feelings, etc. - as Owen, borrowing scholastic terms, puts it, they are "the 'objecta quibus', not the 'objecta quae' of faith".<sup>23</sup>

We are concerned now with the justification of the belief that the Christian scriptures are a divine revelation. Possible approaches can be classified according to whether its justification is taken to

be mediate or immediate, i.e., according to whether the belief is justified inferentially or non-inferentially. This is a matter of the way in which the belief is grounded. There is also another way of classifying approaches and this is a matter of where the grounds are to be found - whether they are internal to the scriptures or external to them. From this it can be seen that talk of self-authentication in relation to the scriptures is ambiguous. It can be understood as requiring that the belief that the scriptures are the Word of God be immediately justified and this is clearly what Wolterstorff and some other contemporary Reformed writers understand by 'self-authenticating' in this context. In other words, it is the belief that is immediately justified. But the scriptures can also be seen as self-authenticating in the sense that the evidence for their being the Word of God is internal to them. It is then the scriptures that are self-authenticating in that they provide their own evidence of their being a divine revelation. This latter seems to be the kind of approach taken by Paul Helm in a couple of recent attempts to set forth what he terms "an internal pattern of justification".<sup>24</sup>

These two independent ways of classifying approaches provide between them for four different types of approach. They are as follows:-

Type 1 (immediate-internal): the grounds for the immediately justified belief (that the scriptures are the Word of God) are internal to the scriptures, e.g., where the subject is immediately aware that God is speaking to him through the words of scripture.

Type 2 (mediate-internal): the evidence for the mediately justified belief is internal to the scriptures, e.g., when it is found in the characteristics of the scriptures and their effect upon the subject of the belief.

Type 3 (immediate-external): the grounds for the immediately justified belief are external to the scriptures, e.g., where the subject is immediately aware of God speaking to him through something external to the scriptures and telling him that the scriptures are the word of God.

Type 4 (mediate-external): the evidence for the mediately justified belief is external to the scripture, e.g., when it is found in independent historical corroboration of events recorded in scripture.

The distinction here between grounds and evidence is not co-extensive

with that between experiences and beliefs since, as we saw in the last chapter, experiences may function either as evidence or non-inferential grounding for a belief. Wolterstorff's definition of the theme of the self-authentication of revelation places it in Type 1 and probably also in Type 3. Helm's approach seems to be an example of Type 2. Type 4 cannot be termed 'self-authenticating' in any sense of the term.

### 3.4.1 DIVINE REVELATION AND EVIDENCE

Helm contrasts what he terms "an internal pattern of justification" with the "externalism" of such as John Locke, William Paley and Archibald Alexander. Helm's 'internal pattern' corresponds more or less to my Type 2 above and his 'externalism' to my Type 4. He says that the internal pattern takes the Bible to be the Word of God for chiefly religious reasons, i.e. reasons relating to a person's duty to God, and on the basis of chiefly internal evidence, whereas externalism accepts the Bible as divine revelation if and only if it meets certain criteria which are established independently of it.<sup>25</sup>

Externalism typically assumes the success of the efforts of natural theology to establish the (at least probable) existence of God without making use of the data of special revelation and then seeks to ascertain whether the Bible is likely to have been revealed by him. The conclusion is that it is probable that the Bible is God's Word if it meets criteria like consistency with what is known independently of it, historical reliability, and accompanying signs, e.g., miracles and fulfilled prophecies. Helm argues that the main defect of this pattern of justification is that it supposes that there is some a priori standard of reasonableness that the Bible must meet if it is the Word of God but if, as is usually also assumed, there is no other special revelation from God of which we have prior experience, any criterion proposed is bound to be Procrustean.<sup>26</sup>

In his accounts of the internal pattern of justification, Helm mentions several different kinds of internal evidence (internal coherence, moral character, and what the scriptures say about themselves). These seem to be kinds of evidence which one may examine and consider and find to be evidence to a degree - even good evidence - of the divine origin of the scriptures.<sup>27</sup> Helm then goes

on to look at further evidence for the scriptures being the revelation of God and this is not simply in that they say that they are so but in that they function as the Word of God. This Helm takes to be "the chief sort of (internal) evidence" for the divine authority of the scriptures.<sup>28</sup>

Helm says that the Bible does not merely provide information to its reader but that its "basic stance" is "that of a document that, on the basis of the information that it provides, makes claims on and offers invitations to its readers". Helm goes on to try to break this down into a number of different elements and he writes:-

"One element is the idea that the Bible purports to give an analysis or diagnosis of the reader. The Scriptures offer this diagnosis as the truth about the reader. Now if the Scriptures are what they claim to be, the Word of God, then one would expect that careful examination and self-scrutiny would reveal that the diagnosis 'holds good' in the life of the reader. Connected with this is the power of the Scriptures to raise and satisfy certain distinctive needs in the reader, particularly the recognition of his sin before God and the enjoyment of forgiveness and reconciliation to God through Christ. Connected with this is the displaying in Scripture of excellent moral standards that focus and integrate the life of the reconciled person. And connected with this is the provision of new motivation to reach out for the newly set standards."<sup>29</sup>

It is not therefore a matter of what the Bible says but what it says to the reader and what it says may be confirmed to him in his experience of how it functions in his life.

Helm's emphasis throughout is on evidence for the divine origin and authority of the scriptures. It would therefore appear that he is concerned with mediate justification of these beliefs concerning the scriptures and this comes out clearly in the following extract:-

"The data of Scripture, in which the divine authority of Scripture is grounded and which provide evidence for the Bible being the Word of God, are known a posteriori. Fundamental, therefore, to accepting the Bible as the Word of God is considering the relevant evidence for that claim honestly and seriously. This point cannot be overstressed, for it is common to find on both sides of this debate those who tell us what the Scriptures must be like without stopping to look and see if the Scriptures are actually like this."<sup>30</sup>

The consideration of evidence is of central importance but this is not a matter of a detached rational observer weighing up evidence which is external to him because Helm ascribes a large role in this process to experience. He talks of an experience which is neither a revelation additional to that contained in the scriptures nor a different sort of



evidence for the claim that the Bible is the Word of God. Rather it is "the discovery that the claims of Scripture bear the weight of experience". Helm links this with the theological doctrine of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit which he regards as a different way of talking about the power of the scriptures to do the things he has described. He continues:-

"The internal testimony of the Spirit is not to be thought of as in some way short-circuiting the objective evidence or making up for the deficiencies in external scriptural evidence, nor as providing additional evidence, nor as merely acting as a mechanical stimulus, but as making the mind capable of the proper appreciation of the evidence, seeing it for what it is and in particular heightening the mind's awareness of the marks of divinity present in the text in such a way as to produce the conviction that this text is indeed the product of the divine mind and therefore to be relied on utterly."<sup>31</sup>

Elsewhere, he talks of this internal testimony of the Spirit as functioning "like a telescope or a new perspective".<sup>32</sup>

It would appear, in the light of this, that the involvement of the Holy Spirit in this process and the role given to insight does not make it any less a matter of coming to have a justified belief on the basis of the consideration of evidence. What the Holy Spirit does is to bring it about that the evidence can be seen for what it is and it is this seeing of the evidence that results in the justified belief that the Bible is the Word of God. Why he thinks this activity should be necessary Helm does not say but that it is necessary seems to be strongly implied.

Notwithstanding the central role of the experience of coming to see the evidence, Helm is insistent that this account is not subjectivist. There is an objective side in that there is something external to the believer and his experience - the text and its meaning - which is, as he says, "something public and verifiable".<sup>33</sup> But the subjective element means the believer is not in a position to bring about in another by rational argument a belief that the Bible is the Word of God. The other person has to investigate the promises and claims of the scriptures for himself so that he may find them confirmed in a similar way in his own experience.<sup>34</sup>

Further, the justification which is given under these circumstances to the belief that the Bible is the Word of God is *prima facie*. The belief is not unchallengeable and this is where such issues as the

historical reliability and internal coherence of the scriptures come into the picture. They do not establish that the Bible is the Word of God but contradiction of historical claims of the scriptures by overwhelming independent evidence or the existence of absolute self-contradiction within the scriptures could overthrow its divine authority.<sup>35</sup>

Helm's account seems to be clearly an example of what I have termed a Type 2 account. My definition of that category is wide enough to provide also for a coldly rationalistic account. This would be one in which the detached observer weighs up the evidence of coherence and other characteristics of the scriptures and comes to his conclusion without being involved or 'engaged' with the claims and promises of the Bible. He might consider its literary qualities or even - in the manner of the author of a book I have come across with the sub-title "An Unanswerable Challenge to an Unbelieving World"! - make much of what are, on the face of it, some quite remarkable facts about the patterns apparently discernible in the Bible when numeric values are assigned to the Hebrew and Greek letters used.<sup>36</sup> In this form, the only difference between this approach and the mediate-external kind of approach is in where the evidence is found, whether within or without the scriptures. Evidence of fulfilled prophecies or of an ancient date for the Turin Shroud and or of Bible numerics seem, in a way, all of a piece and may constitute evidence that the Bible is a remarkable book or even a degree of evidence for its divine authority. Helm's account of the internal testimony of the Spirit - with its emphasis on the involvement of the reader with its claims - is not detached in this way but, in the last analysis, it too is a matter of the consideration of evidence.

#### **3.4.2 DIVINE REVELATION AND IMMEDIATE AWARENESS**

Having looked briefly at both kinds of mediate approach, we come now to approaches of Types <sup>1</sup> and <sup>3</sup> These have in common that justification is held to be immediate. The belief that the biblical propositions are the Word of God is not arrived at as a result of a process of considering evidence of any kind, whether internal or external to the Bible. It is not based on other beliefs but it is grounded, not groundless.

The distinction between internal and external types of approach can, I think, still be made. It is a matter of whether the authentication comes through the propositions of the scriptures or is somehow given in a way that is appropriately described as being apart from things the Bible says. An external pattern here could give immediately the belief that the Bible is the Word of God. I do not intend to develop this - partly for considerations of space and partly because I do not think it is what the Reformed writers we have looked at had in mind - but I shall indicate a possible direction in which it might be developed. The charismatic movement is quite influential on the contemporary Christian church scene (although not generally so in churches of a more Reformed outlook) and I think it is quite easy to conceive of a claim to this kind of immediately justified belief being made in such circles. For example, use of glossolalia is quite common in such circles and I can readily conceive of the possibility of somebody being 'given' a message in tongues which he takes to be God telling him that the Bible is his Word. If he takes this as basic and in need of no further support, then he is claiming to be immediately justified in his belief in a way that is external to the actual propositions of the Bible. Whether or not he would be justified in this claim is another matter. Some would raise a theological objection on the grounds of the doctrine of the sufficiency of the scriptures as special revelation. A possible philosophical objection could be raised against the necessity of this kind of external authentication on the grounds that it would seem to suggest that a claim to revelation requires a further revelation for its validation so it may in its turn require yet a further revelation for its validation and so on ad infinitum. It is on such grounds that Helm argues that the testimony of the Holy Spirit cannot be a further revelation<sup>37</sup> and similar considerations would seem to apply here.

Leaving Type 3 justification to one side, I shall seek to outline a possible version of a Type 1 approach. In some respects it is quite similar to Helm's internal pattern but it differs from it fairly fundamentally as well. In fact, an earlier account by Helm of what he termed at the time "self-authentication"<sup>38</sup> provides a very good starting point. In that account, Helm took the positions of Calvin and the Puritan theologian John Owen as illustrating a distinctive model of religious belief which he summed up as follows:

"A religiously believes p if A assents firmly to p (where p is taken to be revealed proposition) because A intuits, in grasping the meaning of p, that it is revealed by God."<sup>39</sup>

Helm is quite deliberate in this appeal to intuition and he relates it to Anthony Quinton's logically intuitive beliefs. As we saw earlier,<sup>40</sup> these are beliefs which do not require other beliefs to support them or to make them worthy of acceptance. The intuition in question is not therefore that of either Quinton's vernacular intuition or simply his psychological intuition. Helm also differentiates it from that of knowledge of analytic truths and from that of anything known universally or as a result of some Cartesian 'natural light'.

Quinton's logically intuitive beliefs do not need support from other beliefs but they are not necessarily excluded from such support. On this point, Helm points to John Owen's distinction between external and internal reasons for believing. External reasons for believing biblical propositions include such as "the fact that the Bible was an ancient book, wonderfully preserved, coherent and so on"<sup>41</sup> but although they may have "apologetic value (to rebut certain objections)", they do not provide the grounds for religious belief.<sup>42</sup> These grounds are only in "reasons that are internal to the teaching of the Bible".<sup>43</sup>

Does this appeal to internal reasons mean that biblical propositions have the property of being self-evidently true? Not so, says Helm, or, at least, not in the same sense as that in which analytic truths are self-evidently true. Simple mathematical truths and tautologies are such that to understand their meaning is sufficient for the justified belief that they are true but, although Helm says in his definition that the intuition in question comes with "grasping the meaning of" the propositions, it is important to note that what is intuited is that the propositions are revealed by God. The intuition is not of their truth but of their revealedness. Of course, if a proposition is asserted by God then it follows from his omniscience and the impossibility that he should lie that it is true. This would not be so of all biblical propositions, e.g., the words of "the fool" quoted in the Psalms ("There is no God").<sup>44</sup> It is therefore the revealedness of biblical propositions that is intuited and is the

evidence that they should be believed.<sup>45</sup> This is not at all how it is with simple mathematical truths and tautologies.

Helm also says that, on this model of belief, the propositions believed are certain because they are regarded as being the assertions of God. Because the evidence for their truth is their revealedness, they are not held to be probably true or even very probably true - as they would be if inferred from 'external reasons' obtained from historical evidence and the like.<sup>46</sup> Of course, it does not follow that the belief that they are the assertions of God is itself incorrigible or even psychologically certain. Insofar as the scriptures authenticate themselves as divine revelation to a person, he is certain of the propositions believed but, since this is partly a matter of his condition and disposition which may change with time, the firmness of his belief is a matter of degree. As Helm puts it, it is only in the case of "full-formed religious belief"<sup>47</sup> that the believer is certain that the proposition believed is certainly true.

What is it then to grasp the meaning of a biblical proposition? Surely many who read the Bible and agree totally with believers on the meaning of some of its propositions and even, possibly, on their truth are very far from being convinced that they are revealed by God. The subject of meaning and understanding is a major theme of Helm's study and he makes the point more than once that there is a distinction between, on the one hand, meaning as sense and reference and, on the other, meaning as point, function or meaningfulness.<sup>48</sup> Of the Calvin-Owen model Helm writes:-

"Coming to believe in the testimony of God revealed in the Bible is like becoming aware of a complicated 'gestalt' ... it is an awareness of the point or meaningfulness of certain propositions."<sup>49</sup>

It is in this sense of seeing the point of biblical propositions rather than merely understanding their reference that their revealedness may be intuited.

But how do some come to see the point in this way? Helm finds in Owen and Calvin the idea of "the power" of such propositions "to arouse and satisfy distinctive religious needs" in the life of the believer. He also writes of the need to become "engaged" so that certain promises in the Bible, e.g., promises of forgiveness, come to be seen not merely as reports of promises to certain individuals in

history but as promises to the reader in that he regards them as relevant because he finds himself in need of forgiveness.<sup>50</sup> Here Helm's account clearly begins to overlap with his more recent outline of the internal pattern of justification but they differ fairly markedly in that the earlier account contains the clearly foundationalist emphasis on intuiting the revealedness of the biblical propositions as against that on the consideration of evidence of the more recent account.

It is this emphasis on logical intuition that moves this Calvin-Owen model clearly into my Type 1 category. Although Helm talks of internal reasons, it does seem that the intuition of the point of the biblical propositions is not the basis of an argument from reasons or evidence to the belief that they are the Word of God, for Helm says: "this intuition or illumination is not the grounds for the believer believing what he does" but "the means or 'power' by which what is present in the Bible is believed".<sup>51</sup> It seems from what he says that it is in having this experience of grasping their point, that the revealedness of the biblical propositions is also grasped. Their point is that they apply personally to the present-day reader and are not just a record of words from God to readers or hearers of Old or New Testament times. This entails that they are the Word of God.

However, there is, I think, another way of accounting for this intuition of revealedness which is rather more in line with what I take to be entailed by talk of personal revelation and which brings in the idea of an immediate awareness of God. Borrowing Buber's terminology, I think it moves the discussion from talking in terms of an 'I-it' relationship to that of an 'I-Thou' relationship or, perhaps more accurately, a combination of both kinds of relationship. Rather than it being the case that the reader of the Bible comes to an awareness that the biblical propositions were written for him - an awareness of a fact about a person - it could be that he becomes aware of God actually speaking to him in the present moment and addressing him with the propositions of the Bible. This is to move from an account which seems to focus fairly exclusively on propositional revelation to that which is more clearly both propositional and personal.

It seems to me that both Helm's internal pattern of justification and his Calvin-Owen model lack an emphasis upon the idea of God speaking through the Scriptures. Although he does talk of "God's personal address to people ... that calls for a response"<sup>52</sup> and, as we have seen, of the importance of the Scriptures 'engaging' in the life and experience of the reader or hearer, he seems to regard this as being to do with what makes the Scriptures the revelation of God rather than with the justification of the belief that they are so. The effect of his insistence upon a process of considering the internal evidence of the Scriptures is that a person can never be justified in believing that God is speaking to him now. Even in the Calvin-Owen model with its element of intuition, it seems to more a matter of God speaking to the prophets and other biblical writers so that what we have is a record of his revealing activity, albeit intended by him to be for us now a means of our coming to know his will for us.

But when somebody speaks to me, I do not normally engage in a process of inductive verification or of grasping the point of the words spoken before I form the belief that somebody is speaking to me. In other words, there is normally an immediacy of awareness of the other person - in the sense of psychological directness - about such situations. If this is the case with ordinary human relationships, why should it not be so if a person is addressed by God? And why should the immediate justification of the belief that God is speaking to me not be grounded in this immediate awareness of him mediated through the words of the biblical propositions?

Of course, one will not be able to see God but that is hardly surprising and should not therefore provide a reason for doubting that one is being addressed by him. It would seem perfectly possible for him to cause us to have an experience of being spoken to by him but this is not at all the same thing as causing us to believe that we are being spoken to by him. At least, it is not so in any sense that is any more objectionable than, say, in the situation where I call out to someone unaware of my presence and thereby cause him to become aware of me. Helm is concerned to repudiate any suggestion that the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit is a case of indoctrinating or brain-washing into the belief that the Bible is God's Word as, for example, when he writes:-

"The internal testimony of the Spirit is not to be thought of ... as merely acting as a mechanical stimulus. ... (T)he words or propositions of the revelation are not the cause or occasion of the experience; rather, they engender it through the meaning of the propositions and their force (as commands, questions, invitations, or whatever) being appreciated.<sup>53</sup>

"This interpretation rules out another, that the internal testimony has a causal role, simply causing the mind to have the conviction that the Bible is God's special revelation. But this would make conviction unrelated to evidence of any kind, and the work of the Spirit would be like brainwashing."<sup>54</sup>

But it is only if the possibility of immediate justification grounded in some form of immediate awareness is ruled out that consideration of reasons/evidence and brainwashing-type processes can be taken as exhaustive of the possibilities. It is not that a process is causal but that it is merely causal that renders it liable to be termed a case of brainwashing or the like. A conviction grounded in an immediate awareness of being addressed by somebody cannot therefore be on that account a case of such unacceptable practice on the part of the person doing the addressing.

Nor, if we talk in terms of immediate awareness, is this to be considered as something apart from the meaning of the words of Scripture any more than internal justification is on Helm's account. For something to be a case of one person speaking to another it is necessary that intelligible language be used and normally it will be intelligible to both addressor and addressee. Our understanding of the words being used, our knowledge of the existence of these words in written form and the like are conditions for the truth of the claim that God is speaking to us through the words of Scripture but this does not necessarily make the justification of the claim a matter of these facts or any other facts providing evidence or reasons why we should believe it. The awareness that God is speaking to a person is in grasping the meaning of the propositions being used rather than because the believer grasps their meaning. And this grasping of the meaning of the words is a realisation not only that they are meaningful but also a grasping of their point as part of God's present personal address to the reader or hearer.

Thus modified by a greater emphasis upon the immediacy of being now personally addressed by God, it seems to me that Helm's Calvin-Owen model becomes more adequate. It takes on board the directness of accounts that put their stress upon experience of personal revelation



but without their mysticism and subjectivism. It provides for the possibility of a personal God speaking to persons in propositions which are identifiable independently of the experience of being spoken to. It does not insist upon incorrigibility and can therefore be fitted into the more moderate foundationalist framework for which I argued in the last section. It provides for the possibility of defeaters and defeater-defeaters. As in the case of alternative conceptual schemes in the last chapter, the fact of the existence of alternative purported divine revelations does not, in itself, defeat the prima facie justified belief that the Bible is God's Word.

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have argued that revelation through personal communication involves the intentional activity of the revealer, activity that can take many forms but centrally that of verbal communication, and which leads to belief that is prima facie justified and which has some newness of content. Revelation that involves coming to know another person involves propositional knowledge of him but is non-transferable because of the element of an immediate awareness of him albeit mediated through his words or actions. I also argued that the fact that God cannot be seen does not mean that divine propositional revelation is impossible.

I outlined four types of approach to the authentication of divine revelation in scriptural propositions. One of these was a mediate approach arguing from evidence internal to the scriptures and therefore an example of self-authentication in a sense. To find an approach more in line with this theme of Reformed epistemology, I went on to consider an approach that involved intuiting the point of the scriptural propositions but I amplified this by incorporating reference to immediate awareness of God speaking through these propositions. In this way, I attempted to develop an account which incorporated the features of personal revelation already outlined.

In this chapter, the focus was shifted from that on a person experiencing God to God's revealing himself to the person. I turn now to the implications for all this of the third characteristic theme - that of the noetic effects of sin.

### SIN HAS NOETIC EFFECTS

According to the third of the characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology identified by Wolterstorff and Plantinga, sin has had an important effect on our intellectual or noetic condition.<sup>1</sup>

Among the effects mentioned by Kuyper, Van Til, Plantinga and other Reformed epistemologists are falsehood, confusion, unintentional mistakes, self-delusion and self-deception. Plantinga says that the results of sin include "all the epistemic ills to which humanity is heir"<sup>2</sup> and he goes on to add a suggestion that is rather startling, at least on first sight, as he points to the possibility that the classical foundationalist view of knowledge might very well be appropriate to an unfallen world. He writes:-

"It is the existence of sin in the world that, for many, interferes with belief in God. Were it not for the existence of sin, we should all believe in God with the same natural and wholehearted spontaneity with which we believe in other persons, the past and the external world. ... If there were no sin in the world, then perhaps there wouldn't be any irresolvable disputes or fundamental disagreements or deeply different ways of looking at the world. ... If there were no sin in the world, the classical foundationalist picture of knowledge as what can be proved from common ground - ground common to all human beings - might very well be correct. It is certainly natural to think that in the absence of sin I would be able to prove whatever I know to anyone else. From this perspective, then, the classical foundationalist way of looking at knowledge is considerably out of date - not merely antediluvian but positively prelapsarian!"<sup>3</sup>

Wolterstorff writes of how sin has "darkened our capacities" for acquiring justified beliefs and attaining knowledge<sup>4</sup> and he suggests that the effects of sin also involve the sinner's resistance to the workings of a natural disposition to believe in God, a resistance that may become so habitual that "he may feel little or no impulse anymore to believe that God exists".<sup>5</sup>

The picture seems to be of a cosmos which is the theatre for the divine revelation of truth not only about God himself but about everything of which humankind should spontaneously advance in knowledge. Because of sin, the capacity to see is 'darkened' and people are turned from creaturely submission to the Creator's authoritative revelation to find something other than God to which

they can cling by faith, a faith or 'unfaith' which finds expression in all aspects of life including the intellectual. The effects of sin pervade all knowing, albeit in some areas more than others.

It is impossible in the present study to attempt to go into the nature of sin or even to begin to trace out how precisely it could lead to any one of these so many and so varied effects. But there is one aspect of this subject which stands out and could serve to focus our thinking. It is strongly present in Van Til's writings with, as we have seen,<sup>6</sup> their recurrent theme of how man takes either God or himself as "the final point of reference in all human affairs".<sup>7</sup> The claim is that a significant way in which sin affects the intellectual life is in a tendency to assume some unacceptable - unacceptable from the point of view of faith in God - form of autonomy of reason. This theme is also discernible in Kuyper's writings and in some of the things that Plantinga and other modern Reformed writers say about the effects of sin.<sup>8</sup> Even Alston, who is certainly not given to making excessive or unwarranted claims, talks of "an illegitimate inflation" of the rightful function of human reason so that "rationalistic imperialism" seeks to bring even our cognitive faculties before the bar of human reason, all at once, and to accept only that which passes the test. He adds:-

"It is not unduly fanciful to see in this demand an analogue, and more than an analogue, of the basic human sin of seeking absolute control, seeking to install man in the place of God and to sit in judgement over all things."<sup>9</sup>

Not only is this a recurrent theme in what a number of Reformed epistemologists have to say about the noetic effects of sin (with the suggestion that it is a basic sin) but it may also have important implications for what they say about belief in God being properly basic and divine revelation being self-authenticating. As we have seen, the position taken in relation to these two issues seems to lead to the possibility of fundamental disagreement for which there seems no prospect of resolution through argument. On the one side, there may be - and are - those who claim that they need no reasons or evidence for their belief that God exists or that he speaks to them through the biblical propositions. On the other side, there may be those who insist that such beliefs should not be accepted in the absence of good reason or adequate evidence. In this way, a form of commitment to God or what he is believed to say may be fundamentally

opposed to a form of commitment to reason. It is not that all commitment to God is opposed to all commitment to reason but that in some forms of both these commitments the disagreement may be basic.

This kind of basic disagreement is a form of what William Warren Bartley has termed 'the dilemma of ultimate commitment' and for which he has proposed a resolution in a particular form of rationalism.<sup>10</sup> In his discussion of this, Bartley states his opposition to the commitment of several Reformed writers but his epistemological position is not one that we have yet, in this study, related to Reformed epistemology.

For these reasons it seems important to take up these related issues now. But there is another reason for doing so and this is that the whole matter also has potentially great significance for education. Not only is it the case that rational autonomy is a widely accepted aim in education and, in the light of the foregoing, some forms of it may be unacceptable from the standpoint of Reformed epistemology, but it is also the case that some philosophers of education have linked their proposals concerning rational autonomy with Bartley's rationalism.

So it would seem that these related issues are of central importance for the whole subject of Reformed epistemology and its significance for education. In this present chapter, I shall therefore attempt to outline what might be meant by talk of rational autonomy and how it might be at odds with the themes of Reformed epistemology. I shall go on to look at Bartley's rationalism and the way in which it deals with the problem of conflicting ultimate commitments. I shall finally attempt to show how the Reformed epistemologist might respond to all this. This chapter is not therefore an outline of all the ways in which sin might be said to have noetic effects but rather of the implications of one important alleged effect for the discussion of the two themes of Reformed epistemology already met and of how that discussion might proceed in the light of this.

#### 4.1 AUTONOMY

It may not seem obvious how there could be a link between sin and autonomy but to attempt a thorough philosophical analysis of the theological concept of sin as well as of the idea of autonomy would seem to be altogether too much to take on within the limits of this already fairly wide-ranging study. So instead of going into such an exhaustive analysis, I shall suggest that it is initially plausible to take a certain kind of independent-mindedness to be opposed to the kind of trusting submission to the authority of God that seems to characterise (at least some) Reformed views of faith. But, it may be asked, is all independent-mindedness sinful and is mindless obedience necessarily the will of God? The answer is surely 'no' to both these questions so it is necessary to spell out in some detail just what kind of personal autonomy could be taken to be sinful.

It is not at all easy to get clear on what might be meant by the use of the term 'autonomy'.<sup>11</sup> This is partly because of its relative absence from 'ordinary language' and partly because of the variety of technical usages it has in political theory, psychology, sociology and theology as well as in philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Even in philosophy there is a fairly wide variety of usages of the term but common to most of them are, I think, these two central components of the idea of autonomy: authenticity and rational reflection. An autonomous person is governed in what he thinks and does by his own reasoned judgements and these must be both his own in a significant sense of ownership - rather than merely his - and reasoned rather than matters of pure fancy, obsession or the like. In other words, the 'nomos' must be both authentically his own ('autos') rather than that of another ('heteros') and rational rather than, say, purely emotional or voluntary. Autonomy is therefore opposed both to heteronomy and to anomie, i.e., both the condition where there is a 'nomos' but it is that of another and the condition of not being governed by any 'nomos'. Perhaps the most obvious reason for the variation in accounts of autonomy has to do with the degree of relative emphasis given to these two components. The more existentialist accounts tend to emphasise authenticity while the more rationalist make more of the rationality component.

There are at least two other candidates for inclusion in a list of conditions for the exercise of personal autonomy. One of these is strength of will and this operates at the frontier between what a person thinks and what he does. Another which is often suggested is self-knowledge or self-awareness although this could be taken to be necessary for or even partly constitutive of authenticity.<sup>13</sup>

What, then, is it that makes autonomy suspect from the point of view of faith or faith from that of autonomy? I do not think that it is likely to be a matter of the presence or absence of strength of will. Although the believer may often acknowledge an inability to do what he believes he should do, he is likely to regard this as a defect and autonomy in this sense as something desirable rather than sinful or opposed to faith. Consistency of belief and action is at least as much a virtue to the believer as to anyone who holds personal autonomy as an ideal.

Self-knowledge also seems to pose no particular problem to the believer and personal autonomy, insofar as it is taken to consist in such a quality, is also likely to be regarded by him as desirable. Indeed, as we have seen,<sup>14</sup> Calvin and other Reformed theologians have held that self-knowledge and knowledge of God are intimately related so that if the latter is taken to be something to be aimed at then, presumably, so also is the former. Although there may well be disagreement on the conditions for its existence and the reasons why it should be valued, that self-knowledge is to be valued does not seem likely to be an issue between the Reformed epistemologist and others.

Of the two central components of personal autonomy, authenticity also seems likely to be valued by the believer rather than regarded as sinful. Although there is a sense in which all our thoughts and actions are our own, the idea of authenticity seems to require a narrower and more significant sense of ownership which would exclude that which is not genuinely self-originated, e.g., the effects of drugs, hypnosis, brainwashing or other effects artificially created by other people.<sup>15</sup> Authenticity in this sense seems to be obviously a virtue rather than a defect and, as we saw earlier, even Van Til would appear to value this component of autonomy.<sup>16</sup>

So, lastly, we come to the rationality component and if autonomy - in at least some forms - is sinful, it would appear that it is in the area of this component that the problem lies. It is upon this component that most of the fire of Reformed writers has been directed and it is this that I shall seek to analyse in this chapter.

#### 4.2 THREE KINDS OF RATIONALISM

The rationality requirement in the ideal of personal autonomy is defined differently by different writers. I shall classify these with reference to a framework of three kinds of rationalism, within which they can be understood more clearly and within which it should also be possible to see more clearly how they might be opposed to the conception of faith as involving a properly basic belief in God or a believing response to a self-authenticating divine revelation. The third of these is Bartley's approach mentioned earlier.

For the first of the three I shall adopt the label used by Karl Popper and some of his followers: traditional rationalism. Here 'rationalism' is understood as including both classical rationalism and empiricism. It is justificationist rather than fallibilist. It includes both the wholistic justificationism of (at least some forms of) coherentism and the more linear approach of classical foundationalism. At its heart lies what Popper terms "the doctrine that truth is manifest" and he continues:-

"Truth may perhaps be veiled. But it may reveal itself. And if it does not reveal itself, it may be revealed by us. Removing the veil may not be easy. But once the naked truth stands revealed before our eyes, we have the power to see it, to distinguish it from falsehood, and to know that is truth."<sup>17</sup>

As Popper describes him, the traditional rationalist assumes that by the exercise of reason and use of sense observation, he will come to know what is true and that all rational people will agree that it is true. Where there are disagreements, then further exercise of reason and use of the senses should eventually dissolve them. But these are not things that can themselves be justified by reason or through the evidence of the senses so the traditional rationalist's optimism depends on a faith in human intellectual powers - whether he be substantively foundationalist or coherentist in his view of the nature of justification. In other words, it can be claimed that traditional rationalism is fideist albeit not self-consciously so.

On the conception of rationality that this involves, a person is rationally autonomous to the degree that his important beliefs are based on reasons and evidence upon which, ideally and all other things being equal, all rational people would agree. Intuition may be permissible on this kind of account but only insofar as the intuitions are shared by all rational people as, for example, those of mathematical or logical laws or of the principle of induction.

Now, as we have seen, Reformed epistemology has much in common with traditional rationalism. It shares its justificationism and it too is optimistic in its belief that there is truth to be apprehended by man and it also rests on a faith in reason. However, its optimism is qualified by the belief that it is God who manifests truth to man and that the veil may be due to man's sinfulness including his refusal to accept that which does not depend on reason. Its faith in reason has a 'deeper' basis in a faith in a Creator. In its claim that belief in God may not necessarily be properly basic for all or that an immediate awareness of God may not be universal, Reformed epistemology distances itself from traditional rationalism in a way that may be regarded from the latter perspective as irrationalist, dogmatic and the like. And although some idea of divine revelation may be acceptable to the traditional rationalist, it is only so if its acceptance can be rationally justified or if it authenticates itself to all rational people. The traditional rationalist cannot allow that there can be the epistemological chasm between the believer and the unbeliever that seems inevitable from the perspective of the Reformed epistemologist.

The second kind of rationalism is exemplified by Popper's own account. He regards it as being in the spirit of the Socratic tradition and as being approached by Kant in the field of ethics with his principle of moral autonomy. Popper calls his position 'critical rationalism' and he argues that the traditional rationalist's questions - 'How do we know?', 'How can we prove?' and the like - are misconceived because they are "clearly authoritarian in spirit".<sup>18</sup> Like the traditional question of political theory - 'Who should rule?' - they assume the answer should be authoritarian. He proposes the replacement of such questions in epistemology by the like of 'How can we hope to detect and eliminate error?' to which he believes the proper answer to be 'By



criticising the theories and guesses of others and - if we can train ourselves to do so - by criticising our own theories and guesses'.<sup>19</sup>

It is of interest to note that Popper links his position with the implications of Kantian moral autonomy for religious authority. He writes:-

"This principle (of autonomy) expresses his (Kant's) realization that we must not accept the command of an authority, however exalted, as the basis of ethics. For whenever we are faced with a command by an authority, it is for us to judge, critically, whether it is moral or immoral to obey. ... Kant boldly carried this idea into the field of religion: '... in whatever way', he writes, 'the Deity should be made known to you, and even ... if He should reveal Himself to you: it is you ... who must judge whether you are permitted to believe in Him, and to worship Him.'"<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding this important shift from rational justification to rational criticism, critical rationalism is evidently no less opposed than its predecessor to the idea of an authoritative divine revelation. But it has been itself criticised for retaining an irrational commitment to reason. Bartley claims to find evidence of this - he terms it "a fideism without glee"<sup>21</sup> - in the critical rationalism of Ayer's 'The Problem of Knowledge'<sup>22</sup> no less than in the traditional rationalism of his earlier 'Language, Truth and Logic'<sup>23</sup> and in such writers as Morton White, Hilary Putnam, Robert Nozick, W.V Quine and the later Wittgenstein. Of course, these writers differ greatly in the detail of their views of rationality but they have in common a recognition of logical limitations on rationality - that, for example, not everything can be rationally justified - and, in general, they take the task of the philosopher to be to describe, rather than justify, rationality's frameworks, presuppositions and the like. Not all of them embrace the shift from justification to criticism as wholeheartedly as Popper but Bartley finds unacceptable elements of justificationism and fideism in some of Popper's own writings as well. The clearest example of this is in the following from an early edition of his 'The Open Society and its Enemies' (he modified it in later editions apparently as a result of discussion with Bartley<sup>24</sup>):-

"Whoever adopts the rationalist attitude does so because he has adopted, consciously or unconsciously, some proposal, or decision, or belief, or behaviour; an adoption which may be called 'irrational'. Whether this adoption is tentative or leads to a settled habit, we may describe it as an irrational faith in reason. So rationalism is necessarily far from comprehensive or self-contained. ... Then why not adopt irration-

alism? ... But such panic action is entirely uncalled for. ... For there are other tenable attitudes, notably that of critical rationalism which recognises the fact that the fundamentalist rationalist attitude results from an (at least tentative) act of faith - from faith in reason. We may choose some form of irrationalism, even some radical or comprehensive form. But we are also free to choose a critical form of rationalism, one which frankly admits its origin in an irrational decision (and which, to that extent, admits a certain priority of irrationalism)."<sup>25</sup>

Recent discussions of rational autonomy and notably those which advocate its adoption as an educational ideal are, I believe, firmly rooted in the critical rationalist tradition. This is certainly the case with Dearden's accounts as, for example, when he writes:-

"'Rationality' is being understood here in terms of always being open to criticism, rather than in terms of having an ultimate justification. ... Everything can consistently be held open to criticism, though one cannot, of course, criticise everything at once."<sup>26</sup>

"All criteria may be questioned, but not all at once, if intelligibility is to be preserved. ... Autonomy neither does nor could require the stepping outside of all criteria to engage in some supposedly criterionless choosing."<sup>27</sup>

The following quotations from Richard Peters and Paul Hirst respectively also show the influence of this kind of approach:-

"The liberal ideal of autonomy is to be understood in contrast to unthinking conformity and rigid adherence to dogma. It does not demand making explicit everything which has been picked up from various sources and subjecting it all to constant criticism. What it does require is a willingness to learn and to revise opinions and assumptions when confronted with situations that challenge them. Logically speaking, too, criticism must take certain presuppositions for granted. Not everything can be questioned at once."<sup>28</sup>

"It is not the case that the rationally autonomous person must himself work out every judgement on every action he undertakes, questioning things even to fundamental principles. He does in fact think things out to the extent that he has the necessary knowledge and abilities."<sup>29</sup>

In fact, although I have linked these quotations with critical rationalism, there is evidence that a more radical and thoroughgoing kind of approach has influenced recent accounts of rational autonomy. This is Bartley's own approach in which he claims to have carried through Popper's critical rationalism to its logical conclusion. It is called 'comprehensively critical rationalism' or, more recently, 'pancritical rationalism'. Indeed, Dearden acknowledges the

influence of Bartley's account<sup>30</sup> and John White, in a paper on indoctrination, suggests that the principle 'You ought to critically examine all your beliefs' should be taught in a way that leads the pupil to apply it to itself.<sup>31</sup> In the light of the volume of complex philosophical discussion that Bartley's account has generated, it would seem unlikely that many pupils would ever achieve the degree of sophistication required to critically examine such a principle but to hold it as a theoretical ideal that they should is certainly in line with this third kind of approach to rationality.

From the point of view of the pancritical rationalist, both traditional rationalism and critical rationalism may be seen to evidence a fideist commitment to reason. From that of the Reformed epistemologist, if this commitment is not grounded on some deeper commitment to a God who made man with his rational powers, it may appear as an alternative to and exclusive of trusting obedience to a self-authenticating divine revelation. The difficulty for the rationalist of either kind is that he can offer no reason why his faith is to be preferred to faith in God or, for that matter, to any other kind of commitment however irrational. This poses for him what Bartley terms "the dilemma of ultimate commitment" because it is open to those who espouse any alternative to rationalism and who find themselves under attack from the rationalist to employ "a 'tu quoque' or boomerang argument" in response by reminding him that he too has made a commitment beyond the logical limits of rationality.<sup>32</sup>

This argument for faith in God - or, rather, counter to arguments against it - is essentially the same as the "Parity Argument" which Terence Penelhum has recently claimed to recognise in what he terms the "Evangelical Fideism" of Kierkegaard and the more modern versions of it adduced by, he says, Norman Malcolm and Plantinga.<sup>33</sup> It is to provide an effective response to this kind of argument and what he sees as a 'retreat to commitment' on the part of many recent Protestant theologians who have no time for traditional natural theology that Bartley puts forward his pancritical rationalism. Not that Bartley himself would have any time for what he would see as the traditional rationalism of the natural theologian. His own position entails a complete abandonment of justification in favour of holding all positions open to criticism including that position itself. Bartley writes:-

"While agreeing with Wittgenstein that principles and standards of rationality, or frameworks and ways of life, cannot be justified rationally, we regard this as a triviality and not as an indication of the limitations of rationality. For we don't think that anything at all can be justified rationally. Not only do we not attempt to justify the standards; we do not attempt to justify anything else in terms of the standards. We do not think that there is any such thing as 'well-founded belief' anywhere in the system. Rather, we locate rationality in criticism. A rationalist is, for us, one who holds all his positions - including standards, goals, criteria, authorities, decisions, and especially his framework or way of life - open to criticism. He withholds nothing from examination and review. ... We believe that the framework, or language-game, can be held reasonably or rationally only to the extent that it is subjected to and survives criticism. Thus we wish to enhance the role of 'reflective acceptance' of frameworks, not deny it."<sup>34</sup>

Evidently, if the Reformed epistemologist is indeed guilty of such a retreat to irrational commitment and if Bartley's rationalism is an effective response then the whole enterprise of Reformed epistemology up to the present is a failure. Bartley would then seem to have made room for an unlimited rational autonomy which would be exclusive of faith in God and untroubled by any ascription of autonomy to the noetic effects of sin.

This is why I have focussed upon rational autonomy and upon this particular account of what it is to be rational. The apparent fideism of both traditional and critical rationalism assumes that there are logical limits to rationality and to the attainment of rational autonomy. In the terms used by D.C. Phillips,<sup>35</sup> it is logically impossible to attain to 'autonomy 1', i.e., to rationally challenge the framework of beliefs and practices of one's society or, at least, of one's own beliefs and practices. If so, the most that can be attained is 'autonomy 2', that of accepting a framework uncritically but, like Kuhn's 'normal scientists', working autonomously within it.

This latter kind of autonomy is not a threat to faith in God and, indeed, seems quite acceptable and even desirable to the Reformed epistemologist. But to aspire to rationally justify the framework of obedient commitment to God is not acceptable to him. It is not in the finitude of reason that its corruption consists but, at least partly, in what the Reformed epistemologist may see as its arrogant refusal to admit its finitude or, if it does admit it, in going on to

think and act inconsistently with this admission. The dilemma of ultimate commitment for the rationalist is the dilemma of the seeming unattainability of 'autonomy 1' and yet, in his hostility to the idea of a self-authenticating divine revelation that calls for obedience, he must assume that it is attainable in calling upon the Christian to justify his framework beliefs. However, if Bartley's pancritical rationalism can be held to solve or dissolve the dilemma, then the way is open to a form of 'autonomy 1' and the commitment of faith must give way to openness to rational criticism. The autonomous man would then seem to have the last word.

There are, I think, at least two ways in which the Reformed epistemologist can respond to Bartley's criticism of his basic commitment to God. One is to reply to the charge that he is irrationalist in his commitment. The other is to criticise Bartley's position on its own terms. It is the possibilities in the first of these that I shall now investigate.

#### 4.3 REASON AND COMMITMENT

How can the Reformed epistemologist respond to the charge that the commitment of basic belief in God or response to a self-authenticating revelation which he cannot show to be self-authenticating is not an example of irrationalism? He could, for a start, question Bartley's (and Popper's) assumption that rationalism and irrationalism are not only mutually exclusive but also exhaustive of the possible kinds of position available. It is only if there are no logical limits to rationality that the rationalist can rationally adopt the position that all alternatives to rationalism are, in the final analysis, irrational, i.e. contrary to reason. So if Bartley is correct about the limits to rationality, then he can go on to talk, as of course he does, of the exhaustiveness of rationalism and irrationalism. However, if there are logical limits to rationality, then a non-rational or, perhaps more accurately, a supra-rational commitment is possible. This would be a commitment which is beyond reason rather than contrary to it. Some have termed it 'transrationalist'.<sup>36</sup> But then there would appear to be a dilemma for all - not only for the rationalist but also for the Reformed epistemologist - in that there would seem to be nothing to choose (rationally) between any of the alternatives. The transrationalist's commitment may not be

irrational but then it is not rational either! And, as objectors to Plantinga's proper 'basicity of belief in God have not been slow to point out, there is no reason why a person may not disbelieve in God. Sinful unbelief would appear to be excusable after all and the 'tu quoque' argument to be something of a double-edged sword. I shall return to this question of an excuse for unbelief shortly but before that there are, I think, other things the Reformed epistemologist can say in response to the charge that he is irrationalist.

For a start, the Reformed epistemologist can point to how he values reason and, in a qualified sense, autonomy. His is not an anarchic epistemology where 'anything goes'. Indeed, Bartley speaks very highly of the reasoned approach of Karl Barth whom he regards as a leading example of one who retreats to ultimate commitment. He describes him as "far from being dogmatic in the ordinary sense of that word, ... remarkably flexible, a most rational irrationalist".<sup>37</sup> Plantinga probably ranks as one of the foremost philosophers of religion of our day and could probably be spoken of in similar terms.

Secondly, contrary to the impression Bartley sometimes gives<sup>38</sup> and the charges of 'epistemological behaviourism' that have been brought against Plantinga's position,<sup>39</sup> the use of the 'tu quoque' argument by somebody does not necessarily mean that he is committed to a relativistic stance. The kind of Reformed epistemology which Plantinga and others advocate is an example of theological realism. Their claim is that it is true in a straightforward sense that God exists notwithstanding their acknowledgement that this is not something that they can demonstrate to the non-believer. It is not a case of saying that it is 'true for me' and something else may be 'true for you'. The point of the use of the 'tu quoque' argument can simply be to show that rational demonstration has limits which apply to the positions of all parties in the dispute. So if the Reformed epistemologist is irrational, it is not because he is guilty of the standard kind of self-refuting claim of which the relativist is commonly accused.

Thirdly, although he may believe that he cannot argue the non-believer into faith by means of appeal to reasons and evidence, the Reformed epistemologist may nevertheless engage in reasoning with the non-believer. He may attempt to demonstrate the coherence of his

position and this could include an explanation of the apparent non-universality of his beliefs and even of the limitations a limited rationality and the nature of faith may impose upon his ability to argue somebody into believing. Since coherence is not sufficient for truth, leaving as it does the problem of how to choose between two mutually exclusive but equally coherent stances, this is more a matter of removing obstacles to faith rather than providing arguments for it.

The Reformed epistemologist may also engage in reasoning through attempts to show internal problems in alternative stances. Bartley says that anybody who uses the 'tu quoque' argument may not criticise the commitments of others<sup>40</sup> but use of the 'tu quoque' is not inconsistent with criticism of the positions of others. If both as part of their commitment agree on the value of rationality and internal consistency, then one may legitimately point out to the other respects in which he believes that the other's position lacks internal coherence. To do so would not be irrational and if these lacks could be shown to be irremediable unless basic assumptions are amended or abandoned then this fact would constitute an argument against that particular stance.

So, although he may not be able to provide arguments for faith, the believer may respond rationally to arguments against faith and provide arguments against unbelief - at least in particular forms. He does not therefore have to resort to force - brainwashing or whatever - as an alternative to argument. Nor could he do so consistently with the Christian values of respect for persons, truth and rationality. The use of such methods could lead at most to inauthentic outward conformity to a way of life but this is not at all the same as a response in faith to a self-authenticating divine revelation. It would therefore not be consistent with the content of Christian faith to resort to such methods - although it must be granted that church history contains rather too many examples of such inconsistency (and that some of the techniques used in modern evangelism may also display it). Again, this is another respect in which the approach of the Reformed epistemologist need not be subject to the charge of irrationalism.

Fourthly, the Reformed epistemologist can point out that he is not taking belief in God to be groundless. He holds that his position is

indeed justified since it is immediately justified. To insist that justification is necessarily a matter of appealing to reasons or evidence is to deny the possibility of a self-authenticating divine revelation. To do so requires the support of argument to show that such revelation is impossible. The Reformed epistemologist holds that he is being rational as far as it is possible to be rational but because his commitment is not a matter of considering reasons or evidence it is not, ipso facto, nonjustificationist and, in this sense, not irrational. He has not retreated beyond justification but rather he has gone to the logical limits of the justification of this particular kind of belief. To be entitled to label this irrational, Bartley would have to show the unacceptability of an appeal to, say, immediate awareness of God mediated through the words of the Bible. It may be unacceptable as the starting-point for a rational demonstration to another person but this does not make it unacceptable as the grounding of the person's own belief.

Admittedly, immediate justification is not to the level of an absolute guarantee - and Bartley does seem to be assuming that justification must be absolute.<sup>41</sup> But lack of absolute guarantee does not require the abandonment of all talk of epistemic justification and its total replacement by talk of criticism. Why should justification have to provide an absolute guarantee before it can be regarded as real epistemic justification? The Reformed epistemologist attempts to give an account of justification which does not have such stringent requirements and which overcomes some of the difficulties that have been found to undermine classical foundationalism. To the extent that he is successful in this he is not irrational nor is his basic stance irrationalist.

Fifthly, we come to the objection mentioned at the beginning of this section that making use of a 'tu quoque' or Parity Argument provides an excuse for unbelief. The objection could be along the lines that if there is nothing to choose, from the point of view of rationality, between the alternatives of faith in God or unbelief, the unbeliever cannot be held to be responsible for his choice of unbelief and so unbelief cannot be held to be sinful. To this there are, I think, some responses available to the Reformed epistemologist. Following on from the points just made about immediate justification, he can claim that faith in God may be both rational - in a sense - and supra-



rational. The parity exists in the inability of either believer or non-believer to argue the other around to his position and not in an equal resort to unjustified beliefs or, in that sense, a retreat to commitment. From the inside of the Reformed position, it is not a matter of choice between equally unjustified beliefs - there is everything to choose between them but argument into faith may not be an available option.

The Reformed epistemologist may argue further that there is room for the possibility of religious rebellion in his account. This is the possibility of willing not to believe - where belief is understood in the sense of trusting obedience - even when the revelation authenticates itself to one. (Indeed, as we saw earlier,<sup>42</sup> Kuyper and Van Til, at least, portray the whole human race as being in a state of religious rebellion in the face of divine revelation in nature.) And if the ideal of rational autonomy is indeed exclusive of faith as trusting obedience, then this willing not to believe could find cognitive expression in the assumption of such autonomy.

However, there may be a price to pay for this turning aside of the objection in question. It seems to ascribe a centrality to the will so that if it is possible to will not to believe, it would seem possible also to will to believe or even to will to suspend judgement altogether. This lands us back with the ultimate commitment of a choice which begins to look suspiciously criterionless, a veritable leap of faith. But it may not be inevitable that we end up with this kind of commitment.

For a start, it does not follow that here the will to believe and the will not to believe differ only in content. It is possible to make a distinction between what might be termed 'responsive freedom' and 'wilful freedom'.<sup>43</sup> Responsive freedom is the kind of freedom we exercise in our response to overwhelming reasons or evidence for the truth of a claim when we freely accept that it is true. In a sense, it is a coerced freedom but, as is often pointed out,<sup>44</sup> intellectual coercion is not inconsistent with the voluntariness of belief. On the other hand, wilful freedom is what we must exercise when we have to 'make up our minds' upon inconclusive grounds or when we believe 'against the evidence'. This latter is at least possible in that we have indirect control over our believing because we can choose to

engage in activities that influence the conditions under which beliefs are formed and maintained.<sup>45</sup> It is also possible to act in ways that are inconsistent with our beliefs and this could be another form of wilful freedom.

The exercise of wilful freedom against divine revelation could therefore be seen as religious rebellion but it does not follow that responding to the revelation in trusting obedience is also wilful in this way. On the contrary, it would seem more appropriate to the kind of account of revelation that I have given that the revealer be taken to be the active one and the person to whom the revelation comes to be seen as more passively responsive. Belief in God is therefore not necessarily a case of a leap beyond reasons or evidence as it is sometimes portrayed and unbelief as wilful rejection of revelation can be sinful after all.

Sixthly, there is the question of whether a commitment of faith must be absolute. The assumption that it must seems to be one of Bartley's main targets in his advocacy of a position that holds all beliefs open to rational criticism. He seems to link the guarantees that he thinks are necessary for knowing - if knowing were possible - with the absoluteness of ultimate commitment. This leads him to distinguish 'conviction' from commitment as when he writes:-

"We can assume or be convinced of the truth of something without being committed to its truth. As conceived here, a rationalist can, while eschewing intellectual commitments, retain both the courage of his convictions and the courage to go on attacking his commitments - the courage to think and go on thinking. The word 'courage' is appropriate here. The submission of one's peripheral and unimportant beliefs to criticism requires no courage, but the willingness to subject to the risks of criticism the beliefs and attitudes one values most does require it."<sup>46</sup>

From this and in the light of his rejection of justification, it would seem that 'conviction' should be taken as strong or firmly held belief but it cannot be knowledge nor can it be justified belief. It would also seem to follow that it must be a matter of believing that something is true rather than that we may justifiably believe it to be true. What then is it to be 'committed' to the truth of something? Bartley does not provide us with a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for commitment but from what he does say, it would seem that he takes it to be a matter of an irrational or dogmatic assumption in holding that some, but not all, beliefs are immune to

the demand for rational justification. Commitment is therefore a matter of believing in a certain way, a way that does not hold the belief open to criticism and even shields it from criticism. Conviction may be firm but its firmness is qualified by an openness to criticism.

However, if commitment is seen as closely allied to - if not identical with - trust, then a different picture of the situation may emerge. It is not simply a matter of being committed to the truth of something but also of acting in certain ways or, at least, of being disposed to act in those ways. Trust will rest upon beliefs concerning the rightness of the action or the trust-worthiness of a person but it is more than the totality of those beliefs. In other words, faith is not merely assent to certain propositions but it does involve assent to them.

The problem that Bartley's challenge poses for the believer is whether the core beliefs of a commitment have to be certain if the commitment is to be absolute or unconditional. Basil Mitchell meets this problem as he seeks to reconcile the probably true beliefs that rest on his cumulative case for Christianity with the unconditional faith which is characteristically held by the Christian to be the ideal, although maybe not the actual attainment of many. His response is to distinguish between the believer's trust in God and his system of belief. He suggests that the former is unconditional but it does not follow that the latter - "the entire system of belief, including the belief that there is a God and that he is trustworthy" - could not turn out to be false in the end.<sup>47</sup> However, this solution seems to take the system of beliefs to be all of a piece and fails to distinguish between its core beliefs and those which are more peripheral. One may accept the possibility of a fairly radical revision of one's system of beliefs but can one trust unconditionally in a God whose existence is taken to be probable rather than certain? Some may talk of 'fluid axioms',<sup>48</sup> but the Reformed epistemologist may well ask whether all one's axioms can be as fluid as this?

The Reformed epistemologist could, instead, point again to the nature of immediate justification. To hold that a belief is immediately justified is to hold that it is immune from the demand for rational justification. It is not necessary to produce any reasons or

evidence in its support. But it does not follow that it is immune to rational criticism. After all, it is a case of prima facie justification. This means both that the belief is justified and that it is open to criticism. Immediate justification does not make a belief certain in the sense that it is infallible, logically indubitable, irrefutable or incorrigible. If it is grounded in some form of immediate awareness, then it is psychologically direct and so gives psychological certainty. If so, it would seem plausible to suggest that a combination of this psychological certainty with the immunity that the belief does possess - that from demands for rational justification - is sufficient for absolute commitment. That he allows the logical possibility that he is mistaken in his belief does not mean that the believer has (justified or unjustified) doubts or that he cannot have unconditional faith. Reformed epistemology can therefore be seen to differ greatly from Bartley's pancritical rationalism. It provides for the possibility of a justified belief being held open to criticism whereas for Bartley no belief is ever justified. For Bartley, commitment is not required but for the Reformed epistemologist, although it is required, it is not a problem.

Insofar as these responses to the charge of irrationalism are adequate, Reformed epistemology cannot be easily dismissed on these grounds. He does not necessarily assert anything which is contrary to reason and may indeed be thoroughly rational in many ways and to the limits of rationality. But, as we have seen, Bartley claims that there are no limits to rationality. So the second way in which a Reformed epistemologist can meet the challenge of Bartley's arguments is to turn to criticise it on its own terms.

#### **4.4 SOME PROBLEMS IN PANCRITICAL RATIONALISM**

Most of the discussion that has arisen in relation to Bartley's proposals has been centred on problems concerning their self-reference and on whether these are such as to render them unacceptable.<sup>49</sup> But there are other criticisms the Reformed epistemologist can make of Bartley's account and I shall seek to outline these before taking up the matter of self-reference.

#### 4.4.1 ARGUMENT WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION?

I think the Reformed epistemologist can point to the difficulty of getting clear on precisely what Bartley sees himself to be doing in setting forth his proposals for a pancritical rationalism. It would seem that he ought to deny both that he is arguing for anything and that he could be successful. To be consistent with his own proposals, he has to avoid the use of justificationist terms like verify, confirm, validate, defend, show to be acceptable and many more, for, as he says, "Nothing gets justified; everything gets criticised".<sup>50</sup>

However, reading through his book, it is at times difficult to avoid the impression that he is proclaiming a gospel hidden for ages but now revealed. Indeed, he talks of the "almost revelatory character" of an observation by Popper in his 1960 address before the British Academy, an observation that "throws a very different light on the history and problems of philosophy" - the observation that the questions asked in all the philosophies of the past "beg authoritarian answers".<sup>51</sup> Perhaps to suggest that Bartley presents himself as the evangelist of a new gospel is rather ad hominem but it is certainly difficult to work out exactly what he sees himself to be doing. He says that he wants to "argue" that rationality is unlimited<sup>52</sup> and to attempt to "succeed" in resolving the dilemma of ultimate commitment.<sup>53</sup> This he sees as the fundamental problem of modern philosophy and he defines it as the problem of how to defeat the tu quoque argument by "showing" that it is possible to choose in a nonarbitrary way among competing ways of life.<sup>54</sup> This is the language of success and it is present elsewhere too as, for example, when he says of his book (in the introduction to the second edition):-

"It delineates how it differs from earlier answers to the problems of criticism and of rationality, and it explains why such attempts failed, and how it succeeds where they failed."<sup>55</sup>

Again, he says that if his argument is correct, he succeeds in refuting the tu quoque argument and in solving the problem of rationality in which it is rooted.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, he thinks that his theory of rationality "satisfactorily" solves the problem.<sup>57</sup> All of this sounds like the language of a justificationist and the Reformed epistemologist may well point out that this is only to be expected since it is difficult to see how one can argue without justifying what

one says. Even though Bartley says it is inappropriate to ask or answer questions like 'How do you know?', what he is doing sounds very like giving answers to that kind of question. Could it be otherwise?

Admittedly, in his abandonment of what he terms "the old aim of establishing our views", he does maintain that it is impossible to "decisively refute" theories.<sup>58</sup> So perhaps a solution or a refutation can be 'satisfactory' without being 'decisive' but then this does not sound all that different from what one would expect from somebody who fuses justification and criticism in the critical rationalist approach that Bartley rejects.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps Bartley is simply being inconsistent and by changing the tone of some of his remarks he could end up with something more true to the spirit of his openness to criticism. In other words, he has not carried out completely what he terms his "diacritical analysis" of language - his attempt "to eliminate from it (ordinary language) an ordinary assumption about rationality which prevented the solution of the problem that accounts of rationality were intended to solve".<sup>60</sup> This may be possible but the Reformed epistemologist may well still find it difficult to see how a process of argument can exist without attempts to justify statements.

#### **4.4.2 COMMITMENT AND METACONTEXTS**

A second line of argument that the Reformed epistemologist could take is to attempt to show that Bartley is himself committed notwithstanding his rejection of commitment in favour of having convictions. Indeed, Bartley does allow at least one "absolute presupposition" and this is the presupposition of logic "to which we are committed not as human beings, because of our biology, psychology or sociology, but as arguers about the world". Bartley says that logic can be held open to revision and criticism and he continues:-

"To be sure, to abandon logic is to abandon rationality as surely as to abandon Christ is to abandon Christianity. The two positions differ, however, in that the rationalist can, from his own rationalist point of view, consider and be moved by criticisms of logic and of rationalism, whereas the Christian cannot, from his own Christian point of view, consider and be moved by criticisms of his Christian commitment."<sup>61</sup>

But the Reformed epistemologist can well respond to this that the

Christian may well be moved by criticism to revise the content of his Christian beliefs. After all, this is part of the dialogical situation of a personal relationship that he may hold to be central to an adequate notion of revelation.<sup>62</sup> He may also argue, as W.D. Hudson and others have done, that it is inconceivable that a person be argued out of the very practice of argument.<sup>63</sup> The main examples that Bartley gives of being argued out of the practice of using logic are of being argued into relativism, fideism, scepticism or determinism but to be argued into what he terms an irrationalist position is hardly the same as being argued altogether out of the practice of argument.

The Reformed epistemologist may also claim that there is another commitment underlying Bartley's writings, a commitment that has to do with truth rather than logic. It would seem that Bartley is committed to the pursuit of truth and even, judging by the volume and depth of his writings, passionately committed to it. He talks enthusiastically of the "goals of eliminating error and enhancing the advance of knowledge" as he elucidates the broad outlines of his evolutionary epistemology.<sup>64</sup> It is not that truth can ever be finally attained but that one may get closer to it. Bartley's approach can therefore, I think, be properly regarded as an example of what Agassi terms a 'bootstrap theory of rationality', i.e., one which embraces a historical relativism of rationality but rejects a historical relativism of truth.<sup>65</sup>

Bartley may object that this is not a matter of commitment to certain beliefs but rather to aims or goals but the Reformed epistemologist can plausibly urge in reply that commitment has a cognitive core and that the cognitive core here is the belief that one should seek to get nearer to truth. This core does not include the belief that openness to criticism is the best way of doing this because, according to Bartley, this position is itself held open to criticism.

This suggestion of overarching goals and beliefs brings in Bartley's notion of 'metacontexts'. In his first appendix to the second edition of his book, Bartley introduces a new line of thought which, he says, takes the argument of the book to "a new dimension". He goes on to make a distinction between positions, contexts and metacontexts. Positions can be expressed in statements describing

the environment or recommending ways of behaving in it. Positions are embedded in the contexts of belief-systems, ideologies and traditions which are not just the sums of positions held but are also their frameworks. A person's real allegiance is to a context rather than a position. Metacontexts are the contexts of contexts and Bartley says there are only three of them: justification philosophy, oriental nonattachment and pancritical rationalism. He also says that people hold conflicting positions in conflicting contexts and in terms of conflicting metacontexts but that criticism is possible and, presumably, desirable at all three levels.<sup>66</sup>

Bartley distinguishes the pancritical rationalist metacontext from that of justificationism but the Reformed epistemologist can argue that the differences are not as great as all that and that both fuse justification and criticism. Both are committed to the pursuit of truth through rational means and, if so, it would seem plausible to suggest that both have an underlying faith in the power of human reason to get closer to truth (if not to see it). Perhaps this opens up the possibility of going to the level of meta-metacontexts where the meta-contexts of both justificationism and pancritical rationalism have a common context of, say, truth-orientation through reason. But then the Reformed epistemologist could just as easily propose the alternative of, say, an intuitionist divine-revelation-based meta-metacontext. To this the pancritical rationalist might object that this classification merely reflects the Reformed epistemologist's own context to which the short response is 'Tu quoque?'

If the pancritical rationalist must exhibit these kinds of commitment then it would seem that he has not solved the dilemma of ultimate commitment nor has he come up with an adequate response to the tu quoque argument. Nor has he shown that rationality does not have logical limits.

#### 4.4.3 THE ANTHROPOCENTRICISM OF BARTLEY'S ACCOUNT

The Reformed epistemologist has yet another line of objection to Bartley's pancritical rationalism and to accounts of autonomy as an aim in life or an aim in education that are founded in it. From the perspective of the believer for whom belief in God is properly basic and divine revelation is self-authenticating, the major limitation in



Bartley's account is that it tacitly assumes that knowledge is a purely human product, i.e., that Popper was right when, towards the end of the lecture referred to earlier, he said:-

"What we should do, I suggest, is to give up the idea of ultimate sources of knowledge, and admit that all knowledge is human; that it is mixed with our errors, our prejudices, our dreams, and our hopes; that all we can do is to grope for truth even though it be beyond our reach."<sup>67</sup>

Popper explicitly includes supernatural sources of knowledge among those he rejects and at the same time he also dismisses the view that error may be due to human corruption.

Most of his lecture consists of description and recommendation and I can find only three reasons that he gives for this rejection, all of them rather briefly stated. First, against the "doctrine" that truth is manifest he argues that history shows us the "the simple truth is that truth is often hard to come by, and that once found it may easily be lost again".<sup>68</sup> But the Reformed epistemologist need not be at all moved by this observation since it is entirely provided for on the kind of account he is proposing with its emphasis on the noetic effects of sin. Secondly, as a counter to the theory of the ultimate sources of our knowledge, Popper appeals to the genetic fallacy and the need to distinguish questions of origin from questions of validity.<sup>69</sup> But the Reformed epistemologist may well respond that this assumes that the giving of reasons is necessary for all epistemic justification and that it is impossible that men believe with justification - albeit not on the basis of reasons or evidence - that God is speaking to them. Popper finally appeals to consequences in his suggestion that the conclusion that there are super-human sources of knowledge "tends to encourage self-righteousness and the use of force against those who refuse to see the divine truth".<sup>70</sup> The Reformed epistemologist may allow that this can happen but deny that it necessarily does so. It would seem that Popper's arguments are not unanswerable. But perhaps, anyway, he does not intend to justify his rejection of super-human sources and he means what he says when he includes this statement: "I propose to assume, instead, that no such ideal sources exist".<sup>71</sup> If it is assumed rather than argued for that supernatural sources of knowledge are impossible, then it is simply the case that the Reformed epistemologist makes no such assumption and has been presented with no reason why he should make it.

Bartley, I think, assumes that Popper has shown that divine revelation is an epistemological non-starter - if, again, it is possible from their standpoint to show that anything is the case! In an appendix on Fries's dilemma, he does very briefly mention the possibility of justifying a proposition "non-propositionally" but only to dismiss it immediately and summarily as either "psychologism" or a matter of appeal to a decision.<sup>72</sup> Apart from this, he seems to assume that, for the justificationist, the only alternative to the infinite regress of justification is "arbitrary dogmatic commitment".

This assumption means that the Reformed epistemologist can validly claim that there is an implicit anthropocentrism in Bartley's account. He may have much to say that is relevant to philosophy of religion but religion is viewed as a purely human phenomenon. Bartley's denial of the possibility of an authoritative source of knowledge rules out from the start the theocentric alternative of self-authenticating divine revelation to which the appropriate response is trust, obedience and commitment.

#### **4.4.4 SELF-REFERENTIAL INCOHERENCE IN BARTLEY'S ACCOUNT**

The issue of self-reference and paradox has received a fair amount of attention in the discussions there have been of pancritical rationalism.<sup>73</sup> The Reformed epistemologist may well feel he has sufficient reason to reject Bartley's position - especially on the issue of anthropocentrism - without going into this. And he may not gain much by going into it because the presence of paradox in an account does not mean that it is incoherent.<sup>74</sup> Bartley allows that paradox is virtually inevitable in an account like his but he goes on to point out that the mere possibility of a solution to these paradoxes is sufficient to show that his position can itself be held open to criticism. In order to show that Bartley's position is uncriticisable, his critics would have to demonstrate that all attempts to solve such paradoxes have failed and that they could not succeed.<sup>75</sup> This would seem a major task for the Reformed epistemologist even to embark upon and considerations of space in the present study make it impossible for me to do so even assuming that there could be a lot to be gained thereby, which I doubt.

There is a separate issue which has arisen in the literature in the course of the discussion on paradox and this has to do with whether criticisability and survival of criticism are necessary or sufficient conditions of rationality. In the appendix to the second edition of his book, Bartley states that "nonjustificational criticizability" is a sufficient condition for rationality.<sup>76</sup> This would seem to expose his position to a criticism that he may not be able, with consistency, to refute and this is related to a comment made by Agassi, Jarvie and Settle early on in the debate about paradox:-

"Bartley does not specify sufficient conditions for holding beliefs rationally - sufficient conditions would be specifications for justification and thus for victory - Bartley rather specifies as far as he can some necessary conditions - which (in the event of their being unfulfilled) are specifications for defeat".<sup>77</sup>

So if Bartley does provide sufficient conditions as he now says he does, then upon fulfilment of such conditions he can with justification say that he is being rational. This again casts doubt upon the possibility of completely unfusing justification and criticism.

#### 4.5 SUMMARY AND SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have focussed upon the suggestion that the assumption of rational autonomy, in some of its forms, is a noetic effect of sin. It is suggested that it manifests an unwarranted imperialism of reason and is opposed to the notion of a self-authenticating authoritative divine revelation. A revelation cannot be accepted as coming with divine authority in the absence of adequate reasons and evidence or so, it seems, the proponent of some forms of the autonomy ideal maintain. But the Reformed epistemologist holds that he need not adduce or possess any reasons or evidence for his belief.

I have looked at this fundamental disagreement with reference to the Popperian framework of different kinds of rationalism. Traditional rationalism with its insistence upon the rational justification of all beliefs apparently cannot meet its own standards and, failing to recognise that its rationality is necessarily limited, rests on what is by its own standards an irrational faith in the powers of unaided human reason to decide upon truth and falsity. Critical rationalism recognises that justification must come to an end and, contenting

itself with the description of its framework beliefs, presuppositions and the like, acknowledges its basic reliance upon the competence of human reason to get closer to truth if not to reach it. On both of these positions human reason is therefore held to be autonomous and claims to divine revelation must be judged at its bar. Faith as a trusting submission to an authoritative self-authenticating revelation from God is held to be unacceptable because it fails to satisfy the demand for rational justification.

The remaining account of rationality considered has been that of pancritical rationalism. It makes an attempt to completely replace justification by criticism in a position that insists that all positions including that of pancritical rationalism itself can be held open to rational criticism. This is held to solve the problem of a retreat to commitment discerned by Bartley in both its predecessors as accounts of rationality and, if it does so, this kind of rationality is unlimited, rational autonomy can be reinstated as an ideal without theoretical limits and commitments of all kinds are rightly regarded as irrational. But I have suggested that there is reason to believe that Bartley, as the leading proponent of this version of rationalism, does not succeed in completely unifying justification and criticism or in altogether avoiding commitment to reason as a means of getting closer to truth. It would seem that such a reliance upon unaided human reason means that the position is anthropocentric and that it therefore assumes from the outset the impossibility of the kind of self-revealing activity of God referred to above.

Against this ideal of unlimited rational autonomy the Reformed epistemologist posits the alternative of trusting response to the self-revealing activity of God. A convenient label for this notion is the term theonomy.<sup>78</sup> The nomos is that of another rather than one that originates in the self but the other is unique in being God rather than man. Man being finite and sinful cannot ultimately rely on his own powers nor can he find in other finite and sinful beings appropriate objects for complete trust or obedience. So, from the standpoint of faith in God, neither autonomy nor heteronomy is acceptable. But if there is an infinite Creator who is altogether good, he is uniquely worthy of such reliance and obedience and, indeed, of worship.<sup>79</sup> To this it may be objected that even if it be allowed that God is necessarily infinite and good, man cannot evade

his responsibility to decide for himself that this God is speaking to him and, a fortiori, that he exists.<sup>80</sup> But this objection assumes the impossibility of a self-authenticating divine revelation. On the basis of an account in terms of responsive freedom, it is not a matter of deciding in the sense of weighing up reasons and evidences and then coming to a decision. A person may be convinced that God is speaking to him and may be immediately justified in this belief. Of course, it is another matter to work out what God is saying to him and how it applies to the circumstances of his life. That a revelation is self-authenticating does not mean that there are no hermeneutical problems. And it is here that the exercise of reason may be of central significance as a person wrestles with complex problems of biblical interpretation and with real moral dilemmas - to say nothing of such noetic effects of sin as self-deception - in the application of biblical principles to life.

The whole issue seems to depend on the starting-point of the discussion. From the perspective of the assumption of unlimited rational autonomy, faith in the sense that I have taken it is not an option. From the perspective that allows the possibility of God speaking to man in a way that does not require rational reflection for justified belief, the assumption of autonomy is unacceptable and, since it is exclusive of faith, it is a manifestation of human sinfulness. These starting-points are mutually exclusive. They may also be ultimately exhaustive but I cannot attempt to show here that this is so. The choice between them is not a matter of arbitrary commitment because the believer may find himself confronted with a self-authenticating revelation to which he freely responds or else he wilfully rejects. It is no more arbitrary or dogmatic than belief in tables and chairs. However, it is likely to appear dogmatic to the non-believer who does not find himself with such beliefs. The believer can attempt to show the coherence of his own perspective on the basis of - for this purpose - a hypothetical assumption of his starting-point. He may also attempt to show incoherence in the autonomy-based perspective. For some this may be necessary for faith but it cannot be sufficient for it.

**WORLDVIEWS AND THEORY CONSTRUCTION**

Moving into the three chapters of Part Two of this thesis, we step back from the three themes of Reformed epistemology and the focus of the study moves to the significance of all this for the theory of education. Immediately, the subject of the relationship between a Reformed Christian (or any other) worldview and the construction of theories in education (or in any other area of knowledge or life) comes to the fore.

In fact, the relationship between Christian commitment and theory construction is of threefold relevance to this thesis. First, it has to do with the whole enterprise of describing a particular approach to knowledge as 'Reformed epistemology'. A common objection to doing this is to the effect that epistemology is epistemology and it does not make sense to talk of it as Reformed or Christian or Humanist or Marxist or whatever. Secondly, this thesis is concerned with the educational implications of Reformed epistemology and therefore, presumably, with some notion of Reformed Christian education. But, again, for many, not only is it the case that epistemology is epistemology but also that education is education and there is no such thing as a distinctively Christian view of education. So to talk of the educational significance or implications of Reformed epistemology also brings to the fore the question of the relationship between Christian commitment and theory construction. And a third way in which it is relevant is in that education theory is not only itself theoretical but also a theory of theories in the sense that it has to provide for the teaching of the theories of the different disciplines in the curriculum. So it would seem that to talk of Christian education or of Reformed education could involve a distinctive view of the content of education in the various disciplines. And here again, for many, talk of Christian or Reformed Christian mathematics, physics, geography, economics, art or the like is just as mistaken as talk of Reformed epistemology or of Christian education.

In view of this, it is important to get clear on what exactly is being proposed about the nature of this relationship between Christian commitment and theory construction so that we can ascertain whether it

is meaningful to talk of Reformed epistemology or of the educational significance of Reformed epistemology. It is one thing to put forward an approach to epistemology or education or a school subject and give it a label like Christian or Reformed but it is another to show that the particular view is logically linked with the particular Christian or Reformed Christian commitment of the person putting forward such an approach rather than simply being a view which happens to be held by some Christians.

I shall attempt to outline the main details of a spectrum of views on this subject along with what I take to be their strengths and weaknesses. I shall then take the one I find the most adequate and outline how it can make sense of the ideas of Christian education and Reformed epistemology. And to get into this project I shall start with a particularly forcefully put example of an argument which attacks the notion of 'Christian education' as being a kind of nonsense. This is the argument Paul Hirst presents in his paper 'Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?'.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 COMPLEMENTARITY

Hirst claims that the idea that there is a distinctively Christian form of education is just as much a mistake as the idea that there is a distinctively Christian form of mathematics, of engineering or of farming. He maintains that in all these pursuits it is now thought possible to attain knowledge on "autonomous, independent, rational grounds" rather than by appeal to Christian scriptures or Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup> The principles that govern matters in all these areas are "neither Christian nor non-Christian, neither for Christianity nor against Christianity".<sup>3</sup>

Hirst describes what he terms a "primitive concept of education" whereby "whatever is held by the group to be true and valuable, simply because it is held to be true and valuable, is what is passed on so that it comes to be held as true and valuable by others in their turn".<sup>4</sup> He contrasts this with a "second, sophisticated view of education" which is concerned with passing on beliefs and practices "according to, and together with, their objective status".<sup>5</sup> He continues:-

"On this second view the character of education is not settled by any appeal to Christian, Humanist or Buddhist beliefs. Such an appeal is illegitimate, for the basis is logically more fundamental, being found in the canons of objectivity and reason, canons against which Christian, Humanist and Buddhist beliefs must, in their turn and in the appropriate way, be assessed. When the domain of religious beliefs is so manifestly one in which there are at present no clearly recognisable objective grounds for judging claims, to base education on any such claims would be to forsake the pursuit of objectivity, however firm our commitment might be to any one set of such beliefs. Indeed an education based on a concern for objectivity and reason, far from allying itself with any specific religious claims, must involve teaching the radically controversial character of all such claims. An understanding of religious claims it can perfectly well aim at, but commitment to any one set, in the interests of objectivity it cannot either assume or pursue."<sup>6</sup>

Hirst's argument is two-fold. He holds that the controversial nature of religious claims renders them unacceptable as a basis for a rational and objective theory of education. An adequate basis for a theory of education would, it seems, have to be in a concern for objectivity and reason which is - or ought to be - fundamental to religious claims as well. Not that the canons of reason are applicable to both education and religion in the same ways for Hirst goes on to say that his whole argument is based on "the autonomy thesis ... that there exist vast areas of knowledge and understanding using concepts and canons of thought, objective in character and in no way connected with religious beliefs".<sup>7</sup>

So it is not simply that religious beliefs are less objective or more controversial but - and this seems to be the real thrust of Hirst's argument - that they belong to a logically distinct area of understanding with its own concepts and canons of reason even though these latter may not yet be clearly established. Education is, for Hirst, directed to the development of reason in all its forms and these include mathematics, science, history and the like and the autonomy of these forms is such that they are necessarily free of religious presuppositions. It is not that education is itself a form of knowledge or understanding but that education is education in the various forms of knowledge. Education in religion can only be in religion insofar as religion is rational for, as Hirst says:-

"... in education in this sense, no commitment or belief or faith is sought beyond the grounds or reasons or objective basis for the claims concerned. Faith can thus be rational but it can also be a-rational, non-rational, irrational, anti-rational,



unreasonable. Only the first of these has a part in 'education'. In so far as objective grounds for Christian beliefs, or any other religious beliefs, can be given, such beliefs have a place in 'education'. It seems to me that at this moment we have to accept that such grounds do not exist. If that is so, Christian beliefs must at present be regarded as a matter of faith that is not objectively defensible, and commitment to it cannot therefore at present properly figure in education in the sense I am defending. That does not mean that Christian beliefs necessarily run counter to anything that is rationally defensible, for they may consistently complement what is rationally known. But that provides no objective ground for their truth as religious claims, for other systems of belief also do that."<sup>8</sup>

Again, the two issues of the autonomous forms of knowledge and of the rationality and objectivity of religious beliefs are woven together and this is accomplished by Hirst's linking of his concept of education as the development of reason with the idea that reason takes several different autonomous forms. I propose to separate these two ideas because neither logically requires the other. The issue of the rationality of religious belief is one that has been to the fore in Part One of this thesis and to which I shall return in the next chapter in considering the subject of indoctrination. That of the autonomy of forms of understanding in relation to religious belief is the issue that concerns us here.

In the last extract quoted above, Hirst suggests that religious beliefs may complement beliefs in other areas of understanding. The complementarity of beliefs in different areas is an idea that has received considerable attention in recent decades and which can take various forms in the hands of different writers. And even where the idea of complementarity takes the same form, religious belief may be given different status by different writers. Some, like Hirst, seem uncertain whether religion can even be accorded a place among the forms since they take them to be forms of knowledge and they are reluctant to allow that religious propositions can be known to be true. Others put religious beliefs on all fours with beliefs in other autonomous areas. And still others give religious beliefs - or certain religious beliefs - a more basic role without thereby infringing the relative autonomy of other areas in relation to one another.

One way to subdivide complementarist positions is according to whether they see different areas of understanding as dealing with different parts of reality or different aspects of reality. These two kinds of position could be termed 'regionalist' and 'perspectivalist'.<sup>9</sup>

A classic example of regionalism is the mind-body dualism of Descartes. He saw the person as being composed of two completely different substances - 'res extensa' and 'res cogitans'. The former belongs to the material realm where mechanistic explanations are appropriate and potentially complete whereas in the case of the latter such forms of explanation are totally inappropriate, the mind being spiritual rather than material. Difficulties in accounting for the interaction of these two kinds of substance have made this form of dualism rather less popular in the present century than formerly although it does still have its contemporary advocates.<sup>10</sup> Another form of dualism assumes a dichotomy between a supernatural realm of spiritual forces and miraculous acts of God and a natural realm of cause and effect which apply equally to mental events as to physical events. Some phenomena, on this account, cannot be naturally explained since they are caused supernaturally. Everything that happens is either an act of God or a natural occurrence and nothing that happens is both. This kind of dualism tends to restrict God to the gaps in human knowledge. There are also difficulties in accounting for the relationship between these two realms or regions of reality, e.g., in the case of a miracle, between supernatural causes and natural effects. These problems with the definition of interrelationships do not in themselves show that dualism must be mistaken but they do produce a sense of unsatisfactoriness about this kind of account.<sup>11</sup>

The perspectivalism of such as Donald MacKay<sup>12</sup> sees forms of understanding as being concerned not with different parts of reality but with different aspects of it. Whereas the Cartesian dualist insists that physical science is competent only to study certain regions of reality, the perspectivalist allows it to deal with the whole of reality but only with certain aspects of that whole. The perspectivalist says that physical science tells us only one of several complementary 'stories'.

MacKay illustrates the notion of complementarity by an example of the use of lamps to signal from ships at sea where, in one sense, all that is coming from the ship is a series of flashes of light but the trained observer sees a message being sent ashore. The message is related to the flashing of light, not as an effect is to a cause, but rather as one aspect of a complex unity is related to another aspect.<sup>13</sup> Here the illustration is of a complementarity between the physical and the non-physical or, at least, the non-purely-physical. Another oft-quoted illustration of the idea of complementarity comes from within physics itself in the practice of taking the wave and particle models of the behaviour of light as being complementary rather than contradictory. A similar thing can happen within mathematics where, for example, two definitions of probability which are not equivalent may nevertheless give the same results in situations where they both apply.

This idea of complementary perspectives can be used in an attempt to resolve the mind-brain debate without appeal to dualism and without falling back on the reductionist alternative which MacKay terms the 'the fallacy of nothing-buttery'.<sup>14</sup> Different aspects of the same events can be described in complementary ways in personal terms (the 'I-story') and in neurophysiological terms (the 'brain-story'). The former is human and indeterministic whereas the latter is mechanistic and deterministic but there is no contradiction. As one writer who adopts this kind of approach puts it:-

"With respect to the question of freedom, it is important to distinguish between people and brains, because it is people - not brains - who are free. Conversely, it is brains - not people - which may be machines."<sup>15</sup>

This resonates with the distinction made by many philosophers between reasons (for actions) and causes (of events). It also echoes something of the context of Gilbert Ryle's discussion of the idea of a 'category mistake'.<sup>16</sup> Such a mistake results from attempting to combine more than one of a set of complementary perspectives in a single description of some phenomenon or, in Wittgensteinian terms, using more than one 'language-game' at one time. For the kind of complementarist in question, to speak of people - rather than their brains - as machines is to make just such a mistake. In a similar way, it can be argued that it is a category error to talk of conflict between the assured results of psychological research into religious experience and religious or theological accounts of such experience.<sup>17</sup>

The complementarist picture is of different language domains with different contexts which bring with them different purposes in the use of language. To oppose them is to commit a category error and it is, I think, such an error that Hirst sees in talk of Christian education. And D. Z. Phillips sees a category error in the whole idea of Reformed epistemology. He suggests that it takes place in an apologetic context when, as he says, it should rather be that the philosopher is "the guardian of grammar" while the theologian is "the guardian of the Faith". He takes this to be a conception of philosophy and epistemology which is neither for or against religion and to understand which is to see why attempting to establish a Reformed epistemology is "still to remain captive to an apologetic conception of epistemology".<sup>18</sup> A similar kind of argument from different contexts and purposes is brought by opponents of what has come to be called 'creation-science' when it is claimed that the Bible tells us who made the universe and why he made it but not how or when he made it.

Complementarism has much to commend it and not least, in relation to the nature of man, in its stress on the holism of the person in all his aspects. Against materialistic reductionism, it asserts that man is more than a mechanistic brain and, against dualism in at least some of its forms, man is not a mysterious conjunction of different substances, a soul temporarily housed in a body. All aspects of the person - spiritual, psychological, biological and the like - are given their places in the differing perspectives that can be taken of the single reality which is the human being.

But, at the same time, this approach is not without its problems. Perhaps the chief of these is similar to that which is perceived as a major weakness of dualism: how to relate together the different aspects or perspectives. This is of particular importance in cases where it is not clear whether two accounts of the same phenomenon are complementary or contradictory. If they are complementary then contradictions are apparent rather than real. It may be quite clear, for example, that there is no real contradiction between the descriptions of ship-to-shore signalling as flashes of light and as messages. But it is by no means as clear that the deterministic brain story and the indeterministic mind story are not incompatible. To appeal to the notion of complementary perspectives in such a case

may be merely to assert that they are compatible. William Hasker says that some complementarists take the problem of apparent conflict, add the word 'complementarity' as "a verbal embellishment" and then present the problem over again as its own solution.<sup>19</sup> To be fair to MacKay, he gives much space in his writings to attempts to show that the contradiction between mechanistic and teleological accounts is not real. Nevertheless, some respondents feel that his position is still basically determinist and that he may be reinterpreting the mind story in order to bring it more into conformity with the mechanistic brain story.<sup>20</sup> So it can at least be argued that it is not obvious that there is no conflict between the two accounts which are proposed as complementary. And in such situations it seems that there may be a tendency for one perspective to become dominant at the expense of another.

## **5.2 A HIERARCHY OF PERSPECTIVES?**

A possible view of the relationship between complementary perspectives is that they are held to be so completely autonomous in relation to one another that they are strictly incommensurable. It is not a matter of a statement being true simpliciter but of a statement being true in science or true in religion or true in some other form of human understanding. If a statement is true in religion then it is neither true nor false but meaningless in other forms of understanding. 'The Resurrection has occurred' is either true or false in religion but being a religious statement - a statement of theological truth or falsity - it cannot be regarded as either true or false in history. If it is true, it is a spiritual truth and not a historical truth. On the other hand, 'the empty tomb has occurred' is not a religious statement but a statement which is either true or false in history and neither true nor false in religion.

According to this way of thinking, there is strict incommensurability between religious statements and statements about the past. This seems to be part of what is entailed by saying that religious language is "logically odd". I. T. Ramsey suggests that it belongs to its own domain and has its own logic so that it is possible to assert that the empty tomb occurred and deny that the Resurrection did and even to assert the latter and deny the former.<sup>21</sup> This means that it is possible that the bones of Jesus of Nazareth could be mouldering away

in a middle eastern tomb and that it be nevertheless true that the Resurrection has taken place.

But all this seems very strange. The statement 'The Resurrection has occurred' certainly seems to be a statement about the past. Granted it means more than that certain historical events have taken place - the tomb is empty, Jesus of Nazareth has returned to life from death, and the like - but it does not follow from this that we can go on to say that it means other than that they have taken place. The problem here is that both historical and theological statements seem to be about a single reality viewed from different perspectives rather than a dualism of realities.<sup>22</sup> They may indeed be made from different perspectives and they are certainly not equivalent in meaning to one another but it scarcely follows from this that there is no relationship between the truth of one and that of the other. The same could be said of neurophysiological accounts of the brain and teleological accounts of human action so that it may be that if a certain event has not taken place then a certain action has not been carried out either.

Indeed, to separate differing perspectives in the way that strict incommensurability would seem to require is something that is not presupposed in much of our use of language. Statements in physics, for example, make frequent use of mathematical concepts and rules without being guilty of any kind of category mistake.

The way in which one form of understanding makes use of ideas and rules from another suggests the possibility of a hierarchy of levels of description. What is written on this page could be described from a number of perspectives each with its own level in a hierarchy. It could be described in terms of marks transferred from carbon film to paper. It could be viewed as letters of the English alphabet together with spaces and punctuation marks. At a higher level, it could be viewed as sentences using the words and rules of the English language and making grammatical sense as does, say, the sentence 'colourless green ideas sleep furiously by my book for eating apples every other Christmas Eve'. A higher level would be that of making semantic sense and beyond that there is the level of making logical sense as an attempt at a philosophical argument. Other possible points of view include that of literary style, that of the psychology

of the writer and that of personal significance to the writer or, were it addressed to him in particular, the reader. It could also be viewed as an attempt to do something which is morally good or as an attempt to serve God. And doubtless there are other possible perspectives as well. For example, if it were hand-written, the graphologist might well view the shapes of the letters and other such features as expressions of the unique personality of the writer.<sup>23</sup>

But if it is right to suggest that there are higher and lower levels in a hierarchy like this then it is of interest to look for some principles of ordering. Lower level descriptions are presupposed by higher levels. Description of what is written on this page as letters of the alphabet, spaces and punctuation marks presupposes that there are marks of some kind on the paper - although not necessarily transferred from carbon film by the printer of a word-processor. It is the particular kind of marks that are made that makes it possible to describe them as letters and the like rather than blobs, drawings, doodles or something else. This means that the higher level description is more comprehensive.

Comprehensiveness is one of two criteria proposed by Stephen Evans for what he terms 'metaphysical ultimacy'. The other is uniqueness and he sets the two side by side with reference to the example of a written poem:-

"That perspective in which the poem is seen as a poem, a literary creation, is most comprehensive. It incorporates all the other perspectives by presupposing them and going beyond them. The perspective in which the poem is experienced as a poem also scores highest on the uniqueness criterion. There are molecules which do not form ink marks, there are ink marks which do not form letters, there are letters which do not form words, and there are words which do not form poems. Only when a poem is read or heard as a poem does its uniqueness - its character as a poem - stand out clearly."<sup>24</sup>

Evans goes on to suggest that the personalistic perspective upon human beings is more comprehensive than, say, a materialistic account and that it shows the uniqueness of human beings. Here again he sets the two criteria side by side but it seems to me that there is really here but one basic criterion - that of comprehensiveness. If an account or perspective is more comprehensive than its alternatives it follows that it does more justice to the uniqueness of that of which it is an account or upon which it is a perspective.

An example of a very detailed account of aspects related together in a hierarchy of perspectives is found in the modal theory of the Kuyperian philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd.<sup>25</sup> He enumerated fifteen distinct modes or aspects of reality moving from the simple to the more complicated. These modes are distinct and irreducible aspects of reality but as aspects of the same reality they exist in what Dooyeweerdian philosophers often term 'a coherence of irreducibles'.<sup>26</sup> A particular aspect is abstracted from this integrated whole by the process of scientific thought. Each mode is characterised by its own laws, e.g., the laws of motion or the laws of organic growth, and by its central ideas or its indefinable 'modal kernels' or 'nuclear moments' which Dooyeweerd suggested are indefinable and directly known by intuition, e.g., the ideas of harmony in the aesthetic mode and of life in the biotic mode.

With these modes are linked the 'modal sciences': mathematics (combining the numerical and the spatial), physics/chemistry (covering the kinematic and energetic), biology, psychology, logic, history, linguistics, sociology, economics, aesthetics, jurisprudence, ethics and theology. Dooyeweerd distinguished these modal sciences from individuality sciences. Whereas modal sciences are concerned with the study of particular modes, individuality sciences study specific kinds of phenomena. Astronomy is an individuality science related to the modal science of physics and applies the theories of physics to the particular phenomenon of the stars.

Higher modes have in their foundations increasing numbers of lower modes so that, for example, the existence of an object in the physical mode, say, a stone, presupposes number, space and motion for it can move and it occupies space and consists of a number of particles in motion. Its existence in the physical mode does not presuppose other higher modes, e.g., that of organic life.

It seems to me that an account of the relationships between forms of knowledge in terms of a hierarchy of perspectives is more adequate than the alternatives of other kinds of complementarism and strict incommensurability. However, this still does not show how it might be meaningful to talk of Reformed epistemology or Christian education. The higher modes may presuppose those at lower levels but since, under schemes like Evans' and Dooyeweerd's, that which is of central concern



to Christians - the theological mode - is at or near the top of the hierarchy it is by no means apparent how theological beliefs can affect those in lower modal spheres. Reformed writers like Dooyeweerd, Van Til, Kuyper and some of the more recent American writers tend to speak of the influence of their Christian 'presuppositions' or 'perspectives' upon theory formation in other areas of study and hence of a downward flow of influence if we adopt the kind of hierarchy being proposed here. But, so far, it is beliefs at the lower levels that are being 'presupposed' as we go higher up the ladder. In other words, the autonomy of, say, physics or political science in relation to religious belief seems to be preserved under such an approach - unless there are presuppositions of a different kind which influence matters downward rather than upwards. All this seems to call for study of what might be meant by the use of terms like 'presupposition'.

### **5.3 PRESUPPOSITIONS**

Under 'presupposition', the Concise Oxford Dictionary gives "thing assumed beforehand as basis of argument etc.". For our purposes, the main kind of 'thing' that can be presupposed is a proposition. The dictionary definition suggests that the proposition need not be believed by the person who presupposes it but merely taken to be true for the purposes of an argument or discussion. A presupposition does not have to be true nor can it be shown to be true by the argument or discussion in which it is presupposed nor does it follow that if the conclusion of the argument is true, its presuppositions must also be true. But a set of presuppositions may be sufficient for the truth of the conclusion without being necessary for it.

However, there is another sense of 'presupposition' which is significant for the present discussion - that of a proposition which is a necessary condition not simply of the truth of a statement but of its truth or falsity. This is a sense identified by Peter Strawson (and mentioned earlier<sup>27</sup>) when he points out that statements made by sentences beginning with such phrases as 'All ...', 'All the ...', 'Some ...', 'Some of the ...', 'At least one ...', 'At least one of the ...', 'No ...' or 'None of the ...' presuppose the existence of members of the subject-class although they do not assert their existence. If I say 'Some of the books on the top shelf of my

bookcase have green covers' then this statement presupposes that there are books on the top shelf as does the statement 'None of the books on the top shelf of my bookcase have green covers'.

In both senses, a presupposition is assumed at the outset of an argument or discussion. In neither sense, therefore, can its truth be proved by that argument or discussion, being itself a basis or foundation for the argument. But in the second sense and not the first, the truth of the conclusion, if independently established, would establish the truth of the presupposition. It may be possible to use a transcendental argument to identify presuppositions and demonstrate that they are actually being assumed in a particular argument or by a particular kind of practice or activity.<sup>28</sup> But transcendental deduction of this kind in itself does not show that the presupposed proposition is necessarily true. A presupposition may be necessarily presupposed (second sense) without being true and it may be a presupposition (first sense) without being necessarily presupposed. The practice of scientific study may presuppose (second sense) order in the world but it is arguable whether that in turn presupposes (first sense) an Orderer - although many people do assume or presuppose (first sense) that there is one.

The second sense of necessary condition of truth or falsity suggests a way in which one level in a hierarchy of perspectives may 'presuppose' another. Consider statements like 'Some of the marks on the page before me are words' or 'Some of the objects on the table are flowers'. These statements presuppose the truth of certain physical-object statements although they themselves involve higher-level descriptions. This accounts for the 'bottom-upwards' relationship among the perspectives. But there is a 'top-downwards' relationship as well for if it is true that there are flowers on the table or words on the page before me then certain object-language statements are also true. And this takes us back to the first sense of 'presupposition'.

This could suggest that the higher-level descriptions are 'optional extras' to those at lower levels leaving the way open for the reductionist to have his 'nothing-buttery'. But as I sit looking at the marks on the paper or the objects on the table, I may find myself compelled to wonder why there is anything at all. I am not concerned about whether there are words or flowers before me but with 'ultimate'

or 'fundamental' questions. I find myself assuming the necessity of higher levels of description and explanation and, upon further analysis of my beliefs, I may even find that I am making tacit substantive assumptions at these levels. Even my anti-metaphysical reductionist friend could be said to be making certain negative assumptions at this level in his exclusion of explanations of this kind. This gives a further sense to 'necessary presupposition' - that of the necessity of making some, but not any particular, assumptions at the higher levels in the hierarchy of perspectives. And these assumptions at the higher, more comprehensive levels are presuppositions in the first sense and may influence beliefs at lower levels.

For present purposes, what is of interest is the kind of higher-level description or proposition that can be presupposed within whole areas of knowledge or understanding or by particular approaches to whole areas of knowledge and understanding and how such propositions affect the content of beliefs in these areas. As presuppositions, they will be assumed to be true within the area or within a particular approach to the area and so cannot be shown to be true from within the area or approach. This does not mean that they cannot be argued about but simply that such argument must take place outside the area of knowledge and understanding in which they are presupposed.

Some of these presuppositions will be substantive assumptions about the nature of the subject matter of the area of knowledge, e.g., a psychologist may assume that mind is not reducible to matter. These are about the nature of the reality with which the area of knowledge is concerned and are therefore ontological. They include presuppositions concerning the categories into which the different kinds of subject matter may be sorted although they could be regarded as sufficiently significant and distinct to merit separating out on their own. These categorial presuppositions were highlighted by Stephan Korner in his 'Categorial Frameworks' in which he drew attention to the most basic distinctions to be made in reality and the relations which hold among the phenomena thereby distinguished.<sup>29</sup> A second class of presuppositions will be assumptions about the methodology that is appropriate to the study of this subject matter from the perspective of the area of knowledge in question and these are epistemological, e.g., the assumption that the tests for

scientific claims are ultimately matters of sense perception. A third kind of presupposition is axiological, having to do with the values, purposes and goals involved in the study of the subject matter.

As we saw earlier,<sup>30</sup> some Reformed writers have posited the logical priority of ontology/metaphysics over epistemology. This seems quite sensible since it is evident that methodology must be appropriate to subject matter and so we must make assumptions about the reality that we are studying before we can decide how we go about studying it. If reality and our theories about it are separated in this way then ontology is not reduced to epistemology.<sup>31</sup> A similar distinction should be maintained between what is of value and how we know what is of value.

Of course, many of these basic ontological, axiological and epistemological presuppositions are very controversial and very far from being universally held. Indeed, even the thesis that we can talk about ontology separately from epistemology is itself controversial as is that of the logical priority of ontology over epistemology. But their controversial nature does not mean that we can avoid making any assumptions of these kinds.

If presuppositions are ontological, then the reality of God is surely likely to occupy a fairly central role in the believer's conceptual scheme. If they concern categorial distinctions, then that between a Creator and his creation must be fairly significant. If they have to do with values and goals, then the believer's aim to glorify God and the value put on the human person by being regarded as made in the image of God must dramatically affect his set of values. If presuppositions are about how we can come to know things, then the belief that our knowing faculties themselves and the objects of our knowledge of things are created by God must also be of fairly major significance for a theory of knowledge. Van Til refers to God as 'the final point of reference in all human affairs'. By their very nature, basic religious beliefs seem likely to be central to the believer's worldview and interwoven among his basic presuppositions in a way that makes the distinction between the philosophical and the theological very difficult to define.

But how precisely and to what extent can these central philosophico-theological beliefs affect the content of beliefs and the construction of theories at lower levels in the hierarchy of areas of knowledge? It is not enough to assert that they do so - some account of how they do it is required. Various Christian scholars have made attempts at the integration of their Christian faith with their learning in different areas of scholarship so I shall look at some of these to see what difference, if any, these central Christian beliefs can make.

### **5.3.1 APPROACHES TO THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING**

I shall examine three main types of approach used by these scholars in their attempts to integrate their Christian beliefs with their areas of study. Doubtless there are other possibilities and actual examples of some of them but these three are the most popular and they serve to highlight the issues involved. I shall label them 'compatibilist', 'soft-presuppositionalist' and 'hard-presuppositionalist'.

The compatibilist maintains the strict autonomy of the forms of human knowledge and understanding so that Christian presuppositions will not have any implications within non-theological areas but he nevertheless sets the different areas of knowledge in a larger context wherein he claims that the basic assumptions of the different areas should be compatible with his basic Christian beliefs.

An example of this kind of strategy would be in Gareth Jones' approach to the biology of the human brain.<sup>32</sup> After outlining the structure and functions of the brain and the personality and character changes that brain damage can cause, he argues that every person is "a unity, describable as a biological-spiritual being, as a body-soul, or as a material-immaterial entity". He maintains that the two complementary descriptions of a human being whereby for certain purposes he can be compared to a machine and is at the same time and equally a person created by God are "intimately interwoven aspects of what being human is all about".<sup>33</sup> He concludes by insisting that the brain has to be seen within the context of the human being as a whole, a context within which "Christianity affirms the significance of human beings and the meaning of human existence" and "in so doing, it affirms the value of the human brain".<sup>34</sup> Setting the results of biological study

of the brain in such a Christian context contributes to a total view of the person but it does not effect any changes within the biological account of the brain.

Compatibilism does not comport well with the view of the relationships between the different aspects of reality that I find most adequate - that of a hierarchy of perspectives. I think that Paul Hirst's approach is basically compatibilist. As we have seen, he regards his sophisticated concept of education to be something that is neither Christian nor anti-Christian.

An example of the second type of strategy - that of what I have termed 'soft-presuppositionalism' - is given by James Martin's attempt to change some of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of psychology.<sup>34</sup> Martin is a professor of psychology at Pennsylvania State University but he is critical of the dominant paradigms in contemporary psychology for their exclusion of personal knowledge. Since psychology has to account for the knowledge of persons as well as of physical objects, personal knowledge is, he maintains, the central issue for psychology. He claims that an adequate psychological epistemology has to account for both the otherness and the not-otherness of the to-be-known, both its opacity and its intelligibility, that it is both a mystery and a self-revelation and he argues that it is in the notion of the person that this happens. He claims that this has radical implications for psychology and he writes:-

"If I am correct, psychology cannot, insofar as it deals with persons, be construed only as a science. I take it as a distinctive characteristic of science that it involves a comprehension of a determined world through concepts. On my account, it is not through the determinate concept alone, but through the imagination that we apprehend persons. ... An epistemology which makes room for persons - for self-revelation and love - is long overdue. Without such a positive foundation, the future of psychological investigation will be a continuation of the past - a series of retreats from a series of increasingly barbaric and sophisticated renderings of the thesis that a human is a piece of meat. Clearly, we need another metaphor. The Bible gives us one. Humanity is the image of God - God who both hides and reveals himself."<sup>35</sup>

Martin's proposal is for a fairly radical transformation of psychology by bringing in among its ontological and epistemological presuppositions the Biblical concepts of the person and of personal knowledge. He builds his case from within psychology as it is at

present by discussing its deficiencies in a way that is aimed at convincing his fellow-psychologists as such of the need of a new metaphor and then he attempts to show the adequacy of the metaphor that is available in the biblical view of personal knowledge. His concern is to transform the discipline from within by the introduction of ideas from without to meet needs perceived from within. These ideas are derived from the Christian faith. In this way, his Christian presuppositions are brought into relationship with those which are not distinctively Christian and which he shares with his non-Christian colleagues.

Another two interesting examples of soft presuppositionalism are provided by Stephen Evans and Malcolm Reid in their discussion of some Christian answers to the question 'why be moral?'.<sup>36</sup> Evans presents the following argument for giving divine rewards as an answer to the question:-

- "1. Rewards which are intrinsic to an activity provide a reason to perform that activity which in no way despoils the character of the activity.
2. If heaven is understood as the enjoyment of the presence of God (both in this life and afterward), and God is understood as the ontological realization of that love which is the heart of moral striving, then heaven provides a reason to be moral.
3. If God has created every human being with a need for himself, then every human being has a reason to be moral."<sup>37</sup>

Evans is here working within a particular tradition in philosophical ethics - that which puts the emphasis upon moral duty - but he seeks to transform it by the adduction of his own theistic ontological and axiological presuppositions. Again the change is from within by the introduction into the tradition of theological presuppositions from without.

It is interesting to compare this with Reid's alternative. He has a different interpretation of what it is to be moral and sees it in terms of being a good person rather than of doing one's duty. He therefore places himself within a particular philosophical tradition but not the one that Evans chooses. He also brings into the tradition a set of religious presuppositions in an attempt to transform it but his presuppositions are distinctively Christian rather than, as those of Evans', broadly theistic. His claim is that what Christians receive in the revelation of Jesus Christ "is not in the first instance a fundamental moral principle or new rules but

moral goodness personified and exemplified in the story of a life that moves from birth to transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost ... the life of a distinct human personality with characteristic virtues: reverence, faith, hope, self-giving love, forgiveness, thanksgiving, joy, and peace."<sup>38</sup> He concludes that the Christian realisation of his redemption in Christ is at the same time an acknowledgement "that knowing what it is to be moral and becoming a morally worthy person are inseparable from a personal trust in Jesus Christ".<sup>39</sup> His set of presuppositions is rather wider than those of Evans and their effect is a rather more radical transformation of the ethical tradition. Both Evans and Reid employ a soft presuppositionalist approach although it could be argued that Reid's comes rather nearer to the category of hard presuppositionalism.

Hard presuppositionalism claims that there is total antithesis between Christian presuppositions and those of all alternative worldviews. It asserts that the forms of knowledge must be totally reconstructed on exclusively biblical assumptions and that these are sufficient on their own for such reconstruction. A well-known and influential example of this kind of approach is in the most thorough-going versions of what has come to be known as 'scientific creationism'.

One version of this is to be found in 'The Genesis Flood' by Henry Morris and John Whitcomb.<sup>40</sup> The professor of geology who writes the foreword to the book significantly expresses his hope that some other means of harmonization of religion and geology could be found, one which would retain "the essential structure of modern historical geology".<sup>41</sup> This is clearly not the effect of Morris and Whitcomb's thesis that the 'uniformitarianism' and 'evolutionism' which are controlling principles for the interpretation of geological data should be replaced by those of 'biblical catastrophism'. They claim that there are really only two basic philosophies, one "oriented primarily with respect to God" and the other appearing in a great variety of forms all alike "oriented primarily with respect to man".<sup>42</sup> They see uniformitarianism and evolutionism as outworkings in geology of this second basic philosophy. Uniformitarianism is defined as "the belief that existing physical processes, acting essentially as at present, are sufficient to account for all past changes and for the present state of the astronomic, geologic and biologic universe" whereas biblical catastrophism is "the doctrine that, at least on the



occasions mentioned in Scripture, God has directly intervened in the normal physical processes of the universe, causing significant changes therein for a time".<sup>43</sup> Morris and Whitcomb start with study of the Scriptures which they interpret as teaching that a universal deluge with catastrophic effects was a historical event and they go on to interpret the data of geology and other relevant sciences in the light of this framework. They allow that their presuppositions are dogmatic and incapable of scientific proof but no more so than those of the alternative interpretative frameworks and they believe that their system will be found ultimately to be "much more satisfying than any other, in its power to correlate scientific data and to resolve problems and apparent conflicts".<sup>44</sup> Whether the fairly impressive study that follows does show that they are correct in this is not important for present purposes but it does serve as an example of this type of approach to an area of study.

I think it can be seen from the foregoing examples that the difference between soft- and hard-presuppositionalism is one of degree. This is why I am using the prefixes soft- and hard- rather than alternative ways of labelling them. Terms like 'transformationalist' and 'reconstructionalist',<sup>45</sup> which could be used instead, suggest that the former leaves the basic structure untouched whereas the latter produces a new structure from the same materials. There is much to commend their use but I am not sure that the distinction is as sharp and clear as this. Even the most thorough-going versions of the second kind of approach seem to have sufficient in common with the accounts they seek to replace to render them recognisable as geology, psychology, education or whatever. The difference is in the degree of influence of distinctively Christian or biblical presuppositions in relation to those which are not so. I doubt whether any account - even in theology - can take all its basic presuppositions from the Bible.

### **5.3.2 PRESUPPOSITIONALIST APPROACHES TO EDUCATION**

In turning to look at education, I am leaving compatibilism to one side since I am looking for evidence of how it can be meaningful to talk of 'Christian education' or 'Reformed Christian education'. Compatibilism - at least in a Hirstian form - will not provide such evidence since it takes it that such talk is a contradiction in terms.

I am also leaving it to one side because it does not account for the interrelationships between the areas of knowledge which, I have suggested, are best seen as a hierarchy of increasingly comprehensive perspectives.

Nicholas Wolterstorff has developed a theory of Christian 'control beliefs',<sup>46</sup> which he has attempted to work out in relation to education theory.<sup>47</sup> The result seems to me to be a fairly clear example of soft-presuppositionalism. Wolterstorff suggests that when we weigh a theory in an area of knowledge we come to it in a "cloak of belief" and this includes "beliefs as to what constitutes an acceptable sort of theory on the matter under consideration". He continues:-

"They include beliefs about the requisite logical or aesthetic structure of a theory, beliefs about the entities to whose existence a theory may correctly commit us, and the like. Control beliefs function in two ways. Because we hold them we are led to reject certain sorts of theories - some because they are inconsistent with those beliefs; others because, though consistent with our control beliefs, they do not comport well with those beliefs. On the other hand control beliefs also lead us to devise theories. We want theories that are consistent with our control beliefs. Or, to put it more stringently, we want theories that comport as well as possible with those beliefs."<sup>48</sup>

Wolterstorff instances a number of examples of control beliefs including the following:- the Church's belief in the authoritative truth of their interpretation of the Scriptures leading to the rejection of Galileo's theories; the seventeenth century Cartesian scientist's belief that matter can only be moved by contiguous matter leading to the rejection of Newton's theories of gravity; Ernst Mach's insistence that natural science should contain only concepts connected with sensation leading to his rejection of contemporary atomic theory; and B. F. Skinner's refusal to admit as acceptable psychological theory any that made reference to mediating states of mind.

In his work on education, Wolterstorff outlines the main elements of a philosophy of Christian education.<sup>49</sup> He says that this should grow out of a Christian vision of life and reality and the main features of such a vision include beliefs about creation, the fall and redemption. The Christian believes that the world is created by God and that human beings are "the crown of the physical creation" because they

alone are responsible to God for acting in certain ways in respect to him, to themselves and their fellow human beings and to the physical creation around them. The fall has to do with man's rebellious decision to act as if he were "self-normed" and this led to his becoming confused about his responsibilities and to his defection from them. Redemption concerns God's action for the ultimate renewal of his creation and he calls upon people to repent, believe, follow his Son and become agents in this cause of renewal. Those who accept this call are the new community of the church, an "alternative society" which has the Scriptures as authoritative guides for its thought and life. On this matter of the central place of the Bible in relation to the Christian's apprehension of his responsibilities, Wolterstorff writes:-

"For one thing, even though the Bible is not a political or economic or aesthetic or even moral handbook, it does contain a wealth of guidance, often quite specific, not only about what God asks of his redeemed people, but also about what he asks of his human creatures generally. But secondly, the Bible serves to open our eyes to creation and its normative structure - to what God asks of us by virtue of our status as created human beings - so that we can go on to inquire on our own. Where once we may have thought of aesthetic values and artistic goals along Platonic or Romantic-humanist or Marxist lines, the Bible opens our eyes to how those are distorted visions of God's will for art in human life. From there on we act like grown-up human beings, thinking things through for ourselves, not demanding a biblical word on all the details of human responsibility."<sup>50</sup>

Although the Bible has this central 'eye-opening' role, Wolterstorff makes it clear that Christians have a lot of work to do in thinking things out for themselves and in applying what they discover in the Bible to concrete situations. Also, he is quick to allow, it is not only Christians who can discern human responsibilities and he points out that many cultures have a fundamental moral principle which approximates to the biblical principle to love one's neighbour as oneself.

Against this background, Wolterstorff says that it is the ultimate goal of all education - as Christians see it - "that those who are taught shall live in such a way as to carry out their responsibilities to God and find joy and delight in doing so".<sup>51</sup> A Christian philosophy of education is therefore a responsibility theory of education but, as such, it is not unique: Jews and Muslims, for example, might well also adopt the same ultimate goal but they might

disagree with Christians about the details of human responsibilities because their world and life view would not have the same emphasis upon God's redemptive activity.

As a responsibility theory, a Christian philosophy of education will aim at imparting knowledge and understanding of how things are since this is required for responsible action in relation to how they are. Responsible action requires abilities as well as knowledge, abilities to acquire knowledge in a number of areas and to discern what we ought to do in various situations. But, as Wolterstorff puts it, "knowledge and abilities are not yet performance"<sup>52</sup> and so responsible action also requires that which he goes on to make the main focus of his book - tendency learning.

Most of the rest of Wolterstorff's study is concerned with identifying the best strategies for cultivating the tendency to act in accord with the moral law and, in doing so, he makes extensive use of contemporary psychological evidence and theories, e.g., those of Kohlberg. This evidence comes from experiments conducted from within a number of different psychological orientations but Wolterstorff seeks to make use of his Christian theological/philosophical image of man together with his understanding of the nature of the moral agent to set much of the evidence in quite a different light and to produce "an array of strategies which fit together".<sup>53</sup> For example, contra Kohlberg, Wolterstorff claims that a programme of Christian moral education must concern itself with more than the form of children's reasoning. The effects of the fall mean that the content cannot be left entirely to their judgement and that the Bible should be used as the source of authoritative moral principles.<sup>54</sup>

From this it can be seen that Wolterstorff's approach is presuppositionalist rather than compatibilist. He is working within a particular tradition in philosophy of education - that of 'responsibility theory' - but he seeks to transform it in the light of his Christian presuppositions. He also makes use of the results of contemporary psychological theory but within a different framework from those adopted by the psychologists in question. It is soft-rather than hard-presuppositionalist since his foundations are not exclusively biblical.

A middle-of-the-road approach like Wolterstorff's is likely to come under fire from both sides. On the one hand, those who want a harder line may say that he should not make use of elements that are not distinctively Christian. But this charge fails to realise that something may be Christian without being distinctively Christian. Why should there not be overlap between different worldviews or approaches to a social science or view of education? After all, even one of those who argues most strongly for a distinctively Christian view of knowledge - Van Til - allows for this possibility in his notion of 'borrowed capital'. He says that the non-Christian may well know things which he would not be entitled to claim to know if he followed through his non-Christian assumptions to their logical conclusions.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, from the other side can come the objection that it is difficult to work out this approach across the board. George Mavrodes reports on a study made of Wolterstorff's thesis of Christian control beliefs by a group of Christian professors from various fields of knowledge and he writes:-

"We could not think of, nor does Wolterstorff supply, plausible examples of (say) mathematical conjectures or chemical theories which we might reject because of our Christian commitment, nor of new research experiments in astronomy which that commitment may suggest."<sup>56</sup>

Mavrodes acknowledges that this evidence does not show that the project is impossible and he leaves the door open for further developments. Others are not prepared to leave the door open in this way.<sup>57</sup> But I think it may be significant that these areas so quickly seized upon and held as allegedly clearly autonomous are at or near the bottom level of the hierarchy of perspectives that I described earlier. In other words, they are the less comprehensive areas in that they presuppose only their own ontologies and those of lower levels. The higher up one goes through the modal levels the greater the number of ontological presuppositions one makes for the more inclusive perspectives one takes upon reality. These higher-level perspectives are also more personal and more significant for life; they come closer to what Brian Hill terms "the personal core of our living".<sup>58</sup> If this is so, it is only to be expected that the implications of Christian beliefs, if any, should be rather more evident and easier to set forth at the higher levels than in mathematics or chemistry. It is by no means as controversial to

propose the possibility of, say, Christian ethics or of Christian political theory as to propose that of Christian mathematics. This is not to say that the suggestion that ethics is not autonomous in relation to religious presuppositions is not controversial. Nor is it to allow that Christian mathematics is impossible. The observation is simply that if there is an influence of Christian presuppositions in other areas of knowledge and if these areas can be arranged in the suggested kind of hierarchical order, then it seems plausible that this influence should spread down from the higher levels and have diminishing influence as we go down.

Turning now to hard-presuppositionalism, Cornelius Van Til provides in his attempt to outline a Christian theory of education a fairly clear example of this. He holds that the Reformed view of education is "based exclusively upon the Bible".<sup>59</sup> A central issue in the way he develops this is the place of what he refers to as a "principle of unity" without which he claims there cannot be a fully intelligible philosophy of education. He argues that non-Reformed Christian views of education lack such a principle because they are essentially Arminian and, as such, they "attribute to man, the creature, a measure of autonomy which belongs to God alone" and accept a "principle of interpretation for human life which comes in part from man himself".<sup>60</sup> In particular, he is critical of American Fundamentalism and its efforts to formulate a Christian philosophy of education and he writes:-

"The pupil is asked to commit himself to Christ and to God. But when he is asked to do so, he is, as it were, told that in order to choose he must take his place above the two opposing positions of Christianity and non-Christianity. That presupposes that there is some place in the sky, abstracted from either system of education, whence man may have a neutral view of the systems that he passes in review. To say to him, as the Reformed person does, that man cannot make an intelligent choice between the two systems except it be from within the Christian system would, in the eyes of Fundamentalism, be to attack the legitimate autonomy of man. But the result of such an attempt at neutrality is to place the pupil in an educational void."<sup>61</sup>

In contrast to this he sets forth the Reformed view as "beginning with the presupposition of the absolute truth of the Christian position", on the basis of which, he says, the teacher should tell the pupil that both the goal of human life and the criterion by which man must live can only be found in the authoritative revelation of the Scriptures. The goal of human life - and therefore of education - is "to build the

kingdom of God" and the criterion of education is that "whatever is in accord with Scripture is educative; whatever is not in accord with it is miseducative".<sup>62</sup>

As always with Van Til's writings, there is much that is not defined very precisely and much that remains very unclear but even these few brief comments and quotations give the impression of a completely uncompromising position which is, I think, worthy of being termed hard-presuppositionalist. The emphasis is upon an absolute antithesis between his Reformed Christian 'principle' and all other 'principles' for the interpretation of human life. Other non-Reformed views - including some which are avowedly evangelical Christian - are seen as examples of 'synthesis' between opposing and mutually exclusive principles.

However, as we read on, we find Van Til qualifying this as Kuyper did<sup>63</sup> in a way that again throws into question the distinction between the two kinds of presuppositionalism. He tells us that the absolute antithesis is "one of principle only". In this life it is not fully worked out in the thought of either the Christian or the non-Christian - otherwise we could not account for how the non-Christian "can know and teach much that is right and true".<sup>64</sup> Because of sin, the Christian is not wholly consistent in his thinking with his Christian presuppositions and because of God's 'common grace' the non-Christian is not wholly consistent with his non-Christian presuppositions.

Van Til does not go on to work out in detail what this means in relation to the various forms of knowledge or classroom teaching so we can only guess at its implications. He writes approvingly of the schools set up by the National Union of Christian schools which has since become Christian Schools International and which seems to have been strongly influenced by Van Til's approach - at least in its earlier days - and we can perhaps glean something from some of its publications which are rather more detailed on the outworking of such a perspective. In one of its publications, a paper on 'Christian educational philosophy', it is claimed that knowledge of children comes from what God reveals about them in the Bible and through various sciences. From the Bible, teachers obtain knowledge about children "as God's image-bearers, deserving everyone's respect, ... as fallen ... struggling with sin, needing compassionate discipline and

correction ... about children's uniqueness as persons, needing both the authority of law and the freedom of selfhood ... about young persons' great endowments as God's imagebearers for intellectual, moral and creative life in God's world".<sup>65</sup> The writer goes on to say that a second kind of knowledge about children comes from such sciences as physiology, psychology and sociology and this is knowledge "derived from observing and studying children" and it includes knowledge about personality, motivation, developmental needs, effects of upbringing styles and the like. But for a third kind of knowledge teachers should turn again to the Bible and this is for knowledge which goes beyond biblical and scientific descriptions of what children are like to what they ought to be like.

So it seems that it is thought that Christian insights should be combined with those from non-Christian sources for a total view of the child. This combination also comes out in remarks in the same paper on the curriculum appropriate for a Christian school where, for example, in the natural sciences children are taught why nature should not be exploited, worshipped or feared and "they learn that the Christian way is to search out the earth's mysteries and laws, to share with their fellow imagebearers its wonders and benefits, to join with them in its care and preservation, and to support all good efforts to extend the knowledge, appreciation and use of it". They learn this "in laboratory, in field trips, and in books", we are told, and there is no suggestion that books written from non-Christian perspectives would not be used.<sup>66</sup> Whether Van Til would approve of this as an outworking of his 'absolute antithesis in principle only' or whether he would regard it as unacceptable synthesis I cannot say. However, I do think that, if he had to work out the detail of his views for application in the classroom, it is likely that he would have ended up with something which is not so obviously based exclusively on the Bible.

This is partly because, for all Van Til's talk of 'the Reformed view', there has been a recurring problem within Reformed approaches ever since Kuyper first put such stress on the antithesis with his talk of "two kinds of people, two kinds of science"<sup>67</sup> and yet, at the same time, retained considerable emphasis on the implications of common grace for cooperation between Christians and non-Christians. This problem has been a certain tension between these two strands of



thought. Indeed, there have been identifiable groupings of individuals and churches which some have termed 'Antitheticals' and 'positive Calvinists' respectively.<sup>68</sup> It is this tension that leaves detailed approaches to education moving somewhat uncertainly between hard- and soft-presuppositionalism. The issue of how to resolve this tension within a Reformed approach to education is something I shall return to and attempt to deal with in the later chapter on pluralism in education. Of course, this kind of problem applies to any approach that stresses worldview differences and is an issue in contemporary multicultural Britain.

There is a possible objection to this whole enterprise which arises from the disagreements we have just met - disagreements between the results of Christians who attempt to develop a Christian view of education or any other area of knowledge. It is advanced by Paul Hirst in his attempted demolition of the notion of Christian education referred to earlier. He writes:-

"What one is offered under this label (Christian education) is often very dubious from both an educational and indeed from a Christian point of view. Much of it is based on very general moral principles, backed by perhaps Scripture or Christian tradition, which, having little or no explicit educational content, are applied to educational problems in a highly debatable way. It is not uncommon to hear it argued that Christians, convinced of the value of personal relationships, must clearly object to any school of above 500 pupils. One is sometimes assured in the name of Christianity that comprehensivisation is a wicked thing, and that specialisation in the sixth form is equally deplorable. But clearly the general moral principles that people use to back up these beliefs about education do not alone determine any particular, practically relevant, educational principles. To get these one must consider equally important matters of psychological and sociological fact, the structure of our social institutions, the availability of money and manpower, and so on. ... none of these considerations has anything to do with Christian beliefs. What is more it seems to me that the general principles on which the whole exercise is based are usually not in any sense significantly Christian either, though people might appeal to Christian texts or Christian tradition in support of them."<sup>69</sup>

Hirst goes on to argue that working from the other end - formulating educational principles from what the Bible actually says about educational matters such as punishment and discipline - does not get us any further. Attempts to extract the principles lead to "inconclusive debate about Biblical interpretation" and attempts to apply any such principles do not produce any more agreement among Christians.

Apart from the question-begging assertion that psychology and sociology have nothing to do with Christian belief, Hirst's main argument here seems to be based on the lack of agreement among Christians. They disagree among themselves and take up the same sets of positions about practical educational matters as do those who are not attempting to develop a Christian view of education. Therefore, he seems to conclude, appeal to Christian beliefs is irrelevant to the task of formulating a practical educational theory. But this very same argument could be used against those who profess to base their view of education on objective rational principles - a similar lack of agreement seems to characterise them but Hirst would hardly advocate the abandonment of such principles! Few thinking Christians would claim that the hermeneutical task is a simple one or that the application of general principles to particular situations is straightforward<sup>70</sup> but this hardly requires that either task should be abandoned as hopeless.

Hirst argues that the Bible is insufficient in what it implies for education today but, of course, this does not mean that it is not necessary or that it has nothing to contribute. The main intent of the Bible is redemptive and it is clearly not a text-book of science, philosophy or education theory. It does not follow that what it says has no implications whatever for science, philosophy or education theory or that redemption is to be taken to be simply about one's 'soul' rather than one's mind or body or about the physical creation. After all, it is clearly not a text-book of history - since it gives great weight to certain events of comparative insignificance to the historian as such and not to others which are of major significance to him - but it does not follow that when it makes a historical statement this is of no interest to him as a historian. Indeed, if such a statement were shown to be false this would count against the Bible being taken as the Word of God. There seems no reason why this should not also apply to statements that are clearly moral, philosophical or educational.

#### 5.4 SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have attempted to show why I think Christian beliefs can make a difference to beliefs in other areas of knowledge, especially those that are at higher levels in what I have taken to be a hierarchy of perspectives. Of the three possible approaches to the integration of faith and learning that I have outlined, that of presuppositionalism in a softer form seems to me to have the most going for it.

I think that the way in which the characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology were developed in Part One of this study fits the pattern of soft-presuppositionalism. It worked within the overlap between several philosophical traditions - realism, foundationalism, internalism, intuitionism and the like - but introduced Christian presuppositions of the existence of a personal God who speaks to people. This had the effect of setting the assumptions of these philosophical traditions in a new light. It also set opposing positions in a new light by, for example, exposing some hidden assumptions which excluded the possibility of this form of Reformed epistemology from the outset and could not therefore be said to be 'neutral' in relation to the conflict between these presuppositions.

The antithesis between these mutually exclusive sets of presuppositions might seem to be such as to place this account within the hard-presuppositionalist camp. But then I am not sure that it is possible to construct an approach to any area of knowledge exclusively on Christian presuppositions - if by that term is meant presuppositions that are derived solely from the Christian scriptures.

I shall now seek to apply this approach to two issues in education. This, of course, by no means constitutes a developed philosophy but merely an attempt to apply a philosophical position to two aspects of education theory with which it resonates more clearly.

**AIMS, METHODS AND THE CRITIQUE OF AUTONOMY**

In this chapter, I shall seek to apply a soft-presuppositionalist approach to a particular controversy within education theory - that of the distinction between education and indoctrination. It would seem particularly relevant to do so since at least some of the content of the approaches to education outlined in the last chapter might well seem to some to be appropriately described as indoctrination rather than education.

I shall seek to show that the presuppositions underlying some of the discussions of the concept of indoctrination are not themselves neutral in relation to the basic beliefs that underlie a Reformed account of knowledge. I shall also seek to show how the discussion is transformed if a different set of presuppositions is assumed. I shall go on to attempt to argue for a particular kind of confessional approach to education. In this way, I hope that looking again at the subject of indoctrination that received so much attention in the sixties and seventies will not simply be a rehearsal of tired old arguments but rather that the whole matter may be put in a new light and that I can make some positive proposals as a result.

The issue of indoctrination ranges across the whole field of educational theory including aims, content, method and evaluation. It is relevant to the subject of the kind of institution that is appropriate to education. Education can take place in the home as well as at school and so, presumably, can indoctrination. This issue is also relevant to education throughout the whole age-range and brings into focus the differences between stages of development of the pupil or student. And although it appears to be particularly relevant to certain curricular areas, e.g. religious, moral and political areas, it has implications for the whole curriculum. So, although it might seem somewhat negative to give space to what could be taken as mere defence of an approach to education against charges of indoctrination, to focus upon this aspect is to deal with a fairly central issue with implications for the whole of the educational process.

Much discussion of the issue of indoctrination in the past has centred on alternative proposals for necessary and/or sufficient criteria for application of the concept. The main candidates have been the 'method', 'content' and 'intention' criteria and I shall first examine the merits of each of these as they have been presented and as they could be seen in the light of the main themes of Reformed epistemology.

### 6.1 INDOCTRINATION AND METHOD

R. S. Peters and others have pointed out that 'education' is a term that can be applied to both tasks and achievements for, as he puts it, "educational practices are those in which people try to pass on what is worthwhile as well as those in which they actually succeed in doing so".<sup>1</sup> The same seems to apply to 'teaching' and to 'indoctrination' but since 'success' in the achievement of indoctrination in the pejorative sense of the term is, unlike that in education or teaching, an undesirable outcome, I shall be more concerned with criteria for the task sense. That is, I shall be more concerned to ascertain what it is to indoctrinate a person than with what it is to have been indoctrinated. By their very nature, method criteria can apply to indoctrination only as a task and not as an achievement.

It seems initially plausible to suggest that if a classroom activity is indoctrinatory, this is, at least in part, something to do with the kinds of methods that are being used. In other words, it would seem possible to recognise that indoctrination is taking place without being aware of the teacher's intentions and regardless of the content of the lesson. Having said this, it is not at all easy to come up with an adequate definition of indoctrinatory method.

A version of a method criterion which provides a useful starting-point is the following suggested by Leslie Smith:

"... a person has been indoctrinated if, and only if, he has come to accept a belief in a non-rational way, if he is unable to assess the grounds on which that belief is based."<sup>2</sup>

This purports to provide a condition which is both necessary and sufficient for indoctrination but for the present I shall only look into the question of the necessity of a method criterion since I do

not wish to rule out the possibility of other kinds of criterion at this stage.

I do not think that the specification above is adequate. For a start, it is questionable whether it is properly termed a method criterion rather than, say, a form of evaluative criterion focussing on the achievement sense of indoctrination. This objection could be met by a rephrasing along the following lines:-

X indoctrinates Y with a proposition p only if X teaches p to Y in a way that tends to bring about Y's non-rational belief that p, i.e., to bring it about that Y believes p but Y is unable to assess the grounds upon which his belief that p is based.

This move into the active voice provides a condition for the task sense of indoctrination.

A key phrase in this formulation is 'non-rational belief'. This is often used by those who put forward method criteria<sup>3</sup> and sometimes used interchangeably with 'non-evidential belief' or a similar expression. In Smith's formulation above, he expands upon what he means by 'non-rational' with his reference to the pupil's inability to assess the grounds on which the belief is based and I take it that he has in mind grounds which are reasons or evidence for and against the belief in question. Other writers also insist that the pupil should be put in a position to investigate relevant evidence for his beliefs or weigh relevant reasons.

At this point, a common objection to method criteria of this kind is usually adduced: that non-rational methods have to be used in teaching young children who lack the intellectual capacity to assess the grounds for beliefs which are being imparted to them.<sup>4</sup> If so, it is argued, then this cannot be a case of indoctrination - at least in the pejorative sense of the term - and so a method criterion cannot distinguish between indoctrination and that which is not indoctrinatory. However, this objection can be met simply by restricting the method criterion for indoctrination to the use of non-rational methods "despite the availability of other, rational methods".<sup>5</sup> This serves to render the methods used with very young children non-indoctrinatory since rational methods are not available.

However, this highlights another problem and this is that the use of rational methods seems to be taken as an all-or-nothing matter but

this is clearly not the case. Ability to assess reasons or evidence is a matter of degree and this varies not only with age or maturity but also with intellectual capacity, knowledge and experience. Also, as far as the teacher is concerned there are the variables of his own competence and the time and energy he has available. It would hardly be reasonable to require of the teacher or the pupil/student more than that of which they are capable. In other words, the principle that 'ought' implies 'can' should be applied to the moral acceptability of teaching methods as it is in other moral situations. After all, methods used in teaching some 'A' Level science pupils are likely to be less 'rational' than, say, those used with research scientists. The ability to question and assess evidence can be assumed to increase with experience and knowledge all the way through the educational process and this process may be life-long. Perhaps one of the most important features of indoctrination is that it tends to impair the pupil's capacity to develop such abilities.

Further, use of the term 'indoctrination' seems to presuppose some understanding on the part of the taught. A good example of this is in that form of indoctrination that 'inoculates' a person against a change in his beliefs by exposing him to weakened forms of counter-arguments to his belief and thereby apparently builds up resistance to change more effectively than does the supply of supportive arguments.<sup>6</sup> Other forms of indoctrination also seem to require some understanding of reasons and arguments so it would seem that it can never be a matter of using strictly non-rational methods. They would take us entirely outside the sphere of beliefs based on reasons or evidence to the purely causal processes of hypnosis, conditioning, brain-washing and the like. These processes are to be sharply distinguished from indoctrination although they share with it the possibility of being morally acceptable in certain circumstances, e.g., with very young children. For example, it is arguable that conditioning and the like are acceptable in the very early years of childhood in order to establish the preconditions for education and indoctrination to become real alternatives. A definition of indoctrination therefore needs to be narrow enough to exclude such purely causal processes.

All this is incorporated in a third version of the method criterion which I would put as follows:-

X indoctrinates Y with a proposition p only if, given the capacities of both X and Y, X teaches p to Y in a way that is less rational than it could be in that it tends to restrict the development of Y's ability to assess the grounds upon which his belief that p is based.

By 'development' here, I do not mean any purely 'natural' process but rather that which could be produced by educational processes.

There is, however, a further objection to with all three versions of the method criterion considered so far and this is that they can all apply only to beliefs rather than, say, to attitudes. I think that this objection ignores the fairly plausible suggestion that attitudes have cognitive cores so that, in at least some minimal sense, they can be expressed in propositional beliefs. Hugo Meynell, for example, instances the possibility of bringing up a child in such a way that he unthinkingly treats women as inferior to men without actually assenting to the proposition that women are inferior to men and he suggests that this is an even more thoroughgoing form of indoctrination.<sup>7</sup> It seems to me that such a person does hold the belief in question although it may be tacitly held and never actually articulated even to himself. If this is not so, then I think the discussion moves away from indoctrination to conditioning or some other purely causal process. Nevertheless, this matter of attitudes and the possibility of a tacit dimension to indoctrination is of importance - especially in relation to the issue of content and doctrines, ideologies and the like which we shall meet later.

Assuming that indoctrination is centrally concerned with beliefs rather than with non-propositional attitudes, there is a further objection to the method criteria I have formulated. This is that they all apply only to beliefs which are based on reasons and evidence, i.e., only to beliefs that are inferentially justified. This means that they do not apply to beliefs that are immediately justified. Indeed some say that indoctrination cannot apply to such beliefs. Kingsley Price, for example, writes:-

"Beliefs that do not admit of evidence are neither reasonable nor unreasonable. I cannot reason myself into the belief that I feel warm; and since I cannot, no procedure that brings me to it can be unreasonable."<sup>8</sup>

Price's example is of a belief that is minimally dispositional and has minimal ramifications.<sup>9</sup> However, the properly basic beliefs of Plantinga and other Reformed epistemologists have fairly maximal



ramifications, notably the belief that God exists and the related thesis that divine revelation may be self-authenticating. Can it be that no procedure that brings me to these beliefs can be unreasonable or that they cannot be the subject of an indoctrinatory method? This would seem a strange conclusion since many writers use just such beliefs in their paradigm examples of indoctrination. I shall suggest shortly that a content criterion cannot be sufficient for indoctrination and that an intention criterion is not necessary. So if the paradigm cases involving such beliefs really are cases of indoctrination, it must be (partly) a matter of method and yet the method criteria on offer do not apply to properly basic beliefs. So it must be a matter of method and yet it cannot be!

I shall return to the question of indoctrinatory method later in this chapter but, before going on to the other possible kinds of criteria, there is an important point that emerges from this. This is that it suggests that the whole discussion of method criteria for indoctrination takes place against an epistemological background that, apart from the brief quotation above, tends to exclude from consideration the possibility of there being any properly basic beliefs. Its underlying assumptions therefore exclude from the outset the possibility of belief in God being properly basic or divine revelation being self-authenticating. Repeated references to assessment of reasons and evidence for belief suggest that the framework being generally taken for granted is probably justificationist of a fairly strongly internalist kind, if not actually classical foundationalist. It assumes the value of autonomous rationality and tacitly excludes a theonomous alternative.

## **6.2 INDOCTRINATION AND CONTENT**

Since it seems very plausible to suggest that any content whatsoever can be handled in an educational process at an appropriate level, it follows that any content whatsoever can be handled in a way that is morally acceptable and therefore not indoctrinatory. But if this is correct it does not follow that indoctrination is not at all a matter of content even though certain methods may be necessary for it to occur. It could be that indoctrination takes place only when certain beliefs are taught in certain ways. And at least some purported examples of indoctrination do combine content and method,

for example, teaching false beliefs as if they were true or teaching beliefs not known to be true as if they were known to be true. To show that content is irrelevant, it would be necessary to show that any content whatsoever could be taught by an indoctrinatory method.

Turning first to the more obvious candidates for indoctrinatory content, some writers have stressed the link in meaning between 'indoctrination' and 'doctrine'. For example, Peters writes:-

"... whatever else 'indoctrination' may mean it obviously has something to do with doctrines, which are a species of beliefs."<sup>10</sup>

This seems very sensible but at least two questions arise: what is it that marks doctrines off from other beliefs and how is indoctrination linked with them? Perhaps, in relation to the second of these questions, not only doctrines can be indoctrinated but also beliefs which tacitly presuppose doctrines without being themselves strictly doctrinal.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'doctrine' as 'what is taught, body of instruction; religious, political, scientific, etc., belief, dogma or tenet'. However, the first alternative in this definition would make all teaching indoctrinatory and it therefore fails to demarcate indoctrination (in its pejorative sense) from education. So if it is to be helpful to say that indoctrination can only be of doctrines, we need a narrower sense of the latter term than 'what is taught'. The following is a definition proposed by Woods and Barrow:-

"A doctrinal system of belief ... consists of an inter-related set of ideas, based upon certain propositions or postulates that cannot be demonstrated to be unquestionably true, which taken together have repercussions for the way in which the believer views the world and for the way in which he lives his life."<sup>11</sup>

Basic beliefs of all kinds are such that they cannot be shown to be true although it does not follow - or so Reformed epistemologists claim - that they cannot be known to be true. Whether or not the basic axioms of a mathematical or logical system would fall into this category I am not sure but the second element of the above definition draws attention to the purported worldview-ish and practical implications of a doctrinal system and this would seem to apply rather more to the higher and more comprehensive levels of the hierarchy of forms of knowledge than to mathematics and logic. Metaphysical, religious, moral and political basic beliefs would be rather more

obviously doctrinal. The basic beliefs of systems like naturalism, materialism and the like would also be doctrinal. But the definition given above does not require that doctrinal beliefs have to be basic: rather, it suggests that they are integral to systems of beliefs which have both undemonstrable bases and pervasive consequences for a person's total outlook and way of life.

This points to an important way in which basic beliefs may be imparted. Since they are presupposed by other beliefs in a doctrinal system, they can be taken for granted in setting the framework for a lesson or discussion. For example, a lesson which starts from examination of the question of whether God only works through 'natural' means or intervenes supernaturally in nature presupposes the existence of God. And, as I have suggested, even a discussion of the question of indoctrination will take for granted some basic beliefs about persons, rationality and the like. Gregory and Wood display some concern on this kind of possibility as they write:-

"Is it not possible to unearth a number of doctrinal propositions that provide the rationale for our own paper? Thus, 'it is impossible to reach true conclusions as far as doctrines are concerned', or, 'The rational way is the only way to get at the truth'. ... There remains unease on our part that we may be half-way towards being characterised as indoctrinators ourselves, on our own criteria at any rate."<sup>12</sup>

Whether or not their unease on this point is justified depends upon what are acceptable ways to deal with such basic beliefs. We shall return to this shortly in an attempt to bring together some of the criteria.

I think that doctrines defined in terms such as the above are the classic content of indoctrination and cover the usual paradigm examples. This, of course, does not establish the necessity of a content criterion because it is still possible that any belief whatsoever may be indoctrinated. Those who argue that indoctrination is not restricted to any particular kind of content or, at least, that it is not restricted to doctrines have produced various counter-examples. John White, for example, suggests that a teacher might want to get a boy to hold unshakably the belief that Melbourne is the capital of Australia, just to show that it can be done.<sup>13</sup> White allows that we may generally use the word 'indoctrination' only in relation to the teaching of beliefs that form part of an ideological system but insists that his hypothetical example is sufficiently like

the more usual cases of ideological indoctrination to justify the teacher in question in calling it indoctrination. I am not sure that White is correct in setting aside general linguistic usage in seeking to analyse concepts or in concluding that the connection between 'indoctrination' and 'ideology' is contingent rather than necessary. What other source do we have for analysis of concepts but general linguistic usage? The problem here is that general usage has changed somewhat from that which covers teaching of all kinds of knowledge to a more limited pejorative sense and, for this reason, a dictionary which has to include all these uses is of limited use. The teacher in White's example might well call what he is doing indoctrination (in the pejorative sense) but I think most people would find it a somewhat odd use of the term even though they would agree that the activity in question is indeed an example of miseducation of some kind or other.

Other counter-examples adduced include: "He does not regard Pop music as music because he has been indoctrinated to believe that only classical music is music", "He believes that it is always wrong to act illegally because he has been indoctrinated to do so" and "He has been indoctrinated to believe in the existence of ghosts".<sup>14</sup> These examples have in common that the beliefs in question are fairly controversial and I would expect their contexts to show that they were taught in a way that was less rational than it could have been given the conditions in my third version of the method criterion earlier. I would expect them to meet the method criterion but do they meet the criterion of doctrinal content? Without a context we cannot say but I would suggest that it is not impossible that they should. The first example could be uttered by a devotee of some cult movement which holds that Elvis Presley is still alive. The second could well be about someone who has been on the receiving end of a Thought Reform Programme in a totalitarian state and the third could refer to an initiate into spiritism of some form. I would maintain that these examples make more sense if both content and method criteria apply to their uses of 'indoctrinate'. To say, for example, 'He has been indoctrinated to believe that the square of seven is forty-eight' does not make sense in the same way.

The more plausible counter-examples to a criterion of doctrinal content are such as to be likely to have been taught using an indoctrinatory method and for which a background of a doctrinal system

is not unlikely. Here I am using the term 'doctrinal system' in a slightly wider sense than, for example, John White does when he refers to a "close-knit system" of political or religious beliefs and in relation to which he takes "communist systems of political education or, perhaps, the teaching of religion in Roman Catholic schools" to be paradigm cases of indoctrination.<sup>15</sup> My wider sense refers to worldviews and these need not be close-knit or explicitly formulated but this sense need not be so wide as to render the use of the term 'doctrinal system' meaningless. After all, we are dealing here with concepts which are "fuzzy round the edges".<sup>16</sup> It is in this wider sense that indoctrination may take place in any part of the school curriculum. Beliefs may be imparted along with tacit presuppositions that come to form the framework of the pupil's world-and-life-view. There could be a 'hidden curriculum' being taught - not necessarily knowingly or intentionally - in that, say, the examples used in a mathematics lesson are racist or the impression is being given that human reason must always have the last word in all matters. Some form of naturalism could be imparted in this way in a science lesson.

Doctrinal content is not sufficient for indoctrination since any content whatsoever can presumably be handled in a morally acceptable manner but, in the pejorative sense of the term as I am using it, it is necessary for indoctrination. Perhaps there is something of a stipulative or persuasive definition in the way I have gone about this but I do think it conforms to the general usage of the term and covers the most plausible examples.

### 6.3 INDOCTRINATION AND INTENTION

I have maintained that both method and content are necessary for indoctrination but are they jointly sufficient for it? I think they are because I find the other main candidate - an intention criterion - to be unnecessary and I shall attempt to show fairly briefly why I do so.

Some have argued that an intention criterion is necessary for indoctrination and, indeed, some have argued that it is also sufficient. Among these are John White who suggests that "indoctrinating someone is trying to get him to believe that a

proposition 'p' is true, in such a way that nothing will shake that belief"<sup>17</sup> and I. A. Snook who writes:-

"A person indoctrinates P (a proposition or set of propositions) if he teaches with the intention that the pupil or pupils believe P regardless of the evidence."<sup>18</sup>

White's definition is wider than Snook's since, presumably, beliefs may be shaken by factors other than counter-evidence, e.g., the influence of a charismatic personality or peer-pressure. But both have it in common that what makes an activity indoctrinatory is what the indoctrinator intends or attempts to accomplish through the activity rather than what kind of activity he engages in or what it actually accomplishes. White would probably say that it is a false dichotomy to oppose intention to kind of activity since he holds that we normally distinguish one activity from another in terms of the agent's intention.<sup>19</sup> He points to the example of a person raising his arm and argues that observing his bodily movements does not tell us that he is signalling rather than doing P.T. nor does observing the results of what he is doing because in both cases a taxi might draw up. I am not sure that the same would apply in cases other than those consisting of a simple physical action like the one that White chooses for his example. If the action were more complex, e.g., those involved in signalling from the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, or if it involved speech, then I think distinguishing between activities would not require reference to the agent's intention.

I would further maintain that an intention criterion is neither necessary nor sufficient for indoctrination. On the one hand, a person may be indoctrinated unintentionally or even nonintentionally. It is possible to have indoctrinatory systems of education where the person engaging in the indoctrinatory activity may simply be 'going through the motions' quite unthinkingly or with the intention of simply doing what is expected of him. If I am correct in this then an intention criterion is not necessary. On the other hand, a person might intend to indoctrinate or, at least, to implant fixed beliefs or some such end result of his activity - for there cannot be many who actually intend to indoctrinate in a sense that they would accept as pejorative - and this person might fail to achieve what he intends. A failed attempt to indoctrinate is never indoctrination so intention cannot be sufficient for indoctrination.

Of course, the proponents of an intention criterion generally show their awareness of counter-arguments like these. White, for example allows the possibility of something like unintentional indoctrination which he distinguishes from "the full-blooded intentional sense" of the word but he is reluctant to term it indoctrination. He writes:-

"Just as one can offend people without meaning to, so too, perhaps, one can indoctrinate them without meaning to. But it does seem rather odd to say this, for if indoctrinating is a matter of getting people to believe things unshakably, does it make sense to talk of getting someone to do something without meaning to."<sup>20</sup>

But White begs the question by introducing an intentional word like 'getting' into his definition! If instead he had written '... for if indoctrinating is a matter of engaging in activities that tend to make people believe things unshakably ...', he could not have made his point.

Snook introduces a 'weak' sense of 'intention' to cope with some of the counter-examples to his intention criterion whereby a person would be indoctrinating if he foresees that it is likely or inevitable that as a result of his teaching his pupils will believe what he is teaching regardless of the evidence.<sup>21</sup> It is very questionable whether this is a genuine sense of 'intention' at all.<sup>22</sup> Suppose, for example, that I find myself required by a syllabus to teach quite young children about the evils of taking drugs. Suppose further that I make every effort in doing so to bring it about that the children do not begin to take drugs but, at the same time, I am aware that their home backgrounds, environments or the like - together with the effect of my drawing their attention to drugs in my teaching them of the dangers of addiction - are such that I can foresee it as likely that they will experiment with them. Snook's weak sense of 'intention' entails that I intend these children to get involved in drug-taking notwithstanding all my efforts to discourage them. This does not seem at all plausible.

The intention to indoctrinate is wrong but it is not indoctrination. Assuming then that there are no other strong candidates for a criterion of indoctrination, I conclude that indoctrination is a combination of certain methods with certain kinds of content.

#### 6.4 METHODS, CONTENT AND BASIC BELIEFS

I shall now bring the two criteria for indoctrination together and examine how they apply to the characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology and their place in education. Method and content criteria can be combined as follows:-

X indoctrinates Y with a proposition p if and only if both:

(i) given the capacities of both X and Y, X teaches p to Y in a way that is less rational than it could be in that it tends to restrict the development of Y's ability to assess the grounds upon which his belief that p is based; and

(ii) p belongs to an inter-related set of propositions which is based upon certain propositions or postulates that cannot be demonstrated to be unquestionably true and which taken together tend to have repercussions for the way in which the believer views the world and for the way in which he lives his life.

Of the two conditions given here, I think that the method one is the more important but I nevertheless feel that general linguistic usage and the paradigm examples of indoctrination justify the inclusion of the reference to content.

There can be no doubt that beliefs in God and in self-authenticating divine revelation are included in the category of doctrinal content and, therefore, to teach them or beliefs that presuppose them meets the requirements of the second condition for indoctrination. But the second condition is, on my account, insufficient on its own and so the important question is whether it is inevitable that they be taught in a way that meets the requirement of the first condition. Only then is it justified to hold that to teach them is indoctrinatory.

However, as we saw earlier, it is impossible to teach basic beliefs in a way that is less rational than it could be simply because they are not justified inferentially. Indeed, if there is immediate justification of such beliefs, to teach that belief in God ought to be based on reasons and evidence is, in a way, less rational than it could be because it is more 'rational' than it ought to be! In other words, if this kind of account is along the right lines, it is impossible to indoctrinate belief in God because it is properly basic. On the other hand, if belief in God is not properly basic, then it is indoctrinatory, all other things being equal, to teach it as if it were.



What of beliefs that presuppose a properly basic belief? How should they be taught since they too meet the content criterion for indoctrination as I have presented it? Here I would suggest that the presuppositions of these beliefs should be made explicit if, all other things being equal, the teaching method is to be as rational as it could be. In this way, it can escape the charge of indoctrination in the more subtle form referred to earlier. Of course, all other things may not be equal and it would seem difficult, for example, to show a young child how one belief presupposes another, much less give him a lesson in Kantian transcendental deduction!

All this means that I am not indoctrinating if my belief in God is properly basic and I assume his existence in my teaching. Nor do I have to make an epistemic ascent to the level of this present discussion in order to be justified in my belief in him or, presumably, in my open declaration of this belief in the classroom or anywhere else. At this point, someone who does not share my basic commitment is likely to raise the Hirstian objection that commitment to any set of religious claims is something that a sophisticated concept of education cannot assume or pursue.<sup>23</sup> I think I can then reply that my concept of education does meet Hirst's requirement that it be concerned with passing on beliefs and practices "according to, and together with, their objective status" and, further, I am not seeking any commitment "beyond the grounds, reasons or objective basis for the claims concerned".<sup>24</sup> I am being as rational as I can be so how can I be faulted or, at least, how can I be guilty of indoctrination? I can only be guilty of it if, in fact, the regress of justification stops elsewhere than with a properly basic belief in God.

I think that this shows how Hirst's account comes from within a strongly internalist framework and assumes that reasons or evidence can be demanded for any belief whatsoever. But if these religious beliefs are properly basic it is impossible that they be justified in this way. In this respect, these beliefs are like the basic axioms of a mathematical system. They differ from them in other respects and not least because they are not universal and because, being higher in the hierarchy of perspectives upon reality, they are more comprehensive. The believer can account for the non-universality of professed belief in God so that hardly makes him any less justified in

his belief. That a belief has greater implications for a person's worldview or way of life hardly makes it any less justified either. Therefore, what Hirst demands it is logically impossible for the believer to provide - if his belief is properly basic.

Further, if the Hirstian objects to commitment, he must also face up to the question of whether he himself is committed to one or other of the three alternatives of traditional rationalism, the professedly irrational faith in reason of the Popperian critical rationalist and what I have argued is the anthropocentricism of Bartley's pan-critical rationalism. These, I believe, share an assumption of unlimited rational autonomy in one form or another and their proponents are just as committed as the believer who submits himself to what he finds to be a self-authenticating authoritative divine revelation. And if these basic assumptions are mutually exclusive then it is not possible to argue against one of them from the perspective of the other. Epistemic ascent to the meta-level of discussing these differences 'from above', as it were, does not guarantee access to neutral ground because even there these basic presuppositions may have their influence.

It seems therefore that what we have are opposing positions whose basic assumptions are mutually exclusive so that each - on the basis of my definition given earlier - can accuse the other of indoctrination. The Reformed Christian who adopts an account along the lines I have sketched out may accuse Hirst of indoctrinating because his teaching presupposes basic assumptions which he can not justify (because they are basic) and which, on his own account, he ought to be able to justify. On the other hand, his opponent thinks the Reformed Christian of this kind is indoctrinating if he proceeds on the assumptions of his belief in God without first rationally justifying that belief. There is here the possibility of an important asymmetry in that the Reformed Christian is pointing to internal incoherence in his opponent's approach whereas his opponent's accusation of indoctrination does not make use of the Reformed Christian's assumptions. Apart from that, it seems that, for both parties, indoctrination is possible in their own teaching but inevitable in that of their opponents. Indoctrination is not simply what the other person does - it is what he must do and what I may do.

This raises at least two major questions. First, what is the teacher's responsibility in relation to teaching alternative worldviews and how is he to discharge it? Secondly, if he cannot indoctrinate his own basic beliefs, what about other non-rational methods for imparting beliefs of this kind? I have touched upon this second question briefly already and I shall return to look at it more fully shortly. First, I shall seek to outline a range of possible approaches to teaching alternative worldviews.

### 6.5 COMMITMENT, NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

Brian Hill has sketched an outline of alternative approaches to his own and other worldviews for the committed Christian teacher.<sup>25</sup> He labels these respectively 'exclusive partiality', 'exclusive neutrality', 'neutral impartiality' and 'committed impartiality'.

Exclusive partiality is a stance that represents the teacher's decision "to impart his personal and religious beliefs in a manner which precludes challenge" and at the other end of the continuum is exclusive neutrality which represents a decision "to keep such controversial areas of study as religion and politics out of the curriculum altogether". The third stance is that of neutral impartiality which provides for the inclusion of "descriptive material in areas of controversy" and invites discussion and analysis of them but the teacher must remain neutral in the sense that "he does not reveal his own personal stance". The other remaining stance is that of committed impartiality which differs from neutral impartiality only in that the teacher may reveal his personal beliefs "at relevant points in classroom interaction".

Hill's stances seem to vary according to whether or not controversy is excluded from the class-room (exclusive-inclusive), whether or not the teacher's personal beliefs are revealed (committed-neutral) and whether or not there is bias toward the teacher's beliefs (partial-impartial). This would theoretically give eight possible combinations but two are impossible because a stance cannot be both partial and neutral and the remaining two are probably omitted because, on the one hand, committed impartiality is taken to be unlikely to coexist with the exclusion of controversy and, on the other hand, committed partiality would tend not to allow it.

The exclusive-inclusive distinction could perhaps be more helpfully termed 'closed-open'. Hill suggests two ways in which an approach can be exclusive - or, in my terms, closed - and they are the alternatives of (i) excluding controversial religious, political and other basic worldviewish matters altogether from the curriculum and (ii) allowing only one perspective and that in a way that 'precludes challenge'.

The first of these is exemplified in the public (state) schools of the United States where religious studies is totally excluded from the curriculum. Hill mentions that a similar approach can be found in his own country of Australia and the result is what he terms "a bleached, fact-loaded academic curriculum".<sup>26</sup> Hill says that this distorts the balance in the curriculum. However, it is possible to respond to this by questioning whether the balance of the curriculum has to be achieved altogether within schools. There are other educative agencies, e.g., family, church, media and the like, so, it might be argued, why should not the state's part in the educational process be confined to certain parts of the curriculum? After all, at least in Britain, education is recognised to be the responsibility of the parent and the teacher is 'in loco parentis'. There may be some merit in this kind of case but I think it is outweighed by considerations that arise from the unified and integrated nature of knowledge. If knowledge consists of a complementary set of autonomous areas or even strictly incommensurable areas, then it might make some sense to assign the immediate responsibility for different areas to different institutions. But if it is as I have presented it - a hierarchical set of increasingly comprehensive perspectives upon reality - then to divide it up into discrete areas taught in separate institutions seems inevitably distorting. At least where it is taught in different classrooms by different teachers in different departments or faculties of the same institution, there is greater possibility of co-operation and integration.

Assuming such an integrated view of human knowledge and the pervasive influence of presuppositions which are philosophical-theological and central to worldviews, the exclusion of religion will distort the balance of the school curriculum regardless of what happens in the home or any other place of educational influence upon the child. Further, it can give the impression that these matters of basic

outlook and basic values do not matter and it may even promote by default what Hill terms "a vague kind of secular humanism which is the more pernicious for being unadmitted and therefore unexamined by the students at the level of presuppositions"<sup>27</sup> (an example of unintentional indoctrination).

If such basic matters of belief and value should not be excluded altogether from the school curriculum then perhaps they should be included but only in the form of a particular position imparted in a way that can not be challenged. The official position is taught and controversy is excluded because critical questioning is not allowed. This is Hill's 'exclusive partiality' and it is found, for example, in some Christian and Islamic schools and also in schools in some Communist countries or, at least, it was in pre-glasnost days. This is clearly indoctrination by the definition given earlier. I think this is so regardless of the age-level of the pupil because, if the child is capable of critical questioning, not to allow it makes the method less rational than it could be.

However, the position is not so clear if such questioning is allowed and the stance, although still committed and partial, becomes inclusive rather than exclusive. This is one of the possible stances omitted by Hill presumably because he takes it to be unlikely. Unlikely it may be but, I think, not impossible. I can conceive of a school which has an official position which it teaches along with the reasons and evidences upon which it is based as far as it is logically and practically possible to teach them and allows - even encourages - critical discussion to ascertain whether the official position is internally coherent. This is not obviously an example of Hirst's 'primitive concept' of education whereby beliefs and values are passed on by one generation to the next simply because they are held to be true and valuable. It has much in common with his 'sophisticated concept' because reasons and grounds are communicated in a way that does not preclude critical scrutiny even down to the foundations. This could and, all other things being equal, should provide for the consideration of defeaters and defeater-defeaters of the set of basic beliefs in question. This could even be done with an awareness that it is not a universally shared set of beliefs but without necessarily going into any detail about alternative perspectives.

I am not sure that this stance of inclusive or open partiality is indoctrinatory in the way that the exclusive or closed alternative obviously is. Assuming my earlier definition of indoctrinatory method, I do not think it can be faulted. It does not tend to restrict the development of the student's ability to assess the grounds upon which these beliefs are based unless we assume that knowledge of alternative beliefs and belief-systems is required for such assessment. If this knowledge is required, it would seem that a person cannot be justified in believing something unless he has considered and is justified in rejecting all the alternative beliefs and belief-systems which are opposed to it. It does not seem reasonable to require this so I suggest that whatever this stance is, it is not indoctrinatory as it stands. It might be claimed that it is miseducative because it deepens the divides between groups in society with different worldviews or it fails to prepare the student adequately for life in such a society (and of this there will be more in the next chapter). It may be miseducative without being indoctrinatory.

It might be objected that such a stance is partial and therefore biased towards a particular worldview. But bias in itself is not wrong: I may be biased towards something because it is good or true or valuable and I may be biased against something because it is not good or true or valuable but I cannot be faulted for such biases. This kind of bias is not necessarily prejudice in the sense of having made up one's mind without considering all the reasons, evidences and grounds. I conclude that this kind of open partiality is not as clearly unacceptable as either Hill's exclusive partiality or his exclusive neutrality. At least, it is not obviously indoctrinatory or biased in unacceptable senses of those terms.

The third stance in Hill's list is that of neutral impartiality. This is neutral in that the personal commitment of the teacher is not revealed and impartial since it is intended that there be no bias towards the teacher's viewpoint or any particular worldview. It is inclusive or open in that controversy is not excluded from the classroom. The ways in which controversial material is handled can vary from the purely descriptive through encouragement to clarify the student's own values to discussion, analysis and critical assessment of a variety of viewpoints but always under the chairmanship of the

'neutral teacher'. The purely descriptive handling of controversial material would give an approach which would be better classified as 'exclusive neutrality', as would the version of this stance that excludes religious beliefs altogether from the classroom. One of the main problems with the inclusive versions is not dissimilar to that of the unintentional indoctrination of exclusive neutrality. It has to do with the kind of model the neutral teacher becomes for the pupil. In seeking to avoid abusing the institutional power vested in his position and his generally superior intellectual resources in relation to an educational audience which Anthony Quinton terms "the most abject of all in its captivity",<sup>28</sup> the teacher seems to have his colours nailed rather firmly to the fence. This position is false to the reality of his own commitment and of his relationship with his pupil as a fellow pilgrim after truth and, I would suggest, tends to indoctrinate into a viewpoint which devalues commitment and turns discussion of such important matters into a playground for intellectual frolics. In addition, as Hill and others point out, neutrality is impossible to maintain since the teacher is always unintentionally revealing his values and attitudes in all sorts of ways.<sup>28</sup>

So why not stop play-acting and reveal one's own commitment to one's pupils? This takes us to Hill's fourth approach, that of committed impartiality. This stance is, like neutral impartiality, inclusive of controversy and differs from it only in that the teacher can come down off the fence at appropriate moments and in appropriate ways. This is a very difficult stance to maintain without allowing the teacher's position to exert undue influence but difficulties may be there to be overcome rather than to be avoided by adopting another stance. Indoctrination is possible but not inevitable.

A final possible stance is committed impartiality which excludes controversy. This is omitted by Hill and does seem unlikely. It would require a purely descriptive and unchallengeable account of alternative worldviews including the teacher's own which is simply identified as such. As before, excluding critical analysis of worldview beliefs seems clearly indoctrinatory because it tends to restrict the development of the pupil's ability to assess the grounds of these beliefs.

Having looked briefly at these six alternatives - including the two I have added to Hill's four - I have rejected four. Those which exclude controversy do not allow critical analysis of any worldview beliefs and are therefore indoctrinatory. Neutral stances distort the nature of knowledge and commitment and tend towards unintentional indoctrination. This leaves just two stances, both of which are inclusive (open) and committed. They differ only in that one is partial and the other is impartial, i.e., in that one deals only with one worldview and the other deals with a range of worldviews. They can be equally rational in assessing reasons and evidences as far as is logically possible and in encouraging discussion right to the foundations of the set or sets of beliefs and their potential defeaters. As committed stances, both face the problem of the possibility of the teacher's position exercising undue non-rational influence upon the pupil but this is something to be fought against in using these approaches rather than a reason for not adopting either of them.

Perhaps these two stances are not mutually exclusive as far as the pupil's total school career is concerned: perhaps the partial approach of dealing with just one worldview is more appropriate with the younger child who having come to understand one perspective better is then in a better position to appreciate others. For the Christian, the partial stance is only possible within a Christian context and this is likely to mean that of a Christian school. A different kind of Christian school - no less committed - could provide the context for committed impartiality but it is also possible in schools which are not committed to any worldview - if that is possible. This brings us to the subject of the next chapter so I shall defer further discussion of it until then.

## **6.6 NON-RATIONAL METHODS AND BASIC BELIEFS**

If properly basic beliefs are not a matter of rational justification and if, as a result, it is not possible to indoctrinate them, the question arises: does anything go as far as imparting them is concerned? We saw earlier how Price claimed that no procedure that brings him to believe that he feels warm can be unreasonable since such a belief is not a matter of reason. But there are a variety of procedures that may bring me to feel warm other than immediate



awareness of warmth. It seems conceivable that some form of hypnosis or conditioning might make me believe I was warm when I was in danger of becoming frost-bitten. In such circumstances, these techniques may not be unreasonable - or reasonable - in the sense that they do not involve the use of reasons and evidence as a basis for the beliefs in question but the use of such procedures may be unreasonable in the sense that it is morally unacceptable. Because a method does not involve argument it does not follow that we cannot argue about the use of the method.

However, my adaptation of Price's example is not one that rules out as morally unacceptable the method as such but only the method used to impart a false belief. What, say, of the use of an aggressive de-programming technique on the brainwashed victim of a cult to replace false beliefs with true beliefs, assuming, of course, the unavailability of a rational method? What is acceptable and what is unacceptable in relation to basic beliefs?

It would seem helpful at this point to look again at what constitutes a properly basic belief. I have proposed that, to be properly basic, a person's belief involves his immediate awareness of the object of the belief and his believing understandingly in the light of this immediate awareness. I cannot be immediately justified in my belief that I am being appeared to red-ly if I am not being appeared to red-ly and if I have no understanding of redness. Nor can I be immediately justified in my belief that God is speaking to me through the words of the Bible if he is not speaking to me through them and if, say, I have no understanding of the words. I proposed earlier, on this basis and following Paul Helm, that the internal testimony of the Spirit should not be thought of as merely acting as a mechanical stimulus.<sup>30</sup>

What this entails, I think, is that the conditions under which a person comes to hold a basic belief must be appropriate for him if he is to be immediately justified in his belief. Otherwise he lacks the immediate awareness and understanding necessary for such justification. Just as there are conditions necessary in order that a belief which could be indoctrinated should not be so, e.g., appropriate reasons and evidences are provided and grasped, so, also, there are conditions here in relation to the imparting of basic

beliefs if they are to be properly basic. An acceptable method for the Reformed Christian to deal with the basic beliefs that characterise Reformed epistemology is to bring about the appropriate circumstances for coming to be immediately justified in holding these beliefs.

It is therefore not true that anything goes where teaching properly basic beliefs is concerned. Indeed, 'teach' might seem an inappropriate term to use in relation to basic beliefs. They may be caught rather than taught or, to adapt, an old saying:- belief cannot teach to unbelief, it can only preach to it. D. Z. Phillips, in dealing with a similar problem in relation to his 'groundless beliefs' suggested "elucidation ... displaying a thing of beauty" would be appropriate.<sup>31</sup> The problem with basic beliefs is similar to that of how to teach that something is beautiful and the solution may be to display the thing and talk about it and its features. The hope is that the pupil will come to see for himself. He should not be hypnotised or brainwashed into seeing it and he cannot be argued into seeing it but, in the appropriate conditions, he may find himself with the belief that it is beautiful.

Elucidation of the Reformed Christian worldview will be a case of displaying it and pointing to its features in order to bring about understanding of them. These features may include its internal coherence. It is not a case of presenting reasons for believing but of meeting objections to belief and removing hindrances to it. If it is possible, i.e., if students are capable of appreciating and understanding it, then it could include epistemic ascent to the meta-level of considering the nature of immediate justification. All in all, it is a matter of bringing about the conditions in which immediately justified belief may occur. And an education whose assumptions exclude the possibility of this happening is not neutral in relation to this kind of view of belief in God.

This could form part of a confessional approach to education which is not indoctrinatory because it respects reason within its logical limits and repudiates purely mechanical teaching methods which do not bring about belief with understanding. It would seem appropriate for a Christian home, school or church and distanced from the indoctrination that can sometimes take place in home, school or

church. But what about the non-denominational school? What about preparation for life in a pluralist society? What about common ground with those of other worldview outlooks and co-operation with them in coming to understand the world? Should all schools be identified with their particular worldviews - Christian (of many different kinds?), Muslim, Jewish, Humanist, etc.? These and related issues are the subject of the discussion of the final chapter.

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY**

'Pluralist' can be used both in a descriptive and an evaluative sense. A society might be said to be pluralist in the former sense if it is the case that there exists within it significant numbers of adherents to a plurality of world-views. These may include not only religious outlooks but also those which are alternatives to them and which have the same kind of function in the life of the individual or group as those which are clearly religious. In this first descriptive sense, it seems evident that modern Western societies are pluralist. Indeed, the state schools of such societies are also likely to be pluralist in this sense and within any classroom in such a school - at least at the secondary level - the teacher will probably be relating to pupils who represent among themselves a plurality of worldviews. The second sense goes beyond mere description to a positive evaluation of this plurality of worldviews. This evaluative sense applies more to outlooks than to societies but a society is pluralist in this sense to the extent that such an outlook finds general acceptance among its members. This sense has both strong and weak versions. A weaker version might hold, for example, that plurality of worldviews is a good thing because it provides for the possibility of change and development through the competition of differing outlooks for acceptance and the dialogue that may take place between them. A much stronger version might seek to transcend the variety of competing alternative worldviews with an outlook which both explained this variety and sought to replace it with an all-embracing view or a 'world theology' so-called.

The task for the Reformed epistemologist who seeks to work out a view of education which is consistent with his theory of knowledge is two-fold. It has to do with both the attitude he ought to take towards those whose viewpoints differ from his own and the extent to which he ought to engage in co-operative activity with them in a task as important as the education of children. He might hold that dialogue with holders of opposing viewpoints is itself a compromise of his position and that the only appropriate kind of school for the Reformed Christian teacher or student is one that is itself Reformed in outlook. Indeed, he might go further and advocate a form of

apartheid in the separate development of communities of believers of different basic outlooks, each with their own schools for their own children. This is the antithetical form of Calvinism taken to its logical outcome and there are examples of its outworking to be found in some parts of the world. However, as we saw earlier, there has generally been a tension between this emphasis in Reformed theology and the more positive account which, on the basis of a doctrine of 'common grace', gives more place to common notions or common ground between differing outlooks. A more positive Reformed Christian could well take a rather different attitude toward those of differing basic outlook and would find it rather more acceptable to work along with them in a common educational institution.

The problem here is one of the limits of tolerance. Of course, this is a problem not only for the Reformed Christian but also for the holders of a wide variety of other worldviews, if not for all. Even the most thoroughgoing of liberals faces what has become known as the 'paradox of liberalism' for, it seems, liberalism provides for and even requires the tolerance of all viewpoints except those which are intolerant. The most liberal advocates of multi-faith religious education do not give the same credence to all viewpoints: they do not generally encourage teachers to develop in their pupils sympathetic insights into Nazism or Satanism. The limits of tolerance can also be a problem among holders of more or less the same worldview. The problem here concerns how far a viewpoint may diverge from what is accepted as 'orthodox' and how to relate to a fellow-believer over those points of belief and practice over which there is disagreement. Those Christians who lay most stress on the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian viewpoints are often those who tend most easily to sectarian division among themselves.

### **7.1 CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO OTHER FAITHS**

Discussions in recent years of how different religious viewpoints should relate to one another have tended to take place within the framework of a classification proposed by John Hick. He suggests that the three main views of the relation between the different religious traditions are what he labels 'exclusivist', 'inclusivist' and 'pluralist'. He defines these as follows:-

"By 'exclusivism' I mean the view that one particular mode of religious thought and experience (namely, one's own) is alone valid, all others being false. By 'inclusivism' I mean the view ... that one's own tradition alone has the whole truth but that this truth is nevertheless partially reflected in other traditions; and, as an additional clause special to Christianity, that whilst salvation is made possible only by the death of Christ, the benefits of this are available to all mankind. And by 'pluralism' I mean the view - which I advocate - that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the different cultural ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is manifestly taking place."<sup>1</sup>

Before I go on to examine these in an attempt to see which would be more consistent with Reformed epistemology, there are a couple of general comments which I shall make on Hick's classification.

First, Hick presents these three alternatives as progressive stages through which "most thinking Christians"<sup>2</sup> have been moving over the last hundred years or so. He likens this to the changes within astronomy from a simple Ptolemaic picture of the universe with the earth at the centre through the stage of the addition of epicycles or smaller circles centered on the original circles to the third stage of a Copernican revolution and its paradigm-shift to a helio-centric picture of the universe.<sup>3</sup> However, I think it can be plausibly argued that both exclusivism and inclusivism are well represented on the contemporary Christian scene and that both are held by thinking Christians and that pluralism is more of a minority view-point at the present time. If so, Hick's likening of these options to the successive stages of a process of scientific development seems quite questionable since there has been by no means a complete 'paradigm-shift' from exclusivism to inclusivism and still less from inclusivism to pluralism.

Secondly, Hick's alternatives are not exhaustive of the possibilities. For example, he ignores the alternatives of relativism and syncretism although they could perhaps be viewed as forms of pluralism albeit not identical with that which he advocates. He also leaves out naturalism in all its forms since the naturalist is not, in his terms, "open to the transcendent".<sup>4</sup> However, it might well be argued that many have sincerely considered the religious options and concluded

that a naturalistic humanism is the right response to life as they find it. Further, Hick's exclusion of these alternatives suggests that his own account is itself exclusivist and that this form of pluralism also has its own limits of tolerance. I shall return later to the issue of the criteria for the exclusion of some worldviews and the acceptance of others.

### 7.1.1 IS REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY NECESSARILY EXCLUSIVIST?

The advocates of Reformed epistemology have often been charged with holding an exclusivist theology. John Hick says that contemporary Reformed epistemologists and notably Plantinga tend to be theologically extremely conservative and probably strongly inclined towards an exclusivist theology of religions and he calls upon them to abandon their allegiance to "a sixteenth century set of theological ideas".<sup>5</sup> He suggests that this need not involve abandoning the basic tenets of Reformed epistemology since, he says, he himself has long held a view which is similar to Plantinga's on basic belief in God.

Hick makes a distinction between basic beliefs such as the belief that he is in the presence of God and what he terms "secondary ... optional ... interpretative theories" such as that Jesus had two distinct natures or that the Christian awareness of God is the only authentic awareness of God. However, some of the beliefs that Reformed epistemologists put forward as being properly basic seem difficult to link with Hick's pluralism. He himself gives 'I am in the presence of God' as an example but this seems to make God personal as do other examples of Plantinga's and Alston's, such as 'God is speaking to me'. But Hick says elsewhere that different conceptions of the ultimate - some of which take God as personal while others do not - arise from the variations between different sets of human conceptual schema and spiritual practice.<sup>6</sup> If it is acceptable to Hick to take as a basic belief one that entails that God is personal then it would seem that he must allow that basic beliefs are also interpretative. This seems to remove the basis of his distinction between basic beliefs and secondary interpretative theories although it does raise the problem about the theory-ladenness of claimed perceptions of God with which I attempted to grapple earlier.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps there is some truth in the claim that theology and epistemology can be separated since, for example, a claim which is formally similar to that of Reformed epistemology could be made for the statements 'Allah is speaking to me' or 'the Bhagavad-Gita is a self-authenticating divine revelation'. Nevertheless, if there is a priority over epistemology of ontology (part of which has to do with the nature of spiritual reality and is therefore theological), our assumptions concerning what is there to be known will influence our theory of how we know it. So when it comes to making a substantial claim in epistemology, this will require reference to particular views of what is there or what God is like. To claim that 'God is speaking to me through the scriptures' requires use of particular concepts of God and of scripture. This is part of what I earlier termed 'semantic information' which is necessary for the existence rather than the justification of the basic beliefs in question.<sup>8</sup> No particular belief can be properly basic without concepts like these because no such belief can exist without them.

If a Christian claims that God is speaking to him through the scriptures and authenticating to him statements about the death of Christ on the cross and a believer from another religious tradition claims that his scriptures tell him that Christ did not die on the cross, the Christian who is a theological realist cannot accept both these incompatible beliefs as being true. His self-authenticating belief seems to exclude incompatible beliefs and to that extent at least he must be exclusivist. What if the other claimed a divine revelation which supplemented rather than contradicted his Christian revelation? How he will respond to this will depend on his beliefs about the finality of revelation in the Christian scriptures and he may well hold that the Christian scriptures claim finality for themselves.

So if the Reformed epistemologist makes the claim that God is speaking to him through the scriptures, the meaning of such a claim depends on the concepts of God and scripture that he is operating with and how exclusivist his position is will also depend - at least in part - on those concepts. And because appeal is being made to a revelation which is both personal and propositional, it would seem that he must at least be exclusivist in relation to claims to revealedness for



those propositions which clearly contradict those which he holds to be divinely revealed.

Insofar as Reformed epistemology is exclusivist, why exactly is this taken to be something objectionable? What is wrong with being exclusivist? After all, to believe something is to believe that it is true and therefore, presumably, that what contradicts it must be false.

Hick and others give a number of reasons for finding exclusivism an unacceptable view of the plurality of religions. Foremost among them is the argument that it is largely a matter of geographical accident whether one grows up a Christian or Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist so that exclusivism on the part of an adherent to any one of these religions makes possession of truth and salvation depend upon an accident of birth. Hick allows that there are "spiritual immigrants" but claims that these are very few in comparison with the populations through which religious traditions are transmitted from generation to generation. He writes:-

"Realistically viewed, one's religious commitment is usually a matter of 'religious ethnicity' rather than of deliberate comparative judgement and choice."<sup>9</sup>

But how does this show that exclusivism is mistaken? It can easily be turned against Hick's own exclusion of non-religious alternatives wherein there is no spirituality or, as he puts it, no 'openness to the transcendent'. There are areas of the world and populations where the predominant worldview is not a religious one so it would seem to be a matter of 'ideological ethnicity' (extending his idea) whether one grows up with any religious view at all. If Hick's own argument is valid, it would seem to count against his own exclusion of these alternatives. In addition, talk of how few 'spiritual immigrants' there are makes the whole world religious situation rather more static than perhaps it really is nowadays - whatever it may have been in centuries past - for there are parts of the world where thousands of people are changing their religious affiliations - and many, it would seem, are doing so in a direction which is away from any religious faith at all. What I would term Hick's 'geographicism' also fails to take account of the influence of mass media across geographical and cultural boundaries in this dynamic situation. And, I think, he fails to take account of the distinction between 'nominal'

adherence to a religion and becoming a committed believer, a step which the presence in one's situation of both the practical atheism of nominal religion and the theoretical atheism of secularism makes rather less automatic and more a matter of deliberate judgement than he seems to allow.

Further, it is argued that exclusivism (in, at least, its traditional Christian form) condemns the majority of the world's population to hell and that this is inconsistent with the Christian doctrine of the universal love of God. Perhaps this is what really underlies the preceding argument for Hick writes of "the old Christian presumption of a monopoly of saving truth" which, he says, "generated the paradox of a God of universal love who has ordained that only the Christian minority of the human race can be saved" and, he continues, "it is precisely this paradox that has called for a 'Copernican revolution' in our Christian theology of religions".<sup>10</sup> However, again, this argument may be too strong for Hick's purposes for, if valid, it must count against any view of salvation which is less than universalist and it would seem that, according to Hick's own view, it is the great world religions that are ways of salvation and their different conceptions of salvation are "specifications of what, in a generic formula, is the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to a new orientation, centered in the divine Reality".<sup>11</sup> It would seem that there is no salvation outside the great world religions and, again, what Hick terms the problem for the exclusivist (Christian or other) of a plurality of religions becomes for him as a religious pluralist the problem of a plurality of worldviews, some of which are non-religious. Admittedly, Hick is talking of the experience of salvific transformation in this life rather than of a person's destiny on the great day of eschatological verification but by no means all conservative theologians would say that those who have never heard the gospel of Christ go to hell. It would seem that the varying possibilities in the doctrines of the fall, sin, grace and human responsibility need to be taken into account before it can be assumed that the paradox that Hick alludes to cannot be resolved satisfactorily.

In addition, Hick criticises Christian exclusivists for failing to do justice to the universal love of God and, at the same time, he holds that the policy of converting the world to Christianity is "an

anachronistic by-product of a past imperial age".<sup>12</sup> The Christian exclusivist is held to be indifferent to the fate of non-Christians and to condemn millions to hell but if he engages in missionary work, then, apparently regardless of his attitude or manner of approach to those of other faiths or even how much he may have to suffer for his belief in the uniqueness of Christianity, he is an imperialist!

A third kind of argument against exclusivism takes up the note of presumption and claims that the religious exclusivist ignores human fallibility,<sup>13</sup> the influence of cultural factors upon beliefs<sup>14</sup> and the like. But although this may be true of some religious exclusivists, it is not necessarily the case and therefore does not count as an argument against the position per se. A person may well be fairly strongly exclusivist and yet hold many of his beliefs - including some of the more basic of them - in a way that does admit at least the logical possibility of his being mistaken in them. The version of foundationalism set forth earlier may be linked with a fairly exclusivist view but it is nevertheless a moderate foundationalism as against the stronger versions of classical foundationalism. Such a position can coexist with a deep commitment to controversial opinions and, as Hick himself says of his own position, the logical possibility of being mistaken - in relation to what he admits to be a minority view - "should not prevent us from proceeding upon the best understanding that we have".<sup>15</sup>

It is also sometimes argued that exclusivism tends to be sectarian<sup>16</sup> and, as a result, productive of social disharmony.<sup>17</sup> This can be answered in a similar way by simply denying that a person with exclusivist views is necessarily sectarian unless it be the case that to hold a controversial set of beliefs shared by some but not by all is inevitably sectarian. I shall return to the issue of social disharmony later in this chapter.

So, insofar as the Reformed epistemologist holds a cognitive view of faith and a propositional account of divine revelation, he will hold that certain beliefs are true and that those which contradict them are false. To that extent at least, his position will be religiously exclusivist. But the arguments against exclusivism can just as easily be turned against any position which seeks to maintain its beliefs against those which contradict them - as Hick does in his

defence of religious pluralism - and so cannot count against exclusivism. We are exclusivist if we hold that what we believe is true and that what is incompatible with what we believe is false. This hardly seems objectionable.

### 7.1.2 INCLUSIVISM AND REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

The case against exclusivism may well be based upon a caricature of the range of views that could be termed both conservative and exclusivist. For example, the 'no salvation outside the church' doctrine may be presented as if, in all its forms, it always and only requires membership of the 'visible church' through baptism. But many believe that there may be members of the visible church who are not Christians - in the sense of an allegiance which goes beyond purely nominal adherence held on to because, say, of parents' wishes or social pressures - and that there may be, on the other hand, those who are not baptised whom God will accept. Again, if exclusivism is presented in terms of a believing response to divine revelation, the impression can be given that the exclusivist holds that only those whose belief systems are fully in accord with traditional orthodox Christian doctrine are truly among the people of God. But there are many who would maintain that only those who are regenerated and have faith in Christ are truly accepted by God - and in maintaining this are in that respect exclusivist - who would at the same time be quite unwilling to say how much or how little revelation of Christ is required for a response of saving faith or how full an adherence to traditional Christian doctrines is needed. Presumably some minimal apprehension of Christ is required to make it meaningful to say that a person has faith in him. This would not be to say that a maximum of true belief is not to be sought after or thought desirable for the follower of Christ but only that it is not required for salvation in the sense of divine acceptance.

It is this range of viewpoint that makes the distinction between exclusivism and inclusivism rather unclear. There are several distinct, albeit not independent, ways in which a religious position may be said to be (more or less) inclusive or exclusive. One way of defining exclusivism and inclusivism is in terms of truth. The exclusivist claims that one tradition alone possesses the truth while all others are false whereas the inclusivist allows that the truth

possessed wholly by his own tradition may nevertheless be partially reflected in other traditions. However, as it stands, this is not an adequate basis for the distinction in question. If by 'truth' we mean any true belief whatever or by 'the truth' we mean the entire set of true beliefs, then nobody could claim that his tradition alone possesses the truth. For a start, unless one is omniscient, there must always be more truth to discover. Secondly, such an exclusivist could not communicate his truths to anybody of any other tradition since there would be no common apprehensions, concepts or insights to provide a base for communication. It would therefore seem impossible that people of other traditions should always be incorrect in all their beliefs! In this sense inclusivism is the only possible option and even then it has to be modified to allow that the whole truth cannot be possessed by any tradition or individual but only, presumably, by God.

So the distinction cannot be made simply in terms of truth but only in terms of truths of a certain kind. Here there is a range of possibilities including religious/theological truths, the truths of the core beliefs of a tradition, revealed truths and saving truth. To make the distinction that we are seeking in terms of religious/theological truths would seem to leave the exclusivist committed to the position that a person who does not share his position cannot make any true theological statements. So that if he is a Christian exclusivist he is forced to deny, for example, the truth of the Muslim claim that God is compassionate. As it stands, this would seem an untenable position but it is rather more plausible when developed in terms of the different concepts of God and of divine compassion that may be held by the Christian and the Muslim. The Christian may well and, I think, plausibly affirm that the Muslim is talking of a God who is rather different from God as conceived within traditional Christianity. It may be claimed that the Christian and the Muslim differ in the content of their basic or core-beliefs and that this is at least part of what makes the distinction between Christian and Muslim meaningful and, in the same way, that between exclusivism and inclusivism. In this sense, exclusivism could be seen as the claim that the core-beliefs of a particular worldview are exclusively true while inclusivism would allow that some of the core-beliefs of the favoured position may be reflected in other traditions. However, I do not think this gets to the root of the

matter because it is likely that the Christian exclusivist will go on to maintain that his core beliefs are true if they are revealed by God and only insofar as they are revealed by God - and the same could apply to the exclusivist of another tradition, e.g., the Muslim or the Mormon.

I think this reference to revelation is more central to the claims of the Christian exclusivist and to those of exclusivists of at least some other traditions. Understood in these terms, the inclusivist will see some other scriptures or parts of them as containing divine revelation insofar as they overlap in content with or cohere with or, at least, do not contradict statements in the scriptures of his own tradition. The Christian exclusivist whose theology is conservative - as Hick sees Plantinga's to be - is likely to claim that the Christian scriptures are uniquely the self-authenticating divine special revelation. This is not to deny that there is a general revelation available to all but simply to limit the scope of special revelation for our time to the contents of the Christian scriptures. Nor is it to deny the possibility of God's revealing some of this content to people who do not have access to the written scriptures themselves as, for example, in the stories told by some missionaries of how they have found peoples or individuals who already have parts of the Christian gospel revealed to them in dreams, visions or the like long before anybody came to them with a knowledge of the Christian scriptures. Indeed, it would seem quite possible on such an account that the scriptures of other traditions might contain either generally or specially revealed truths. Rare indeed would be the Christian exclusivist who would deny that the Jewish scriptures are the Word of God. Indeed, both his and their scriptures contain a substantial section in the 'Wisdom Literature' of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job where what could be termed common sense is incorporated into the scriptures although, significantly, it is set in what Charles Martin terms "a God-fearing framework".<sup>18</sup>

The Christian exclusivist whose exclusivism is defined in terms of revealed truth will regard the contents of his scriptures as uniquely the special revelation of God which authenticates itself to him under certain appropriate conditions. This does not mean that his interpretation of them has this kind of status since this is something that he should always be prepared to submit to the

scriptures for validation and, where he finds it necessary, correction or improvement. If he adopts this attitude then he avoids the charge of presumption or arrogance and he can consistently be inclusivist at least to the extent of allowing (provisional) truth to parts of other scriptures and to common sense insights whilst at the same time maintaining that other traditions are basically mistaken in their core beliefs and concepts.

The spectrum of opinion from exclusivism to inclusivism could also be defined in terms of saving truth. Hick uses this phrase in relation to the exclusivism of religions which compete in their claims "to possess the saving truth".<sup>19</sup> Use of the phrase 'saving truth' can be misleading in that it suggests that it is true beliefs that themselves save a person rather than the grace of God through the person's faith-commitment to the object of those beliefs. It is, I think, traditional Christian belief to require at least a minimal awareness of divine grace in the death of Christ for saving faith and, in that minimal sense, true beliefs. But, although true belief to that extent may be necessary for salvation, it cannot be held to be sufficient since it would seem that the devil must be one of the most orthodox in his beliefs. Possession of a complete set of true beliefs is therefore neither necessary nor sufficient for salvation while the kernel of true belief that is at the heart of faith-commitment is necessary without being sufficient. A person cannot trust in Christ without some awareness of who he is and what he has done but such awareness without trust cannot save. This is, I think, in accord with traditional Reformed Christian interpretation of the scriptures. It can have more inclusivist implications than might appear obvious at first sight in that, although it might insist that there is no salvation outside the church, it would allow that what counts is membership of the invisible church rather than of the visible church through its sacraments. In this way, it would seem possible that somebody brought up in another religious tradition and outwardly conforming to the general requirements of that tradition might really be a Christian believer because he has that minimal awareness of Christ and has responded to him in faith. Such a person might be an 'anonymous Christian', albeit probably not in as inclusive a sense as that of Karl Rahner's use of the term to apply to those who do not have an explicit Christian faith but who nevertheless seek, consciously or unconsciously, to do God's will even though they do not

regard themselves as Christians and even though they may insist that they are not Christians but Muslims, Jews, Hindus, or whatever.<sup>20</sup> In the face of such possibilities it would seem best not to judge a person's spiritual state too hastily but rather to acknowledge with the apostle Paul that "the Lord knows them that are his".<sup>21</sup>

The preceding are all definitions of the inclusivist/exclusivist distinction in terms of truth but Hick considers it more profitable to make the distinction in terms of salvation which he uses in a way that includes its functional analogies in the other major world religious traditions (liberation, enlightenment, fulfilment and the like).<sup>22</sup> Hick distinguishes two concepts of salvation - a juridical concept and a 'transformation-of-human-existence' concept. Under the juridical concept, salvation is a matter of God's acceptance of a person on the basis of Christ's atonement. The exclusivist limits this to those who respond to it with an explicit act of faith whereas the inclusivist extends it to include those who have never heard of the death of Christ. Under the latter concept - which Hick himself opts for in the development of his pluralist position - salvation is a matter of the transformation of human life which may also be held to be exclusively experienced by Christians or inclusively extended to take place within the contexts of the other great world religions.<sup>23</sup>

Hick seems to regard these concepts of salvation as mutually exclusive and in the way he develops his own concept they do become so but there is no necessary contradiction between these ideas. Indeed, the Reformation theme of justification by faith properly understood cannot form an excuse for an antinomian casting off of all obligations to live a good life. The ideas of justification and sanctification go together in traditional Reformed theology so that both faith without works and works without faith are held to be dead. Sanctification is taken to be God's gradual transformation of the believer into 'the image of Christ' in a process which is only complete in the world to come and then immediately so. This is a restoration of the divine image in man which was marred through sin. The effects of the fall are such that man is not as bad as he might be since the restraining effects of God's common grace prevent him from going altogether to the bad and underlie his search for truth and goodness. On the other hand, the immediate effects of regeneration are not that the believer becomes altogether perfect at once - he is still a sinner and still



has to struggle with sin in this life. This view of salvation certainly is exclusivist in that it confines salvation to the regenerate but they are not to be completely identified with the adherents of a 'religion' of Christianity and its institutional structures. In addition, it is inclusivist in that all that is good in the world is to be seen as evidence of God's common grace to all if not of his special grace to the redeemed.

This gives a basis for the Christian believer to respect others as being made in the image of God and as truth-seekers like himself whilst at the same time recognising the reality and the effects of sin in them and in himself. He can thank God for every act of love and every evidence of the transformation of human existence. He can respect the integrity and sincerity of others even though he may see their belief system to be mistaken in certain, even fundamental, respects or some of their practices to be idolatrous. He can see others not as Hindus, Muslims or whatever but as people who share a common humanity with him and who are, like him, sinners in need of the grace of God and as such, like him, capable of intellectual self-deception and even very evil deeds. Such an attitude is rather more open and inclusive than that which the stereotypical exclusivist is generally seen to hold and yet it is quite consistent with an exclusivist insistence upon the need for regeneration or with Kuyper's talk of two kinds of people.

This attitude and approach is, however, open to the objection that it restricts the possibility of progressive transformation and, with it, saintliness to those who are regenerate through faith in Christ. But what Hick takes to be the inductive basis of his pluralism is that, as he puts it, "the salvific transformation of human existence is going on, and so far as we can tell going on to a more or less equal extent, within all the great traditions".<sup>24</sup> Hick sees the great world religions as being centrally concerned with ways of salvation and salvation as being "an actual change in human beings from self-centeredness to a new orientation centered in the ultimate divine Reality".<sup>25</sup> He sees this new orientation as having spiritual and moral aspects. The spiritual is most clearly discernible in those we call saints and Hick claims that all the great world religions have those who are particularly "open to the transcendent" so that it seems doubtful that there is any higher incidence of saintliness within any

one tradition. In regard to the moral aspect, he suggests that there is no good reason to believe that any of the great religious traditions has been more productive of love or compassion than any other. From this he concludes that no one of the great world religions is salvifically superior to the others. I think the main weakness with this argument is that it fails to account for the fact that it is not only the great world religions which produce outstandingly good or compassionate people. Hick excludes some from consideration because he sees them as not being open to the transcendent but the problem is that his criteria for the recognition of saintliness - "largely free from self-centred concerns and anxieties and empowered to live as an instrument of God/Truth/Reality"<sup>26</sup> - could be applied to a secular saint as well. Hick accuses Christian exclusivists of defining salvation in such a way that only Christians can be saved but, because the criteria he offers for recognising the fruits of salvation in human life can be applied to other than adherents of the great world religions, his restriction of salvation to the great world religions is also a case of defining salvation in such a way that it is a necessary truth that only Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and members of other great world religious communities can experience salvation.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, traditional Christian theology is not necessarily embarrassed by the examples of what Hick terms saintliness from within other religious traditions since, as we have seen, it can well account for them in terms of its doctrines of man, sin and grace.

### 7.1.3 PLURALIST ALTERNATIVES

Reformed epistemology with its stress on the cognitive core of the faith response, its basic belief in a personal God and its emphasis on a self-authenticating propositional revelation seems to cohere most readily with an exclusivist approach to the plurality of world-views. However, this does not necessarily entail the kind of hard-line exclusivism which denies the possibility of any true belief about God to all but Christian believers. It can affirm all that is true and good in people of other outlooks albeit with a critical eye for all that is neither good nor true in others or, for that matter, in the Reformed Christian himself.

Reformed epistemology can therefore be more inclusivist than might at first sight seem likely but not to the extent of the thoroughgoing form of inclusivism which allows all the benefits of the death of Christ to extend to those who have no faith whatever in him. The move to such an inclusivist stance would require a fairly radical redefinition of the central Christian claims.

This would be even more true of a move to one of the pluralist alternatives. One of the best-known of these is that advocated by Hick himself. He proposes that we see "the thought-and-experienced deities and absolutes as different manifestations of the Real within different historical forms of human consciousness" and "the divine noumenon, the Real an sich, as experienced through different human receptivities as a range of divine phenomena, in the formation of which religious concepts have played an essential part".<sup>28</sup> He writes:-

"We should therefore not think of the Real an sich as singular or plural, substance or process, personal or non-personal, good or bad, purposive or non-purpose".<sup>29</sup>

Hick talks of the Real 'revealing' itself to human beings but he goes on to qualify this by insisting that it does not entail divinely disclosed propositions or miraculous interventions in the course of human history but that it is "a response to the circumambient presence and prevenient pressure of the divine Reality".<sup>30</sup> Clearly here the possibility of special/propositional revelation is dismissed and Hick's approach becomes essentially anthropocentric. It would seem that it cannot be reconciled with Reformed epistemology with basic themes such as those elaborated in the central section of this study.

Although Hick may claim support for his thesis of the ineffable Real an sich in some of the writings of mystics of various traditions,<sup>31</sup> he effectively tells the followers of most if not all traditions that their view of the Real is deficient and proposes a new theology to replace those that exist at present. His is not a purely descriptive thesis at a different logical level from those of the sets of beliefs of the major world religions, a thesis which leaves everything as it is. He tells the traditional Christian believer that the time has come to leave behind the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation "together with its protective envelope, the doctrine of the Trinity" which makes it difficult for Christians to move to a pluralist

position.<sup>32</sup> He suggests that the advaitist Vedantic Hindu is mistaken in thinking that the Real is only authentically experienced as the impersonal absolute being, Brahman.<sup>33</sup> Presumably, too, notwithstanding his protestations that as a Christian he is not in the business of telling members of other faiths how to conduct their affairs,<sup>34</sup> he must regard them as just as much in need of demythologisation and a similar kind of Copernican revolution in their exclusivist theologies of uniqueness as that which he advocates within Christianity.

Because of this I think it can be fairly claimed that Hick is just as exclusivist in his own way as those he criticises. His theology may seem wider in that it attempts to embrace the plurality of world religions but it is in fact quite narrow if it requires radical change in them all to a new and different way which rests on the basic premise that salvation is equally going on in them all. It is also, as I noted earlier, exclusivist in the way in which it grades religions and excludes altogether the loving and compassionate naturalistic humanist whose openness to the transcendent has led him to a considered judgement that there is no transcendent ultimate Reality. He may exclude the member of the Jim Jones cult for lack of love/compassion/unselfish good will but his exclusion of what I have termed the secular saint shows that salvation is also a matter of basic belief. This, I think, makes his exclusivism, although different in scope, no different in kind from that which he condemns.

## 7.2 CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY?

The qualified exclusivism that I have suggested should characterise the Reformed Christian is often associated with a move to set up separate Reformed Christian schools. However, there are at least two questions to face in relation to the setting up of separate Christian schools. One is whether Christian parents should entrust their children's schooling to institutions which are not explicitly Christian and this is the one which tends to receive most attention in discussions among Christians. But a second question is one faced by Christian teachers: should they teach in schools which are not explicitly Christian or should they, if possible, withdraw into Christian schools? This second question has not received by any means the same amount of attention in recent discussions.

Sometimes the former issue is approached from the point of view of an attempt to reconcile the apparently opposing principles that require the Christian, on the one hand, to be the salt of the earth and light of the world and, on the other, to bring up his children in a Christian way under Christian influences.<sup>35</sup> Something of the conflict between these principles might seem to be resolved if the salt-light principle is applied to the choice facing the Christian teacher and the Christian upbringing principle is applied to that facing the Christian parent. However, the position is not as clear-cut as this. If the Christian teacher finds the system or curriculum to be humanist, naturalist, Marxist or whatever in its basic outlook and therefore, at that level, impossible to reconcile with his basic Christian beliefs, he still has to balance acting upon the salt-light principle with that which requires him to teach consistently with his Christian outlook. So the avoidance of compromise with what he sees to be in error will be an issue for such a teacher. And it is surely this avoidance of the corruption that is perceived to be in the world - manifested partly in false views of reality - that also underlies the obligation that the Christian parent may feel to bring up his children in a Christian environment. If a curriculum is unacceptable for its Marxist or Muslim or Humanist presuppositions then it is so both for the Christian teacher and the Christian parent. On the other hand, the Christian parent will probably see the education of his children as, in part, a preparation for life in a world which is far from Christian and will face the problem of how best to prepare them, if they are also Christians, to be salt and light in that world. Being 'cocooned' from it in the environment of a Christian school may not be the best preparation for this. Perhaps at root the problem for both teachers and parents is how to follow the teaching of Jesus by being in the world and yet not of the world.

Those Christian teachers or parents who favour the setting up of separate Christian schools have to face some fairly major objections to the whole idea of having a system of separate schools to reflect a pluralism of worldviews. I shall examine ways in which a Reformed Christian might respond to these objections.

### 7.2.1 THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO AN OPEN FUTURE?

That children's future choices are restricted thereby is a fairly common objection to the 'closed pluralism'<sup>36</sup> of separate schools for children of different faiths and worldviews. Paul Hirst expresses it as follows:-

"The committed ethos of the school will restrict undesirably the choice of children in important aspects of life when they should be open to a variety of influences within the generally agreed framework of the common morality of the society."<sup>37</sup>

To this it could be responded that every school has a 'committed ethos' of some kind or other. I think that Hirst would agree that this is so but he would go to insist that the kind of school that he would commend would be committed in a way that did not tend to restrict children's future choices but would rather, on the contrary, enlarge and deepen their capacity for choice. This would be provided by a commitment to an education which seeks that "in all areas, beliefs, values and attitudes and so on are held by individuals according to their rational status, there being a fundamental commitment to the progressive rational development of personal beliefs and practices rather than uncritical adherence to, or determined defence of, any particular set of beliefs and practices whatever their source."<sup>38</sup> Such commitment is, according to Hirst, logically more fundamental than any particular religious commitment but if some of the discussion of rational autonomy earlier in this study is along the right lines then we may have here two basic commitments which are mutually exclusive. The kind of commitment which Hirst advocates is exclusive of faith-commitment in response to a self-authenticating divine revelation. The strong internalism of its insistence upon reasons and evidence means that immediately justified belief of this kind is not acceptable.

However, a 'tu quoque' answer is not the only response that can be made to this objection. The Reformed Christian could go further and argue that his approach could be held to be more acceptable than one based on Hirst's commitment provided that it is worked out in a way that recognises and brings about an understanding of the religious and controversial nature of such basic commitments. The Reformed Christian's commitment does not need to render him any less opposed to indoctrination than anybody else - he can encourage rational questioning to the limits of rationality but he may define them

differently to Hirst. It may not be so much the fact of the committed ethos of the school that matters as the way in which it is exhibited and communicated to children. Undoubtedly, Christian schools can be highly indoctrinatory in their procedures - as can separate schools of other faiths and, indeed, state maintained schools as well - but they do not have to be so. Hirst may be effectively acknowledging this in his use of the word 'tend' in a separate objection to the setting up of separate schools when he writes:-

"They will tend to be inadequate in their support of open, critical, rational education, particularly in the areas of religious and moral education."<sup>39</sup>

The tendency may well be there but this is something to be recognised and resisted within Christian schools rather than accepted as a reason for not setting up such schools.

There is another way in which the committed ethos of the school might unjustifiably restrict children's future choices and this has to do with content rather than method. This may be nearer to the heart of Hirst's objection since he says that the children "should be open to a variety of influences within the generally agreed framework of the common morality of the society". The concern may be that, however rational the method, the approach could be that of what I earlier termed 'committed partiality' in that only one worldview is dealt with rather than the range of outlooks of the alternative of 'committed impartiality'.<sup>40</sup> I suggested then that neither of these fell foul of the definition of indoctrination that I was proposing but I left open the possibility of one of them being held to be miseducative on other grounds. Denial of what Joel Feinberg terms 'the child's right to an open future',<sup>41</sup> could form just such grounds.

In order to avoid the controversial issue of whether it is meaningful to talk in terms of moral rights - as opposed to legal rights - I shall pose this problem in terms of the educator's obligations rather than of children's rights. Is there an obligation upon parents, schools, teachers or others responsible for a child's education to try to see that he becomes acquainted with and gains an informed understanding of a range of worldviews? This is something unlikely to be true of education under some totalitarian regimes, e.g., in some Communist and Islamic states, and in some closed communities within pluralist societies.

A clear example of this closed educational situation is in that provided by stricter communities of the Protestant Amish people in the United States. The religious faith of the Amish is expressed in a total way of life which is regulated by biblical texts and community rules. They are very efficient farmers even though they refuse to use modern technological aids. They are extremely self-sufficient, try to insulate their communities from outside influences and refuse to become involved with any of the state's provisions, e.g., social benefits or insurance. They are a law-abiding people but they have come into conflict with the state in regard to their educational provision for their children. This is because they believe that their children's formal education should cease at the eighth grade when the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic necessary for their community life, work and worship have been mastered and it is this that has brought them into conflict with the authorities in at least two states in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Less extreme cases than that of the Amish might not restrict the child's future choices to the extent of making him fit for only the way of life of a pious farmer but Christian, Muslim or Communist schools could well have in common with the Amish the restriction of influences to that of just one worldview.

Is restriction of education to just one worldview wrong and, if so, why exactly is it so? In line with the suggestion that separate schools restrict children's future choices, it could be argued that if such schools teach only one worldview - not that the fact that a school is a Christian school entails that there is no teaching about other faiths but assuming that the curriculum is limited in this way - they thereby pre-empt children's decisions about which faith they should adopt. And the Christian should surely hold that this is a much more important matter than restricting the choice of career to that of being a pious farmer or a pious farmer! However, as stated, this argument is rather voluntarist and it is questionable whether it is really a matter of deciding to adopt a faith. Certainly, as far as Reformed epistemology is concerned, becoming a Christian may not be at all a matter of weighing up reasons and evidence for and against a position.<sup>43</sup> But even if stated in less voluntarist terms this argument, pursued to its logical conclusion, would place an impossible burden upon educators. How many alternative faiths must a person know about and which ones and to what depth of knowledge before he can



make such a choice? Is it necessary anyway to know about any of the other major world religions before one could conclude that one could not accept the Christian position? I would suggest that potential defeaters of Christian basic beliefs are by no means limited to arguments from within other worldviews and obvious counter-examples include internal incoherence and such obstacles to belief as the problem of evil. An adequate education in the Christian worldview should face such potential internal defeaters honestly and openly but I would argue that the 'choice' for or against Christianity does not really depend upon knowing about any particular alternative perspective.

Hirst's limiting of alternative influences to the "framework of the common morality of the society" would seem surprisingly relativistic in its implications. It would presumably exclude Satanism and Fascism, for example, from the legitimate influences in our society but it would exclude Humanism and Christianity in some Islamic states and could insist upon voodooism in some societies. I think a case can be made for studying the major faiths that find allegiance in the global village of our world but on grounds other than an appeal to the need to widen children's choices. A stronger objection to separate schools that teach only one worldview is along the lines that they encourage social fragmentation and it is to this I now turn.

### **7.2.2 DO CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS LEAD TO SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION?**

The perceived tendency towards social fragmentation is a common objection to the idea of separate schools for those of different worldviews. Hirst expresses it in the following terms:-

"Such schools necessarily encourage social fragmentation in the society along religious lines. The pluralism of a system of separate schools seems to me not to be the pluralism of a positively-developing rational critical society, for such a society will wish its major institutions to encourage unity amongst its members, a unity born of an open, rational, critical approach to all of life's concerns."<sup>44</sup>

Again, I think this argument is only valid on the two-fold assumption that these separate schools go in for indoctrination and that they only teach the worldview of those who run the school. Neither of these need be the case but I do think there is an argument here for the teaching of other faiths in all schools.

It may not be the case that to understand all is to forgive all but surely misunderstanding and prejudiced views of others contribute in a major way to hostility and strife between peoples. It is not that peace and social harmony is the only value but it is a Christian value. The way of love for others is a way that seeks to understand them. Love seeks to communicate and inter-communication requires mutual understanding. Understanding of others must include understanding of their basic outlooks and of the ways in which they look at the world. So I think an adequate Christian education based on central Christian beliefs and values will seek to promote accurate understanding of other worldviews. This would seem completely in line with the doctrines of God's creation of all in his image, his love for all and, not least, the Reformed Christian theme of his common grace to all. This would preclude caricaturing the beliefs of another worldview or comparing the worst elements in another worldview with the best in the Christian outlook or, as Nipkow puts it, introducing the beliefs of another merely "as a black foil in order to put the Christian answers in a bright light".<sup>45</sup>

Seen in this way, multi-faith education is far from being a threat to Christian commitment - it is positively required by it. The fallen world in which children are growing up is a world of diversity in belief and learning to live in such a world requires understanding of that diversity. This understanding should not only be accurate but it must also avoid being superficial. It goes further than the kind of comparative religion which Charles Martin terms "a patronising Cook's tour of what the natives do".<sup>46</sup> And yet there are limits to the understanding and empathy beyond which teacher or pupils cannot go in an education which is consistent with the exclusivism that I have suggested is entailed by Reformed epistemology. The approach advocated by the second half of the following comment from a prescription for an adequate religious education lies, I think, beyond those limits:-

"Religious education ... does more than study the role of religion in culture, investigate objectively the sacred writings, rituals and cultural products of religious communities, compare religions, or explore the religious phenomenon. It is not possible to understand the faith of others without participation in their worship and spiritual life. We cannot understand Buddhism without learning Buddhist forms of meditation."<sup>47</sup>

Granted that seeking to understand another means more than merely

looking at his beliefs and practices, it would nevertheless be inconsistent with a Reformed Christian outlook for a teacher or pupil to participate in the worship of another faith and insofar as understanding is said to require doing so then such understanding is unattainable. Respect for another's beliefs is one thing but participation in his worship is quite another. Of course, it is not only the Reformed Christian who draws lines like this. There are for all theories of education and understanding acceptable limits to the process of identification with other outlooks. For example, it is unlikely that any would advocate participation in a Satanist ritual even though the sincerity of those involved may not be in question. All approaches to education will be exclusivist in that they will seek to encourage children to try to understand others but only within certain limits and the limits set by the Reformed Christian may well be narrower than those set by the common morality of his society. He cannot participate in the worship of those of other faiths unless he not only understands their beliefs but actually shares them. But insofar as the beliefs of others are opposed to his own basic beliefs, he cannot share such beliefs.

An additional reason suggested by some for teaching about other worldviews is that the study of the faith of others can illuminate facets of one's own faith. This is fairly vividly portrayed in the following extract:-

"... the messages of other faiths - whether it be the primal vision present in African religions, the note of joy and abandon (or, again, contemplation and discipline) in Hinduism, the notes of comprehensiveness, detachment, mystery, zeal and quietude in Buddhism, the rejection of racialism and class in the Muslim brotherhood, the passionate prophetism of many a new cult, the sense of history and law in Judaism or even the notes of critical judgement in modern agnosticism - ... leave us with an echoing note that rings out from within our own Christian tradition, but, were it not for the others, we might not hear it. The spontaneity of the festival in another religion may remind us that it is children who are to enter the kingdom and the note of quietude in many an eastern faith presents a challenge to 'poor talkative Christianity' which may have forgotten that 'the Lord is in his holy temple... let all the earth keep silent before him' (Habakkuk 2:20)."<sup>48</sup>

Again a belief in God's common grace and general revelation gives support to such a suggestion although it is by no means as compelling a reason as that which relates to social harmony.

Another reason for studying other worldviews is put forward by Anthony O'Hear. He suggests that even if a religious faith were true, its full meaning and implications would emerge only when confronted with contrary opinions and he continues:-

"Heresy and secular thought have been instrumental and vital to the development and understanding of Christian dogma itself (especially in the patristic period) and of the significance of Biblical texts (for example, in the Victorian worry about evolution). Where there is no opposition to a ruling ideology, stagnation of thought is inevitable, and there are surely strong grounds for objecting to this, even if one is convinced of the truth of a religious faith or some other ideology."<sup>49</sup>

This seems rather like saying that we would not understand goodness unless we also experienced evil. Perhaps there is some truth in such a statement but it does not seem altogether right. Does the recognition of mathematical truth require its being confronted with mathematical error? O'Hear follows Karl Popper on this point but, as we saw earlier,<sup>50</sup> Popper assumes that truth is not manifest and thereby excludes the possibility of a self-authenticating divine revelation. To this Reformed epistemology stands opposed but, given our fallenness and fallibility in interpreting revelation, I think that the Reformed Christian can go some of the way with O'Hear in allowing some but not ideal value to the diversity of an open pluralist society and this without granting the whole critical rationalist and evolutionary epistemology which underlies his argument.

On the point of social harmony, it might be objected that the study of other worldviews is somewhat abstract when separated from meeting and communication with those who come from other traditions and that a Christian school is unlikely to provide opportunities for this. However, this objection rests on the assumption that the Christian school is part of a whole life insulated from external influences as is the life of the Amish. This is not necessarily so. A Christian school may well be open to the children of people of other faiths provided that they are clearly aware of its committed stance - and this is certainly true of some of the new Christian schools in this country. The children of Christian parents may also meet those of other faiths and worldviews in everyday life outside school and in a Christian school they should be encouraged to go out into the community as salt and light. A very significant factor is that of probable access to a

vicarious meeting with other worldviews through the media and, in particular, through that of television.

Restriction of children's future choices and the promotion of social disharmony may well be the consequence of education in a separate Christian school but it seems to me that in a good Christian school this will not happen. The presence of bad examples does not make the good either undesirable or unattainable.

### 7.2.3 DOES NURTURE HAVE A PLACE IN SCHOOL?

Another objection to the setting up of Christian schools is that it confuses nurture with education and ascribes to the schoolteacher a role which belongs to parents and/or churches. I shall contest this argument and suggest that it can actually be turned around and become an argument for Christian schools.

Hirst distinguishes what he terms 'catechesis' - but which others use fairly interchangeably with 'nurture' - from education because, he says, the former necessarily presupposes a particular religious position while the latter does not.<sup>51</sup> John Hull says that religious nurture is a "convergent teaching process ... which intends to foster or deepen the commitment of those who are already believers or are already inside the religious community" and he terms it 'convergent' because the personal faith of the teacher converges with the content of his lessons and with his hopes for his pupils. He distinguishes this from education which does not seek or assume convergence so that a teacher can educate a pupil with respect to Islam whether he (the teacher) is a Muslim or not and such an education will not necessarily deepen the pupil's Islamic faith and will certainly not discourage him, should he be a Muslim. A teacher can educate a pupil in a religion and a pupil can benefit from such education whether or not either of them are believers in that religion but nurture can only be carried out by a teacher who is a believer in the religion in question and in relation to somebody who is inside that community of faith.<sup>52</sup>

From these definitions it seems clear that a Christian parent may both educate and nurture his children. It would also seem that a teacher in a Christian church may both educate and nurture children in the church. Why then should it be thought undesirable that a parent

delegate part of the responsibility for nurture as well as that for education to teachers in a Christian school? After all, both are legitimate activities where parents and church teachers are concerned and, Hirst suggests, "education and catechesis, based respectively in reason and faith, are properly to be seen as complementary".<sup>53</sup> So it would seem that these complementary activities could well be carried out by Christian teachers in Christian schools.

Hirst allows the possibility of both being carried on in church schools provided they are kept sharply distinct from each other.<sup>54</sup> Hill argues against Christian nurture being seen as a part of schooling because of its institutional features of compulsory attendance, compulsory curriculum and compulsory assessment and he continues:-

"In addition, many (Christian schools) exhibit a benevolent pressure to conform, and to engage in religious acts of personal commitment, which violate the private space of the individual. ... the school (is) a partner with other essential agencies in the full project of a child's education, notably the home and voluntary groups such as Christian Unions in schools and youth groups in churches. The attempt to subsume the tasks of such agencies under the umbrella of schooling runs a grave risk of either inciting students to rebel against the pressure they sense they are being put under, or reducing them to a state of conformity and dependency which augurs ill for their ability to survive and witness in the open society."<sup>55</sup>

The dangers that Hill alludes to undoubtedly do exist in many Christian schools but do they necessarily exist and is it not overstatement to term these risks 'grave'? Awareness of the dangers can lead to their avoidance by means of good practice.

Perhaps the problem is that, in spite of statements made about nurture and education being complementary, these activities are actually seen as being antithetical to and in conflict with each other. This comes out in Hirst's characterising of them as being based respectively in faith and reason along with his linking of nurture with what he variously terms 'traditionalist' and 'primitive' approaches to education in contrast with a 'sophisticated' concept of education.<sup>56</sup> I think that the Reformed Christian should resist this sharp distinction between the bases of nurture and education. Both are based in a faith-commitment and are aimed at commitment. For the Christian his approach to education - like everything else he does - should be ultimately based on his faith in God and aims at commitment

on the part of his pupils to beliefs which are justified either immediately or mediately. Hirst's sophisticated education is, he says, under-pinned by critical rationalism.<sup>57</sup> This is a faith which operates at the same logical level as the Christian's religious faith. Hirst's education aims at commitment "to the most rationally justifiable beliefs and values as (the pupil) can judge these in his particular circumstances".<sup>58</sup>

At this point the basis of the distinction between these terms seems to be evaporating and nurture is becoming identified with a Christian teacher's education of a pupil who is within the Christian community in the content of the Christian faith. In other words, Christian nurture is education in a particular context and content. But this blurs what is a meaningful and helpful distinction and I think it can be at least partly recovered by making a distinction between aims that are more immediate and those that are more ultimate. Nurture and education may share the same ultimate aims but, in relation to the Christian faith, education aims more immediately at understanding of the faith and nurture at personal commitment to Christ. Putting it another way, education in this context aims more immediately at faith at arm's length and nurture at faith on one's knees.<sup>59</sup>

I think it is fairly obvious that this kind of Christian nurture would be very out of place in the context of a captive audience in the classroom of a state school but I question whether it is so in that of a Christian school and whether the suggestion that it is not so can be sustained as an argument against the setting up of Christian schools. If I am correct in this then in a Christian school the Christian teacher can well combine the roles of educator and nurturer in these senses provided they are kept distinct. He can act both in loco parentis and in loco pastoris with, I think, a clear conscience.

### 7.3 THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER IN THE STATE SCHOOL

Much of the discussion of the issue of Christian schools versus state schools focuses on the bad examples of schools, text-books, teachers and so on taken from the category which is being argued against and good examples from that which is being argued for. There are good and bad Christian schools and good and bad state schools since there

are different respects in which a school may be good or bad and these are not simply a matter of its religious commitment.

I have attempted to defend the setting up of Christian schools by arguing that they can be good - they do not need to indoctrinate or pressurize children and they ought to teach more than one worldview and the like. I also allow the right of Muslim, Jewish and other religious communities to set up separate schools for the nurture and education of the children of their communities. But arguments against Christian teachers working in state schools or Christian parents sending their children to state schools can be along the lines that they are based on a secular public ethic and inevitably indoctrinate into secularist beliefs and values. The Christian teacher who co-operates in this process, it is claimed, is therefore guilty of compromising his basic beliefs.

It is true that a system of state schools in a pluralist society requires a secular public ethic as a base. But it does not follow that this ethic is necessarily opposed to that of Christianity at all points. Values can be shared even when they are derived from different basic positions. For example, honesty is undoubtedly a Christian value but one does not have to be a Christian to value honesty and the same could be said of a host of other values which can be common to people of a variety of worldviews. This may be a matter of Van Til's 'borrowed capital' referred to earlier<sup>60</sup> or it may simply be the logical point that the same conclusion can follow from different sets of premises but, whatever the explanation, for the Reformed Christian it is ultimately due to God's common grace to all (rather than the basis of a natural theology).

It is these shared values and concerns that provide a basis for Christian co-operation with non-Christian in an enterprise such as education. As Charles Martin puts it, "all play in the orchestra, but some are watching the composer-conductor while others ignore or dispute the existence of any conductor".<sup>61</sup>

Of course, there may well come points at which the Christian teacher cannot co-operate. A Christian doctor may well work happily in a general hospital but he may not be able to carry out abortions on demand in that hospital or go to work in an abortion clinic.



Likewise, a Christian teacher may well be able to go along with much of what happens in a good state school but he may not be able to use what he regards as pornographic literature even though it may be recommended for a certain course. It all seems to be a matter of judgement of how large is the area of shared insights and values and where and to what extent conflict occurs. To be secular is not necessarily to be secularist in philosophy but a secular school could be secularist in its ethos and, if so, a Christian teacher might well find that he could not, in good conscience, teach in such a school. Further, it would seem likely that the state schools of some totalitarian regimes might well be places where a Christian teacher could not teach without compromising his faith.

It may be objected that Christian ethics are for the whole of society and not just for Christian people so that a Christian in education cannot merely passively go along with what he is not unhappy about but should rather seek to see that God's law is known and obeyed. But it does not follow from the fact that God's law is for all that a Christian can impose this law upon anyone against their will. As we saw earlier in relation to theory-construction,<sup>62</sup> the appropriate strategy is transformationalist and not reconstructionalist. God's way is that of persuasion rather than coercion.

In certain situations, working in a state school may be impossible for the Reformed Christian teacher. In others it will be quite possible and in keeping with his commission both to fulfil the creation mandate and to be salt and light to the world as people see his good works and work. I therefore conclude that to teach in either a Christian school or a state school can well both be quite consistent with the Reformed Christian worldview.

In this chapter I have argued that Reformed epistemology coheres with a fairly exclusivist attitude towards other worldviews but one that is not necessarily as hard-line as it is sometimes portrayed. It provides room for shared insights and common values even though basic beliefs differ greatly. It provides a basis for respect for others as made in the image of God and seekers after truth. It is opposed to those forms of pluralism that require radical re-definition of basic Christian beliefs. In line with this, it is consistent with

the setting up of good Christian schools wherein education and nurture may both take place and which do not indoctrinate or necessarily promote social disharmony. At the same time, Christian teachers may be able to work in state schools provided that their curricula and basic stances are not opposed to Christian basic beliefs and values. It may not be an ideal situation for the Reformed Christian but it can be one into which he may go with confidence in the common grace of God to all and the possibility of some commonness of insights and aims in spite of divergence at the ultimate and basic level.

## CONCLUSION

This study has been an attempt to examine some characteristic themes of Reformed epistemology in order to develop a coherent account of them and to work out something of their significance for education.

These themes are that belief in God is properly basic, that divine revelation is self-authenticating, that sin has noetic effects and that differences in worldview may be reflected within science. All of these themes are present in the writings of Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til and Alvin Plantinga. The first of them is dominant in the way in which Plantinga has so far developed his version of Reformed epistemology and has also dominated discussion of this kind of epistemology in the philosophy of religion of the last decade or so. The ideas of opposing basic presuppositions and of the sinfulness of the assumption of autonomy were particularly prominent in Van Til's writings. The proper basicity of belief in God is perhaps less prominent in an explicit form in Kuyper's writings although it does tacitly underlie much of his account.

To claim that belief in God is properly basic is to hold a form of foundationalism which does not necessarily require of the foundations that they be infallible, indubitable or incorrigible. It is to hold a moderate foundationalism which claims immediate *prima facie* justification for belief in God. This is quite different from the claim that belief in God, as a framework belief, is groundless. Belief in God may be grounded in experience without being inferred from experience. Epistemic regress is terminated in the supervening of the epistemic upon the non-epistemic and one way in which this could happen is through an immediate awareness of God. To hold that this is so is to appeal to a form of religious intuitionism. This shares with empirical intuitionism several major philosophical objections but these are not obviously unanswerable. The respects in which sense experience and experience of God differ are not epistemically relevant, i.e., they do not affect the justifiedness of beliefs grounded in one as against that of those grounded in the other. In particular, the non-universality of claims to experience of God does not render them any less justified since it is quite explicable in terms of the account being proposed. Further, it is not required for justified belief that the believer should be able to

show that his belief is justified. To engage in discussion of these claims and to attempt to show their coherence or respond to counter-arguments is not to base belief in God upon such reasoning or, thereby, to deny that it is immediately justified.

The experience of immediate awareness of God is not like that of an impersonal object in the world but it is rather of a person and involves self-revelation on the part of that person. It has an immediacy in the sense of psychological directness although it may be mediated through things the person does or makes. Central to this is the role of verbal communication so that the fact that divine revelation is personal does not mean that it is not propositional. Much is made in the Reformed tradition of this revelation being mediated through the propositions of the Christian scriptures. It is claimed that this revelation is self-authenticating. This may be matter of intuiting the revealedness of these propositions in grasping their point and in an immediate awareness that God is speaking to one through them.

The claim of the Reformed epistemologist that sin affects the intellectual life is, in part and perhaps centrally, that it consists in an unacceptable form of the assumption of the autonomy of reason. The various form of rationalism can provide bases for such an assumption and a recently developed form which has had some influence upon educational theory is that of pancritical rationalism. It claims to have solved the dilemma of alternative competing ultimate commitments and to provide an adequate response to the 'tu quoque' of some, including Reformed writers, when charged with irrationality in their basic commitments. This form of rationalism denies that there are logical limits to rationality by claiming that justification should be replaced by criticism and that all positions - including that of pancritical rationalism itself - can be held open to rational criticism. It is exclusive of commitment to God in response to a self-authenticating revelation. However, it seems doubtful that justification and criticism can be unfused in the way this requires or that there is not in it an underlying commitment to reason which is essentially anthropocentric. If so, this approach is not an adequate counter to the claims that belief in God and trusting response to divine revelation are immediately justified. This form of the autonomy ideal and the Reformed epistemologist's form of an ideal of

theonomy are fundamentally opposed to each other. They are mutually exclusive but the choice between them, for the Reformed epistemologist, is neither a matter of arbitrary commitment nor one of weighing up reasons and evidences. A person may freely respond to a self-authenticating revelation of God or, sometimes, he may wilfully reject it.

Development of these three themes in this way is an example of a particular strategy for the integration of faith and learning. On the one hand, it does not leave faith and learning in epistemology or any other area of knowledge lying side by side in unrelated complementary compartments. On the other hand, it does not conform to the hard-presuppositionalism of some Reformed writers which requires the reconstruction of all areas of knowledge on distinctively Christian foundations. It seeks to take a middle way in introducing Christian presuppositions into the areas of knowledge to transform them from within and the influence of these presuppositions is more evident in the forms of knowledge that are higher in the hierarchy of increasingly comprehensive perspectives they take of reality than in those which are lower down. Part of the effect of introducing these presuppositions is to set the assumptions of traditions within these areas of knowledge in a new light and to expose some assumptions which may have been hidden. These hidden assumptions may be exclusive of the assumption of the existence of a God who can speak to people through a self-authenticating revelation which requires obedient response rather than autonomous judgement. This is of double significance for education since it provides a basis for the claim that it is meaningful to talk of a Christian theory of education and also a basis for developing the areas of knowledge which are the subject-matter of education in a Christian way.

A particular debate within educational theory - and one of particular relevance to a Reformed Christian approach to education - is that about the nature of indoctrination. For this the Reformed critique of rational autonomy and the opposing to it of an ideal of trusting response to an authoritative revelation is of significance. Much of the discussion of this subject has assumed either the strong internalism of the more traditional forms of rationalism or the more recent developments of pancritical rationalism. It has therefore excluded from the outset the possibility of belief in God being

immediately justified or divine revelation being self-authenticating. Indoctrination is a matter both of doctrinal content and of a method that is less rational than it could be. If this is so and belief in God is properly basic, it is impossible to indoctrinate belief in God since its justification is not a matter of inference from other justified beliefs. But to teach on the basis of a taken-for-granted commitment to reason may be so. It does not follow from this that, in relation to the teaching of a basic belief in God, anything goes. Some ways of imparting such a belief would be inconsistent with beliefs which are based upon it, such as respect for persons as being made in the image of God. Because belief in God is properly basic only under certain circumstances, a pupil cannot be immediately justified in holding it if he is not in these circumstances. An appropriate way of teaching from this perspective would be that of displaying the divine revelation as a thing of beauty and pointing to its features in the hope that the pupil will come to respond to it for himself. This could involve enabling him to understand objections to these beliefs and to respond to them rationally. It provides for rational autonomy to the extent to which it is possible within this perspective and it challenges the supposed neutrality of alternative approaches.

Christian education in a pluralist society may involve the setting up of Christian schools. The exclusivism of the claims of the Reformed epistemologist follows from his theological realism. Because he holds a cognitive view of faith and a propositional account of divine revelation, he can be termed exclusivist but this does not mean that he necessarily adheres to the hard-line exclusivism of the antithetical Reformed writers. He may instead have a more positive approach to those of other worldviews which makes much of God's common grace to all and of the possibility of shared values and insights in spite of opposing basic assumptions. He may nevertheless and quite consistently oppose those forms of pluralism which call for a radical revision of the basic beliefs of all faiths. In accordance with this outlook he may favour the setting up of Reformed Christian schools wherein neither the commitment of the teachers nor the committed ethos of the school necessarily restricts the child's future choices. An adequate education in a Christian worldview should face openly and honestly the potential defeaters of its basic beliefs. It will also involve study of other faiths, not so as to increase the pupil's

capacity for choice but because understanding of and communication with others is a basic Christian value. This cannot, however, extend to participation in the worship of other faiths since that would require not only understanding their beliefs but actually sharing them in respects in which they are opposed to basic Christian beliefs. A Christian school may be involved in both Christian education and Christian nurture. These are both based in Christian commitment and aimed ultimately at commitment. They differ in that education is aimed more immediately at understanding of the faith and nurture at personal commitment to Christ. Christian nurture is not possible in a school that is not Christian but a Christian teacher may - consistently with the requirements of his Christian beliefs - teach in a school which is not distinctively Christian. To be secular is not necessarily to be secularist but there may well come points at which the Christian teacher finds shared values and insights too few to be sufficient as a basis for co-operation with others in the education of children. Insofar as he does he may ascribe this to the grace of God to all and at the point where he cannot in good conscience continue to work together with others in education he may, with sorrow, put this down to the influence of sin, aware that he too is a sinful being. In a world affected by sin, an ideal and perfect education will not exist but the Christian should seek to promote the ideal within the limitations of the real.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER 1 (pp. 8 - 35)

1. Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Introduction' in 'Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition', ed. Hart, Hendrik, Van Der Hoeven, Johan and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1982), pp. v - vi.
2. See the papers in Wells, David F. (ed.): 'Reformed Theology in America' (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985). These show how these divisions within the Reformed tradition have been worked out in Canada and the United States. For example, there is the Dutch-American tradition deriving from the influence of Abraham Kuyper and the Scottish-American tradition more strongly influenced by Thomas Reid's 'common-sense philosophy'. The former is more dominant through Herman Dooyeweerd's influence on the Toronto Institute for Christian Studies and the Christian schools movement that has derived its inspiration largely from that centre. The latter seems fairly prominent in the writings of Nicholas Wolterstorff of Calvin College and is also one of the influences in the shaping of the movement known as 'Christian Schools International'.
3. Kuyper, Abraham: 'Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology', trans. J.H. de Vries (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899).
4. Ibid., p. 125.
5. Ibid., p. 133.
6. Ibid., p. 101.
7. Ibid., pp. 107 - 113.
8. Ibid., pp. 110 - 111.
9. Ibid., p. 150.
10. Ibid., p. 155.
11. Ibid., pp. 157 - 166.
12. Ibid., pp. 169 - 171.
13. Ibid., pp. 220 - 221.
14. Ibid., pp. 218 - 219.
15. Ibid., p. 265.
16. Ibid., p. 264.
17. Ibid., p. 267.
18. Ibid., p. 288.
19. Ibid., p. 281.
20. Ibid., p. 288.
21. Ibid., p. 414.
22. Ibid., p. 374.
23. Ibid., pp. 386 - 389.



24. See Van Til, Cornelius: 'A Christian Theory of Knowledge', (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969).
25. Van Til, Cornelius: 'The Defense of the Faith' (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1955), p. 126.
26. Cf. Van Til, Cornelius (1969), pp. 12 - 13.
27. Van Til, Cornelius (1955), pp. 117 - 118.
28. Van Til, Cornelius (1969), p. 42.
29. Van Til, Cornelius: 'Response' to Dooyeweerd, Herman: 'Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought' in Geehan, E.R. (ed.) (1977), p. 109.
30. Cf. Helm, Paul: 'Introduction' in Helm, Paul (ed.): 'Divine Commands and Morality' (Oxford: O.U.P., 1981) and several other papers in that collection.
31. Van Til, Cornelius: 'Apologetics' (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), p. 45.
32. I have elsewhere suggested that there are two main components to autonomy: authenticity and rationality. It would seem that Van Til has no objection to the first but that the second is a major stumbling block in some forms. See Shortt, John: 'A Critical Problem for Rational Autonomy' in 'Spectrum', Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1986), pp. 107 - 121 and also later on pp. 101 - 103 of this present study.
33. Van Til, Cornelius (1955), p. 49.
34. Cf. Halsey, J.S.: 'A Preliminary Critique of "Van Til: The Theologian"' in 'Westminster Theological Journal', Vol. 39, No. 1 (Fall, 1976), p. 121.
35. Van Til, Cornelius (1976), p. 9.
36. Van Til, Cornelius (1955), p. 50.
37. Ibid., p. 102.
38. Van Til, Cornelius (1969), p. 33.
39. Van Til, Cornelius (1977), p. 21.
40. Van Til, Cornelius (1969), p. 33.
41. Ibid., p. 56.
42. Ibid., p. 15.
43. Ibid., p. 245.
44. Ibid., p. 293.
45. Ibid., p. 46.
46. Ibid., p. 295.
47. Ibid., p. 22.
48. Plantinga, Alvin: 'Is Belief in God Rational?' in Delaney, C. F. (ed.): 'Rationality and Religious Belief' (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 7 - 27; Plantinga, Alvin: 'The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology' in 'Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association', Vol. 54, 1980. pp. 49 - 63; and Plantinga, Alvin: 'Is Belief in God Properly Basic?' in 'Nous', Vol. 15, 1981, pp. 41 - 51. See also Plantinga, Alvin: 'Rationality and Religious Belief' in Cahn, Steven and Shatz, David (eds.):

'Contemporary Philosophy of Religion' (Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 255 - 277.

49. Plantinga, Alvin: 'God and Other Minds' (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

50. Plantinga's other discussions of the subject include the following:- Plantinga, Alvin: 'On Reformed Epistemology' in 'Reformed Journal', Vol. 32, (January, 1982), pp. 13 - 17; Plantinga, Alvin: 'Reformed Epistemology Again' in 'Reformed Journal', Vol. 32, (July, 1982), pp. 7 - 8; Plantinga, Alvin: 'The Reformed Objection Revisited' in 'Christian Scholars Review', Vol. 11, (1983), pp. 57 - 61; Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.): 'Faith and Rationality' (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Plantinga, Alvin: 'Reason and Belief in God' in Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.) (1983), pp. 16 - 93; Plantinga, Alvin: 'Self-Profile' and 'Replies' in Tomberlin, James E. and Van Inwagen, Peter (eds.): 'Alvin Plantinga' (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985); Plantinga, Alvin: 'The Foundations of Theism' in 'Faith and Philosophy' Vol. 3, No. 3, (July, 1986), pp. 298 - 313; Plantinga, Alvin: 'Coherentism and the Evidentialist Objection to Belief in God' in Audi, R. L. and Wainwright, W. J. (eds.): 'Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment' (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 109 - 138.

51. See, for example, the following papers:- Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Can Belief in God be Rational if it has No Foundations?' in Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.): 'Faith and Rationality' (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 135 - 186; Gowen, Julie: 'Foundationalism and the Justification of Religious Belief' in 'Religious Studies' Vol. 19, (1983), pp. 393 - 406; Goetz, Stewart C.: 'Belief in God is not Properly Basic' in 'Religious Studies' Vol. 19, (1983), pp. 475 - 484; Grigg, Richard: 'Theism and Proper Basicity' in 'International Journal for Philosophy of Religion' Vol. 14, (1983), pp. 123 - 127; Robbins, J. Wesley: 'Is Belief in God Properly Basic?' in 'International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion' Vol. 14, (1983), pp. 241 - 248; Alston, William P.: 'Plantinga's Epistemology of Religious Belief' in Tomberlin, James E. and Van Inwagen, Peter (eds.): 'Alvin Plantinga' (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), pp. 289 - 312; Konyk, Kenneth: 'Faith and Evidentialism' in Audi, R. L. and Wainwright, W. J. (eds.): 'Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment' (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 82 - 108; Audi, Robert: 'Direct Justification, Evidential Dependence, and Theistic Belief' in Audi, R. L. and Wainwright, W. J. (eds.): 'Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment' (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 139 - 166; Hanink, James G.: 'Some Questions about Proper Basicity' in 'Faith and Philosophy' Vol. 4, No. 1, (January, 1987), pp. 13 - 25; Evans, C. Stephen: 'Kierkegaard and Plantinga on Belief in God: Subjectivity as the Ground of Properly Basic Beliefs' in 'Faith and Philosophy' Vol. 5, No. 1, (January, 1988), pp. 25 - 39; Basinger, David: 'Hick's Religious Pluralism and "Reformed Epistemology": A Middle Ground' in 'Faith and Philosophy' Vol. 5, No. 4, (October, 1988), pp. 421 - 432; and Gilman, James E.: 'Rationality and Belief in God' in 'International Journal for Philosophy of Religion' Vol. 24, No. 3, (November, 1988), pp. 143 - 157. Among the books that have given extensive treatment to Plantinga's Reformed epistemology are the following:- Penelhum, Terence: 'God and Scepticism' (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983) and Phillips, D. Z.: 'Faith after Foundationalism' (London: Routledge, 1988).

52. Plantinga, Alvin: 'Sheehan's Shenanigans' in 'The Reformed Journal' (April, 1987a), p. 25. See also Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), pp. 80 - 81 and also his explicit inclusion of this theme among the tenets of Reformed epistemology of which he apparently approves in Plantinga, Alvin (1982a), p. 14.
53. Plantinga, Alvin (1982a), p. 16.
54. Plantinga, Alvin: 'Advice to Christian Philosophers' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 1, No. 3 (July, 1984), pp. 253 - 271. See also Plantinga, Alvin: 'Method in Christian Philosophy' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 2 (April, 1988), pp. 159 - 164 and Plantinga, Alvin (1985), pp. 94 - 95.
55. Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.) (1983b).
56. See pp. 40 - 41 of this study.
57. Alston, William P. (1985), p. 289.
58. Ibid. and see, for example, Alston, William P.: 'Christian Experience and Christian Belief' in Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff (eds.) (1983), pp. 103 - 134 and Alston, William P.: 'Religious Experience and Religious Knowledge' in 'Journal of Philosophy', Vol. 83 (1986), pp. 655 - 665.
59. See pp. 59 - 62 of this study.
60. See, for example, Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), pp. 17 - 39..
61. Plantinga, Alvin (1985), p. 390.
62. Plantinga, Alvin (1986b), pp. 110 - 112.
63. Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), p. 39.
64. Plantinga, Alvin (1986b), p. 112.
65. Ibid., pp. 48 - 55. This latter point has implications for discussions of certainty and commitment to which I shall return later - see pp. 114 - 116 of this study.
66. Ibid., pp. 59 - 60.
67. See, for example, Alston, William P. (1983), p. 119, Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1983), pp. 149 - 153, 162 - 164, and Plantinga, Alvin (1985), pp. 62 - 63. Scottish common-sense philosophy is often seen as one of the two main influences upon modern Reformed epistemology, the other being the Dutch neo-Calvinism of such as Kuyper and Bavinck - see the introduction and several of the papers in the 'historical setting' section of Hart, Hendrik et als (eds.) (1983) and also fn. 2 to p. 9 of this present study.
68. Plantinga, Alvin (1985), p. 386. The argument of Plantinga, Alvin (1983b) is presented in an amended version here.
69. Ibid., pp. 388 - 389.
70. Ibid., p. 390.
71. Plantinga, Alvin (1986b).
72. Ibid., pp. 125 - 126 and see also Plantinga, Alvin (1985), p. 392.
73. Ibid., p. 128.
74. Ibid., pp. 136 - 137.
75. Plantinga, Alvin (1985), p. 391.

76. Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), p. 77.
77. Ibid., pp. 74 - 82.
78. Ibid., p. 78.
79. Ibid., pp. 82 - 83.
80. Plantinga, Alvin (1986a), pp. 311 - 312 and see also Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), pp. 83 - 87.
81. Plantinga, Alvin (1986a), p. 313, f.n. 11.
82. Plantinga, Alvin (1982a), p. 15.
83. Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), p. 78.
84. Plantinga, Alvin (1982a), pp. 16 - 17 and see also Plantinga, Alvin (1985) pp. 62 - 64.
85. See Plantinga, Alvin: 'Epistemic Justification' in 'Nous', Vol. 20 (1986c), pp. 3 - 18 and, for a fuller account, Plantinga, Alvin: 'Justification and Theism' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 4, No. 4, (October, 1987b), pp. 403 - 426.
86. Plantinga, Alvin (1987b), pp. 411 - 413.
87. Ibid., pp. 422 - 424.
88. Ibid., pp. 406 - 407.

## CHAPTER 2 (pp. 36 - 72)

1. Cf. Plantinga, Alvin (1983b), pp. 18 - 20 and Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Introduction' in Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.) (1983), pp. 10 - 15.
2. I have worded this rough formulation in this way to rule out believing everything simply to maximise truth, believing nothing simply to minimise falsity and believing only that which is obviously true. This leaves problems of the relative weightings of true beliefs against false beliefs and of beliefs on matters of importance against those which are relatively trivial but the above is sufficient to roughly mark out the epistemic area.
3. The distinction between moral and epistemic may not be quite as clear as this. Perhaps the maximising of truth and minimising of falsity could be thought of as partly constitutive of moral goodness. For example, on the basis of a divine command theory of ethics, biblical injunctions to believe could be taken as moral commands. This would seem to make the epistemic area a part of the moral area. Further, talk of 'the ethics of belief' certainly seems to bring into question the relationship between epistemology and ethics and perhaps when, as sometimes happens, epistemologists make appeal to 'ethical analogues' they may be doing more than merely finding isomorphisms between relatively autonomous areas.
4. For example, Paul Moser brings together epistemic, moral and prudential justification under the umbrella notion of 'all-things-considered rationality' - see Moser, Paul K.: 'Empirical Justification' (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), pp. 214 ff.
5. This particular distinction is due to Robert Audi - see Audi, Robert: 'Justification, Truth and Reliability' in 'Philosophy and Phenomenological Research', Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (September, 1988), p. 12.

6. See comment by Alston, William P.: 'Concepts of Epistemic Justification' in 'The Monist', Vol. 68 (1985a), p. 84, f.n. 3.
7. Alston, William P. (1983), pp. 113, 115.
8. Alston, William P. (1985a), pp. 65 - 66.
9. Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1983), p. 168.
10. Armstrong proposes a "thermometer model" according to which there may be a law-like relation between a state of affairs and a person's beliefs provided they are produced by a reliable belief-producing mechanism just as the readings of a reliable thermometer lawfully reflect the temperature - see Armstrong, D. M.: 'Belief, Truth and Knowledge' (Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 166 - 171.
11. Alston, William P. (1985a), pp. 78 - 79. For another helpful account of varieties of internalism, see Dancy, Jonathan: 'An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology' (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 131.
12. See, for example Moser, Paul K. (1985), p. 125 and Bonjour, Laurence: 'The Structure of Empirical Knowledge' (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 38.
13. Sosa, Ernest: 'The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge' in French, Peter A. et als (eds.): 'Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Vol. 5' (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1980b), pp. 3 - 25.
14. Quine, W. V.: 'From a Logical Point of View' (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 111.
15. Cf. Alston, William P.: 'Two Types of Foundationalism' in 'The Journal of Philosophy', Vol. 73, No. 7 (1976a), p. 173 f.n.; Sosa, Ernest (1980b), pp. 10 - 13; and Moser, Paul K. (1985), pp. 107 - 115.
16. Sosa, Ernest (1980b), pp. 11 - 13. There are other arguments and Sosa mentions several of them. They can, I think, be met more easily than the one in question. For example, it is argued that life is too short or the human brain too limited to show that for each member of the chain that it is justified but this is inadequate since what is at issue is whether or not such a regress can be ruled out in principle rather than because of practical limitations. It is not a matter of engaging in the activity of actually showing or demonstrating that each belief in an infinite chain is justified but rather of whether or not it is possible for them all to be justified. It is also inadequate to point to the possibility of an infinite causal chain in the manner of familiar responses to one of Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God. Epistemic justification is about reasons, not causes.
17. Cf. Moser, Paul K. (1985), p. 29.
18. Wittgenstein, Ludwig: 'On Certainty' ed. Anscombe, G. E. M. and von Wright, G. H. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), para. 253.
19. Wittgenstein, Ludwig: 'Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief' ed. Barrett, Cyril (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), p. 58.
20. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1969), p. 205.
21. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1970), pp. 56, 59.
22. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1969), para. 250.

23. Williams, Bernard: 'Wittgenstein and Idealism' in Vesey, Godfrey (ed.): 'Understanding Wittgenstein', Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Vol. Seven (London: MacMillan, 1974), p. 84.
24. Alston, William P. (1985b), p. 293.
25. Alston, William P.: 'The Christian Language-Game' in Crosson, Frederick J. (ed.): 'The Autonomy of Religious Belief' (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 138.
26. Quinton, Anthony: 'The Nature of Things' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 119 ff. and Quinton, Anthony: 'The Foundations of Knowledge' in Dearden, R. F., Hirst, P. H. and Peters, R. S. (eds.): 'Education and the Development of Reason' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 278 - 279.
27. Quinton, Anthony (1973), pp. 119 - 120.
28. Ibid., p. 121.
29. Russell, Bertrand: 'Mysticism and Logic' (1918), quoted from in Alston, William P.: 'Self-Warrant: A Neglected form of Privileged Access' in 'American Philosophical Quarterly', Vol. 15, No. 4 (1976b), p. 266.
30. Moser, Paul K. (1985), pp. 141 - 206.
31. Ibid., p. 166.
32. Ibid., p. 169.
33. Ibid., p. 163.
34. Ibid., p. 184.
35. Ibid., p. 184 and see also Alston, William P. (1976b), p. 261.
36. This response meets a similar objection to holding belief in God to be properly basic: that it requires some prior inferential knowledge of what God is like (the main point of Goetz, Stewart (1983)).
37. Moser, Paul K. (1985), p. 177,
38. Ibid., p. 178. See more on this kind of level-confusion in Alston, William P.: 'Level-Confusions in Epistemology' in French, Peter et als (eds) (1980), pp. 135 - 150.
39. Swinburne, Richard: 'The Existence of God' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 250 - 252.
40. Owen, H. P.: 'The Christian Knowledge of God', (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p. 135. See also Evans, C. Stephen: 'Philosophy of Religion', (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), pp. 86 - 87.
41. Alston, William P.: 'Religious Experience and Religious Knowledge' in 'Journal of Philosophy', Vol. 83 (1986b), pp. 655 - 656. Even though Alston is talking about a different kind of religious experience, I have made use in what follows of some of his arguments for the epistemic irrelevance of purported differences between sense experience and religious experience since they apply equally to the kind of mediated experiences with which I am concerned.
42. See Levine, Michael P.: review of Plantinga, Alvin and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (eds.) (1983) in 'Philosophia', Vol. 16 (1986), p. 451 and Penelhum, Terence: 'On Perceiving God' in 'Journal of Philosophy', Vol. 83 (1986), p. 666.
43. Alston, William P. (1986b), p. 662. Joseph Bobik, for example dismisses religious intuition on the unsupported assumption that only

sense experience and self consciousness are acceptable grounds of intuition - see Bobik, Joseph: 'Intuition and God and Some New Metaphysicians' in McInerny, Ralph D. (ed.): 'New Themes in Christian Philosophy', (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 269.

44. Ibid., pp. 660 - 661.

45. Keith Yandell points out that a being like the genie of Aladdin's lamp who had to come when the lamp was rubbed would not be God - see Yandell, Keith: 'Christianity and Philosophy' (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 12.

46. Audi, Robert (1986), p. 150.

47. Quinton, Anthony (1973), pp. 125, 129.

48. Alston, William P. (1983a), p. 130.

49. Ibid., p. 132.

50. This point is due to George Mavrodes from Mavrodes, George: 'Belief in God' (Lanham: University Press of America, 1981) and quoted in Evans, C. Stephen (1985), p. 88.

51. I derive this criticism from Agassi who claims it has several forms, one of which is as defined above which makes every criticism an event predicted by the theory and thus a reinforcement of it - see Agassi, Joseph, Jarvie, I. C. and Settle, Tom: 'The Ground of Reason' in 'Philosophy', Vol. XLVI (1971), pp. 46 - 47.

52. Hasker, William: 'On Justifying the Christian Practice' in 'The New Scholasticism', Vol. 60, No. 2 (Spring, 1986), pp. 139 - 144.

53. Hasker does not in fact refer to beliefs being basic or properly basic at all but only to the degree of their justification but it would seem legitimate to adapt his argument as I have done.

54. Ibid., p. 141.

55. Ibid., p. 144.

56. Swinburne, Richard (1979), pp. 254 - 271. See also Franks Davis, Caroline: 'The Evidential Force of Religious Experience' (O.U.P., 1989).

57. Ibid., p. 254,

58. Ibid., p. 270.

59. Ibid., p. 291.

60. Ibid., pp. 255 - 256.

61. See pp. 25 - 26 of this study. See also Alston, William P.: 'The Role of Reason in the Regulation of Religious Belief' in Hart, Hendrik et als (eds.) (1983b), p. 156 and f.n. 20 on p. 169; and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1983b), p. 174.

62. Moser, Paul K. (1985), pp. 246 - 247.

63. Alston, William P.: 'Epistemic Circularity' in 'Philosophy and Phenomenological Research', Vol. XLVI, No. 1 (September, 1986c), pp. 1-30. For further discussions of this problem see Sosa, Ernest (1980), pp. 558 - 561; Shatz, David: 'Foundationalism, Coherentism and the Levels Gambit' in 'Synthese' 55 (1983), pp. 97 - 118; Keller, James A.: 'Foundationalism, Circular Justification and the Levels Gambit' in 'Synthese' 68 (1986), pp. 205 - 212; and Shatz, David: 'Circularity and Epistemic Principles' in 'Synthese' 68 (1986), pp. 369 - 382.

CHAPTER 3 (pp. 73 - 97)

1. Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1982) , p. vi.
2. Ryle, Gilbert: 'The Concept of Mind' (London: Penguin, 1963), pp. 143 - 144. Cf. Abraham, William J.: 'Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism' (Oxford: O.U.P., 1982), p. 11.
3. Abraham, William J. (1982), p. 11
4. Helm, Paul: 'Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues' (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1982), p. 4.
5. A third possibility is that of knowledge and revelation of skills since we may know how to do certain things and we may reveal to others how to do them. And it is possible to talk of God revealing not only himself or that he made the world but also how we ought to live or relate to others. But, for the present, I shall focus upon how revelation can bring about knowledge of the minds, thoughts, intentions of others and whatever else may constitute personal knowledge.
6. See Owen, H. P. (1969), p. 40.
7. Nor, for that matter, are 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' mutually exclusive although the latter cannot be reduced altogether to the former.
8. Helm, Paul: 'The Varieties of Belief' (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 81.
9. See chap. 2, p. 59. The earliest use of the expression I can find is in Owen, H. P. (1969), p. 135 and this is echoed in Donovan, Peter: 'Interpreting Religious Experience' (London: Sheldon Press, 1979), p. 57 and used also by Alston, William P. (1981), p. 145. A similar idea (but not the phrase) is present in Mavrodes, George (1970), pp. 62 - 66.
10. Owen, H. P. (1969) pp. 130 - 137.
11. Robert Audi has an alternative account of what is happening here - see Audi, Robert (1986), p. 152 - 154. He makes a distinction between beliefs being "contemporaneously evidentially dependent" and their being "historically evidentially dependent". The former are a matter of needing evidence at the time of believing while the latter, which could perhaps be applied to the present case, are a matter of their justification requiring that one once had adequate evidence for the proposition in question. It seems to me that this 'evidence' is rather a condition for the existence of the belief rather than a condition for its justification - see p. 56 of last chapter. Another alternative is that of what Quinton terms "telescoped inference" - see Quinton, Anthony (1973), p. 220 and cf. Alston, William P. (1985), pp. 71 - 72 on "unconscious inferences" - but this seems a rather ad hoc response.
12. Torrance, Thomas F.: 'Theological Science' (London: O.U.P., 1969), p. xiv.
13. Cf. Martin, James E.: 'Towards an Epistemology of Revelation' in Heie, Harold and Wolfe, David L. (eds.): 'The Reality of Christian Learning' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 148 - 152.
14. Mavrodes, George I. (1970), p. 53.



15. Oakes, Robert: 'Religious Experience, Sense-Perception and God's Essential Unobservability' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 17 (1981), p. 363.
16. Mitchell, Basil and Wiles, Maurice: 'Does Christianity need a Revelation? A Discussion' in 'Theology' Vol. 83 (March 1980), pp. 108 - 109.
17. See Brakenhielm, Carl Reinhold: 'Problems of Religious Experience' (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1985), p. 60; Abraham, William J. (1982), pp. 17, 22; Shepherd, John J.: 'The Concept of Revelation' in 'Religious Studies' Vol. 16 (1980), pp. 432 - 433; and also Audi's talk of hearing the voice of God 'in the mind's ear' mentioned earlier (p. 51 of this study).
18. John 1:14.
19. Helm, Paul: 'Revealed Propositions and Timeless Truths' in 'Religious Studies' Vol. 8 (1972), pp. 132 - 135.
20. Loc. cit.
21. Helm, Paul (1982), p. 24.
22. Cf. Helm, Paul (1982), pp. 25 - 27 and Packer, James I.: 'Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics' in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (eds.): 'Scripture and Truth' (Leicester: IVP, 1983), pp. 334 - 335.
23. Owen, H. P. (1969), p. 36.
24. See Helm, Paul (1982), pp. 71 - 88; and Helm, Paul: 'Faith, Evidence and the Scriptures' in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (eds.) (1983), pp. 303 - 320.
25. Helm, Paul (1982), pp. 73, 80; Helm, Paul (1983), p. 113.
26. Helm, Paul (1983), p. 306.
27. Helm, Paul (1982), pp. 81 - 85.
28. Helm, Paul (1983), p. 311.
29. Ibid., p. 310.
30. Ibid., p. 311.
31. Ibid., pp. 312 - 313.
32. Helm, Paul (1982), p. 86.
33. Helm, Paul (1983), p. 313.
34. Ibid., p. 318.
35. Ibid., pp. 316 - 317.
36. Payne, F. C.: 'The Seal of God in Creation and the Word' (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King, 1966).
37. Helm, Paul (1983), p. 312.
38. Helm, Paul (1973), pp. 101 - 117.
39. Ibid., p. 114.
40. See p. 52 of this study.
41. Helm, Paul (1973), p. 107.
42. Ibid., p. 183.
43. Ibid., p. 104.

44. Psalm 14:1 and 53:1. Cf. Helm, Paul (1973), p. 113.
45. Ibid., p. 175.
46. Ibid., pp. 112 - 117.
47. Ibid., p. 112.
48. Ibid., chap. 1 and pp. 181 - 185.
49. Ibid., p. 111.
50. Ibid., p. 106.
51. Ibid., p. 108.
52. Helm, Paul (1983), p. 310.
53. Ibid., pp. 312 - 313.
54. Helm, Paul (1982), p. 86.

CHAPTER 4 (pp. 98 - 125)

1. Plantinga, Alvin (1982), p. 14. See also Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1983), p. vi.
2. Plantinga, Alvin (1982), p. 17.
3. Ibid., p. 16.
4. Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1983), p. vi.
5. Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Is Reason Enough' in 'The Reformed Journal' (April, 1981), p. 22.
6. See pp. 17 - 18 of this study.
7. See p. 17 of this study.
8. See pp. 33 - 34 of this study and also Plantinga, Alvin (1985), p. 389.
9. Alston, William P.: 'The Role of Reason in the Regulation of Belief' in Hart, Hendrik et als (eds.) (1983), p. 156.
10. Bartley, William Warren: 'The Retreat to Commitment' (1st edition - New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962 and 2nd edition - London: Open Court, 1984).
11. See my 'A Critical Problem for Rational Autonomy' in 'Spectrum' Vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1986), pp. 107 - 121. In what follows I have made use of this study but, having since come to the conclusion that much of it was inadequately nuanced or just plain wrong-headed, I have made extensive revisions to it without departing substantially from the main argument. Also, at the time that it was written, I did not have access to the second edition of Bartley's 'The Retreat to Commitment' in which he takes up some of the criticisms made in discussions of the first edition, the apparent inconclusiveness of which I had taken as evidence of lack of success in his attempt to resolve 'the dilemma of ultimate commitment'.
12. Pohlmann, Rosemary: 'Autonomie' in Ritter, Joachim (ed.): 'Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie' (Basel: Schwabe, 1971), columns 701 - 719. She suggests that the uses of the term are so far from being univocal that they may even lack what Wittgenstein called 'family resemblances'.

13. The ability to reason well has also been suggested as being partly constitutive of personal autonomy. See, for example, Barrow, Robin: 'Moral Philosophy for Education' (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 138 - 140. The main argument for this seems to be that without it autonomy is not a desirable ideal. Great criminals can be markedly autonomous and the more autonomous they are the worse they are likely to be. See Dearden, R.F. (1972), p. 461 and also Adams, Robert Merrihew: 'Autonomy and Theological Ethics' in 'Religious Studies' Vol. 15 (1979), pp. 192 - 193 and Young, Robert: 'Personal Autonomy: Beyond Negative and Positive Liberty' (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 30 - 31. I think that an easy way out of this is to argue that because autonomy is held to be of value it does not follow that it is the only or even the supreme value. May it not form part of a more comprehensive ideal of personal attainment which also includes the ability to reason well or correctly? We may value the criminal's possession of 'a mind of his own' above mindless conformity to the pressure of others and nevertheless deplore the use to which he has put his independent-mindedness. So it need not be required of the autonomous person that he reason well or correctly. However, even if this requirement is included, I do not see that the believer as such has to differ with the non-believer on the value of reasoning well, all other things being equal. There may be such a phenomenon as fundamentalist obscurantism but I do not think that it necessarily characterises the stance of the Reformed epistemologist or of Christian believers in general.

14. See p. 14 of this study.

16. Joel Feinberg provides us with a definition of autonomy which seems to me to be very helpful in the light it throws upon the idea of authenticity: "I am autonomous if I rule me and no-one else rules I." - see Feinberg, Joel: 'The Idea of a Free Man' in Doyle, James F.: 'Educational Judgements' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 166. This requirement leads to talk of thought and action being "an expression of one's core self" or "motivated by the constituting self" or the like. The 'I' who rules 'me' has to be a 'core self', 'constituting self', 'true self' or 'real self' which is narrow enough to be contrasted with the 'me' or total self over which it is to rule and yet wide enough to have constitutive elements of its own which form a coherent whole - unlike those of the anomic sufferer of a condition like schizophrenia. At the same time, no-one else must rule 'I' and although this obviously excludes hypnosis, brainwashing and the like, it is by no means so obvious what we are to make of the many and varied social pressures which influence the person. And the position becomes even more complicated when it is also taken into account that many of these influences are internalised in the early years of life - see Dearden, R. F.: 'Autonomy and Education in Dearden, R. F., Hirst, P. H. and Peters, R. S. (eds.) (1972), p. 450. The problem is how to provide some ontology of the person that gives him both personal and social identity. On the one hand, it would be easy to adopt a ghostly individualism which makes people into what Martin Hollis calls "abstract and absurd angels in a historical vacuum" - see Hollis, Martin: 'Models of Man' (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 73. In this case, there is no space for a core self but, on the other hand, such a self cannot be wholly a social product for that leads to the passive conception of a "Plastic Man" (Hollis' expression for something he contrasts with "Autonomous Man") which is incapable of self-origination in any significant sense. This seems to leave the self sliding uneasily along a continuum between the extremes of the lonely pre-social atomic individual and the wholly determined social product and it takes us to the threshold of a vast

arena of philosophical debate but one into which within the confines of this study we may not tread. One rather inadequate remark I would make to provide a pointer to the direction that could be taken at this point is that it would seem plausible to suggest that the notion of the self as being created by God and existing in relation to him as a person would be likely to lead to a view of the nature and value of authenticity which differs fairly radically from that of a self which simply finds itself in a world of other selves similarly placed or even, in the manner of some existentialists, sees itself as 'thrown' into the world.

16. see p. 18 of this study.

17. Popper, K.R.: 'On the Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance' in 'Conjectures and Refutations', (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 5.

18. Ibid., p. 25.

19. Ibid., p. 26.

20. Loc. cit.

21. Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 96 - 103; and Bartley, W.W.: 'Non-Justificationism: Popper versus Wittgenstein' in 'Proceedings of the 7th International Wittgenstein Symposium' (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1983), p. 257.

22. Ayer, A.J.: 'The Problem of Knowledge' (London: Penguin Books, 1956).

23. Ayer, A.J.: 'Language, Truth and Logic' (London: Gollancz, 1970).

24. Bartley, W.W. (1983), p. 258 and Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 104 - 105.

25. Popper, K.R.: 'The Open Society and its Enemies' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), Vol. 2, p. 231.

26. Dearden, R.F.: 'The Philosophy of Primary Education' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 47-48. See also pp. 156 - 157.

27. Dearden, R.F. (1972), pp. 457 - 458.

28. Peters, R.S.: 'Ambiguities in Liberal Education and the Problem of its Content' in Strike, Kenneth A. and Egan, Kieran (eds.): 'Ethics and Educational Policy' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 19.

29. Hirst, Paul H.: 'Moral Education in a Secular Society' (University of London Press, 1974), p. 64.

30. Dearden, R.F. (1968), p. 48.

31. White, J.P.: 'Indoctrination without Doctrines?' in Snook, I.A. (ed.): 'Concepts of Indoctrination' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 201.

32. Bartley, W.W. (1983), p. 257 and Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 71 - 77.

33. Penelhum, Terence: 'God and Scepticism' (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), pp. 146 - 158. There are many parallels between Penelhum's work and that of Bartley. They both trace the argument in question from roots in the Pyrrhonian scepticism of Sextus Empiricus through Bayle, Pascal, and Kierkegaard although they differ in whom they take as modern users of it, Barth in Bartley's case and Malcolm and Plantinga in that of Penelhum. It is therefore surprising to find no mention of Bartley's book in Penelhum's in spite of it being first published some twenty years earlier and attempting to go rather

further than Penelhum does to respond to the argument. Penelhum does acknowledge the influence of Richard Popkin's work on scepticism (p. 3).

34. Bartley, W.W. (1983), p. 259
35. Phillips, D.C.: 'The Anatomy of Autonomy' in 'Educational Philosophy and Theory', Vol. 7, No. 2 (1975), p. 11.
36. Pojman, Louis P.: 'Rationality and Religious Belief' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 15 (1979), p. 159.
37. Bartley, W.W. (1984), p. 43.
38. Cf. Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 74, 95.
39. Cf. Robbins, J. Wesley (1983), pp. 246 - 247.
40. Bartley, W.W. (1984), p. 79.
41. Ibid., p. 113.
42. See pp. 10 - 14 and 17 - 18 of this present study.
43. See Evans, Donald: 'Faith, Authenticity, and Morality' (Edinburgh, Handsel Press, 1980), p. 115. I am adapting the distinction somewhat from that suggested by Evans although the basic idea is the same.
44. Cf. Helm, Paul (1973), pp. 147 - 154 and Penelhum, Terence (1983), pp. 110 - 111 and their responses to John Hick's insistence upon 'cognitive freedom'.
45. See earlier discussion on p. 40 and Alston's analogy mentioned then with our obligation to be in good health and the steps we can take to influence the conditions that make for good or bad health.
46. Bartley, W.W. (1984), p. 121.
47. Mitchell, Basil: 'Faith and Reason: A False Antithesis' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 16 (1980), p. 141. Mitchell does admit his own uncertainty regarding the adequacy of the solution he proposes.
48. Torrance, Thomas F.: 'Reality and Scientific Theology', (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), p. 81.
49. I used to think that because this debate appeared to be inconclusive Bartley's account was thereby invalidated - see Shortt, John G. (1986), pp. 111 - 119. I am no longer sure of this. Like several of his critics, I had taken it to be necessary that Bartley justify his alternative but, of course, this would be inconsistent with the whole tenor of his approach. For Bartley, the whole business is about openness to criticism rather than rational acceptability. In addition, the recent second edition of his book has among its appendices one that deals fairly thoroughly with this question so that the debate may no longer be as inconclusive as I took it to be before.
50. Bartley, W.W. (1984), p. 112.
51. Ibid., p. 110. The impression of an 'almost revelation' is also given in the way he introduces the new dimension of metacontexts in the first appendix to the second edition of his book (pp. 169 - 170): he talks of the "realization" that rationality "should be treated metacontextually" and this certainly has a strong justificationist ring to it.
52. Ibid., p. xv.
53. Ibid., p. 109.

54. Ibid., p. 83.
55. Ibid., pp. xiii - xiv.
56. Ibid., p. 72.
57. Ibid., pp. 86, 124.
58. Ibid., p. 126.
59. If I am correct here, it is hardly surprising that there has been some discussion as to whether Bartley's suggestion that every belief can be held open to criticism is analytically true and trivial. See Watkins, J.W.N.: 'CCR: A Refutation' in 'Philosophy', Vol. 46, no. 175 (January, 1971), pp. 56 - 61; Settle, Tom, Jarvie, I.C. and Agassi, Joseph: 'Towards a Theory of Openness to Criticism' in 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences', Vol. 4 (1974), pp. 85 - 87; and Derksen, A.A.: 'The Failure of Comprehensively Critical Rationalism' in 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences', Vol. 10 (1980), pp. 53 - 57.
60. Ibid., pp. 124 - 125.
61. Ibid., p. 134.
62. See also Helm, Paul: 'On Pancritical Irrationalism' in 'Analysis', Vol. 47, No. 1 (January, 1987), p. 27.
63. Cf. Hudson, W.D.: 'Professor Bartley's Theory of Rationality and Religious Belief' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 9 (1973), pp. 343 - 344; Hudson, W.D.: 'Learning to be Rational' in 'Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain', Vol. 11 (1977), pp. 43 - 44; and Robinson, N.H.G.: 'The Rationalist and His Critics' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 11 (1975), pp. 347 - 348. Hudson's accounts include a very effective counter to Bartley's analogy of this situation with that of a democrat voting democratically to give up democracy in pointing out that the criticism which he takes to be of the essence of rationality is more than the exercise of choice. Indeed, it could be added that his use of the analogy commits Bartley to the very decisionism that he is so concerned to oppose!
64. Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 207.
65. Agassi, Joseph: 'Plausible Arguments' in 'Mind', Vol. 83 (1974), p. 414.
66. Bartley, W.W. (1984), pp. 171 - 183. See also his footnote on p. 118.
67. Popper, Karl (1960), p. 30.
68. Ibid., p. 8.
69. Ibid., p. 24.
70. Ibid., p. 30.
71. Ibid., p. 25.
72. Bartley, W.W. (1984), p. 212. In the light of this easy dismissal of psychologism, it is interesting to find that whether or not Bartley's own account is weakened by an element of psychologism is debated among his protagonists and defenders - see Watkins, J.W.N. (1971), Settle, Tom et als (1974) and Derksen, A.A. (1980).
73. The main criticisms have come from J.W.N. Watkins and John F. Post. For details of their arguments and responses see the following:- Watkins, J.W.N.: 'Comprehensively Critical Rationalism' in 'Philosophy', Vol. 44, No. 167 (January, 1969), pp. 57 - 62; Agassi, Joseph, Jarvie, I.C. and Settle, Tom: 'The Grounds of Reason' in

'Philosophy', Vol. 46, No. 175 (January, 1971), pp. 43 - 49; Kekes, John: 'Watkins on Rationalism' in 'Philosophy', Vol. 46, No. 175 (January, 1971), pp. 51 - 53; Richmond, Sheldon: 'Can a Rationalist be Rational about his Rationalism?' in 'Philosophy', Vol. 46, No. 175 (January, 1971), pp. 54 - 55; Watkins, J.W.N. (1971), pp. 56 - 61; Post, John F.: 'Paradox in Critical Rationalism and Related Theories' in 'Philosophical Forum', Vol. 3, No. 1 (1972), pp. 27 - 61; Settle, Tom: 'Concerning the Rationality of Scepticism' in 'Philosophical Forum', Vol. 4, No. 3 (1973), pp. 432 - 437; Settle, Tom et als (1974), pp. 83 - 90; Hudson, W.D. 1973), pp. 339 - 350; Koertge, Noretta: 'Bartley's Theory of Rationality' in 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences', Vol. 4 (1974), pp. 75 - 81; Robinson, N.H.G. (1975), pp. 345 - 348; Derksen, A.A. (1980), pp. 51 - 66; Radnitzky, Gerard: 'Are Comprehensive Theories of Rationality Self-Referentially Inconsistent?' in 'Proceedings of the 7th International Wittgenstein Symposium' (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsty, 1983), pp. 262 - 265; Post, John F.: 'A Godelian Theorem for Theories of Rationality' in 'Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences' (1983), pp. 1071 - 1086; Watkins, J.W.N.: 'What has become of Comprehensively Critical Rationalism?' in 'Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences' (1983), pp. 1087 - 1100; and especially Appendix 4 in Bartley, W.W. (1984).

74. See the extensive discussions of this in Martin, Robert L. (ed.): 'The Paradox of the Liar' (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) and Martin, Robert L. (ed.): 'Recent Essays on Truth and the Liar Paradox' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). See also Mavrodes, George I.: 'Self-Referential Incoherence' in 'American Philosophical Quarterly', Vol. 22, No. 1 (January, 1985), pp. 65 - 72.

75. Watkins, J.W. (1984), pp. 224 - 227.

76. Ibid., p. 238.

77. Agassi, Joseph et als (1971), p. 44.

78. This is a term used by Paul Tillich and, following him, Robert Merrihew Adams - see Adams, Robert Merrihew: 'Autonomy and Theological Ethics' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 15 (1979), p. 194 - but I am giving it a meaning which is not as restricted to the field of ethics as theirs seems to be and which has what I think they would regard as unacceptably heteronomous elements.

79. To accept this latter point is to accept one of the premises of James Rachels' attempted moral disproof of the existence of God - see Rachels, James: 'God and Human Attitudes' in Helm, Paul (ed.): 'Divine Commands and Morality' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 34 - 48 - but his conclusion follows only if one also accepts his further premise: that it is not possible for man to abandon the assumption of autonomous agency. It is that further premise that is excluded by the assumption of theonomy.

80. A further objection could be that even if a person is justified in believing that God is speaking to him, he still has the responsibility to decide for himself whether he ought to do what God tells him, i.e. whether God and his commands are good. This is one of the objections raised on the basis of the assumption of moral autonomy to most if not all versions of what has become known as Divine Command meta-ethics. I cannot go into detail on this here except to say that if I have been correct in appealing to parallels between ethics and epistemology, it should be possible to respond to these objections in a way that is analogous to that which I have used above. Also in the light of the considerable debate over Divine Command theories in ethics, it is not

obvious that this objection can be sustained - see the essays in Helm, Paul (1981) and also the following:- Schrader, George A.: 'Autonomy, Heteronomy and Moral Imperatives' in 'Journal of Philosophy', Vol. 60 (1963), pp. 65 - 77; Adams, Robert Merrihew (1979); Sokol, Moshe Z.: 'The Autonomy of Reason, Revealed Morality and Jewish Law' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. 22 (1986) pp. 423 - 437; Hanink, James G. and Mar, Gary R.: 'What Euthyphro Couldn't Have Said' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 4, No. 3 (July, 1987), pp. 241 - 261; Adams, Robert Merrihew: 'Divine Commands and the Social Nature of Obligation' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 4, No. 3 (July, 1987), pp. 262 - 275; and Murphy, Jeffrie G.: 'Kantian Autonomy and Divine Commands' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 4, No. 3 (July, 1987), pp. 276 - 281.

CHAPTER 5 (pp. 126 - 155)

1. Hirst, Paul H.: 'Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?' in 'Faith and Thought', Vol. 99, No. 1 (October, 1971), pp. 43 - 54.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
5. Ibid., p. 48.
6. Ibid., pp. 48 - 49.
7. Ibid., p. 49.
8. Hirst, Paul H.: 'Mr Robson, Mr Adcock and Christian Education - A Reply' in 'Faith and Thought', Vol. 99, No. 3 (May, 1972), p. 189.
9. In his study of the human sciences ('Preserving the Person', Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977, p. 89), C. Stephen Evans uses the terms 'territorialist' and 'perspectivalist' but I have changed the first of these because it suggests that the study of a particular part of reality is in need of protection from possible intruders and I do not think that this kind of attitude necessarily characterises the proponent of this particular type of position.
10. Perhaps the best-known of these is the eminent neurophysiologist Sir John Eccles - see Eccles, J. C.: 'Brain and Conscious Experience' (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1966) and Popper, K. R. and Eccles, J. C.: 'The Self and its Brain' (Berlin: Springer International, 1977).
11. The Christian who sees God as the Creator of the universe must presumably hold that he is different from that which he has created and yet capable of interacting with it and is thereby committed to some form of dualism involving an interaction which is, in principle, impossible for created human beings to explain.
12. See MacKay, D. M.: 'The Clockwork Image' (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974) and 'Brains, Minds and Machines' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).
13. MacKay, Donald M.: 'Man as a Mechanism' in MacKay, Donald M. (ed.): 'Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe and other essays' (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1965), pp. 57 - 58.
14. Idem.
15. Jones, D. Gareth: 'The Human Brain and the Meaning of Humanness' in Heie, Harold and Wolfe, David L. (eds.): 'The Reality of Christian



Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 178.

16. Ryle, Gilbert: 'Dilemmas' (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 68 - 81.

17. Jeeves, Malcolm: 'Psychology and Christianity: The View Both Ways' (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 18.

18. Phillips, D. Z. ( 1988), pp. xvi - xvii, 113.

19. Hasker, William: 'Brains and Persons' in Heie, Harold and Wolfe, David L. (eds.) (1988), p. 187.

20. See Evans, C. Stephen (1977), pp. 112 - 117 and Hasker, William: 'MacKay on Being a Responsible Mechanism: Freedom in a Clockwork Universe' with a response by D. M. MacKay and a reply in 'The Christian Scholar's Review' Vol. 8 No. 2 (1978), pp. 130 - 152.

21. Ramsey, I. T.: 'Religious Language' (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 127. Ramsey suggests that to treat the Resurrection as a historical event is a category error of the kind that we have considered above as he writes: 'We cannot date the Resurrection: any more than we can walk out with Pythagoras' Theorem or find the square root of love' (p. 130).

22. Admittedly, to make this claim is to adopt a realist outlook rather than, say, the 'transcendent idealism' of the Wittgensteinian philosopher (see earlier on p. 50) wherein it would not make sense to talk of a reality external to a particular language-game but then the language use of the 'ordinary' believer hardly conforms to such esoteric requirements. So if it be allowed that both historical and religious statements do refer to the same reality of the one event, the relationship between accounts can hardly be that of strict incommensurability.

23. The Dutch Christian philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd was fond of the illustration of the multi-faceted activity of buying a box of cigars. A jurist would notice the rights and duties of buyer and seller. An aesthician would be more interested in the style of the activity, the gestures of the participants and the like. An economist would focus on the price and value of the cigars. And so on through the sociologist, the linguist, the psychologist and many others. See Seerveld, Calvin G.: 'Dooyeweerd's Legacy for Aesthetics' in McIntire, C. T. (ed.): 'The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition' (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 47 - 48.

24. Evans, C. Stephen (1979), pp. 151 - 152.

25. Dooyeweerd, Herman: 'In the Twilight of Western Thought', (New Jersey: Craig Press, 1965) and Dooyeweerd, Herman: 'A New Critique of Theoretical Thought', 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953 - 1958).

26. Cf. Strauss, D. F. M.: 'The Nature of Philosophy' in Hart, Hendrik et als (eds.) (1983), pp. 274 - 277.

27. Strawson, Peter: 'Introduction to Logical Theory' (London: Methuen, 1963), pp. 176 - 179.

28. This is a form of 'retrospective justification' whereby foundations are the end goal of 'an archaeological dig' rather than the first steps in constructing the building of a set of 'prospectively' justified beliefs or practices. This term and the contrasting metaphors for the role of foundations is taken from Burrell, David B.:

'Religious Belief and Rationality' in Delaney, C. F. (ed.): 'Rationality and Religious Belief' (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 107.

29. Korner, Stephan: 'Categorical Frameworks' (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

30. See pp. 18 - 19 (in section on Van Til).

31. Roy Bhaskar says there is an 'epistemic fallacy' which "consists in the view that statements about being can be reduced to, or analysed in terms of, statements about knowledge: i.e. that ontological questions can always be transposed into epistemological terms" - see Bhaskar, Roy: 'A Realist Theory of Science' (Leeds: Leeds Books Ltd., 1975), p. 36.

32. Jones, D. Gareth (1987).

33. Ibid., p. 179.

34. Martin, James E.: 'Toward an Epistemology of Revelation' in Heie, Harold & Wolfe, David L. (eds.) (1987), pp. 140 - 154.

35. Ibid., pp. 150, 151 - 152.

36. Evans, C. Stephen: 'Can Divine Rewards Provide a Reason to Be Moral?' and Reid, Malcolm A.: 'Is There an Alternative Reason to Divine Rewards for Being Moral?' in Heie, Harold & Wolfe, David L. (eds.) (1987), pp. 192 - 302, 303 - 314.

37. Ibid., pp. 301 - 302.

38. Ibid., p. 314.

39. Loc. cit..

40. Morris, Henry M. & Whitcomb, John C.: 'The Genesis Flood' (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961).

41. McCampbell, John C.: 'Foreword' in Morris, Henry M. & Whitcomb, John C. (1961), p. xvii.

42. Ibid., p. 440.

43. Ibid., pp. xx - xxi.

44. Loc. cit.

45. See Heie, Harold and Wolfe, David L. (eds.) (1987) - especially the introduction by David L. Wolfe and the conclusion by Ronald R. Nelson.

46. Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Reason within the Bounds of Religion' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

46. Ibid., p. 67.

47. Wolterstorff, Nicholas: 'Educating for Responsible Action' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

48. Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1984), pp. 67 - 68.

49. Wolterstorff, Nicholas (198.), pp. 7 - 15.

50. Ibid., pp. 12 - 13.

51. Ibid., p. 14.

52. Ibid., p. 15.

53. Ibid., p. 114.

54. Ibid., pp. 28 - 29, 107 - 110.

55. See earlier on p. 21.
56. Mavrodes, George: 'On Christian Scholarship' in 'Reformed Journal' (No. 27, July 1977), pp. 4 - 5.
57. Hirst, Paul H. (1971), p. 43.
58. Hill, Brian V.: 'Faith at the Blackboard' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 8.
59. Van Til, Cornelius: 'The Dilemma of Education' (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), p. 30.
60. Ibid., p. 27.
61. Ibid., p. 29.
62. Ibid., pp. 32 - 33.
63. See earlier pp. 12 - 13.
64. Van Til, Cornelius (1954), p. 35.
65. Beversluis, N. H.: 'In Their Father's House: A Handbook of Christian Educational Philosophy' (Grand Rapids: Christian Schools International, 1982), p. 16.
66. Ibid., p. 25.
67. See earlier pp. 12 - 13.
68. See Bratt, James D.: 'The Dutch Schools' in Wells, David F.: 'Reformed Theology in America' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 146 - 147.
69. Hirst, Paul H. (1971), pp. 44 - 45.
70. A Jewish writer, Norman Solomon, points out that this is often a matter of argument from particular to general in the first instance - in extracting a general principle from particular instances recorded in the Scriptures - and then the general principle has in its turn to be applied to the particular of the contemporary situation. He claims that this makes the process doubly fraught with uncertainties. See Solomon, Norman: 'Political Implications of the Belief in Revelation' in 'Heythrop Journal' (1984), pp. 129 - 141.

CHAPTER 6 (pp. 156 - 179)

1. Peters, R. S.: 'Ethics and Education', (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 26.
2. Smith, Leslie: 'Indoctrination and Intent' in 'Journal of Moral Education' (Vol. 3, No. 3, 1974), p. 229.
3. Cf. Hare, R. M.: 'Adolescents into Adults' in Hollins, T. H. (ed.): 'Aims in Education' (Manchester University Press, 1964); Davey, A. G.: 'Education or Indoctrination?' in 'Journal of Moral Education' (Vol. 2 No. 1) pp. 5 - 15; and Cooper, David E.: 'Intentions and Indoctrination' in 'Educational Philosophy and Theory' (Vol. 5, 1973), pp. 43 - 55.
4. Cf. Hare, R. M. (1964); and Smith, Leslie (1974).
5. Cooper, David E. (1973), p. 54.

6. See McGuire, W. J.: 'Inducing Resistance to Persuasion' in Jahoda, M. & Warren, N. (eds.): 'Attitudes' (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 168 - 169.
7. Meynell, Hugo A.: 'Moral Education and Indoctrination' in 'Journal of Moral Education' (Vol. 4 No. 1, Oct. 1974), p. 18. Some might argue that Meynell's own assumption that the child is male shows the presence of the same attitude in him!
8. Price, Kingsley: 'The Forms of Indoctrinatory Method' in 'Philosophy of Education' (1977), p. 352.
9. See earlier on pp. 45 - 46.
10. Peters, R. S. (1966), p. 41.
11. Woods, R. G. and Barrow, R. St.C.: 'An Introduction to Philosophy of Education' (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 66.
12. Gregory, I. M. M. and Woods, R. G.: 'Indoctrination: Inculcating Doctrines' in Snook, I. A. (ed.): 'Concepts of Indoctrination' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 188.
13. White, J. P.: 'Indoctrination' in Peters, R. S. (ed.): 'The Concept of Education' (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 184 - 187.
14. Marantz, Heim: 'Leslie Smith on Indoctrination' in 'Journal of Moral Education' (Vol. 4 No. 2, Feb. 1975), p. 118.
15. White, J. P. (1967), pp. 184, 181.
16. Gregory, I. M. M. and Woods, R. G. (1972), p. 173.
17. White, J. P. (1967), p. 181.
18. Snook, I. A.: 'Indoctrination and Education' (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 47.
19. White, J. P. (1967), p. 182.
20. Ibid., p. 188.
21. Snook, I. A. (1972), p. 50.
22. See also Cooper, David E. (1973), pp. 47 - 49.
23. See earlier pp. 127 - 128.
24. See earlier p. 128.
25. Hill, Brian V.: 'Faith at the Blackboard: Issues Facing the Christian Teacher' (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 114 - 120.
26. Ibid., p. 116.
27. Loc. cit.
28. Quinton, Anthony: 'On the Ethics of Belief' in Haydon, Graham (ed.): 'Education and Values: The Richard Peters Lectures' (University of London Institute of Education, 1987), p. 42.
29. Hill Brian V. (1982), pp. 117 - 118.
30. See earlier pp. 95 - 96.
31. Phillips, D. Z.: 'Faith and Philosophical Enquiry', (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 158 - 161.

CHAPTER 7 (pp. 180 - 210)

1. Hick, John: 'On Conflicting Religious Truth-Claims' in 'Religious Studies', Vol. XIX (1983) reprinted in Hick, John: 'Problems of Religious Pluralism' (London: MacMillan, 1985), p. 91.
2. Hick, John: 'Religious Pluralism and Salvation' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 376.
3. Hick, John: 'Religious Pluralism and Absolute Claims' reprinted in Hick, John (1985), pp. 52 - 53.
4. Hick, John (1988), p. 367.
5. Hick, John: 'A Concluding Comment' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 4 (October, 1988), pp. 451 - 452 and see also Basinger, David: 'Hick's Religious Pluralism and "Reformed Epistemology": A Middle Ground' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 426.
6. Hick, John (1988), p. 372.
7. See earlier on pp. 63 - 68.
8. See earlier on p. 56.
9. Hick, John (1985), p. 47.
10. Hick, John: 'In Defence of Religious Pluralism' in 'Theology', Vol. LXXXVI, No. 713 (September, 1983), reprinted in Hick, John (1985), p. 99.
11. Hick, John (1988), p. 366.
12. Hick, John (1985), p. 101.
13. Runzo, Joseph: 'God, Commitment, and Other Faiths: Pluralism vs. Relativism' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 348.
14. Hick, John (1985), p. 100.
15. Loc. cit.
16. Runzo, Joseph (1988), p. 348.
17. Griffiths, Paul J.: 'An Apology for Apologetics' in 'Faith and Philosophy', Vol. 5, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 413.
18. Martin, Charles: 'How Plural Can You Get?' in 'Spectrum'. Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), p. 164. Martin suggests that 'The Way of Wisdom' be seen as a third alternative to natural law and common grace as a model for co-operation between Christians and others.
19. Hick, John: 'A Philosophy of Religious Pluralism' reprinted from Whaling, Frank (ed.): 'The World's Religious Traditions: Essays in Honour of Wilfred Cantwell Smith' (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984) in Hick, John (ed.) (1985), p. 28.
20. See Hick, John (1985), pp. 32 - 33.
21. II Timothy chapter 2 verse 19 (N.I.V.). Louis Berkhof in his 'Systematic Theology' (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1958, pp. 565-566), as conservative and Reformed a volume of theology as any, writes that the church is said to be invisible "because she is essentially spiritual and in her spiritual essence cannot be discerned by the physical eye; and because it is impossible to determine infallibly who do and who do not belong to her".

22. Hick, John (1988), p. 365.
23. Hick, John (1985), pp. 32 - 33.
24. Hick, John (1988), p. 375.
25. Ibid., p. 369.
26. Ibid., p. 367.
27. Hick's pluralism has been referred to as 'a priori pluralism' and this would seem to give support to that view. See Griffiths, Paul J. (1988), pp. 412 - 415 and Hick's response in Hick, John (1988), p. 453.
28. Hick, John (1988), p. 370.
29. Ibid., p. 371.
30. Hick, John (1983), pp. 97 - 98.
31. Hick, John (1988), pp. 371 - 372.
32. Hick, John (1984), p. 34.
33. Hick, John (1983), p. 98.
34. Hick, John (1988), p. 377.
35. Cf. Hill, Brian V.: 'Faith at the Blackboard', (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 87.
36. I borrow this phrase from an unpublished paper - Crittenden, Brian: 'Cultural Pluralism and Common Curriculum'. Crittenden defines it as a kind of voluntary apartheid where both primary and secondary associations are limited to people of the same cultural sub-group.
37. Hirst, Paul H, 'Education and Diversity of Belief' in Felderhof, M. C. (ed.): 'Religious Education in a Pluralist Society' (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), p. 16.
38. Ibid., p. 13.
39. Ibid., p. 16.
40. See earlier on pp. 171 - 176.
41. Feinberg, Joel: 'The Child's Right to an Open Future' in Aiken, William and La Follette, Hugh (eds.): 'Whose Child? Children's Rights, Parental Authority and State Power' (Littlefield, New Jersey: Adams, 1980), pp. 124 - 153.
42. For some detail see loc. cit and also O'Hear, Anthony: 'Education, Society and Human Nature', (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 10 - 11.
43. See earlier on p. 34.
44. Hirst, Paul H. (1985), p. 16.
45. Nipkow, Karl-Ernst: 'Can Theology have an Educational Role?' in Felderhof, M. C. (ed.) (1985), p. 29.
46. Martin, Charles (1989), p. 146.
47. Westerhoff III, John H.: 'Religious Education and Catechesis' in Felderhof, M. C. (ed.) (1985), pp. 58 - 59.
48. Hammer, Raymond: 'The Christian and World Religions' in Jackson, Robert (ed.): 'Approaching World Religions', (London: John Murray, 1982), p. 116.

49. O'Hear, Anthony (1981), p. 15.
50. See earlier on pp. 121 - 122.
51. Hirst, Paul H (1985), p. 14. See also Hirst, Paul H.: 'Education, Catechesis and the Church School' in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring, 1981), pp. 85 - 93.
52. Hull, John M.: 'Open Minds and Empty Hearts?' in Felderhof, M. C. (1985), pp. 101 - 105.
53. Hirst, Paul H. (1981), p. 90.
54. Hirst, Paul H. (1985), p. 14.
55. Hill, Brian V.: 'Shall We Wind Down State Schools?' in 'Spectrum', Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), pp. 142 - 143. See also Hill, Brian V. (1982), pp. 78 - 79.
56. Hirst, Paul H. (1985), pp. 5-6 and Hirst, Paul H.: 'Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?' in 'Faith and Thought', Vol. 99, No. 1, p. 47.
57. Hirst, Paul H. (1985), p. 15.
58. Ibid., p. 13.
59. I borrow this metaphor from Stewart Sutherland's 'Concluding Remarks' in Felderhof, M.C. (ed.) (1985), p. 140.
60. See earlier on p. 21.
61. Martin, Charles (1989), p. 163.
62. See earlier on pp. 141 - 145.

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