

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *SENSUS DIVINITATIS* AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE
PROPAGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL:
CASE STUDIES OF THE DIVINE SENSE IN WESTERN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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The history of Christian thought has presented several varied concepts of how the Divine and human minds are related. The chapters of this thesis are six successive case studies of this “divine sense” in western Christian thought. Research interest began about John Calvin’s particular version: the *sensus divinitatis* (the sense of the divine). Initial efforts were to exposit its meaning and then discover from where the idea developed. Calvin sought to reproduce a biblical outlook. So the trail was expected to trace back to biblical starting points. Strangely, just immediately after the forming of the New Testament, Calvin’s exact concept is missing. There is in early Christian centuries not an absence of any “divine sense” – just that of Calvin’s particular version. Research direction adjusted to take stock of the varied concepts represented across Christian history and via six case studies set out the development of the “divine sense”.

The hope was to explain the development from a “divine sense” to a “sense of the divine”. Each case study was seen in the intersection of their particular ideas with the philosophical winds of the times. The start is in Plato’s ideas and their varied impact on the early Church fathers. Thomas Aquinas follows. Aquinas switched the major philosophical underpinning to Aristotle. The third is Calvin, the fourth Jonathan Edwards, and the fifth Cardinal John Henry Newman. Edwards and Newman’s writings were against a backdrop of developing Modernity. The last is the Reformed Epistemologist, Alvin Plantinga, who utilized Aquinas and Calvin’s idea of the *sensus divinitatis* in an apologetic to show that, due to the divine sense, belief in God can be responsibly and rationally held in the absence of outward evidence.

The historical thesis is that development can be seen if one “graphs a line” through these six sets of ideas. There is something to conclude about the persistence of the idea through history in terms of human awareness about God. Belief in God is not only due to gospel presentation, but also to the innate sense of the divine. The gospel being presented has as an ally within the people on the receiving end.

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Unless otherwise cited, the material is all original.

No matters have needed the Ethics Committee approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim Gibson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T' and 'G'.

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INTRODUCTION

The Call for this Study

In the 1980s this student was pastoring a church in Adelaide, South Australia. To keep the mind active he also completed all the undergraduate philosophy subjects offered at the University of Adelaide. In one such course, *Marxism*, the lecturer introduced himself by explaining that, although still a socialist, he was no longer a Marxist. He had applied the test of history on the Marxist predictions concerning the coming of the utopian state. When around the globe this utopia had not anywhere sufficiently materialised, he felt his ideology disproven. One could not but admire the lecturer's courage, intellectual rigour and honesty concerning his favoured speculative ideology. There began in this thesis writer's mind the desire to find some equivalent test for Christianity or theism. To some degree there was a developing call to add in more evidentialist elements to how the Christian faith was expressed to others while being aware that these evidences were not necessarily the origin of one's own faith. The more philosophy was studied, the more it was apparent that this was not really being an evidentialist at all.

At the same period of time, Plantinga and Wolterstorff edited the book *Faith and Rationality*.¹ This book included material on the evidentialist challenge to Christian/theistic belief. This book speaks to just this area of mind of many a student where questions remain unresolved about the relationship of faith to evidences in the modern age.

¹ Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

There had been previous moments for this writer of being confronted with this unresolved question to do with faith and evidences. One had occurred at a university party a Christian friend and this writer attended in the dorm room of a girl student. The girl had moved out all her furniture and the students were sitting around the walls relaxing with drinks when we arrived. We said hello to the host and set about talking to each student in turn about Christianity around the room, going in opposite directions. On meeting up again, having completed the circle, we could see the party was warming up with conviviality aided by the alcohol. The host looked relieved when we thanked her and left. Driving home we shared about our opportunities and conversations and both broke into laughter – neither of us had become Christians ourselves for the reasons we had given the students. We were both sons of Baptist Ministers. My Christian friend had at the age of three “tumbled out of his cot and given his life to Jesus” in line with his family upbringing. I was the product of a Billy Graham Crusade in Perth, West Australia. There was a large gap between our own Christian experiences and the rationales we were giving others.

Such events militate against the sincerity of any developing evidentialism. There was needed a more finely tuned nuance about the relationship between truth and experience, between evidences and faith. Plantinga’s “Reformed Epistemology”² addressed this issue and so initial exploration for a topic for a PhD thesis began in that epistemological arena, and Macquarie University’s having a “Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience” allowed the history connection.

² “Reformed Epistemology” is a school of Apologetics following the writings of Alvin Plantinga. C.S. Evans wrote: “It is not an overstatement to say that Alvin Plantinga and his fellow Reformed epistemologists have revolutionized discussions in apologetics and philosophy of religion in the past twenty-five years. Previously, debates hinged around the question of what kind of evidence is required for religious belief and whether enough evidence of that kind is available. Reformed epistemology changed the terms of the debate by arguing that belief in God, and even more specific Christian beliefs, can be ‘properly basic’ and not founded on evidence at all.” C.S. Evans, “Approaches to Christian apologetics” in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Campbell Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, Illinois; Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 15-21.

Plantinga's epistemological ideas made recognition of both Aquinas and Calvin. He referred to Aquinas and then Calvin as both mentioning a natural knowledge of God and he used the possibility of the idea in his epistemological framework. It was an epistemological theory that needed only the possibility of an alternate source of belief in God that did not rely on reason and evidences, but which came from human nature operating naturally.³ It was a defence against the challenge that such beliefs in God were irrationally held if not founded on sufficient evidences. One is obviously not irrational to have beliefs caused by human nature operating properly. It did not have to be proven so, but just possible to negate the necessity of the verdict of irrationality. This reference to an implanted knowledge of God seemed a good epistemological start to take, not claiming too much which would make the conclusion more tenuous and allowing for some middle ground of evidences giving extra weight after the fact to beliefs that may have arisen from another route. This exactly answered the need in this thesis writer's mind. It fitted in with the original attraction to some form of evidentialism, providing reasons and proofs for the faith, even though one's own faith had come about on other grounds.

History is a powerful discipline. It does not *appear* strongly to prove things to the same degree as scientific proofs. But it is very hard to fly in the face of its deliverances and it certainly can add plausibility to ideas which may stand on other grounds. The *sensus divinitatis*⁴ was open to a historical test in that if it were really an actual operating capacity within human nature, then surely it would have shown its presence repeatedly across history. Here was something investigable that in a small way paralleled the Marxist watching to see the development of the utopian states. Not only was the *s.d.*, by its possibility, a suitable idea for Plantinga's epistemology, but also it might also be useful as a test of history as to the plausibility of the naturalness of belief in God in the presence or absence of sufficient

³ See Chapters 2 and 3.

⁴ This is the natural human capacity discussed by John Calvin and here after referred to as the *s.d.*

evidence. Other than by the intellectual investigation of theism, one may be in possession of strong alternate reasons for faith, and rightly so. This does not have to mean one cannot also still respect the place of outward and objective historical confirmation that may be available. Furthermore it can only add to the power of Reformed Epistemology to show how the historical test added to the plausibility of the *s.d.*

The last part of the thesis title indicates a special interest in an application of the research to the propagation of the Christian gospel. Outwardly in society, a plethora of social, political, geographical and general historical factors have all been involved in the spread of Christianity at various times and places, but the call to believe in God and in other gospel doctrines creates a particular concern for a potential follower of Jesus Christ to *know* inwardly that Christianity is true. The Christian gospel asserts these truths and calls on the listeners to believe them. Is there another factor that has aided people on the receiving end of the gospel to *know* God exists? Does the *s.d.* or “the sense of the divine” or “the awareness of divinity” explain why human beings, across all of their recorded history, have so often interpreted their world and themselves by reference to the divine? Is this at least partly due to the internal mechanism of an *s.d.*, with which we are supposedly created? Can it be responsible for why belief in God is so prevalent and so hard to eradicate? Could this inward capacity to believe be just as important an explanation as the other outward factors in explaining the spread of the Christian gospel?

Just here, there stands in the dock not only the theistic claim; nor also just the evidentialist’s pose about it; but perhaps also implicated might be the whole reality of Modernity’s demands. Perhaps Modernity’s heady intellectual demands rest on a too narrow route to knowledge, such as by scientific analysis or philosophical demonstration, when history may show that human beings have repeatedly come to believe in God for deeper and more experiential reasons. The times have changed since it was assumed that apologetics mainly needed a demonstrable set of propositions to convince the mind. The history of

Christian experience is being called to give testimony here. So the thesis project began with an aim to research the development of the *s.d.*

That wording *s.d.* is Calvin's particular version of what more generally could be called a "divine sense". There are probably a great deal more examples of this "divine sense" to be found in history, but to limit the thesis to a manageable size, six case studies have been chosen to illustrate its existence across Western Christian history. A study of Eastern Christianity could also be productively done, but the demand to cover such large spans of history and geography were too exhaustive. To go any further than Western Christian history and to investigate other faiths and other areas will be left to be someone else's task. The six case studies are: Plato and the Early Church Fathers; Thomas Aquinas; John Calvin; Jonathan Edwards; Cardinal John Henry Newman; and Alvin Plantinga. Not all these case studies equally prove to be an instance of "the divine sense". In each of these, the aim has been to exposit their own words about what they have said about their version of a "divine sense". It is expected that they could be understood in the terms of their own philosophical times.

The exposition is via these six case study people's own words rather than too much weight being accorded to all the varied opinions about them and their works. When immersed in each case study one is very aware of their differences. But stepping back from their differences there might be discerned from history something more general about the divine sense within humanity.

Chapter 1:

Plato (circa 424 -399 BC) and the Early Church Fathers

Introduction

Antony Flew gives reasons for starting a survey of Western philosophy with Plato.⁵ This thesis proceeds by covering six successive chapters across Western Christian history and will also start with Plato. Flew's reasons are fourfold. Plato's body of extant material is large, in contrast to a scarcity of written material by most of the other ancients. Plato's pioneering work has made a major contribution to a definition of philosophy still accepted today. His writings have a literary charm and excellence compared to others such as Aristotle whose style is harder to follow. Finally, in Plato's works he showed an openness to grow and develop and even in instances drastically changed his mind. There could be added another reason to Flew's list that is particularly the case with this thesis: and *it would be that Platonism is the philosophy that teamed best with Christianity* in the first centuries of Western Christian thought and whose presence in the team makes the greatest difference to how these early centuries construed "the divine sense". Plato's ideas preceded Christianity and in many cases constituted the dominant pre-understanding under which the Judaist/Christian concepts were received.

Greek religion was a broad and changing melting pot. Plato's emphasis was only one amongst others. Morgan has summarized these varieties under two major groupings: one whose slogans were "nothing too much" and "know thyself". These were an outlook to

⁵ Antony Flew, *An Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ideas and Argument from Plato to Popper*, revised edition (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 40-41.

respect the gods and recognize human limitations along with the need to know yourself in your humanity.⁶ Morgan describes this outlook as existing alongside another which was just the contrary. He describes this contrasting pair as follows:

Underlying the world of polis religion, then, was this theological attitude of separation between the divine and the human, of discontinuity, of human limits and hence of the temptation to illicit self-esteem and pride (*hubris*). I call it the Delphic theology. Contrasted with this posture was the attitude of those committed to the alternative religious styles that involved ecstatic rites and salvation-oriented cults. Unlike traditional Athenian piety, this attitude assumed that there was continuity between the human and the divine – for example, that both were immortal, and that the gap between them could be bridged by the divine possession of human beings (as in shamanism) or by the human attainment of the status of divinity or both. . . . There is an element in human life, the soul or *psyche*, that has a quasi-divine nature; it is immortal. And that element, through ecstatic ritual performance or perhaps through a life of ecstatic practice, could grow stronger and aid in the attainment of salvation.⁷

Morgan's thesis is that Plato adopted this latter choice but adapted it by replacing the emotional and ecstatic method with an intellectual and philosophical one. This thesis discusses the "divine sense". The particular philosophical idea at issue with Plato is the differentiation asserted between the origins and essence of the soul and the created body.⁸

Clearly Christianity with its emphasis on salvation involving connection with God and the possibility of the life of God in the human was to have a lot in common with Platonism and so they made a very understandable team. Along with the similarities and compatibilities there were also some differences between the members of the team. These go a long way to explain the way the divine sense is understood at the start of Christian history and how it changes as the two original contributors vie for influence along the way. Platonism, by viewing the soul as having a history in the divine realm and the body as begun on earth,

⁶ Michael L. Morgan, "Plato and Greek Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 231.

⁷ Morgan, 231.

⁸ Understanding Plato's beliefs about the soul is not a simple task. It has been explored at length in the past, such as by G.C. Field, *The Philosophy of Plato* (Oxford: University Press, 1969). At issue here is the Platonic ontological differentiation between the soul and the effect on exactly what is meant by a "divine sense". It is not intended to get into the complexities of Plato's ideas about a tripartite nature of the soul: the logical, the spirited and the appetite parts. These are also discussed in *The Republic*.

assumes a scenario quite at variance from the original Hebrew picture of creation, to which Calvin will later in the *s.d.* seek to conform.

Platonism

In *Phaedo*⁹ Plato contrasts the soul to the body and concludes that the body is very human in being changeable and mortal, and the soul is “more divine” by the possession of the opposite characteristics. There is an interesting assumption immediately visible here. Of the two, ‘Socrates’¹⁰ argues that the soul presents itself as the one which should rule and that the body should obey. ‘Socrates’ then asks the question of Cebes:

“Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? And which to the mortal? Does not the divine appear to you to be that which naturally orders and rules, and the mortal that which is subject and servant?”¹¹

Cebes agrees: “and ‘Socrates’ further asserts:

“... the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intellectual, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and the mortal, and unintellectual, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable.”¹²

These descriptions here are about some of the constituent parts of a person and recognize a divide such that the soul is “more divine” and the body merely human. Not only do Plato’s ideas encompass the soul having a past that distinguishes it from the body, but complementary to this is the soul’s distinguished future - the eternity of the soul. ‘Socrates’

⁹ Plato, “Phaedo,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, *Great Books: 7. Plato* (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva: William Benton for Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 220-251. The Publisher, William Benton has made a new edition of the original: B. Jowett, trans. *The Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901).

¹⁰ In “Phaedo,” ‘Socrates’ is as much Plato as his original teacher.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹² *Ibid.*

continues the discussion into this logical conclusion that an indissoluble soul must be eternal.

Flew wrote:

In *The Republic* 'Socrates' presents one unpersuasive argument as a proof of the immortality of the soul and then proceeds almost immediately to the Myth of Er. . . . Although Plato is not asking us to accept this or any of his other myths as literally true it does embody two doctrines for which he offers elsewhere what are supposed to be philosophical demonstrations.

Number one is the immortality of the soul, which 'Socrates' takes to have been proved by the preceding argument. The second is the reverse but complementary doctrine of the eternal pre-existence of the soul. . . .they would appear to be a matching pair. If the soul, or the Universe, or God, or anything else, is thought to be everlasting then, surely, the presumption, in default of positive reason to the contrary, should be that what will be without end was also eternally without beginning; and the other way about likewise.¹³

Possibly the most well known entrance point to Plato's ideas, of the human predicament, is the Allegory of the Cave.¹⁴ Through it, he (by dramatisation of Socrates' teaching) seeks to show "how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened". This has relevance to this thesis in that "the enlightenment" in Plato's thought is connected to the instincts and "divine sense" of the soul. The analogy of the cave, and the discussion that follows it, spell out how the human soul needs to break free from bondage to this bodily existence into a more knowledgeable condition of enlightenment or awareness of realities obscured by the mere every day, bodily living. This release could be at first by the adoption of the right philosophical insights and attitudes now in life and then later by the departure of the soul from the body at death. This right philosophical attitude entails a detachment from bodily appetites and priorities, while the final solution is by the actual escape of the soul from the body to be free to return to the divine realm.

In the analogy there are people chained up deep in the cave. They are restrained so that they cannot face or see the front of the cave through which light comes. They are unaware of the cave entrance/exit by which their escape might be effected to a fuller, more open world. Instead they are held captive and chained to face only deeper into the cave where nothing was

¹³ Flew, *An Introduction to Western Philosophy*, 126-7.

¹⁴ Plato, "The Republic," Book VII. *Dialogues*, 388-9.

in view but the wall in front of them. All the information they could discern was by the shadows cast on this wall - shadows of everything behind them back nearer the entrance of the cave. These things behind them and between them and the entrance include a large fire that provides more immediate light, adding to the outside light filtering down, but causing strong shadows from other people and objects moving to and fro across the cave between the captives and the fire and the exit. These movements are only detectable by the captives by shadows cast on their wall. This analogy is of the ignorance and misinterpretation that everyday people of the world experience because their only indicators are via “shadows” within their purview. The apparent objects of this life are not really the most real! Rather, that which we see as apparently real is only shadows of something more substantial out of our immediate mental sight. Plato’s theories were indeed an example of Realism, philosophically speaking, but the reality was first of all the existence of the realm of the Forms!

The Platonic teaching includes the existence of this higher and more permanent world of “the forms.” We in this life cannot directly see this world of forms but only have shadowy hints of them. But, according to Plato’s philosophy, we once knew that world intimately before we came to our time to be attached to a body. White summarizes about these Forms:

Central part, however, is played by his view that certain entities exist that have come standardly to be called Forms, *eide* (and are also called Ideas, *ideai*, though they are not mental entities, contrary to the suggestion of the English word “idea”). These entities figure prominently in the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Republic*, . . .¹⁵

The pre-existence of souls has left deep memories from the prior experience in the world of the Forms in the divine realm. The experiences in this life are all of imperfect items and instances laden with values and *eide* that have their proper existence amongst the Forms. Our encounter with the instances of their approximations here on earth can trigger memories

¹⁵ Nicholas F. White, “Plato’s Metaphysical Epistemology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 279.

of the more perfect Forms. The Forms are ideals such as beauty or a true circle or the ultimate goodness or a number. In the realm of the Forms they are more than just mental entities.

The Platonic doctrine of learning is about the reminiscence of the soul of knowledge from this prior existence “outside the cave” (before we were embodied). Going outside the cave would represent the eventual escape of the soul from the prison of the body to view the greater reality of the intellectual world. The pre-existence of the soul in that greater, divine realm is integral to Platonic thought and entails a lessening of the earthly creaturely status of the soul and an increased emphasis on its “divine” origin and status. When understanding the soul in this divine realm, care is needed not to apply strict clear-cut Christian ideas of “creation” by God.¹⁶ The soul has either been eternally there, as suggested by Flew above, or at least come into existence well before its time to be planted in a body. Another corollary is that there is not much ontological differentiation between God or gods or anything in this “divine realm”. That is, the Platonic picture of the heritage of the soul with the divine is perhaps not quite that the soul is a little bit of God, but not quite that it is not. To come from the divine realm is to be divine.

Socrates (Plato’s dramatisation thereof) explains the analogy:

. . . . the prison house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, . . . the journey upwards [out of the cave] to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or in private life must have his eye fixed.¹⁷

‘Socrates’ continues to discuss the analogy with Glaucon gaining understanding along the way:

And must there not be some art which will effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already, but has been turned in the wrong direction, and is looking away from the truth?

¹⁶ Although Platonism proposed the existence of a number of entities in the “divine realm” it did not suggest these were all created by one unique being.

¹⁷ Plato, “The Republic,” Book VII. *Dialogues*, 389.

And whereas other virtues of the soul seem to be akin to bodily qualities, for even when they are not originally innate they can be implanted later by habit and exercise, the virtue of wisdom more than anything else contains *a divine element* which always remains, and by this conversion is rendered useful and profitable; or, so, on the other hand, hurtful and useless. Did you never observe the narrow intelligence flashing from the keen eye of a clever rogue - how eager he is, how clearly his paltry soul sees the way to his end; he is the reverse of blind, but his keen eye-sight is forced into the service of evil, and he is mischievous in proportion to his cleverness? . . . But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures . . . severed from those sensual pleasures . . . leaden weights . . . attached to them at birth, and which drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below - if, I say, they had been released from these impediments and turned in the opposite direction, the very same faculty in them would have seen the truth as keenly as they see what their eyes are turned to now (*italics mine*).¹⁸

Clearly, Plato's anthropology is that the soul has capacities that can lead to the truth when turned in the right direction. This capacity for the re-discovery of the truth is a soulish "faculty", but existent from its origin in the divine realm. That is, the "divine sense" is because of the characteristics of the soul from its pre-existence in the divine realm. What is more, the sensing of the divine is not the operation of a capacity that detects the divine other person bringing faith in him, but a memory of divine things from that previous existence. In the Platonic case of the pair of words "divine sense" the first word is an adjective. In *Meno*, 'Socrates' does not respond to the assertion that he can teach wisdom and accept a challenge that he could teach the slave boy to be wise, but rather seeks to show that he can simply help him to recall what he already knows. So 'Socrates' says he is not teaching these ideals or virtues. He is helping the otherwise unlearned remember them. This shows the divine sense is in all humans, according to Platonic ideas, but needs to be turned in the right direction with the enlightening philosophy.

Canlis has a fitting summary about Plato's concept of the plight of the soul from

Phaedrus:

Socrates' famous illustration of the chariot in *Phaedrus* describes not only the ascent of the soul but also the previous descent into materiality. Likening the soul to winged horses (human and divine parts) guided by a charioteer, Socrates

¹⁸Ibid.

describes the fateful plunge of the chariot to earth, imprisoning the soul in a physical body. “And now let us ask the reason why the soul loses her wings!” (246D). Vice, ignorance and love of opinion over truth imprison the soul on earth for ten thousand years. However, the philosopher can break the cycle by a frankly intellectual solution: nourishing his broken wings on “the plain of truth” (248B) through contemplation and restraining the lower elements in order to ascend once again. Here ascent and participation are clearly bedfellows, in that the soul participates naturally in divinity and, as such, is enabled to ascend to its original home. But perhaps even more forceful is Plato’s *disjunction* between the heavenly and the material. The soul, exiled, is no more of this world than are the Ideas.¹⁹

This Platonic understanding of the human soul as being *of divine origins from a time different from the moment of human beginnings*²⁰ is very far from the later *s.d.* of Calvin which will be more holistic in that all aspects of the human have equal “creaturely” status. The sense of the divine in Calvin’s concept is not about the *divine nature* of the soul but that a part of our very *human nature* has been created with a capacity to sense God.

Neo-Platonism

Neo-Platonism continued and developed these ideas. Plotinus (204/5 – 270 AD), perhaps thought he was clarifying the true Platonism, but his contributions have given rise to what some (but not all) depict as a further movement forward of Platonism. Plotinus wrote:

In the Intellectual Kosmos dwells Authentic Essence, with the Intellectual-Principle [Divine Mind] as the noblest of its content, but containing also souls, since every soul in this lower sphere has come thence: that is the world of unembodied spirits while to our world belong those that have entered body and undergone bodily division.²¹

¹⁹ Julie Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 27.

²⁰ This is not to deny that at times Platonic philosophy has influenced the Christian picture of humanity as created, precisely at this point.

²¹ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna and B.S. Page. *The Fourth Ennead*, 1st Tractate *On the Essence of the Soul (I)*, I. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.4.fourth.html> (accessed February 21, 2014).

Plotinus' theories concern how at the ultimate heights of reality, all is completely one – a rigorous development from/or application of the Platonic theme. Here “the divine sense” has a very much Platonic future hope of being absorbed back into (what Neo-Platonism calls) the One. Even in eternity past the souls have no spatial separateness from the One. Plotinus continues the above quotation:

There the Intellectual-Principle is a concentrated all - nothing of it distinguished or divided - and in that kosmos of unity all souls are concentrated also, with no spatial discrimination.

Plotinus also speaks of the original condition of the soul having some deficit expressed in a readiness and interest to take on a body which gives an opening for divisiveness even if not a whole-hearted one. The souls have this “waywardness” somewhat cured by the embodiment experience and they show sufficient remaining instinct of soul to remember from whence they had fallen and aspire to return to a whole hearted search for the One. Plotinus continues his exposition about the essence of the soul:

But there is a difference: The Intellectual-Principle is forever repugnant to distinction and partition. Soul, there without distinction and partition, has yet a nature lending itself to divisional existence: its division is secession, entry into body. In view of this seceding and ensuing partition we may legitimately speak of it as a partible thing. But if so, how can it be described as indivisible? In that the secession is not the soul entire; something of it holds its ground, that in it which recoils from separate existence. The entity, therefore, described as “consisting of the undivided soul and of the soul divided among bodies,” contains a soul which is at once above and below, attached to the Supreme and yet reaching down to this sphere, like a radius from the centre. Thus it is that, entering this realm, it possesses still the vision inherent to that superior phase in virtue of which it unchangingly maintains its integral nature. Even here it is not exclusively the partible soul: it is still the impartible as well: what in it knows partition is parted without partibility; undivided as giving itself to the entire body, a whole to a whole, it is divided as being effective in every part.²²

It might be objected that the soul is not being regarded thoroughly *as a part of God* but this is to fail to recognize that Plotinus talks more about “the One” than the usual Christian nomenclature of “God”. Importantly, the soul is near to being absorbed in the One.

For clarity of thinking, a distinction between these two “bookends” of interpreting *the divine sense* can now be rehearsed. Both are illustrations that there is something in the human makeup that interprets reality in terms of a metaphysical entity. Although the incidental philosophical approach may produce a different appearance, these are both incidents of the divine sense.²³ At one end is the earlier Platonic/Neo-Platonic “divine sense” as due to the soul having descended from and going back to the divine realm. This initial case study sees the mind/soul as a sprinkling of divinity within our humanity because of its origin. At the other end of the continuum is Calvin’s idea of a natural, creaturely part of our humanity that enables us to *sense the divine*. This later idea of Calvin is used by Alvin Plantinga in *Reformed Epistemology* (Chapter 6 of this thesis). The earlier Platonic “divine sense”, influential in the early centuries of Christianity, entails a comparative lack in maintaining the ontological gap between the realm of the gods and the realm of humanity. The soul is really divine. The soul, therefore, is so much more superior, being from the realm above, whereas the body is merely from here below. Calvin’s concept, on the other hand, presupposes the ontological transcendence of God from all other beings, including humanity.

The implication, here foreshadowed, is that no developed concept of a *s.d.*, as presented by Calvin, can be possible until the Christian doctrine of creation has been

²² Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, translators Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page. Published by William Benton for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. and reproduced as a part of *Great Books of the Western World*. 17. Plotinus. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 139.

²³ One element of early mystical ideas that is similar to both the “divine sense” and the later “sense of the divine” is the immediacy of the knowledge, in the former being about a direct apprehension of God by the soul undergoing a “contemplation of God” and in the latter as about the immediacy of belief in God in the context of some human experience of wonder.

assimilated sufficiently to push out this Platonic idea of the soul being more divine than the rest of the human creature.²⁴

So to say, is not to militate against philosophy, as it is not the presence of a philosophical underpinning to Christian faith that is itself the problem. Aristotle's philosophy will have a differing result (Chapter 2). But the issue is particularly that Platonism construes the soul as from divine origins; that "salvation" is the climb of the soul back to that divine realm again; that the "divine sense" is in fact not a sensing of information about a personal God, but a remembering of experience in the realm of the Forms.

The *Imago Dei*

Another caveat is needed to crystallize the understanding of the "divine sense" and to keep it from being taken over and eclipsed by the much more widely promulgated concept of the "*imago Dei*". The need is to calibrate "the image of God" with respect to the "divine sense". The image of God is another way to explicate the connection between the human and the divine mind. Williams pictures the Fathers as having the intellect as the major component of the image of God in humanity. She says:

The Fathers . . . are concerned to associate the *imago Dei* in humanity with mind or the rational faculty in degrees varying from virtual identification to the simple assumption that the capacity for thought is an essential part of what it means to be made in the image of God.²⁵

Our being "divine-like" in some way or other is the issue. In the first five centuries of Christianity, the intellect was increasingly identified as God's chief feature. Their anthropology focused on humanity's unique intellect being where we were like God and where we differed from all the other creatures. The fact of the steady development of this

²⁴ This is championed by Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

²⁵ A.N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5-6.

trend adds to the conclusion towards which this chapter is heading. This is that the very early times of the Apostolic Fathers did not show as much influence from Platonism as was the case in the era of more philosophical engagement with Platonism that followed. McGrath's summary of this development is:

The idea that humanity has been made "in the image of God" has been interpreted in a number of ways within the Christian tradition. One of these may be singled out for special comment, on account of its obvious resonances with natural theology. This is the long-standing view that the *imago Dei* designates the human capacity to reason – or, more accurately, to conform mentally to the patterns established by the divine *Logos* within creation – and hence to discern God, albeit partially and imperfectly.

The concept is developed within the Alexandrian theological tradition in such a way to emphasize the correlation between the creation of humanity in the likeness of the divine *Logos* and the human capacity to shape one's ideas in a manner that was somehow "according to the *logos* (logikos). The general approach can be found throughout the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria, particularly his treatise *de incarnation Verbi*.²⁶

Athanasius' dates were 296-8 till 373 AD. This is a time period, a few generations later than the initial Apostolic Fathers who had known and heard the original apostles, but a period now under full sway from the Platonic influence in Alexandria. The depictions of the image of God in even later and subsequent history show quite a variation of interpretation as to wherein exactly lay that image. The major outcome from surveying the length and breadth of all these interpretations is to see that there are many aspects of humanity appropriate to be contenders for exhibiting God's image and it is a mistake to limit that image to just one of these aspects on its own. One step forward in understanding precisely what might be meant by the *imago dei* is to start with some careful biblical exegesis and exposition.

An Exposition of Genesis concerning Humanity in the Image of God

Biblical interpretation is influenced by community pre-understandings and philosophical commitments. Also biblical interpreters can make quick judgments without

²⁶ Alister McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Malden MA, U.S.A., Oxford, UK., Melbourne, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 190-191.

carefully and fully reading the primary accounts. Ambiguity comes also from the scant amount of biblical information. The less the amount of obvious content,²⁷ the broader is the range of possible interpretations. Confusion about the *imago Dei*, nonetheless, can be ameliorated for those prepared to take careful note of the biblical exposition. The most quoted verses are:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26,27, NASB).

"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7 NASB)"²⁸

The expositional difficulty arises out of the fact that Genesis is talking about two aspects which often are blurred together. There is the fact that humanity is an "animated" creation of God akin to the other animals by virtue of there being the principle of life – the breath of life – which animates an otherwise physical body. The fact of a discernible difference between what is dead and what is alive has always demanded some similar explanation. The second aspect being asserted by the passages is that there is something special about humanity by which it is very different from the rest of these "animals" and this is that the entire created product has been especially made in "the image of God". Popular reading²⁹ of the second

²⁷ This thesis' interest is in how humanity is in the image of God from creation, but not the progress toward the image of Christ achieved by Christian sanctification.

²⁸ Other references to the image of God in man are: Genesis 5:2 and 9:6. These make plain that fallen humanity still retains the image of God, even if damaged, which is further evidence that the image is not the indwelling of the Holy Spirit whose absence in fallen but unredeemed humanity is elsewhere and everywhere assumed in Scripture.

²⁹ John Gill (scholar, preacher, Baptist pastor who lived in England 1697 – 1771), *Exposition of the Entire Bible* (written between 1746-63) shows the influence of Platonic background in the comment on Genesis 2:7 wrote: "**And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; which in that way entered into his body, and quickened it, which before was a lifeless lump of clay, though beautifully shapen: it is in the plural number, the "breath of lives", including the vegetative, sensitive, and rational life of man. And this was produced not with his body, as the souls of brutes were, and was produced by the breath of God, as theirs were not; nor theirs out of the earth, as his body was: and these two different productions show the different nature of the soul and body of man, the one is material and mortal, the other immaterial and immortal."

verse - Genesis 2:7 - often concentrates on God's activity of breathing into the man and woman being formed, and then this passage is taken to describe either the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (as in some popular theologies³⁰) or the giving of an immortal soul following Plato. When this is put together with Genesis 1:26-27 (the first of the pair above), the erroneous equation is complete that the image of God is the presence of God's very Spirit in the human life. This is similar to the Platonic idea of a soul from the divine realm welded to a body from the dust of the earth. The only difference is where the "divination" happens – in prehistory amongst the Forms or at the moment of creation on earth.

But Gen 2:7's mention of God's inbreathing of the breath of life, notwithstanding the Godly purpose to form humanity in his image, is not being stated here to make the humans ontologically different from the animals, but to make them equally "living creatures".

The Hebrew for the last two words (in anglicised letters) *nephesh 'ghah'y* is translated varyingly as "living soul" or "living creature" or "living being". Genesis calls the animals the same "*nephesh 'ghah'y*."³¹ This expression is applied at first to the creatures of the land and

That God (1) did bring life to that which was till this point just molded clay and dust and that (2) He did it by the Holy Spirit is obvious from the verse. But Gill's conclusion about the human soul being differentiable from those of the animals is being understood on the wrong basis. The proof of this non-differentiation is that the same operation of God giving the "breath of lives" is said by Genesis to explain the creation of the animals, the whales in the sea, etc. and the birds. See the passages enumerated in the next note. The differentiation from the animals is the fruit of what God accomplished *when* he made them "living souls" but not *by giving them* "the breath of lives." In the human case he made them in his image without the text telling us exactly how that difference was made.

John Calvin's comment on the verse seeks to evade the same mistake. On "*And breathed into his nostrils*" Calvin wrote: "Whatever the greater part of the ancients might think, I do not hesitate to subscribe to the opinion of those who explain this passage of the animal life of man; and thus I expound what they call the vital spirits by the word *breath*. Should any one object, that if so, no distinction would be made between man and other living creatures, since here Moses relates only what is common alike to all: I answer, though here mention is made only of the lower faculty of the soul, which imparts breath to the body, and gives it vigor and motion: this does not prevent the human soul from having its proper rank, and therefore it ought to be distinguished from others."

³⁰ Such as the version of Keswick popularized by Major W. Ian Thomas (1914 – 2007). Thomas was a World War II hero who became a world travelled Bible teacher. He founded his organization, Torchbearers International, in 1947 which now consists of 26 Bible Schools and educational centres around the world. His most famous and influential book is *The Saving Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961).

eventually to all of the fish, birds and animals in their creatureliness. An example is: Gen 1:20 “let the water teem with living creatures (NIV)”; 1:21 “every living and moving thing with which the water teems (NIV)”. The Hebrew noun *nephesh* comes from a verb “to breathe” or “to respire” and is consistent with the concrete Hebrew thinking that distinguished a dead soldier from a living one by the latter still breathing. So the *nephesh* was the life and personality within the person which was absent when they were dead. Keeping in mind that the Hebrew word *ruach* meant breath, strong wind or spirit – whatever it was that gave the life principle to that which otherwise would just be a lifeless body. So the inbreathing is to picture the gift of life coming from the one and only true living one.³² In the Old Testament at death the *nephesh* went to *sheol* whereas the Greek worded equivalent was the *psyche* going to *hades*.

While holding comment about “the image of God” in abeyance for a moment, the use of the term “living creature” then entails that any ontological gap between classes of creatures at this stage of the description is between the plants and those that will eat them. The latter include humans eating fruit and animals eating green plants and both are said in Gen 1:29, 30 to have the “breath of life”:

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that

³¹ Genesis 1:20,21; 30; 9:10,12,15,16 and Leviticus 11:10,46 all use this expression of the animal as distinct from plant life. That it is being used also of humanity underlines the solidarity of humanity with the other creatures which are “living souls” and have the “breath of life.”

³² Karl Barth wrote of the implications of Gen 2:7 saying the Spirit of God did something: “In the OT and NT the general expression for God’s spirit, the Holy Spirit, is God Himself, in so far as He is able, in an inconceivably real way, without therefore being less God, to be present to the creature, and in virtue of this presence of His to realize the relation of the creature to Himself, and in virtue of this relation to Himself to vouchsafe life to the creature. The creature indeed requires the Creator in order to live. He thus requires relation to Him. But this relation he cannot create. God creates it through His own presence in the creature, i.e. in the form of the relation of Himself to Himself. The Spirit of God is God in His freedom to be present to the creature, and so to create this relation, and thereby to be the life of the creature.” *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics, being Vol. I, Part I* Authorised Translator G.T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936) 515-6. Barth does continue this quotation to speak about aspects of his understanding as to how revelation brings its own reception which is peculiar to his own dialectical theology, but that which is quoted thus far is apt in addressing the fact of the inbreathing from the Spirit of God as necessary to bring relationship with God and life to the creature.

move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food. And it was so (Gen 1:29,30, NIV).

What then is the image of God in us?

So the mention of the breath of life coming by agency of the Spirit of God breathed into the human is to picture the giving of a soul/life principle by the Spirit of God. The same thing happens with the animals except that in the case of the human creation it is being done in a way that causes the humans to be in the image of God. There is no doubt that describing man and woman as being formed in the image of God does mark them out as different from the animals, but clearly from the above discussion this difference is not what is referred to by their being “living creatures” or “living souls”. Rather the statement is being made that when God made the living creatures (they were the breathing animals) he particularly made the humans in his own image. Due to the term “breath of life” being used also of all these plant eating “living creatures” then God’s breathing this life into them is just the momentous fact that it takes God to give life. It is a comment about the mystery of all life coming from God, not necessarily an assertion of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit to the humans at creation.³³ He breathes the life into them. He may certainly do that by the Spirit who is present at creation, and who is the impartor of all life, but there is no reason to read into this that the soul/spirit of man is God’s Spirit.³⁴ The proof of this is how humans after the Fall, though out of sorts with the maker, are nonetheless still in the image of God, though one could scarcely imagine Cain (the example cited) as a man with the Spirit of God. At stake here is the difference between humans having a spiritual component and humans having the Spirit of God. This is relevant to

³³ The Old Testament “Spirit of God” is identified by the New Testament as indeed “the Holy Spirit” and so the third member of the Trinity, but care is needed not to read the N.T. idea of the personhood of the Holy Spirit into the Old Testament passage and miss what it is saying, that God was doing something personally by His breath and giving life to the otherwise sculptures of dust.

³⁴ The question of the makeup of humanity can be argued out from other passages.

understanding the “divine sense” as being due to a little bit of God in us as compared to seeing human spirit as a part of their creaturely composite.

Methodology³⁵ to exposit the phrase “image of God” can then be (i) the usage of the phrase in other literature of the times (ANE) or (ii) to extricate meaning from the words themselves here and elsewhere in Scriptures, or (iii) applying theological judgments from the overall teaching of the Scriptures.

(i) In Egypt, “the image of the gods” was understood as either (a) some manufactured objects such as statues of the Pharaoh which would be placed around his kingdom for the benefit of local watchers who might not otherwise have opportunity to see and revere the great man; or (b) a living person who was considered the god’s representative and this was what was meant by this person being “in the god’s image”. Usually this person was a king and the chief idea was that of representative rulership. The king rules on behalf of the god as his representative and is so set up by the god to be “in his image”.³⁶ If this use of the phrase was current in the cultural background of the biblical writer, it might explain why Genesis 1:26 has the statement of God making humanity in his image followed immediately by the statement of their having dominion/rule over the fish, birds and creatures all over the world. So humanity in the image of God would be about the creation of the race in a role of representative rulership on God’s behalf over the created world. This is an often chosen explanation of the phrase.

(ii) The Hebrew pair of words *betselem Elohim* (in the image of God), is very suggestive of a picture/appearance/image of one thing portraying another. The God of the Old Testament, however, has no physical personage (and the New Testament seems at pains not to give away the physical description of Christ). If God had a physical form, or if the New

³⁵ Following D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Testament Christ was described at all in his physicality, then the interpretation would be straight forward. The two words *betselem Elohim* would imply that proper human form was one following the appearance of that physical form of God, or of the physical Christ. No true Jew, however, would read their Bible that way because of the prohibition to have any “graven image,” that is to have an idol or attempt to make an image of God. So the idea of *betselem Elohim* seems to be intended metaphorically.

About the first word of the pair – *betselem* – there are two Hebrew words put together to make it up. These words are *beth* and *tselem*. In many O.T. places the second word *tselem* does refer to three dimensional images. But *beth* has instances of being used metaphorically. That gives room to take the two relevant words together as metaphorical.

Two Old Testament instances are:

Psalm 39:6 "Surely every man walks about as a phantom (NASB, underlining mine)" or "Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: (NIV, underlining mine)" and Psalm 73:20 "As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies (NIV, underlining mine) or "Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form (NASB, underlining mine).

These metaphorical usages of the word in a non-physical way still have foremost the idea of shape and appearance. The evocation of an actual image is strong and, this being the case, it is hard to press the precedent from the Ancient Near East that the phrase “in the image of God” merely entails the idea of “ruling representative”. Cline, nonetheless, does assert such an altogether non-literal idea. Given the meaning of *tselem*, he feels free to take an extreme metaphorical meaning:

Man is created not in God’s image, since God has no image of his own, but as God’s image, or rather to be God’s image, that is to deputise in the created world for the transcendent God who remains outside the world order. That man is God’s image means that he is the visible corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God: he is representative rather than representation, since the idea of portrayal is secondary in the significance of the image. However, the term “likeness” is an assurance that man is an adequate and faithful representative of

God on earth. The whole man is the image of God, without distinction of spirit and body. All mankind without distinction, are the image of God.³⁷

This perspective may indeed be a part of the meaning but does not have to be the total explanation. In the New Testament, Jesus combined both metaphorical and literal ideas with his illustration of a coin in which was printed the image of Caesar. This is acknowledged by the Pharisees by how they applied their trick question. The image of Caesar on the coins they used showed their recognition of Caesar's authority and rulership as expressed by using the currency. Nonetheless, the image on the coin was a literal one.

(iii) Systematic theology can bring some help as to what is the "image of God." The ontological transcendence of God has implications that impinge on the issue. There is by necessity between a transcendent God and a created humanity a difference of media. Now, something made in the image of another is about the impression of the first being portrayed in the medium of the second. The image of an ontologically transcendent God, therefore, cannot finally be just a little bit of God in us. Just the opposite, the concept of our being made in the image of God is the amazing fact that we in flesh and blood and finite spirit and faculties can somehow express the infinite divine person who is so much "other" than are we.

The contrast between a "divine sense" and a "sense of the divine" shows up really how clumsy the early attempt was. The "clumsiness" is twofold: first in not keeping God and humans ontologically each in their own place; second in failing to grasp that it is all parts of humanity with its total that is in the image of God and not just one part of us. The image is truly expressed by the totality of our humanity, not just in our "God part" or "religious side" or certain activities on their own.

Grasping the varied roles and meanings of "the image of God" shows up the differences between the "divine sense" and the "sense of the divine." The former usually involves a choice of one or more human attributes in which the image is seen. The latter is

³⁷ Ibid., 101.

about what we are with the unity of our humanity and does not need to specify any one aspect. A full coupling of the ontological transcendence of God with our total creatureliness - both body and nonbody - is the platform best suited to understand the idea of humanity in the image of God.

This all being said, the reflection of God by our being in His image is not exactly the same phenomenon as the sensing of the divine. They only appeared so at one end of the “bookends” which was the “divine sense” being due to a little bit of the divine in us. The varying models of the image of God are differing angles on the one phenomenon of our relationship with our creator.

The Apostolic Fathers

The first leaders following the New Testament era have been called “the Apostolic Fathers”. Michael W. Holmes wrote:

The term *apostolic fathers* is traditionally used to designate the collection of the earliest extant Christian writings outside the New Testament. These documents are a primary resource for the study of Christianity, especially the postapostolic period (ca. A.D. 70-135).³⁸

The name is because the writers largely had living contact with the original apostles. Not surprisingly, they appear not as innovators but more as leaders determined to pass on the true apostolic faith and maintain unity with it during a period troubled by heresies and schisms. Also apparent in the earliest writings is the impact of persecution on their thinking. Rather than the luxury of quiet and unmolested thought, theirs is the practical endeavour to live good

³⁸ Michael W. Holmes, ed. And reviser, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1992, 1999), 1. This Greek-English diglot edition is essentially “a second, revised edition of the one-volume 1891 edition of texts and translations by J.B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2d ed. Ed. And rev. by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989)” quoted from p. x of Preface to the Second Edition. Hereafter all the quotes are from this edition.

Holmes includes as by Apostolic Fathers: *I and II Clement, The Letters of Ignatius, The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, The Martyrdom of Polycarp, The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Shepherd of Hermas, The Epistle of Diognetus, The Fragments of Papias*. They are not all equally accepted as genuinely written by their supposed authors, and the dating of some is debated, so a smaller set of “Apostolic Fathers” could be listed. Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch are representative as to the major characteristics of the earliest Apostolic Fathers.

Christian lives in times of duress and to be able to process martyrdom into their understanding of discipleship. In their commitment and sacrifice, their discipleship stands out in contrast to Western Christianity of recent centuries. Yet in exhibiting a strong gospel core³⁹ and a commitment to the authority of the apostles and a non-philosophical outlook, they are not unlike some evangelicals of today. That is, they maintain a strong presentation of some major orthodox doctrines with their own admixture of one or two period-sponsored imperatives and uncriticised ideas.⁴⁰ The present question is whether they speak of any recognition of a “divine sense”.

Otherworldliness

Did these early writers speak of anything similar to an *s.d.*? The answer is negative for this first generation of leaders after the apostles. The Apostolic Fathers were predominantly practical,⁴¹ rather than intellectual or philosophical. Their injunctions called not for contemplation but for obedience to the teaching of the apostles and for unity behind the bishops who inherited the lead from those apostles. The Apostolic Fathers, nonetheless, were visibly “otherworldly”. With such an outlook, they might be assumed to be good candidates for espousing a “divine sense”. This, however, does not prove to be the case.

³⁹ 1 Clement 7. 4-7. “Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is to his Father, because, being poured out for our salvation, it won for the whole world the grace of repentance. ⁵ Let us review all the generations in turn, and learn that from generation to generation the Master has given an opportunity for repentance to those who desire to turn to him. ⁶ Noah preached repentance, and those who obeyed were saved. ⁷ Jonah preached destruction to the people of Nineveh: but they, repenting of their sins made atonement to God by their prayers and received salvation, even though they were alienated from God.”

⁴⁰ An example of an “uncriticised idea” is the assumption apparent amongst some of these Apostolic Fathers that they should follow the original apostles in many respects and that they and the Christians of their times should aim at martyrdom as the ultimate in discipleship. Underpinning this assumption is the lack of time to calibrate the implications of the originality of the first apostles whose calling included martyrdom as a way to credential their witness to the resurrection of Christ and the passing on of the divine message.

⁴¹ Holmes wrote: “It appears that three concerns were uppermost in Ignatius’ mind at this time: (1) the struggle against false teachers within the church; (2) the unity and structure of the churches; and (3) his own impending death. To Ignatius, the false teachers within posed a greater threat than the pagan society without. . . . In opposing the false teachers Ignatius, in addition to affirming both the divinity of Jesus and the reality of his incarnation, suffering and resurrection, stresses the importance of the bishop in preserving the unity of the church. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 129.

Clement of Rome

In *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, there is a significant opening: “The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth”.⁴² “Sojourn” is translated from a Greek word, *παροικουσα*.⁴³ This word family, about living as an alien, a stranger or an exile is used in the Scriptures in some significant places which portray the non-residency of God’s people in the present world. Sometimes it can be translated as “living as a stranger”. The Greek word is incidentally used in the NT in Luke 24:18 about Jesus appearing to the pair on the Emmaus Road who see him as such an “unknowing stranger” or “foreigner” (RSV has “visitor to Jerusalem”). Hebrews 11:9 uses the word to describe Abraham: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land (underlining mine)”. Abraham was a sojourner then, where he would later inherit. That is, the categories in his case were horizontal with respect to time rather than vertical with respect to heaven and earth.⁴⁴ Abraham had to buy a plot of land to bury Sarah while knowing that later the plot would rightfully be his by inheritance. The New Testament picks up the use of this “living as a stranger” in 1 Peter 2:11:

Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (RSV, underlining mine).⁴⁵

⁴² Clement of Rome, “The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians commonly Known as First Clement,” in Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 29. The Oxford Classical Dictionary records about Clement of Rome: “author of the epistle (c. A.D. 96) from the Roman church rebuking the Corinthian church for arbitrarily deposing clergy. The plea for order sets many Hellenistic themes in a biblical framework, and expresses a positive attitude to the Empire.” Henry Chadwick, “CLEMENT” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard as eds., 2nd.ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), 250.

⁴³ The noun is *πάροικος* ou m. which means alien, stranger, exile.

⁴⁴ This statement is not in ignorance of the fact that some theological outlooks reinterpret the promises of God to Abraham to be all about the promise of Heaven beyond time, rather than a promised land on earth in this time.

⁴⁵ A vertical use of the word is when it is translated as “pilgrim” when the city travelled toward is Heaven. This is the use in “Pilgrim’s Progress” by John Bunyan. But here, although the final judgment is in mind, referring to it as a day of “visitation”, the expectation of a future inheritance in that land keeps the horizontal

Later Christian interpretation has often applied “living as an alien” in vertical categories.⁴⁶

The idea is that here below on earth the Christian is never at home but awaits arrival above in Heaven. To varying degrees Christianity has encouraged people to view their spirituality to be about “ascent” back toward God.

One version of such was when Christianity thoroughly absorbed Platonic ideas of the naturalness for the soul to ascend back to the divine realm. Escape from the body and from this world allows the soul to “ascend” to God. Also while still in this body we should resist/ignore its passions and by contemplation know “ascension of mind” toward the realm of the divine. Later on than the first Apostolic Fathers, “the divine sense” is used to talk about this contemplation of God by the soul, but this was not found in these first Apostolic Fathers even though scholarship may have pushed these vertical categories anachronistically back onto the Apostles and the first Apostolic Fathers. Clement of Rome, for example, mostly encouraged a life of obedience to the Master’s commands. The knowledge of God had been brought down to earth by the incarnation and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. We do not ascend to gain it. Christ has brought it to us. Clement wrote, revealing what place he did have for contemplating God:

This is the way, dear friends, in which we found our salvation, namely Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness. Through Him let us look steadily into the heights of heaven; through Him we see as in a mirror his faultless and transcendent face; through him the eyes of our heart have been opened; through him our foolish and darkened mind springs up into the light; through Him the Master has willed that we should taste immortal knowledge, . . .⁴⁷

perspective also present. John’s gospel is rich in vertical categories with life below contrasted to life above, but this is not, as more liberal scholarship proposed, achieved by the complete erasure of previously held horizontal categories.

⁴⁶ One Negro-spiritual is worded: “I’m just a poor, way-faring stranger, a travelling through this world of woe. But there’s no sickness, toil, nor danger, in that bright land to which I go. I’m just a goin’ over Jordan. I’m just a goin’ over home” (Author unknown).

⁴⁷ 1 Clement 36. In Holmes, 69.

Clement is more writing about salvation being brought down to humanity and already received, than any ascent of the soul up to God. So the balance is on the horizontal categories very much enhanced by the extreme recency of the event of the Incarnation and the expectation of an early return of Christ and his kingdom being set up on earth.

Ignatius of Antioch

The seven letters from Ignatius, written as he journeyed toward his expected death in Rome, similarly called for obedience to the Bishops and a life style submitted to following the examples of Jesus and His apostles. Ignatius recalls how he spoke amongst the Philadelphians:

I called out when I was with you, I was speaking with a loud voice, God's voice: "Pay attention to the bishop and to the presbytery and deacons." To be sure, there were those who suspected that I said these things because I knew in advance about the division caused by certain people. But he for whose sake I am in chains is my witness, that I did not learn this from any human being. No, the Spirit itself was preaching knowledge of the division caused by some; but he for whose sake I am in chains is my witness, that I had not learned it from any human source. No, the Spirit itself was preaching, saying these words: "Do nothing without the bishop. Guard your bodies as the temple of God. Love unity. Flee from divisions. Become imitators of Jesus Christ, just as he is of the Father."⁴⁸

Ignatius saw the seed of a Christian's "otherworldliness" not in the journey upward achieved by Christian mysticism or contemplation, or by leaving the body after death, but rather as a part of the Christian's possession and responsibility for being "in Christ." Ignatius uses the wording "in Christ" extensively, following the Apostle Paul, to describe the present spiritual reality of a Christian. Ignatius's core doctrines concern the incarnation and sacrifice of the Saviour and our conversion to put faith in him and to follow his example. These are readily recognized as what is now called "evangelical" or "gospel" elements. Ignatius does hold some

⁴⁸ "The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch: To the Philadelphians" 7. In Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 181.

vertical categories along with the horizontal ones as well. Commending the Ephesians for resisting false teachings, Ignatius said:

. . . because you are stones of a temple, prepared beforehand for the building of God the Father, hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a rope the Holy Spirit; your faith is what lifts you up, and love is the way that leads up to God. ² So you are all fellow pilgrims, carrying your God and your shrine, your Christ and your holy things, adorned in every respect with the commands of Jesus Christ. I too celebrate with you, since I have been judged worthy to speak with you through this letter, and to rejoice with you because you love nothing in human life, only God. ⁴⁹

Loving nothing in this life except for God is a description of strong “otherworldliness.” So for Ignatius, despite the existence of vertical categories, the “otherworldliness” is the outworking of a Christian’s position in Christ characterized by the living of a holy life obeying the commandments of the Lord and walking in love and unity with other Christians and the leadership of the Church.

Being united to Christ also meant being “united to his resurrection.” This is not just a spiritual application of the resurrection of Christ to our mystical experience, but to the possibility of our death and resurrection as well. Ignatius, in addressing the Docetic heresy, stressed the reality of Christ’s humanity and the physical setting of his passion and resurrection. He wrote to the Smyrnaeans:

For he suffered all these things for our sakes, in order that we might be saved; and he truly suffered just as he truly raised himself – not as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in appearance only . . . ³ For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: “Take hold of me; and handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon.” And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood. For this reason they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. And after his resurrection, he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father. ⁴ . . . Why, moreover, have I surrendered myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts? But in any case “near the sword” means “near to God”; “with the beasts” means “with God” Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, that I may suffer together with him! I endure everything because he himself, who is perfect man, empowers me. ⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch: To the Ephesians” 9. In Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 143.

⁵⁰ “The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch: To the Smyrnaeans” 2,3,4 . In Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers* 185-187.

The practical and pastoral concerns of St. Ignatius notwithstanding, his willingness and desire to be martyred reveals the depth of this otherworldliness. Suffering was a part of Christian election. Ignatius refers to the Ephesian church as “for ever united and chosen, through real suffering, by the will of the Father and Jesus Christ our God.”

Where Ignatius did not understand the original apostolic attitude to suffering completely. He did not appreciate the significance of Paul seeing his “deliverance” as a possibility not only by martyrdom and going to be with the Lord, but alternatively by release from prison back to the fellowship of the Philippians. Paul said:

Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to part and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again (Phil.1. 19-26, RSV).

Horizontal Categories in the Early Fathers and the Physical Resurrection

A millennium later on, the call for good Christian behaviour will be made on the grounds of a fear of judgment and hell and the reward of heaven. These are vertical categories. Consolation and comfort for those suffering or growing old would be given by reference to “this world is not my home.” On earth, it is said that generation after generation “pass away”, but in heaven the elect are being assembled.⁵¹ In the Apostolic Fathers, the reward striven for is a “good resurrection.” This is indeed another worldly hope but in the resurrected life experienced here in earth if it is post resurrection. Martyrdom was the vehicle

⁵¹ This is not here to deny the vertical categories of life below contrasted with life above, but to say that the vertical does not have to be held by denying the horizontal. The two are both valid in a way similar to G.E. Ladd’s synthesis of the “both/and” categories to do with the Kingdom now and the Kingdom later.

of receiving the best resurrection. Note the reward of the resurrection for pious living in

Clement:

How, then, can we consider it to be some great and marvellous thing, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about the resurrection of those who served him in holiness, in the assurance born of a good faith . . .⁵²

Ignatius came from Antioch but was taken to Rome to be martyred.⁵³ In his letter to the Romans, he begs them not to appeal on his behalf and jeopardize his opportunity for martyrdom and hence the ultimate resurrection.

Early Apostolic Fathers do not represent the trend seen in later Fathers

The early Apostolic Fathers⁵⁴ may not have been overly influenced by the Platonic “divine sense”, but this was not indicative of how the first five Christian centuries would eventually synthesise Christianity with Greek philosophy. Plato had replaced the ecstatic experiential approach of the salvation-oriented cults with a philosophical and intellectual method. The Christianity of the Fathers dismissed some elements of Platonism such as the pre-existence of the soul in the realm of the Forms. But the eventual synthesis did adopt the Platonic methodology of achieving correspondence and even sometimes a mystical connection with the divine mind via a philosophical and intellectual method. Origen has both

⁵² 1 Clement 26. In Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 59.

⁵³ Holmes wrote: “There has long been a virtually unanimous consensus that Ignatius was martyred during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98 -117). *The Apostolic Fathers*, 131.

⁵⁴ Holmes wrote about the question of how Hellenized was Ignatius’ thinking: “The character of Ignatius’s debt to Hellenistic culture is much debated. Gnostic affinities have been alleged on the basis of mythological elements in such passages as *Eph. 19* or the themes of “oneness” and “silence.” But recent investigations have indicated that these elements are also found in the wider popular culture. Taken together with observations about the form and style of his letters, this suggests that Ignatius mirrors more the popular culture of his day than esoteric or Gnostic influences.” *The Apostolic Fathers*, 133.

the familiar Christian doctrinal presentation similar to a “Rule of Faith”⁵⁵, but accompanied by a more Platonic method of reaching salvation through the contemplation of an enlightened mind. Williams is persuaded that Origen’s opening words of *On First Principles* betray this.⁵⁶ Whereas Platonism held the hope for the soul to return to “the divine realm” at its release from the body, the Platonic influenced Christianity presented sanctification as a vertical ascent toward God. Life’s process of sanctification for the Christian and ascent to this hope could be prosecuted by enlightenment to this hope, with concomitant turning away from earthly passions and distractions. Progress toward the ultimate goal was made by prosecuting an intimate and immediate mystical connection with God. Overall “salvation” (of the soul) is understood then in terms of the “ascent” of the soul back to God, both in the contemplation of the mind now, and the literal transfer of the soul to heaven after death. Mysticism is often today understood in terms of Eastern models, but Christian mysticism did not then need to be anti-intellectual but was connected to the value of knowledge. In the early centuries, it maintained this aim of approaching God, interpreted in vertical categories, via a contemplation of his truths and his person.⁵⁷ Clement of Alexandria, in distinction from

⁵⁵ The concept, but not the actual term, “Rule of Faith” is present in Irenaeus (130-202) *Against Heresies*, Book 1.1.1, and in Book 3.213. Tertullian (160-225) actually uses the term in *De praescriptione hereticorum*. He wrote: “The Rule of Faith – to state here what we maintain--is of course that by which we believe that there is but one God, who is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced everything from nothing through his Word, sent forth before all things; that this Word is called his Son, and in the Name of God was seen in divers ways by the patriarchs, was ever heard in the prophets and finally was brought down by the Spirit and Power of God the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, was born of her and lived as Jesus Christ; who thereafter proclaimed a new law and a new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles, was crucified, on the third day rose again, was caught up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father; that he sent in his place the power of the Holy Spirit to guide believers; that he will come with glory to take the saints up into the fruition of the life eternal and the heavenly promises and to judge the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both good and evil with the restoration of their flesh. This Rule, taught . . . by Christ, allows of no questions among us, except those which heresies introduce and which makes heretics.” *The Prescription Against the Heretics*, ed. and trans. S.L. Greenslade, *Early Latin Theology*, Library of Christian Classics V (1956), 19-64.
http://www.tertullian.org/articles/greenslade_prae/greenslade_prae.htm (accessed March 4, 2014).

⁵⁶ Williams, *The Divine Sense*, 44.

⁵⁷ Vertical categories contrast life below with life above, whereas horizontal ones contrast life now with life in the age to come. Compare the aim of Christian mysticism with that of the Apostle Paul in Phil. 3. 10-14, where the desire to know Christ includes the vertical (“upward call of God in Christ Jesus”) but also connects with the horizontal category of the second coming and the resurrection from the dead.

Clement of Rome, was far more adoptive of Platonic philosophy and, although his gospel was still the Apostolic gospel, the end to be achieved by subsequent teaching and sanctification was to arrive at a condition of contemplating God. Clement of Alexandria wrote:

Now piety is instruction, being a learning of the service of God, and training in the knowledge of the truth, and right guidance which leads to heaven. . . Now the instruction which is of God is the right direction of truth to the contemplation of God, and the exhibition of holy deeds in everlasting perseverance.⁵⁸

In the Apostolic Fathers, although vertical categories are not absent, they do not displace the immediate horizontal categories (time now as compared to the age to come or the time of the Lord's visitation) by which they understood their future resurrection as the goal. In this they represented the original apostolic worldview. The Book of Acts records about Paul's discipleship:

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14. 21-22, RSV, underlining mine).

Clearly this example set by Paul at Antioch is of the expectation of an imminent second advent of Christ (and in that sense a future participation in the coming Kingdom), but with tribulations and persecutions just preceding it. These horizontal categories were being followed by Ignatius.

Modern scholarship in the twentieth century promoted the idea that the vertical categories represented where the New Testament came out – with theological motifs such as “the delay in the parousia” being understood as causing the later New Testament documents to put aside horizontal categories for vertical ones. This is now, however, commonly accepted as having been an overstatement.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. by William Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867), 149-150.

⁵⁹ C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (1939; repr., New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1949). G.E. Ladd's correction of C.H. Dodd's ideas are discussed in G.E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the*

Why then do the early Apostolic Fathers not demonstrate an understanding of a divine sense as might be expected in line with the dominant Platonic attitude? The answer is first due to the immediacy of the influence of the original Apostles. This influence was overwhelmingly the strongest as they sought to emulate those who had seen and walked with Jesus. Secondly, there was the threat of persecution with which they had to live and die. This is not dissimilar to evangelicals in any generation, who by major study of the biblical basis of their faith seek to be close to the Apostles⁶⁰ and only have a shallow acquaintance with the philosophical issues of their times.⁶¹ For others, this may be an unintended side effect of an activist attitude to the life of faith. In the case of the era led by the original apostles, they certainly had both Greek philosophy and Roman pragmatism around them. But Christianity was such a new departure and activist engagement with their world. With the threat of persecution and martyrdom there was not the contemplative lifestyle to think deeply on their adjustment to the ideas of their age. It would take a philosophically deeper Christian culture to bring the issues to bear. When that more contemplative and intellectual culture did come, the concept of a “divine sense” in line with Platonic influence became more visible. The resulting mixture of the evangelical motifs with the Platonic vertical categories is obvious in Clement of Alexandria. Williams’ excellent monograph, which is really about mysticism in the first five Christian centuries, has the title *The Divine Sense* precisely because of these Platonic/Neo-Platonic emphases on the vertical categories. The “divine sense” is there in describing the soul’s “ascent to God” which is what they saw mysticism as about. It was called the “contemplation of God” or similar wordings about the object of mystical life. This delineation of the “divine sense” permeated Hellenized Christianity and its practical expressions for many centuries to come.

Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) and G.E.Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

⁶⁰ The Bible Institute movement of the twentieth century was a good example.

⁶¹ This is often exemplified by the adoption of an anti-intellectual attitude.

The “divine sense” represented by Plato was first chosen to combine with Christianity because they had in common a heavenly content, the soul of divine origin or a Saviour from Heaven. Salvation was about deliverance for the soul from the world and return back to the divine realm. It generated our first “book end” of our continuum of “divine senses”. The sense about heavenly things was because there was a touch of the divine in the soul. In the next chapter, Aristotle is another pre-Christian philosopher who talked about being able to understand the divine realm, but not from the supposition of a heavenly realm transcendent to our earthly reality. In time his ideas were combined with Christianity by Aquinas. There remains a task to understand the difference between the combination of Platonic supposition of a divine realm with Christian beliefs and on the other hand Aristotelian confidence in human mind to philosophize its way “around the heavens” – that is to understand the metaphysical world from a basis in a study of the natural world. That is to where the thesis will proceed.

Chapter 2:

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) and the Scholastics

Introduction to the Chapter

Paul Helm wrote that Aquinas was “the greatest philosopher and theologian of the medieval church.”⁶² Aquinas lived and wrote nearer the end of that medieval time and in the middle of the era of Scholasticism.⁶³ The era of the “Schoolmen”⁶⁴ was when Christianity’s formulations were committed to those who were set aside to teach and study, either in Cathedral, Palace or Monastery schools or later in the Universities that were becoming influential. One of these influential universities was the University of Paris⁶⁵ where Albertus Magnus (1193 – 1280) taught. He was an avant-garde exponent of Aristotle’s philosophy in the Scholastic synthesis of the times as well being a leading Dominican friar. Under Magnus

⁶²Paul Helm, “Aquinas, Thomas (1224-1274),” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1974), 60-61. This is taking the medieval period as the thousand years or so span of time from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 500’s A.D. through to the beginning of the Renaissance in the 1400s and 1500s A.D. (Hereafter *TNDCC*)

⁶³ Robert G. Clouse, “Scholasticism,” *TNDCC*, 885-886, defines Scholasticism as: “the theology and philosophy taught in the medieval schools from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, and revived in later periods such as the late sixteenth and seventeenth and nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It features the application of Aristotelian categories to the Christian revelation and attempts to reconcile reason and faith, philosophy and revelation. As a theological method it is associated with organized textbook theology and the thesis method.”

⁶⁴ The Greek word *σχολαστικός* means “to do with the school”. When translated into the Latin *scholasticus* it takes on the meaning of “schoolboy”. The “scholastics” were the “schoolmen” who populated the universities and learning centres to dedicate themselves to learning in an era that multiplied distinctions and definitions.

⁶⁵Stephen Brown wrote: “At the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries great consolidations occurred. In the consideration of theology, Paris led the way on the Continent. With the support of Popes Innocent III and Gregory IX, the University of Paris became the theological stronghold of the Christian world.” “The intellectual context of later medieval philosophy: universities, Aristotle, arts, theology,” in *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 189.

at Paris, Aquinas received much of his advanced education⁶⁶ and later taught there also. Aquinas was therefore the recipient of the trends of the Scholastic movement as well as becoming a significant representative of its themes. Aquinas had also become a Dominican, from an order, somewhat parallel to the Franciscans, committed to itinerant preaching and teaching.

Scholasticism carried and moulded Western Christianity, bridging across the later medieval period, wrestling with competitive influences of the pre-Christian heritage of Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism and carrying this mixture into the later periods. These later periods were to see the humanist and reform movements and ultimately the philosophies of Modernity.⁶⁷ One explanation of Aquinas' visibility is that he embraced an alternate explanation of reality to that of Plato, through his adoption of the theories of Aristotle, while still continuing some Platonic influences.⁶⁸ Tranoy comments on Aquinas' philosophical merit but does not imagine that, all on his own, Aquinas had turned the trends in favour of Aristotle. He wrote:

A better grasp of the time perspective is one condition for an understanding of the philosophy of Aquinas. Born in 1225, he lived and taught rather toward the end of the period. The nature of his philosophy was to a great extent determined by what had been thought, believed, and doubted by philosophers and theologians before him and in his own time. His thinking, which in some respects does constitute a

⁶⁶Helm wrote of Aquinas: 'Born in Italy, he studied at the University of Naples and became a Dominican in 1244. Later he studied under Albert Magnus at Paris, and also at Cologne. Most of the remainder of his life was spent as a teacher in Paris. In 1273 he had to discontinue his *Summa Theologiae* due to ill health. He died the following year. *TNDCC*, 60.

⁶⁷James Franklin wrote: "Descartes and Locke underwent particularly heavy exposure to scholasticism in their formative years, and the questions they ask, and the vocabulary of their answers, stray remarkably little from their teachers' practice" in *The Science of Conjecture: Evidence and Probability Before Pascal*, (Charles Village, Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2002), 347. This was at the time of the Protestant scholasticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the content of which may have been different from the earlier scholasticism but the methodology was much the same.

⁶⁸This chapter is written under the working assumption that Aquinas drew much from the philosophy of Aristotle, although there is some revisionist opinion that in fact he was as much or even more dependent on influences from Neo-Platonism. Noted by Fergus Kerr in *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford, U.K., Malden, M.A., U.S.A., Melbourne, Australia: Blackwell, 2002), 9, 214-5, notes 21 and 27.

high point – and thus also a turning point – in the history of medieval philosophy, came to exert a powerful influence on the climate of opinion in the century immediately following his death in 1274.⁶⁹

Aristotle (384-322 BC)

Aristotle had confidence that the power of philosophical thought could explain all that was necessary without Plato's dualism involving the priority of the realm of the Forms.⁷⁰

Aristotle was once one of Plato's students. The basis of Aristotle's investigation was from the priority of study of the *phusis* (nature).⁷¹ The difference between Plato and Aristotle varies depending on the area under discussion. They both espoused forms of "realism". Realism, however, is a multi-factored issue and in the medieval period one dimension had to do with universals and particulars. Crisp wrote:

The debate about realism involves some of the most fundamental questions in philosophy and theology. The term 'realism' has a number of different applications in literature, depending upon which area of philosophy is under scrutiny. But there is a common idea that these different uses of 'realism' share. This is that there are things which are independent of the mind, and therefore 'real' as opposed to 'ideal', 'relative' or a matter of linguistic convention. . . a person can be a realist in one area and an anti-realist in another.⁷²

Both Plato and Aristotle recognized the existence of realities that were independent of how people found out about them. Their dissimilarity appears when the issue of universals is addressed. An easy example in which to see their different understandings concerns the real existence of numbers. Plato sees numbers as having existence in the perfect, divine world of

⁶⁹K.E. Tranoy, "Thomas Aquinas," *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. D.J. O'Connor (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1964), 99-100.

⁷⁰ To avoid confusion, Plato's "Forms" will be indicated by capitalization and Aristotle's "forms," not so.

⁷¹ *Phusis* was the *protogenos* (primeval god) responsible for the originating and giving order to nature.

⁷² O.D. Crisp, "Realism," *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Campbell Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 594.

Forms, whereas Aristotle sees their existence as part and parcel of the natural world being studied. Nonetheless the numbers for Aristotle are certainly not physical entities.

Aristotle's metaphysics is complicated. Scholars see varying expositions depending on what part of his writings are in the foreground. In his *The Categories* "substance" is the first and major category. There are nine others that are "accidents". Considering the properties of an entity, there is the essential "substance" and there are the non-essential "accidents". The three (of the nine) major accidents are qualitative, quantitative and relative. The accidents are useful to explain "predication" which is what you say about your topics or subjects. Each category group has some universals and some particulars.

Aristotle's position about "substance" is not uniformly understood by every scholar.

O'Connor wrote:

For Plato, the ultimately real features of the universe were the forms. For Aristotle, they were the individual things that make up the world – people, animals, plants, stones, stars, and so on. The central concept of Aristotle's metaphysics (or theory of being) is substance, the concrete individual thing.⁷³

In this excellent article, the word "concrete" here is an unfortunate choice, as our English word "substance" when described as "concrete" sounds decidedly physical.⁷⁴ He might simply have said "definite" or "real" but "concrete" sounds very hard and physical. The English word "substance" is in fact in Aristotle translated from the Latin *substantia* which in turn is a translation of the Greek *ousia*. *Ousia* belongs to the word-family of the verb "to be". *Ousia* literally means "being". The central idea of Aristotle's "substance" is not really "concrete", as in *physical* material, but more the fact that something has *definite existence*, material or immaterial. Aristotle's ideas certainly read elsewhere as though there are some entities that are substantial in their existence – and hence are "substances" – that, nonetheless, are not physical things. Form is substance that relates to physical things on most occasions, without itself being physical. But for Aristotle, God has substance without having corporality.

⁷³O'Connor, *A Critical History*, 49.

⁷⁴ He does immediately admit that "His [Aristotle's] detailed account of substance is very difficult to understand."

This makes a very visible example, proving that substance can be immaterial. Aristotle describes the Divine being as having “primary substance” which for him is pure form without matter, whereas some other substances would be a mixture of form and matter. Clearly Aristotle could construe of the divine being or the divine realm and believe that they had real existence even though they were not composed of matter.

The overall philosophy (the science therein) from which Aristotle achieves this, however, is not tenable today when compared to the ideas of today’s *empirical* science, but it is not the detail of his philosophical structure that is of interest here, but rather that he finds a philosophical vehicle to retain a sense of the divine and does not take the route to reduce to pure materialism without any room for metaphysics. Aristotle does have a materialist emphasis or better said an emphasis on nature as worthwhile in its own right. Aristotle understands the term “substance” as including entities that transcend the material, but as already discussed has not so transferred reality as having its real tenure away from the physical world. (Another facet of Aristotle’s “knowledge” that is not acceptable today has to do with how “knowledge” for Aristotle is the fruit of steps of deductive demonstration rather than an empirical idea of induction from observations through the senses.)

For this thesis’ purpose, Aristotle’s understanding of “science” is not exhausted in its physical account of nature (*phusis* or physics), but also includes: “a universal ‘science of being *qua* being’, the concern of the *Metaphysics*. Part of this universal science examines the foundations of inquiry into nature.”⁷⁵

That is, the “universal science” studies the presuppositions that are common to the other sciences. Irwin lists three names under which this universal philosophy is also discussed by Aristotle and a fourth that is there in description if not with a name given by Aristotle. They are: “First Philosophy”, “the Science of Being”, “Theology” and “Metaphysics”.

⁷⁵T.H. Irwin, “Aristotle (384-322 BC),” *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 49.

In all of these Aristotle understands “substance” to be the primary sort of being but “substance” is not taken as equal to “material”. There are “substances” in Aristotelian thought that are non material. So while Aristotle does not understand reality to be built on a prior belief in the world of the Forms,⁷⁶ implying this world of nature is secondary, nonetheless he has not ruled out the “substantial” existence of entities such as numbers as numbers and God as the Supreme Being or the forms of entities in the physical world. T.H. Irwin’s summary of Aristotelian philosophy includes:

When Aristotle claims that first philosophy is also theology, he implies that the general discussion of being and substance is the basis for special discussion of divine substance The different features of substance explained in *Metaphysics* VII – IX are included in the divine substance of XII. (1) Primary substance is to be identified in some way with form rather than matter or with the compound of form and matter; divine substance is pure form without matter (2) Primary substance is in some way numerically one, . . (3) Primary substance is in some way actuality rather than potentiality; divine substance is pure actuality with no potentiality. (4) Primary substance is soul rather than body; divine substance is pure intellect without sense or body.

Indeed, for Aristotle, the study of nature (*phusis* or physics) points to these other existing but nonphysical “substances” and these include the divine realm. Aristotle wrote:

And it is the function of the philosopher to be able to investigate all things. For if it is not the function of the philosopher, who is it who will inquire whether Socrates and Socrates seated are the same thing, or whether one thing has one contrary, or what contrariety is, or how many meanings it has? And similarly with all other such questions. Since, then, these are essential modifications of unity *qua* unity and of being *qua* being, not *qua* numbers or lines or fire, it is clear that it belongs to this science to investigate both the essence of these concepts and their properties. And those who study these properties err not by leaving the sphere of philosophy, but by forgetting that substance, of which they have no correct idea, is prior to these other things. For number *qua* number has peculiar attributes, such as oddness and evenness, commensurability and equality, excess and defect, and these belong to numbers either in themselves or in relation to one another. And similarly the solid and the motionless and that which is in motion and the weightless and that which has weight have other peculiar properties. So too certain properties are peculiar to being as such, and it is about these that the philosopher has to investigate the truth.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Aristotle does have room for “form”, but this is not the divine realm of the Forms as understood by Plato.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 44.

This means that “the divine sense” for Aristotle did not display any sense of the divine by the postulation of a divine realm away from the physical world. Rather his philosophy had confidence that using the normal human capacity to philosophise from what is seen in nature, there could be an understanding about any necessary metaphysical entities. That was his way to have a sense of divine things.⁷⁸

The physicalist’s assumption/commitment is that the only things that exist are those that are explicable by the laws of physics. Aristotle held to the importance of the physical realm, but also held the view that study of the physical world leads to metaphysical vision. This should be recognized as an assumption commonly held by some, even the majority of the ancient philosophers, very different to that of the physicalist or the logical positivist. These assert the meaninglessness of metaphysical concepts if they are not subject to empirical verification within the natural world. Aristotle shares with these moderns the embracing of the natural world, but not their added assumptions. It is in this intellectual context that Aristotle contributed to the delineation of the individual sciences from his overarching universal science and philosophy.⁷⁹ With his assumptions, Aristotle is exhibiting a very strong version of a “divine sense”.

For Aristotle, the “divine realm” was within the grasp of the mind of the philosopher without reference to any realm of the Forms. This was not a denial of the metaphysical realm, but the assertion of a different starting point for one’s thinking – away from the supposition of the existence of the realm of the Forms “downwards”, to observation of the natural world “upwards”. Writing *On the Universe* Aristotle said:

Philosophy seemed to me truly divine and supernatural, . . . For seeing that it was not possible (as once the foolish Aloadae attempted) by means of the body to reach the heavenly region and leaving the earth behind to spy out that holy country, the soul by means of philosophy, taking the intellect as her guide, finding

⁷⁸ Aristotle’s philosophy is a lot more comprehensive than that which here is represented, but this short treatment is sufficient to set up his and then Aquinas’ understandings of any divine sense.

⁷⁹ Also important to the history of philosophy is Aristotle’s ideas that contributed to foundationalism in epistemology. This will be discussed through Plantinga’s eyes in Chapter 6.

an easy path has transversed the intervening space and fared forth, and by intelligence comprehended things very far removed in space from one another, easily, I think, recognizing those things which have kinship with herself, and by the divine eye of the soul apprehending things divine and interpreting them to mankind.⁸⁰

Notice the wording “the divine eye of the soul”. In another of Aristotle’s articles, “On the Heavens”, this thesis’ interest is again on how Aristotle understands the connection of the heavens of the Universe to “the divine realm”.

First, however, we must explain what we mean by ‘heaven’ and in how many ways we use the word, in order to make clearer the object of our inquiry. In one sense, then, we call ‘heaven’ the substance of the extreme circumference of the whole, or that natural body whose place is at the extreme circumference. We recognize habitually a special right to the name ‘heaven’ in the extremity or upper region, which we take to be the seat of all that is divine. In another sense, we use this name for the body continuous with the extreme circumference, which contains the moon, the sun, and some of the stars; these we say are ‘in the heaven’. In yet another sense we give the name to all body included within the extreme circumference, since we habitually call the whole or totality ‘the heaven’. The word, then, is used in three senses.⁸¹

Aristotle sees the extremity of the heavens as “the seat of all that is divine”. Note this is saying the extremities of the physical Heavens are *the seat* of all that is divine. It is to imagine the divine realm as at the extremity of the physical universe. Such understandings were common to the ancient world as they gazed up into the “heavens”. This may explain the thinking of moving into metaphysical field after starting with phenomenological language. The ancients were describing their world as they saw it from their observation point as people on earth looking up. It was not so different from the ancient Hebrew concept of “the Heavens” or “the panoply”⁸² which could stand for one of the three meanings: “where the

⁸⁰ Aristotle, *On the Universe*, trans. E. S. Forster (Paris: W. L. Lorimer, 1933). Unless otherwise stated, with exceptions, such as this footnote to do with the text, or to do with translators or with particular volume numbers, the quotations from Aristotle will come from Jonathan Barnes, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, revised Oxford translation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁸¹ Aristotle, “On the Heavens,” text: D.J. Allan, Oxford, 1936., trans. J.L. Stocks, as quoted from Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Ibid., vol. 1, Bk 1, 20.

⁸² If one lies down next to a brook under a little bridge in Tasmania (or old England) and looks up to the stone arch which constitutes the bridge seen from below, a “panoply” or arch is seen. The Heavens above

birds fly; where the stars shine; and where God's throne is". This highest heaven is the "divine realm".⁸³ After a couple of millennia of Christianity, it is poignant to observe how strange the idea of the continuity of these three is to our modern mindset - to think of God's heaven as having anything to do with the physical universe, rather than being another dimension.

A modern reading of Aristotle, if it were limited to this work "On the Heavens", and if we were not alerted to the issue of assumptions, could mistakenly interpret him as exhibiting a nonreligious attitude holding the physical universe to be the only existent reality with all gods or God expunged. Rather than ruling out the divine realm, Aristotle believes it is visible to his philosophical science. Aristotle has not expunged the divine realm but believed it to be brought closer into the purview via information from the study of nature. And this is one of his great contributions that will be an impetus to the whole idea of natural theology. It is in fact Aristotle's version of the "divine sense" in place of how Platonism suggests the realm of the Forms. Plato's version of the "divine sense" was a supposition of what was "above". Aristotle's divine sense was a presupposition with which to study the natural world which led one to an insight of the metaphysical world "from below".

The big Historical Picture from Aristotle to Aquinas

Aristotle had philosophized about matters that explained life. These included theological concerns. Much of this was carried over into Aquinas' synthesis. Tranoy wrote:

The influence of Aristotelian philosophy on Aquinas is so marked that it takes closer reading to discover the differences. One major and obvious difference is, of course, that Thomas is a Christian. He is trying to be a good Aristotelian and a good Christian at the same time – and some rather difficult problems grow out of

are described as a panoply or an arch which is how they are viewed phenomenologically from the earth. How far your gaze can penetrate may determine whether you are viewing the birds' heaven, the stars' heaven or God's heaven.

⁸³ Similarly in early Christianity: the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:2 about a Christian caught up to the "the third heaven" "whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell".

the effort to unite the two outlooks. However, partly through Thomas' training as a *Christian* philosopher, his philosophy also came to absorb elements of Platonic or Neo-Platonic origin. Thomas also had original ideas of his own. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that his strength does not lie in originality of ideas. His greatness derives from the force, clarity and persistence with which he tried to bring together into one coherent system elements of such different origins.⁸⁴

The fact that Aquinas is not without influence from Plato and Neo-Platonism fits in with how his overall picture has both some supposition “from above” and also a picture of the metaphysical world “from below”. He presented an overall synthesis that had two tiers. Back in this pre-Christian time the two activities of philosophy and theology were played out in the one arena of philosophical discussion. The “above” and “below” explanatory perspectives competed. Paul Helm's assessment of the thirteenth-century Aquinas as the greatest philosopher *and* theologian of the medieval church is because Aquinas participated fully in two arenas of expertise. Philosophy and theology had come to be two disciplines. Aquinas was not just a philosopher commissioned by the Church or a theologian drawing from philosophy. Rather, he was fully a theologian as much as he was fully a philosopher. His purpose and his success were to create an overall system of thought that was a synthesis of the two. History and the development of thought had allowed the separation of the arenas of philosophy and Christianity. There were some who believed in participation in only one arena and others, of which Aquinas was representative believed the Christian faith should benefit from both.

The reintroduction of Aristotle, and from better documents, had presented the difficult task in the days of the Scholastics, but also the opportunity for Aquinas to champion a synthesis. The medieval ferment had been to agonize over the relationship of faith to reason, of revelation to philosophy, and theology to philosophy.

With the dawn of Christianity, the ancient philosophers were impacted by and superseded by the advent of the Christian revelation. In the immediate period of the Apostles

⁸⁴ O'Connor, *Critical History*, 104.

and then the Apostolic Fathers, Christianity emerged as an infant faith facing persecution in the Roman Empire and preserving itself against the powerful background of Greek philosophy. It was very aware of the need to preserve its revelatory distinction. Their attitude toward philosophy was "by wisdom they knew not God".⁸⁵ By "wisdom" they meant the discipline of proof by philosophical demonstration. Tertullian was one later Apologist who continued that apprehensive fear of philosophy. He wrote:

Chapter III.-The Soul's Origin Defined Out of the Simple Words of Scripture.

Would to God that no "heresies had been ever necessary, in order that they which are; approved may be made manifest!" We should then be never required to try our strength in contests about the soul with philosophers, those patriarchs of heretics, as they may be fairly called. The apostle, so far back as his own time, foresaw, indeed, that philosophy would do violent injury to the truth. This admonition *about false philosophy* he was induced to offer after he had been at Athens, had become acquainted with that *loquacious* city, and had there had a taste of its huckstering wiseacres and talkers. In like manner is the treatment of the soul according to the sophistical doctrines of men which "mix their wine with water." Some of them deny the immortality of the soul; others affirm that it is immortal, and something more. Some raise disputes about its substance; others about its form; others, again, respecting each of its several faculties. One school of philosophers derives its state from various sources, while another ascribes its departure to different destinations. *The various schools reflect the character of their masters,* according as they have received their impressions from the dignity of Plato, or the vigour of Zeno, or the equanimity of Aristotle, or the stupidity of Epicurus, or the sadness of Heraclitus, or the madness of Empedocles. The fault, I suppose, of the divine doctrine lies in its springing from Judaea rather than from Greece. Christ made a mistake, too, in sending forth fishermen to preach, rather than the sophist. Whatever noxious vapours, accordingly, exhaled from philosophy, obscure the clear and wholesome atmosphere of truth, it will be for Christians to clear away, both by shattering to pieces the arguments which are drawn from the principles of things-I mean those of the philosophers-and by opposing to them the maxims of heavenly wisdom-that is, such as are revealed by the Lord; in order that both the pitfalls wherewith philosophy captivates the heathen may be removed, and the means employed by heresy to shake the faith of Christians may be repressed. We have already decided one point in our controversy with Hermogenes, as we said at the beginning of this treatise, when we claimed the soul to be formed by the breathing of God, and not out of matter. We relied even there on the clear direction of the inspired statement which informs us how that "the Lord God breathed on man's face the breath of life, so that man became a living soul" -by that inspiration of God, of course. On this point, therefore, nothing further need be investigated or advanced by us. It has its

⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:20

own treatise, and its own heretic. I shall regard it as my introduction to the other branches of the subject (underlining mine).⁸⁶

But already in these remaining centuries of the Roman Empire this caution against the wisdom of the world was melding into an accommodation with its philosophical thought as much as it did with its politics.

Particularly Platonism and Neo-Platonism were synthesized with the truths of revelation until Augustine gave a system which was generally accepted and with which the Christian world could operate with a comparative degree of unity. Augustine's legacy was kind to some of Plato's ideas and resistant to most of Aristotle. Augustine pointed out that Aristotle talked of the material world as though it were eternal, thus not having a place for creation.

The medieval period developed a model of education that sponsored an overall unity of the Christian world. But by the later medieval years this was now under threat by new information coming from new resources enabling a fresh look at the ancient philosophies. Perhaps Aristotle did not deserve his bad reputation?

The Scholastic era particularly allowed education to scaffold the progress of the Christian faith. Augustine's model of education was at first the major one, but then became only one model amongst others. Aquinas offered a competitive model which followed Aristotle. The heart of the difference between Aquinas' new ideas and Augustine's legacy was not at all any lessening by Aquinas of the revelation of God and Christian doctrines,⁸⁷ but rather that he raised the regard for nature and what could be known through its study by the human intellect. There was of course the question of whether these Aristotelian ideas were watering down the influence of the Christian revelation, but on the other hand Aquinas' synthesis offered a way that philosophy might team with the Christian revelation to have the

⁸⁶ Tertullian, *De Anima (A Treatise on the Soul)*, trans. Peter Holmes, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III. http://www.tertullian.org/anf/anf03/anf03-22.htm#P2588_854958 (accessed March 6, 2014).

⁸⁷ *Summa Theologia* in its constant reference to scripture to settle questions along with good reasons is the proof of this.

best effect. It was not an offer to team the way Platonism had done at the start of Christian history. That had led to competition for influence on certain points. Rather, it was a team whereby philosophy would do one thing and revelation another by the supposition of the two tiers.

The presenting issue relevant to this thesis is the consequence of how thoroughly the Christian faith in its doctrine of creation was being allowed or not fully represented due to the Platonic influence. Aristotle had rejected Plato's dualism between the heavenly realm of the Forms and the material order. Aristotle did not champion any ideas of creation, but it is one of the ironies of history that his emphasis on the study of nature and his value of the human capacity to thereby understand the divine things or the metaphysical realities was to give a helpful alternative to the influence of Plato. This alternative was actually about recognizing the opposite approach to *only* understanding the divine things "from above" by instead having both that and an understanding "from below". It would eventually issue in the possibility of developing a more full doctrine of creation, natural revelation in an appreciation of divinity from the study of the natural order. Plato's theories had fitted so well with Christianity because in its primitive state Christianity is a presentation of God "from above" just as in Plato's theories the soul was from above. Christ came down from Heaven. The Gospel was given. The Scriptures are inspired. Plato's supposition of the divine world to be accepted so as to then understand the worldly experience is in its own way an "understanding from above".

Stepping aside into an amphitheatre of theology: Christian theology has always had this "both/and" tension of the duality of being "from above" *and also* "from below" right at its heart. In Millard Erickson's textbook for Systematic Theology, which he called *Christian Theology*⁸⁸, this thesis writer cum theology teacher's estimate of the very best chapter is that on Christology. Erickson describes the sweep of Christian history as one where there have been two approaches to the establishment of the doctrine of Christ. They are called

⁸⁸ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

“Christology from Above” and “Christology from Below”. The former is either (a) accepting the doctrine of Christ as told from Heaven through the gospel or the Scriptures or (b) sometimes the understanding of the Person of Christ starting with his divinity and then moving to his humanity; the latter is either accepting (a) the understanding of Christ from that which is discernible from the human viewpoint or (b) of starting with his Christ’s humanity and moving on toward the question of his deity. Erickson’s analysis of the development of Christology through history is that there has been an oscillation between the two approaches. For this writer’s theological students what proved a useful illustration was to liken this oscillation to a cricket match with both sides taking turns and both sides receiving two innings. Christology from Above had the first innings with the Early Church Fathers right through till the age of reason. Then there was a time of Christology from Below’s first innings in the “Search for the Historical Jesus”. The second innings “from above” followed with the neo-orthodox theologians led by Karl Barth and his theology based on the Word of God. Then finally a further attempt at “finding the historical Jesus” was the second innings “from below.” Erickson’s chapter concludes well, suggesting that the best Christology is not one or the other but a synthesis of both methods applied simultaneously. (Now the same approach of recognizing one approach from above and another from below can be applied to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scriptures. This doctrine also is best set up when the theological project involves a synthesis of both approaches.)

In the development of the “divine sense” a similar phenomenon is occurring. Plato’s first good match with Christianity was exactly because both represented an approach “from above”. Aristotle’s emphasis was more on what could be observed from our human viewpoint. It was an approach from below. It is quite understandable that Platonism and Neo-Platonism both fitted with Christianity while also somewhat competing with it because both were offering ideas as to the details of the divine world which details clashed in parts. This is why the souls coming from the realm of the Forms necessarily limited the grip of the

Christian doctrine of creation. The revelation at the heart of Christianity actually out-trumped Greek philosophy and writers such as Augustine needed only one source of authority as to the divine world. But there were facets of the Platonic project with to which everyone nonetheless had fallen into line. These continued to be influential.

In this survey of history, the visible difference between Plato and Aristotle is that Plato has “an approach from above” and Aristotle “an approach from below”. Both believe in the metaphysical world and the thesis has recognized this presupposition or intuition or assumption has something to do with “the divine sense”. As said just above, this is one reason why the approach from above by Plato’s Realm of the Forms teamed best with primitive Christianity. But the influence of Christian revelation did not entail that Platonism was ever totally “exorcised” as shall be seen repeatedly in later chapters. But without a more nuanced approach the presence of Platonism can push out the respect for that which can be learned from the natural order. What is lost is that which Aristotle valued which was the basis of the natural order from which to intuit the metaphysical things. Aquinas, centuries later, had his genius in his ability to synthesize both together with the emphasis mostly in congruence with Aristotle. The Aristotelian philosophy, on the other hand, did not offer something to compete with the Christian revelation, but a philosophy to add to it. Thus, Aquinas was able to come up with a two tiered approach which had philosophical science – mainly from Aristotle – as the lower tier and then the Christian revelation sometimes with Platonic flavours as the higher.

Discussing understanding of Aquinas’ theories, Knut Tranoy wrote:

Understanding would be denied to one confirmed in the opinion that metaphysics is always nonsense and that religious ideas are not intelligible but can only be explained as psycho-social events. Here already, we have come to one of the central features in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas believed that the universe is intelligible in a strict sense of the word, i.e., that its structure and laws can be grasped by the limited or finite human intellect, that in consequence of intellectual effort men can come to *understand* it. For him the universe had a

supernatural as well as a natural aspect: God and creation, cause and effect. And he believed in a continuity or intelligible connection between these two aspects.⁸⁹

Aquinas' understanding of "substance" was similar to that of Aristotle, as previously set out. Aquinas, in discussing his idea of "substance", he wrote: "Having treated of the spiritual and of the corporeal creature, we now proceed to treat of man, who is composed of a spiritual and corporeal substance." "Substance" was clearly not limited to physical objects.⁹⁰

For Aquinas, humans are composed of both "corporality" and "spirituality" and the latter is also understood as the "soul". The word "substance" is not just applied to the corporality. Aquinas, like Aristotle, subscribed to a body and non body constitution of man, whereas Augustine had more spoken of a psychology of soul, spirit and flesh. The contrast between Augustine and Aquinas is also due to Augustine stressing the certainties of the illuminated intellectual powers as compared to the uncertain results of the understanding based on our senses. Here can be seen the shadow of "the approach from above" on Augustine's attitudes. He certainly was a lot more following Plato than Aristotle. Aquinas' picture, on the other hand, is from a base of confidence on the reasoning that comes from a study of nature through the senses, and also talks of "the intellectual principle" of the soul. About this, He wrote:

It must necessarily be allowed that the principle of intellectual operation which we call the soul, is a principle both incorporeal and subsistent. For it is clear that by means of the intellect man can have knowledge of all corporeal things. Now whatever knows certain things cannot have any of them in its own nature; because that which is in it naturally would impede the knowledge of anything else . . . Therefore it is impossible for the intellectual principle to be a body. It is likewise impossible for it to understand by means of a bodily organ; since the determinate nature of that organ would impede knowledge of all bodies; . . .⁹¹

⁸⁹ O'Connor, *Critical History*, 99.

⁹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, "Treatise on Sacred Doctrine," *The Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948).

⁹¹ Ibid.

The “principle of intellectual operation” is the spirit: that is soul: that is the non bodily part of man. This soul has substance (reality) but is not now in, nor previously from another realm such as the world of the Forms. (Aquinas’ use of the pairing of matter and form fits in here.) The fact that Aquinas calls it the “principle of intellectual operation” shows how he is seeing the thought processes of humanity as more mind than mere brain.

Thus far, the chapter is showing that it is by this intellectual operation, through philosophy, that Aquinas’ theories exhibit a divine sense within natural humanity. In this he has not strayed from Aristotle as exposited just above in *On the Heavens*. He may have added to Aristotle with his second tier but without devaluing the first tier. Where Aquinas does show his Christian allegiance is in his proposal of this second tier - this way of revelation as another way to know. But the operation of the “intellectual principle” is not this. The “intellectual principle” has to do with the form that is the soul that gives direction to and draws nourishment from the matter that is the body. This non bodily part of man is able to understand the universe and divine things.

Just here, let a mental note be made to compare this Aristotelian thought and then Aquinas’ synthesis with knowledge through revelation with the later Edwards (Chapter 4) as far as how much the spiritual/mental/soul is connected or disconnected from the natural knowledge through the senses and yet how much the revelatory work of the Spirit is also involved!

Aquinas followed Aristotle in believing that by the task of philosophy the metaphysical world could be understood. This he did in his arena of philosophy. As a theologian he presented the truths of revelation which he believed spoke to the metaphysical realm as well. In responding to the question, “Whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required?” Aquinas wrote:

I answer that, It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason. Firstly, indeed, because man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason: "The eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee" (Is. 66:4). But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophical science built up by reason, there should be a sacred science learned through revelation.⁹²

For Aquinas, then, there was the science (knowledge) involved in philosophy and added to it was the "sacred science known through revelation." It is to be noted that the clause "built up by reason" is being contrasted to "known through revelation". That is why the former is "philosophical science" and the latter is theology or "sacred science." He elsewhere shows that the knowledge from the sacred science, not built up by reason but received by revelation, is nonetheless also the object of one's reasoning powers. Aquinas' theological system takes into account both sources of the knowledge. It is visible in this quotation of Aquinas that there is overlap in the content of that which is built up by reason and that known by revelation. The overlap does not issue in a split opinion as there was nonetheless a unity to his system. His system was not just an amalgam of disparate ideas, but steps of philosophical reasoning were applied to bring both inputs together to make the total synthesis.

In this thesis chapter, the quest is to find Aquinas' nearest version of a "divine sense". Observing his two sources of knowledge might have led to expecting it to be the supernatural, revelatory source. Aquinas' most unique contribution, however, is his following Aristotelian insight to philosophize one's way around the metaphysical heavens. His trust in human

⁹² Aquinas, "Treatise on Man," *Summa Theologica*, Ibid.

capacity to start with the universe as it is seen and to sense and arrive at a vision of metaphysical things is his “divine sense”. In contrast, a spiritually blind generation do the same task and see nothing. The Russian cosmonaut went out into the Heavens and came back and said that he had seen nothing, no angel or whatever. Helen Keller (1880-1968), the girl who from early age was blind and deaf, but became an author, political activist, and a lecturer, was the first blind and deaf person to receive a bachelor of arts degree. She said:

I have walked with people whose eyes are full of light
but who see nothing in sea or sky, nothing in city streets, nothing in books.
It were far better to sail forever in the night of blindness with sense,
and feeling, and mind, than to be content with the mere act of seeing.
The only lightless dark is the night of darkness in ignorance and insensibility.⁹³

Also, Aquinas’ trust in human powers of the intellect is so unabated that he turns to them to bring together his philosophical/theological synthesis. As with Aristotle it is hard to accept some of the science of Aquinas with which he is being philosophical. An example is seen in the difficulty in accepting the substance and accidents in explaining the elements of the Communion. Today it is easy to reject some of the aspects and complications of his system as untenable. But his “divine sense” is not in the very pattern of philosophical reasoning, but in the concomitant assurance and presuppositions that assume the existence of the metaphysical world and discern it when looking at the material world.

This writer does not think that pure philosophical reasoning on its own could ever qualify for the “divine sense”. Perhaps Aristotle thought so. But he was probably not aware of the presupposition he held to expect the metaphysical entities to be known some way. If there is such a thing as the *s.d.* then it was operating in Aristotle and so in Aquinas. They may well have thought the insight was in the philosophy when in truth it was while they were being philosophical.

⁹³ Helen Keller, *Great Thinkers of the World*, <http://www.livinglifefully.com/thinkerskeller.html> (accessed February 15, 2014).

So the “divine sense” this thesis is ascribing to Aquinas is rather the insight or assumption present while the philosophy is being done by Aristotle or Aquinas that makes it a “divine sense”. There is something at work that is causing so many different ones to suppose their elaborate systems of thought to be able to include explanation of the metaphysical world. This is a “divine sense” that one either has, or is totally blind about.

An application of this is seen when Aquinas talks so much about knowledge by analogy. He subscribes to God a being so different that the best we can do is analogically make statements about him. This knowing by analogy is due to the definitions of “substance” or “being”. This “beingness” is that which God shares with every other item that has substance. But because of this connection, through the analogy of being, a person should be able to argue from the items of nature up to God by analogy. There has come into the history of ministry by church preachers a style of speaking that is not relying on the Word of God for authority. Protestants do not usually grasp it. It is when the Priest does not speak from the Scriptures but will use an example out of everyday life, and by analogy make inferences about God or the Kingdom of God. To ears unaccustomed to this, these talks seem puerile and without authority. But if Aquinas were correct then it may be a matter of finding his “divine sense” to be discerning of the connection between nature and God.

Later in this thesis, Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology is the sixth case study. His theories take from Aquinas an illustration about an innate human capacity to believe in God. Plantinga argues that “Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin concur on the claim that there is a kind of natural knowledge of God . . .”⁹⁴ Aquinas had written, “To know in a general and confused way that God exists is implanted in us by nature, . . .”⁹⁵ In his footnote about it, Plantinga also refers to a similar statement in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, “There is a certain

⁹⁴ Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 170. See Chapter 6 of this thesis for more detail

⁹⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a.1, ad 1.

general and confused knowledge of God, which is in almost all men. . .”⁹⁶ Aquinas definitely made the comments as quoted, but they are not really representative of the main stream of the philosopher/theologian’s argument. They are, in fact, more incidental admissions in passing. They do concede recognition that there is this awareness of God within humanity, so Plantinga legitimately has the example from Aquinas to trace in further development by Calvin. Given the direction of Aquinas’ reasoning, however, they are somewhat evidence from a hostile or unaware witness.

In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas is handling an objection to the idea that the existence of God is self-evident. His structure of writing uses this word “objection” but it is his way, having set up an issue: “Whether the proposition "God exists" is self-evident?” of then putting up for view the two sides of the issue. The objection is one of these two sides.

Objection 1: It seems that the existence of God is self-evident. Now those things are said to be self-evident to us the knowledge of which is naturally implanted in us, as we can see in regard to first principles. But as Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* i, 1,3), "the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in all." Therefore the existence of God is self-evident.

Aquinas’ reply follows:

Reply to Objection 1: To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is man's beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man must be naturally known to him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching; for many there are who imagine that man's perfect good which is happiness, consists in riches, and others in pleasures, and others in something else.⁹⁷

Aquinas’ Reply begins by affirming that there is an awareness of God’s existence implanted in humanity. But the overall meaning of this reply, when read in its expansion, is to qualify the statement. People are misinterpreting this awareness to the effect that they believe

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Bk III. Ch. 38.

⁹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I,q. 2, a.1, ad 1.

transient things such as riches and pleasures are their “beatitude”. Aquinas’ default belief is that the ultimate good of man is to be happy in God. People do not always understand themselves and misinterpret their own experiences. This does not mean that these do not come out of a real registration of something there. His reply, nonetheless, is to lean the weight of his way to discern God on philosophical reason, even while having also to admit that there is some knowledge of God simply implanted in created human nature.

With Plantinga’s additional quotation from *Summa contra Gentiles*, the same conclusion can be made. In writing to outsiders to both Judaism and Christianity, he is basing his argument as much as is possible on anything that may be common ground – intuition or human reason. The work is not set out in Scholastic form as were his *Scriptum* and *Summa Theologiae*. It is more straight forward prose. Looking at the place quoted by Plantinga, the bigger passage reads:

THAT HUMAN FELICITY DOES NOT CONSIST IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WHICH IS GENERALLY POSSESSED BY MOST MEN

[1] It remains to investigate the kind of knowledge in which the ultimate felicity of an intellectual substance consists. For there is a common and confused knowledge of God which is found in practically all men; this is due either to the fact that it is self-evident that God exists, just as other principles of demonstration are—a view held by some people, as we said in Book One [25]—or, what seems indeed to be true, that man can immediately reach some sort of knowledge of God by natural reason. For, when men see that things in nature run according to a definite order, and that ordering does not occur without an orderer, they perceive in most cases that there is some orderer of the things that we see. But who or what kind of being, or whether there is but one orderer of nature, is not yet grasped immediately in this general consideration, just as, when we see that a man is moved and performs other works, we perceive that there is present in him some cause of these operations which is not present in other things, and we call this cause the soul; yet we do not know at that point what the soul is, whether it is a body, or how it produces these operations which have been mentioned.⁹⁸

Because *Summa contra Gentiles* is written more in prose style than after the Scholastic fashion, his headings can be taken as informative statements. His heading here implies a

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Bk III. Ch. 38.

preliminary conclusion that “human felicity” is not primarily found by God’s existence being self evident from “generally possessed knowledge of God”. It could come from such generally possessed knowledge of God by all men, but Aquinas favours the alternate option “that man can immediately reach some sort of knowledge of God by natural reason”. So again, although this mention by Plantinga of Aquinas admitting the common knowledge of God is accurately spotlighted by Plantinga, if we turn the spotlights off, then the general lighting reveals that Aquinas’ overall exposition is going in the opposite direction.

Why this still does not undo Plantinga’s case, is that he has found a testimony in the mouth of a “hostile witness”. This is one of the strongest types of evidence. Aquinas has conceded the existence of this implanted knowledge. This is not a big issue for Plantinga as he moves on to consider Calvin’s digestion of the whole question. But it is an important issue for the quest for Aquinas’ version of the “divine sense”. The importance is that whatever Calvin and Plantinga each later make out of the reference for an implanted knowledge of God, Aquinas’s best locus of the “divine sense” remains in the philosophical science where he can establish the “human felicity in the knowledge of God”.

Interestingly, Aquinas has arrived at a two-tiered model in his overall synthesis. His version of the divine sense (as herein is being ascribed to him) is in the first tier, and the second tier or step is that provided by the sacred science brought by revelation. This is his major difference, regarding the “divine sense”, from Platonic influenced Christianity. The Christianity influenced by Plato alone tended to only have the one tier. In Church Fathers influenced by Platonism, their mysticism or their intellectual pursuit of God was built on the platform of either the Work of the Spirit in sanctification or the sense of the divine in the very nature of the soul and so in each case equivalent to the second tier in Aquinas’ synthesis.

It is, however, too simple an analysis of the mystical writers of early Christian centuries to subsume them all under the one heading like this. The variation amongst them is

the degree to which their upward ascent is attempted on the basis of that which came by way of the “rule of faith” or other connections to the apostolic message. The earlier examples mainly did this but later ones had lost something of the primitive urge of Christianity. In such early cases the desire and attempt to ascend in contemplation of God is indeed analogous to what became Aquinas’ second tier, because it was based on that which was gained from the Christian revelation. If on the other hand there had been a loss of connection with the original Christian gospel the approach that might once have been an approach from above, as was Plato’s realm of the Forms, had morphed into an approach from below. Julie Canlis’ major idea of the necessity of a firm acceptance of creation and the natural order in order to achieve a true Christian ascent is saying a similar thing. She begins one chapter entitled “Creation: The Ground and Grammar of Ascent” with a quotation from von Balthasar:

An asceticism and mysticism based on the natural longing for the vision of God would be anthropocentric: the standard and the goal would be derived from man himself – his longing, his eros, his self-fulfillment, in short, his own perfection. By contrast, a theocentric asceticism and mysticism would have as their point of departure man’s creatureliness and its fundamental exigencies: the praise and service of God, reverential awe before the absolute Lord, and obedience to him. On this basis, all norms are to be found in God’s hand from the outset. Here we can see that the way of distance and awe is the shortest way to attain to pure love. But, on the opposite side of things, whoever would jump over the level of “nature” in order to start at once with “Christian” sublimity will most likely be importing the unconscious concupiscence of nature into the highest level of reality.⁹⁹

Canlis’ is speaking similarly to this thesis in first recognizing there are the two contrasting approaches amongst the Christian mystics, one from above when based in the prior action of God in Christ coming down to the earth is the basis and the other bedded in the instinct and thrust of humanity to reach up to God but not based on that mission of Christ. When the effort and method has to do with the mind and with “wisdom” but without the basis in the prior initiative of God in Christ, then this is that of which the Apostles had assessed: “by wisdom

⁹⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Grain of Wheat* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 101, as quoted from Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 53.

they knew not God”¹⁰⁰. This descent of God in Christ needed a clear acceptance of the created order to which the Son was incarnated. The humanity and incarnation of Jesus was “the trysting place” between heaven and earth. The ascent that is made by the Christian is by being united to Christ. In Christ’s descent, resurrection and ascension the Christian can approach God. The centre of Christianity has this both/and demonstration of God reaching down in revelation and our human ascent up. So the applicable model of a divine sense has regard for both of these aspects.

Then this thesis is going to connect the possibility of the “from above” and the “from below” to the need for two tiers in a model for the knowledge of God – and also that one is available to all humanity through creation and the other that is the outcome of the revelation of Christ. Finally there will be the issue as to which of these two tiers has pre-eminence. All of this dictates as to wherein one finds an attempt at a “divine sense”.

The supposition of the divine realm by Plato, or initiatives declared in the Christian gospel is the locus of the approach from above. The arrival of the Christian gospel into the Hellenistic world offered an alternative way to Platonism for an approach from above. The supposition of the work of the Spirit in conversion and sanctification will later in the thesis be seen as belonging to the approach from above. In some case studies there is only one tier and in others there are two with the “from above” in the second tier and usually involving “the instigation of the Holy Spirit”. As further progress is made through the case studies of the thesis, comment can be made as to whether what is being observed in a particular study is more applicable to general humanity, because of how humanity has been created in the first place; or whether it is due to Christian experience involving the Holy Spirit. Chapter 3 will discuss Calvin and his doctrine of the knowledge of God and mention his two tiered model, and also exactly where in the balance he has laid his emphasis.

¹⁰⁰ See reference 84. This diagnosis covers not only those who were merely adopting an approach from below but also Plato’s approach from above but in its pre-Christian form was without basis in the mission of Christ.

CHAPTER 3

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564) and Reformation Theology

An Exposition of Calvin's Use of the Term

Sensus Divinitatis

Introduction: Sources and Terms Used

It is Calvin who first utilized the wording *sensus divinitatis*¹⁰¹ for his version of “the divine sense”. Sometimes Calvin has it as *sensus deitatis*.¹⁰² The general concept is also informed by what Calvin wrote about the *semen religionis* “seed of religion.” These terms occur together early in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (I.3.1). His following chapter (I.4) continues at length about the *semen religionis* in order to explain the superstitious idolatry of the world. Also related is discussion in Calvin's Commentaries on the early chapters of Romans where Paul puts forward an explanation of the development of “false religions”. Also in Calvin's commentaries is relevant the first chapter of John's gospel and also the Apostolic preaching in Acts 14 and 17. This thesis chapter is a discussion as to what, from the *Institutes and his Commentaries*, is the best exposition of these terms (herein called the *s.d.* and the *s.r.*) and seeks to locate Calvin's use of these terms in his presentation of knowledge of God through nature. Calvin's Commentaries are also useful in rebutting some more recent objections to the idea of Calvin promoting such a natural knowledge of God.

¹⁰¹As noted in n. 3, the *sensus divinitatis* will be simply referred to as the *s.d.*

¹⁰² John Calvin, *Institutes* III.3

The Early Life of Calvin

John Calvin, “Jean Calvin” or “Cauvin” in the pronunciation/spelling of generations previous¹⁰³, was born on July 13th, 1509 in the town of Noyon in the Picardy area of France. His father, Gerard Calvin, enjoyed a status of a prosperous aristocrat in a secure position as a lawyer of the church. Calvin’s mother - nee Jeanne Le Franc -came from an inn keeper’s family. Both Gerard and Jeanne’s father had prospered sufficiently to be able to apply to become *bourgeois*¹⁰⁴. Jeanne bore Gerard four sons, one of whom died in infancy. Then Jeanne died a few years after the birth of her boys and Gerard married again and fathered two girls. Gerard at first intended “Jean” and the two remaining other sons to also go into the church.

This was traditional Catholic society experiencing the influence of the Renaissance on culture and business. By education and going into the church, Gerard’s working idea for his boys was that they might attain access to the higher classes of their society. This was at a time when the clergy traditionally socialized amongst the nobility but economic changes were coming through due to new channels for the spice trade bringing instability to the old order. Some prices were falling, other living costs were rising, and people on fixed salaries were not able to maintain their standard of living. So Gerard Calvin could have changed his mind as to where to position his son John and rerouted his education to leave Paris at 19 to study law.

John Calvin had been at the University of Paris at fourteen to be trained for the Church and so acquired Greek, Hebrew, Latin and philosophy at an early age. At Paris he was a contemporary student of Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola (eventual co-founders of the Society of Jesus). The European stream of Renaissance humanism was particularly well represented in the University of Paris and was the background to these two latter becoming leaders of the Catholic Reform movement. Parker wonders about the motives of Gerard, the father. Parker wrote:

¹⁰³ T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975 and 2006), 17.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Parker records a picture that Calvin’s grandfather was a “boatman (a vague enough term), or, as another suggests, a cooper , or both; for not only did the Oise, flowing into the Seine, provide a trade route to the north coast and to Paris, but it was at Pont-l’Eveque that the wine was shipped.”

Perhaps, however, it was not Gerard who changed so much as the circumstances. Jean was destined for ‘theology’ as ‘a very little boy’. How old is that? Surely not more than ten at the most, most probably seven or eight – in other words somewhere between 1516 and 1519. And this is, in fact or in effect, before Martin Luther’s impact on the church. By 1525, with part of Germany successfully in revolt against Rome and with Reformation and Reformism active in Switzerland and France, the church may well have seemed to a clear-sighted father to offer a less glittering prospect for his son. If reform got its way, what would become of the desirable plums?¹⁰⁵

Calvin wrote of this change of direction, attesting to the more straight forward financial motive, but did not necessarily know his father’s deeper calculations, especially if Gerard observed the boy coming home reporting differences of opinion between the University of Paris’ traditional Catholic views and the exciting reform trends of other young adventurous souls. Calvin wrote in his *Psalms’ Commentary Preface*:

When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavored faithfully to apply myself in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course.¹⁰⁶

Calvin evidently had a strong grasp on God’s sovereignty and providence and saw himself the beneficiary of all of these societal changes and family decisions. There were clear influences on Calvin by his young intelligentsia peers, if not actually Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola, despite the later persistent and mutual opposition between Calvinists and Jesuits. This later mutual opposition lay not with humanist influences shared in common, but the essential difference between the emerging Reformed faith and that of continuing Catholicism.

Calvin was astute of mind and he developed a very mellifluous writing ability in Latin. On the other hand he was probably weak of physical constitution as he eventually suffered

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on Psalms - Volume 1* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08.vi.html> (accessed August 19, 2013).

from various ailments including headaches, shortness of breath with coughing fits, kidney stones and hemorrhoids. According to Alexandre Ganoczy, Calvin experienced “bleeding from the stomach, fever, muscle cramps, nephritis, and gout.”¹⁰⁷ So, he was a word-smith and man of the mind, but not physically strong.

Other Background Influences to Calvin’s Thought

Calvin’s ministry training would have included the study of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Calvin’s writings evidence a great debt to that early theologian. He followed Augustine’s understanding of double predestination. He said: “Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings.”¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, his concentration was not only on those things so often associated with “Calvinism” such as predestination but more on the church and how it was to be taught and led.

The Writings of John Calvin

Calvin wrote his *Institutio Christianae Religionis* across much time, between the ages of twenty-six and fifty with varying French and Latin editions. About Calvin’s writings, early surveys show two major divisions: the period of his founding of the Geneva Church with its struggle against the Papacy and then secondly during times of felt resistance from Protestant sponsored false teachings over and above the maintaining of his ongoing stance against Catholicism.¹⁰⁹ The major part of Calvin’s writings (including ongoing revisions to the

¹⁰⁷ Alexandre Ganoczy, *Le Jeune Calvin : Genèse et évolution de sa vocation réformatrice* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1966). Quoted in entry by Kent Hendricks posted January 23, 2012, *Logotalk*, <http://blog.logos.com/2012/01/5-things-you-didnt-know-about-john-calvin-and-should/> (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ John Calvin, *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/reformed-theology/predestination-election/a-treatise-of-the-eternal-predestination-of-god-by-john-calvin/> (accessed August 19, 2013).

Institutes) were thus subsequent to his setting up the Geneva model when the issues were not only those pertaining to the original call for reform, but now once the religious bifurcation had occurred the issues were the concern for the establishment, justification, organisation and defence of the Reformed Church in the face of the Roman Catholic establishment. It is notable that his work, nonetheless, was not so much a negative apologetic against other ideas but, in the balance of things, a positive setting out of the truth as established through the Scriptures. This is an important characteristic to note: that his finished product was more due to the effort to be faithful to the Scriptures than the influence of his original assumptions or hostilities. Also he wrote, not only for the faith for the individual, but more because in that particular time the reformation of the Church was uppermost in many minds. He was keen to show himself as an advocate for the Church as the visible Body of Christ on earth in the purest possible form. John E. Smith pictures this as being “high church”.

Calvin was a “high” churchman; he revered the church as the one divine institution testifying to the grace of Christ. His interest accordingly was directed more to discerning and stating the true marks of the church – discipline, sacraments, and the preaching of the Word – than to discovering the distinguishing marks of a solitary piety.¹¹⁰

Smith wrote this in a comparison of Calvin and Jonathan Edwards whose life’s burden was more for the inner spiritual life of the individual than the collective body of the Church. Calvin, nonetheless, gives some time and attention to establish about a natural knowledge of God and the experience of the individual in the early part of the *Institutes*. This is significant despite its relative small percentage of space taken in his overall presentation of a knowledge of God. The agenda of this thesis chapter ultimately focuses on these ideas Calvin put forward about a natural knowledge of God pertaining to normal human experience.

¹⁰⁹ As in Gottlieb Jacob Planck, *Geschichte der Entstehung der Veränderungen und der Bildung unsers protestantischen Lehrbegriffs* [A history of the genesis of the changes and the formation of our Protestant educational concept] (Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1796, now in New York Public Library in the Americana Collection but also digitized by Google).

¹¹⁰ John E. Smith in the editor’s introduction to *A Treatise concerning Religious Affections, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 2, Gen Ed: Perry Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 65.

Humanism

Erasmus (1466–1536) had become famous throughout Europe as a leading Dutch humanist who, although he remained a Catholic priest all his life amid the growing calls for reform, nonetheless was a major pre-contributor to that which led to the Reformation. This he was by virtue of his enormous influence across Europe in the humanism movement.

The humanism agenda was positive in promoting the progress in philology, although negatively it opened the door for irreligious outlooks. The humanistic aspect of the Renaissance cut deeply against the authoritative position previously taken by the church and particularly the universality of the Roman Catholic edifice. In the face of emerging protests of individuals reading critically the Scriptures for themselves, they had the most to lose at that juncture. The humanist philology, nonetheless, paved the way for the Reformation, both Protestant and the Counter Reformation amongst the Catholics, but also would be a double edged sword in the experience of the ongoing church in both sides of this division.

John Calvin began nestled within the Catholic Church; and so was particularly well trained in languages and classical literature necessary to participate in the best of the influences of humanism. Then instead of proceeding with ordination he was moved by his father to pursue the training of a lawyer, because of which, he missed ordination in the mother church and instead was free to use his legally trained mind to write a major system of Protestant theology. More than just a theologian all of this background had positioned him perfectly to become one of the reforming leaders and ecclesiastical entrepreneurs of his day.

The Structure of the *Institutes*

The structure of Calvin's *Institutes* contributes toward his presentation of a Knowledge of God. Calvin rearranged the topics for the 1559 Latin edition.¹¹¹ Such a

¹¹¹ *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* were published first in Latin in 1536 and only later in Calvin's native French in 1541. Further Latin editions came in 1539, 1543, 1550 and 1559 and again in French in 1560. The final editions (Latin and French) are about five times the length of the first, so most comprehensive estimations of his thought make use of these later editions of 1559 in the Latin or 1560 in the French, or translations from them. Calvin's thought is fairly consistent across the various editions although of course expanded and completed greatly with time. Herein quotations are from the 1559 translation to English from the Latin Text. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, *The*

deliberate act carries significance. He might have left out the part about the *s.d.* if he had developed any hesitations about that idea. He did write much new content, but the material from the previous editions is largely reshuffled and expanded into four “books”. These four “books” were a grouping of “themes under which Calvin considered to be the four parts of the Apostles’ Creed: God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Holy Spirit, and the Church and Sacraments.”¹¹² The first two of the books refer to knowledge of God. Book One is “The Knowledge of God the Creator” and Book Two is “The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel.”¹¹³

These headings and their structure reveal how Calvin recognizes that knowing of God as Creator is prior to/and an underpinning knowing of him as Redeemer. Note that this is not saying “knowing God through creation”, but “knowing God as Creator”. It would seem that this structure, along with its inclusion of the parts about the *s.d.*, support the foundational nature of that which a *s.d.* would have a role to add. There is a basic awareness of the existence of God with a raw ability to believe in Him as the creator of the world and the Lord of the individual.

But this awareness is not, according to the implications of Calvin’s structure of the *Institutes*, left to the *s.d.* alone but greatly championed by the teaching of the Scriptures that leads to the full understanding of God as Creator and then finally on to God as Redeemer.

Dowey suggested that when Calvin revised the order and inclusion of material for the last edition, he was attempting to follow the schemata of the Apostles’ Creed. These are: God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Holy Spirit, and the Church and Sacraments. Then Dowey continued to say that this structure of the *Institutes* is unconvincing and that the material, by its nature, falls into just two divisions: the Knowledge of God as Creator; and all

Library of Christian Classics, 26 vols (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1960 [originally published in 1559]), xi and xiii. Subsequent page references to the *Institutes* are to this edition.

¹¹² Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, expanded edition (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), 41.

¹¹³ Calvin, *Institutes*.

the rest of the four books subsumed under the Knowledge of God as Redeemer. He sees Book One as having the purpose of setting the platform for the remainder of the work.¹¹⁴

Book One has eighteen chapters, but from Chapter VI on, this address of God as Creator is made through the input of Scripture! The heading of Chapter VI is: “Scripture is Needed as Guide and Teacher for Anyone Who Would Come to God as Creator.” So the distinction intended between knowing God the Creator and knowing God the Redeemer is *not a division about from where the knowledge of God is found*. In the light of the later debate between Barth and Brunner about natural theology, Richard A. Muller, in his chapter on “Natural and Supernatural Theology”, discusses Calvin’s true commitment to natural theology and notes that “several studies have examined Calvin’s views on the natural knowledge of God and have found them more positive than indicated by Barth, but more clearly within the bounds of Christian doctrine and biblical revelation than indicated by Brunner. Muller writes:

This revised understanding of Calvin – viz., the understanding of his thought without reference to the neo-orthodox paradigm grafted onto it by the Barth-Brunner debate - in turn indicates a greater affinity between Calvin’s teaching and that of the Reformed orthodox at the same time that it recognizes in Calvin (as will also be found in the later Reformed) a firm distinction between pagan natural reason or fallen reason and a Christian application of reason to the examination of the created order. The right application of reason to the natural order, moreover, would issue in a cogent natural philosophy, in the outlines of which Calvin concurred with his contemporaries.”¹¹⁵

There is important a fine distinction needed here to spell out the exact understanding of how Calvin is teaching. On one hand it could be taken to mean that the nonChristian or person prior to absorbing Christian teaching is unable to successfully engage with Natural Theology. On the other hand it could be taken that the correct understanding about natural theology, done by whoever, is the Christian one. It is the one the Scriptures tell us. This latter is in line with how Calvin has described the knowledge of God as Creator. He

¹¹⁴ Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 41.

¹¹⁵ Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd edition (Michigan: Baler, 2003), 270-271.

describes it best understood through the Scriptures, but has no scruples by also expositing the effect of the *s.d.* The correct understanding of the knowledge of God as Creator is that which the Scriptures teach us. Also the light brought by the study of nature agrees with this. The approach of Alister McGrath with his “new vision of natural theology” is more in line with the former choice of nuances, and certainly Reformed Theology developed more in that direction. But this is not really the position of John Calvin.

Rather the division concerns *the role in which God is known* and not on what style of revelation brought that knowledge. The emphasis of Book One, then, by dint of the weight of material, is on knowing God as Creator mainly through the means of the Scriptures. So the general Reformed motif that natural revelation is insufficient to bring a person to God, appears *prima facie* to be upheld by the structure of Calvin’s *Institutes*, inasmuch as it is apparent in how the material is set out about the need of the Scriptures to know God even as Creator. But this God the Creator who is mainly known through the Scriptures is the God who has not failed to leave himself with a witness. This is indeed a scriptural teaching.¹¹⁶

Researchers uneducated about the difference between knowing about God and knowing him personally might miss the nuance, true to Calvin, that knowing God is more than having an intellectual concept. Given this nuance to do with “knowing”, there can be *a witness to God* through nature while at the same time not any opportunity to come to *know God* through nature. The structure of the *Institutes*, as discussed above, places the *s.d.* in a role of giving a witness to God, even of believing in God, without being the means of coming to know him in that deeper manner. This is to say that knowing God as creator is always less than needed, but nonetheless preparatory for knowing God as redeemer. So in Calvin the fruit of the *s.d.* is a part of this preparatory operation and not the conduit of God’s redemption in and of itself. So in answer to the research topic of this thesis and its application to the propagation of the Christian gospel, the work of Calvin’s *s.d.*, would be preparatory for and helpful to the gospel of the Scriptures rather than being a substitute for that message.

¹¹⁶Acts 14:15-17 (NASB). and [Paul] saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. ¹⁶In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

Book One of *The Institutes* is still where to look for information or otherwise on natural theology. The first five chapters do have such material. What are Calvin's theories?

The Relation of the *sensus divinitatis* to the *semen religionis*

Early in Book I of the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote:

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity (*divinitatis sensum*). This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. Ever renewing its memory, he repeatedly sheds fresh drops. Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their Maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honour him and to consecrate their lives to his will. If ignorance of God is to be looked for anywhere, surely one is most likely to find an example of it among the more backward folk and those more remote from civilization. Yet there is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep seated conviction that there is a God. And they who in other aspects of life seem least to differ from brutes still continue to contain some seed of religion (*semen religionis*). So deeply does the common conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it inhere in the hearts of all! Therefore, since from the beginning of the world there has been no region, no city, in short, no household, that could do without religion, there lies in this a tacit confession of a sense of deity inscribed within the hearts of all.¹¹⁷

Calvin's use of the term *s.d.* in this Book One is about a natural knowledge of God. The *s.d.* is universal amongst humanity. It is a part of how humanity has been created, rather than the fruit of any Christian commitment. (Notice how Calvin stresses this in line 1 above with the words "and indeed by natural instinct".) Connections to natural revelation are evoked further by the idea of the "fresh drops" repeatedly shed (lines 4-5 above).¹¹⁸ Such natural knowledge of God can continually be "read off" the creation of which humanity is a

¹¹⁷ *Institutes*, I. iii. 1, 43-44. Usual wisdom is that line 9's allusion is to Cicero, "De Natura Deorum," I. 16.

¹¹⁸ An alternate exposition of the fresh drops "ever renewing its memory" is that it is a reference to God stimulating the soul's memory of the divine world of the Forms and ideals as in Platonic theory. But this would be to over credit Calvin with Platonic sympathies that he does not have to be exhibiting here, especially since he does not anywhere elsewhere give credence to this "realm of the Forms". What he means, then, "by natural instinct" is just the simple awareness of God that is known in the human mind naturally.

part. So although Calvin's *Institutes* are going to hurry on to how the knowledge of God as Creator is primarily done through the Scriptures, nonetheless it is also communicated directly to the creature from the creation of which she/he is a part. Dowey well said:

By creation we do not mean only the external world, or "nature," as something upon which man looks from inside out to garner knowledge of God. Man himself, including his inner mental life, his subjectivity, is a part of creation. Calvin's conception of the revelation in creation corresponds to the doubleness, the subjectivity and objectivity, which is one of the elemental characteristics of mental life. In fact it is the subjective element of the revelation in creation that receives his first attention in the *Institutes*, although the objective receives more detailed attention. God reveals himself to man internally by a direct perception of which Calvin distinguishes two elements: the sense of divinity, and the conscience.¹¹⁹

This continuing natural revelation are phenomena given to all, including those at a distance from Christian civilization (lines 7-11). This is a statement about humanity after the Fall when "savages" abounded. The ubiquity of religion is credited to the same natural knowledge of God, even if in twisted form because of sin. The overall passage is clearly about one topic even though there are the two terms, *sensus divinitatis* and *semen religionis*. So the second term *semen religionis* is not so much about a differing and alternative element but rather refers to the same capacity/entity of the *s.d.* (with ongoing watering by natural revelation) which sin has now made a fulcrum to launch its own sinful and rebellious, religious inventions. This clear exposition of Calvin's teaching reveals both the fact of the witness of the *s.d.* and also how sin has interacted with it to bring about the phenomenon of the *semen religionis*. The *s.d.* is an immediate knowledge of God in the mind of humans, as a part of their natural capacities. This natural phenomenon persists after the Fall and is a springboard or fulcrum point generating all the varied religions of the world.

Dowey's picture of Calvin's *s.d.* is:

Clearly Calvin does not mean by the term a special organ or faculty of the soul, but a *sensus* which is a perception or sensation, an *intelligentia numinis*, and elsewhere a *gustus divinitatis*.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 50.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 50-51.

The Question of the Validity of Natural Theology

In Muller's¹²¹ tracing of the development of Reformed Orthodoxy from beginnings with the original Reformation formulators (Calvin, Luther and Melanchthon etc), he mentions there to be present a range of viewpoints encompassed and rejects some stereotypes that developed to the effect of this emerging Reformed viewpoint being theologically monolithic.

Muller states:

The picture of Reformed orthodoxy painted by much earlier scholarship, whether intentional or unintentional, has been, by and large, of a unified and static teaching set over against any and all adversaries. Whether from a theological, a methodological, or a philosophical perspective, orthodoxy has been viewed as an accomplished fact as of the Synod of Dort, capable of being described as scholastic, Bezan, Aristotelian, and rigid. In contrast to this picture, the review of Reformed orthodoxy that unfolds in this and subsequent volumes of the study is of a variegated movement in the process of development. . . . Beyond this, there remained variations in doctrinal formulation on such key topics as the model of theology as speculative or practical, the possibility and/or advisability of elaborating a natural theology . . . – just to name a few. In short, there was no monolithic orthodoxy – there were, instead, various trajectories in confessional Reformed theology, all of which belonged to the orthodoxy of the era, within which there were controversies, deep, angry controversies concerning the proper formulation of the orthodoxy.¹²²

Schools of Interpretation of Calvin

Calvin has been a sufficient fountainhead for theology that subsequent thinkers at varied junctures in the history of ideas have thought they saw their own emphases prefigured in him. In expositing him some read in more than is there. This has made the task of setting out Calvin's Knowledge of God quite difficult as the secondary sources are looking back on his work through their strongly held lenses. These schools include theologies heavily systematized around either the sovereignty of God or the Covenant of Grace; later writers committed to rationalism such as are the Princeton Theologians; the Neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth;¹²³ a Presuppositionalism such as that of Cornelius Van Til, or, as a more recent

¹²¹ Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*.

¹²² Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, , volume 1., p 41.

¹²³ It is always interesting to read whether any given expositor, writing about Calvin sees him as the forefather of either a heady, intellectual Christianity or the springboard of a more experience-based understanding. William P. Alston wrote: "The opposition between Plantinga and the evidentialist continues a long standing opposition within Christian thought between those who, like Aquinas and Paley, have felt the

apologetic in the face of Evidentialism, such as the Reformed Epistemology led by Alvin Plantinga (see Chapter 6). The question is which of these most reads Calvin aright with least reading in of their own ideas to Calvin's words?

The fact that Book One of the *Institutes* does not contain long sections on the philosophical proofs for the existence of God or a setting out of the divine attributes should alert interpreters that Calvin was not prosecuting an agenda more appropriate to the mindset of early Modernity to favour intense rationalistic explanations.¹²⁴ The idea of a philosophical prolegomena was to come into its own in Modernity. But this observation about how Book One makes a start without such is explained away by Warfield as due to the immediate and practical and pastoral purposes motivating Calvin to write that work.¹²⁵ More likely it is due to the different philosophical/religious backdrop against which Calvin wrote as compared to those writing in Modernity's era. Warfield read Calvin as supporting the rationalist/evidentialist agenda that the Princeton Theology promoted in its own times.

One most recent work, cognizant of this difficulty, and which sets out to explain the development of "Reformed orthodoxy" since Calvin, is that of Richard A. Muller.¹²⁶ It is coming to be seen as a standard treatise on Reformed Theology and its development. Muller seeks to unwrap Calvin from all the contesting interpretations and varied underpinning philosophical commitments to which Calvin had been "accommodated." Muller's conclusion is that "the unaccommodated Calvin" indeed taught that "sin distorts perception and [results

need to put the Christian faith . . . on a sound intellectual footing by exhibiting adequate reasons, and those who, like Calvin, Kierkegaard, and Barth, have insisted that the faith has no need for such foundations. Recently Plantinga has been at pains to stress his continuity with the Reformed tradition." Alston appears to be one who sees Calvin as not basing Christian belief in totally objective aspects. W.P. Alston, "Plantinga's Epistemology of Religious Belief," in *The Profiles Series: Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 293.

¹²⁴ Concerning whether Calvin should be expected to display Modernity's agendas, it is important to note that Calvin lived before Descartes. René Descartes lived 1596 to 1650 as compared to John Calvin 1509 - 1564. Kelly James Clark, Richard Lints and James K. A. Smith wrote about Descartes with reference to Modernity to say: 'French mathematician, scientist and philosopher often referred to as the father of modernity because of his revolutionary account of knowledge. Because the scientific revolution called into question the entire Aristotelian approach to science, Descartes sought a new and secure foundation for knowledge.' 'Descartes René' in *101 Key Terms in Philosophy and their importance for Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 16

¹²⁵ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of God," *The Princeton Theological Review*, vii (1909): 381-436.

¹²⁶ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, c.a. 1520 to ca. 1725. Vol. 1; Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003).

in] superstition and undermines all right knowledge”¹²⁷ However at the same time, while not downplaying the noetic consequences of the Fall, Calvin also did not discount that the knowledge of God was nonetheless obtainable in part through the created order and available for all humanity to view. Muller’s thesis is based on an observation that there is a graded movement toward Reformed Orthodoxy rather than the reading back of this orthodoxy into Calvin. At this point in this thesis, it is very comforting to recognize that Muller’s thesis about development from Calvin to Reformed orthodoxy is travelling along the same road as this chapter.

Controversy about Natural Theology involves the Noetic Effects of Sin

With regard to the view of Calvin through the eyes of those who claim him most – the Calvinists and the “Reformed” – the specific issue is whether the noetic effects of sin have removed the possibility for any knowledge of God via natural revelation getting through and especially to the unregenerate. “Natural theology” when severely interpreted promotes the possibility of coming to a full knowledge of God without recourse to special revelation, but when interpreted more modestly involves the idea of natural revelation being somewhat successful in bringing the knowledge of God to unregenerate humanity without necessarily meaning it is a sufficient knowledge of God to entail salvation.

Summing up the scholarly controversy, Paul Helm identifies three opinions as to whether Calvin actually had a place for natural arguments, either for God’s existence or for the inspiration of Scriptures. His three options are: first, that held by the traditional Calvinists, the origin of whose systems is in the pre-critical period; secondly, the Princeton School a couple of centuries later when the early part of Modernity had swept most scholars into a more rational approach; and then thirdly, the Neo-orthodox in the first half of the twentieth century. The continuation of time allows an addition to those three choices by adding the

¹²⁷Muller, *PRRD*, 274. Muller bases this assessment on the *Institutes* just at this juncture of I,v-vi where Calvin is showing that God’s witness is being received but sin is twisting and distorting it so that its aim is not fulfilled. This is the juncture where this first Book moves on to the necessity of Scripture to come to know the God of creation.

Apologetic Movements in both Presuppositionalism¹²⁸ and then Reformed Epistemology of the twentieth century and beyond.

The beginnings of the development of Reformed “orthodoxy” in the Protestant Scholastic times saw Reformed doctrine become heavily systematized. The championing of theologies stressing the various Covenants of Law, Redemption and Grace set Reformed doctrine up as dependent on logic. Calvin had contributed the emphasis on the Sovereignty of God. His motivation so to do was largely scriptural and the fact that subsequent editions of his *Institutes* changed exactly where in order of discussion to locate this material on the Sovereignty of God, especially relevant to salvation, shows that he was digesting how it fitted in to an overall body of divinity. But the increase of the dependence on logic after Calvin’s time issued in tight systems such as represented by the so-called ‘TULIP’.¹²⁹

A strong commitment to logic brings connections between concepts such as revelation, election and grace. It is the tightness of the system that disallowed a natural theology. There is not a large place for God to be approachable by the nonelect or detectable by the unregenerate. Reformed theologians fear salvation appearing as something to which our natural powers can have some contribution. The sharp difference of opinion between Calvinists and Arminians in this period of time worked to disallow Calvinists to recognize in Calvin anything that looked too much like the Arminian position.

Another opinion is that of the Princeton theologians, as represented by B.B. Warfield, to the effect that “Calvin was a natural theologian without qualification.”¹³⁰ This is very surprising in that the Princeton Theologians¹³¹ were quite “Reformed” in other respects.

¹²⁸ There are two well known varieties – that of Cornelius Van Til (1985 – 1987) and that of Gordon H. Clark (1902 – 1985).

¹²⁹ The Canons of Dort in answering Arminianism were the outcome of the international Synod of Reformed Christians held in Dordrecht, Netherlands across 1618-19. Although originally meant to be just a national synod, the presence of twenty-six delegates from eight foreign countries made it international in flavour and influence. There were only four points made but with much written round each and all designed to answer the five articles of the 1610 Remonstrance. So a summary of those answers issue in the 5 points of Calvinism promoted thereafter.

¹³⁰ Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 209 quoting B.B. Warfield in *Calvin and Calvinism*.

¹³¹ Princeton Seminary, from which these theologians have their name, was founded in 1812 and the school of thought continued till the 1920’s. See Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology 1812–1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

The following chapter of this thesis on Jonathan Edwards will be explanatory of what has brought the change. The explanation has to do with the shifting sands of the philosophies that had been underpinning the theologies as well as the revival movements. In the case of the Princeton Theologians, the onset of the early part of Modernity swept most thinking Christians into applauding a rationalistic approach to all of life including Christian doctrine. Particularly in North America the philosophies of the scientific age in Descartes, Locke and Spinoza had issued in a desire to go with the scientific mind set led by Newton, Kepler and others to advance with the progress of the age. Scottish Common Sense philosophy particularly found welcoming soil in North America.

For whatever combination of reasons, the North American mindset was happy to continue with these philosophical underpinnings, yet not be as quick to major on the reaction against rationalism that happened in Europe with both the Romantic Movement and Liberal Theology. These were coming to the Americas but there was yet time for the Princeton Theology to combine a love for the older Reformed theological systems and a devotion to the Bible while also conjoined with the early offerings of Modernity - then the rationalistic, practical and optimistic philosophies.

Another stream of interpretation of Calvin was developing at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly in Europe. These were at the other end of the continuum of opinion from these older conservative traditions. They were the Barthian writers, who also read Calvin as though he were of their own ilk – believing he did not admit any possibility of unregenerate humanity making contact with or having knowledge of the transcendent God. Barth had himself triggered the impact of these ideas onto the question of interpreting Calvin, by choosing to set his theological presentation within a Reformed dogmatic schemata. The fit was good because of the supreme place given to special revelation in both. The disinclination Barthianism showed to accredit any success to natural theology was due then to at least two reasons: the first was the regular Reformed motif of the extreme damage done to humanity by sin; the second was because Barth's system was built around God's absolute and infinite ontological distance from humanity.

Interestingly, these Barthian thinkers are allied with the Presuppositionalists in at least this matter, although the latter usually are far more conservative than Barth in other

issues. They are one with Barth in that both groups see the same outcome – that there is no possibility of natural knowledge of God. They have, however, overlapping and differing reasons. Conservative Reformed thinkers see the Fall entailing such a historical devastation to human ability so that there could be no possibility of the unregenerate human mind adding anything to the eventual salvation of the individual. It is a total depravity/ election/ grace issue. Only the elect become regenerate by God’s intervention which comes out of the blue on the basis of no human characteristics or performance.

Generally evangelical theologies present regeneration and conversion as two sides of the one coin – regeneration being God’s side and conversion (faith and repentance) as the human side. The issue then is as to which leads to which. Some Reformed thinkers, posit regeneration as coming to the individual completely without any human requisite and then, faith and repentance are the fruits of this undeserved regeneration. To some extent this issue is actually about terminology, for most evangelical theologies present the need for there to have been some prior action of the Spirit to draw a person to Christian conversion and the issue boils down to whether the name “regeneration” is used of this prior working of the Spirit or preserved for the change of person that is experienced as a consequence. This prior work of the Spirit, whether understood as the regeneration or not, is considered the cause of a conversion (repentance and faith) and the whole progress of the turning to God not produced by any natural entity within unregenerate humanity.

The Barthian understanding of the Creation and the Fall is a topic of varied interpretation.¹³² One such interpretation is that, consistent with his more liberal attitude about the non-historicity of Adam and Eve, Barth’s view is that humanity is created as fallen rather than there being a humanity before the Fall. The nature of this “fallenness” then involves the infinite ontological distance from God. It raises the question as to whether there ever was

¹³²Barth’s theology is open to varied interpretations, in as much as he has so emphasized God’s creation from eternity with less emphasis on what occurred in history, that interpreters are divided about exactly which parts of the historical narrative he actually believes in. In a parallel way he sees everything happening in Christ in eternity. He has a Christological interpretation of everything including creation and the Fall. He does not see human history revolving around the two figures of Adam and Christ, but just the one Christ. Jesus is the first “Adam” not the second. The fact that everything happens in Christ issues in one possible interpretation that how he believes in the Fall is that humanity is created as fallen and does not become human till coming to Christ.

original unfallen anthropology. Barth may be interpreted varyingly, but the fact remains that his teaching clearly is that Christ is the first Man rather than that first person being any historical Adam. For Barth, the race is not actually human till it is in Christ. Barth cleverly has the idea of election fitting here as Christ, from the foundation of the world, is that first man. It is hard to process his theories if one does not interpret his teaching that the race has been fallen from the beginning when the Judaist-Christian record finds them; and not yet properly human until people come to know their salvation in Christ.

This cluster of Barthian ideas, includes a concept of sin as being as much about the infinite ontological distance separating humanity from God as about personal rebellion against God. This must be grasped to help explain why some neo-orthodox scholars have trouble accurately reading Calvin, when they want Barth to be a good Calvinist. They do not have room to acknowledge and receive a Calvin who presents both the gravity and dynamic of sin in humanity as the consequence of an historical Fall, alongside there also being a continuing and successfully operating natural *s.d.* It is the connection between ubiquitous humanity and God that the *s.d.* entails that is altogether impossible in a Barthian scheme. There the only substantive connection possible between an infinite and transcendent God and finite humanity is the revelatory material event of the incarnation in history along with momentary and existential events of the incoming of the Word of God to individuals. Barthians are unable to accept that the *s.d.* continually thrusts up concepts of God as a part of a human nature operating properly, either preceding a historical Fall, or while in a post Fall time period but prior to the time of a given individual's personal conversion. This is because Barth was so very aware of the infinite ontological distance between humanity and God.

The presence or otherwise of a natural way to know God is truly an unresolved tension actually in Calvin's thought in his early part of *The Institutes* about despite the far more major and dominant emphasis on the need for special revelation to come to know God at all. The explanation of this tension is the fact that Calvin represents the combination of his background from Augustine and the input of a more reasoning approach coming from his humanism, more sponsored by philosophies with backgrounds from Aristotle than Calvin would have liked to admit. All this was on top of the simple observations he was prone to make about the condition of the human race in all of its ubiquitous religiosity. The Scriptures

also themselves seem to leave this issue in some sort of state of paradox or antinomy. Calvin wrote early in the history of the development of Reformation Christian ideas, and so it is to be expected that his writings have areas where the material does not all meld together seamlessly.

One corollary to the theological effects of this issue for the neo-orthodox is how they view the image of God. They sometimes see it as totally a relational matter with no substantive elements of humanity involved at all. In Barth's understanding (as distinct from Brunner's), only as humanity moves into the redeemed relationship with Christ does reflection of God's image occur. And it occurs simply because of the position in the new relationship that has been attained. This also would not be borne out by an exposition of Calvin.

A Term that Calvin did not use

Muller states: "Calvin nowhere uses the term *theologia naturalis* and, consequently, neither explicitly affirms nor denies its possibility."¹³³ This is specifically about the non-use of the term "natural theology," and Muller is implying the inappropriateness of such an expectation. To suppose that Calvin should do so is anachronistic as the milieu into which Calvin wrote was not the later ferment around distinctions between natural and special revelation and therefore the possibility of people coming to a full knowledge of God aside from special revelation. The sensitivity to the possibility/non possibility of natural theology developed, according to Muller, along the road after the days of Calvin and nearer to the time of "Reformed orthodoxy." At each step of development protagonists made an effort to show that their new thoughts represented the original Calvin, but this should not be unthinkingly accepted as the case.

Mallinson however says: "the differences between Calvin and the Calvinists are often exaggerated." But he then goes on to accept Muller's "helpful periodization . . . an initial era of 'Reformation' (c.1517-65) . . . an era of 'early orthodoxy' (c.1565-1640) . . . the

¹³³ Richard A. Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology*, vol. 1 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, c.a. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 273.

era of ‘high orthodoxy’ (c.1640-1700) . . . the era of ‘late orthodoxy’ (c.1700-90).”¹³⁴

Mallinson, whose book is concerned with the close connection between the thought of John Calvin and Theodore Beza (1519-1605), nonetheless admits: “There are at least *prima facie* reasons to affirm an epistemological shift of emphasis from Reformation to high orthodoxy” and then quotes Godfrey as describing this transition from “the ‘Platonic-Augustinian’ epistemology of Calvin to the ‘objective-Aristotelian’ epistemology of his successors.”¹³⁵

Given the fact of such development, it is better, unless otherwise demonstrated from his own writings, to maintain that Calvin had the view common to the early Reformers¹³⁶ and which continued in his Geneva successor, Theodore Beza, than that we should expect to find in him motifs that belong to much later developments. What was Beza’s position on the issue is more likely to be closer to Calvin’s than that coming later in a stream of continual development. Beza wrote:

Two ways remain open for those of us living in this world to gain *the knowledge of God*. One is through the contemplation of the created order; this Paul demonstrates when treating the first principles of the Christian religion with the Romans and the Athenians. The other God has disclosed in his own word. Neither, I admit, is to be neglected, yet how much more certain the latter is than the former . . . may be discerned readily.¹³⁷

Note that Beza relies on Paul’s theology being in the background (as also does Calvin) but does not mention (in this place or anywhere) the wording of *s.d.* Beza is here talking about the conclusions our minds draw from what we observe in nature rather than an immediate knowledge, as we will show Calvin’s *s.d.* is describing – a raw belief in God thrust up *a priori* to rational thought. Beza elsewhere does recognize an immediate knowledge of

¹³⁴ Jeffrey Mallinson, quoting Muller, *PRRD* i.40-52 in *Faith, Reason and Revelation in Theodore Beza (1519-1605)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14.

¹³⁵ Mallinson, 14, quoting W. Robert Godfrey, “Beyond the Sphere of our Judgment: Calvin and the Confirmation of Scripture,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 58 (1996), 39.

¹³⁶ Mallinson’s judgment is: “the early Reformed tradition generally affirmed the existence of natural revelation, while only Socinians rejected it outright” (and in a footnote: “Following Faustus Socinus (1539-1604). *Faith, Reason* . . . , 99.

¹³⁷ Theodori Bezae Vezelii Tractionum Theologicarum, in quibus pleraque Christianae Religionis dogmata adversus haereses nostris temporibus renovates solide ex Verbo Dei Defenduntur, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1570-82).i.341, quoted by Mallinson in *Faith, Reason* . . . ,100.

God when he says: “It is altogether true that a general notion that a Deity exists has been left in the mind of man, the knowledge of which is *confirmed and maintained* by a consideration of the Deity’s creation above, around, and below.”¹³⁸

Calvin and Beza did work together before Calvin’s death. Calvin’s immediate successor’s views do include the proposition that an inner knowledge of God is present within humanity and that it is added to by the human contemplation on the continual input of natural revelation. Mallinson’s overall thesis is that Beza does demonstrate a small and subtle movement toward the later Reformed orthodoxy with its interest in objectivity as the route to certainty of Christian knowledge, but that his ideas are still very close to Calvin’s. Beza’s ideas, therefore, powerfully witness to, as well as clarify, Calvin’s position: that is, there is an immediate and innate knowledge of God left within the mind of humanity which is confirmed and maintained by contemplation on natural revelation.

The later debate as to whether the noetic effects of sin had made humanity impervious to natural revelation is then not precisely on the point of application of this concept of the *s.d.* The concept involves something more immediate than how natural revelation puts evidence in our sight to think about. The *s.d.* concerns the immediate concept of God, his existence and his power that he has left in our minds. Adding to this is the fact that Calvin’s concept of the *semens religiones* both underlines that sin is playing havoc with the fruit of that natural knowledge of God and also confirms the reality of the witness of this *s.d.* Calvin does believe in the need for special revelation in order to come into a full relationship with God, but also in the *sensus divinitatis* and the *semens religionis* does acknowledge the witness God has left himself in the human mind as well as in his created world.

Rebuttal of Some Objections

One important reason that gives rise to objections regarding the efficacy of the *s.d.* is the doubt that natural revelation can get through to a humanity ruined by sin. Alister

¹³⁸ Beza, *Sermons sur l’histoire de la passion at sepulture de nostre Seigneur Jesus-Christ descrite par les quatre Evangelistes* (Geneva, 1592), 46.

McGrath has written a “new vision” for Natural Theology¹³⁹ which is based on this doubt about natural revelation ever being successful prior to a person taking on board the Christian revelation in Christ and in the Scriptures. He seeks to give a “revisioning” of natural theology based on what he describes as an “incarnational approach”. This “incarnational approach” emphasises the jettisoning of the contribution of the Enlightenment and starting with the assumption that Natural Theology be thought of as a Christian enterprise alone. This “incarnational approach” also includes what most Christians would affirm: that the experience of coming to Christ opens the spiritual eyes to understand the things of God in a way never possible before Christian conversion. Both the idea of the inability to discern without Christ and the ability so to do after coming to Christ are sometimes, singularly or together, found in the Reformed tradition that developed later than the days of Luther and Calvin in the movement toward Reformed Orthodoxy. However it is anachronistic to apply McGrath’s revisioning to how Calvin is read.

Also one must wonder at exactly how McGrath did handle the straight statements of Calvin regarding the *s.d.* McGrath applied the straight statements of Calvin regarding the *s.d.* by analysing them while considering people seeking transcendence through introspection – listening to the voices within. He does so in a section entitled: “Withdrawing from Nature to Find the Transcendent Within Oneself”.¹⁴⁰ McGrath wrote:

Withdrawal into the desert, silence, fasting – all these disciplines are means by which individuals can set distractions to one side, and, in theistic terms, come like Elijah to a place where they can hear the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11-12). The absence of sensory stimulation allows us to disregard and detach ourselves from the external, and focus on the internal pointers to transcendence – such as John Calvin’s “sense of divinity,” which he holds to be innate to human experience.¹⁴¹

McGrath advises that:

¹³⁹ Alister McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Melbourne, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

many spiritual writers suggest that some of the voices that may be heard are ones that need to be challenged, in that they might turn out to be one's own personal "demons," rather than the voice of God.¹⁴²

The problem with this analysis is that, whatever others may do with Calvin's idea of the *s.d.*, Calvin himself did not come to the idea because of reports of people experiencing "the still small voice" in lonely, secluded places. Rather it was due to Calvin's observation of human life generally, as lived out all around the world. The outward behaviour of people rather than their subjective reports of their experiences entailed the evidence that drew Calvin to his generalisation. There was no "withdrawing from nature" that underlay the formation of Calvin's understanding of the human predicament. On top of this, it is more true to Calvin to view nature as both that which is without *and* that which is within. So an awareness of the "within" is not a withdrawal away from nature. In any case Calvin was using an objective perspective of people's outward behaviours to speak to what was their experience of the nature within. The facts that McGrath provides by quoting of Calvin, nonetheless recognizes the Calvin did believe in the place of the *s.d.* as a part of our sources for a knowledge of God. McGrath's footnote 41 at that place on the same page reads:

Calvin identified two sources of a natural knowledge of God: the external ordering of the world, and the internal *sensus divinitatis*. See Paul Helm, "John Calvin, the *Sensus Divinitatis* and the Noetic Effects of Sin," *international Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): 87-107 .¹⁴³

McGrath is accurate to note that Calvin recognized both the external and the internal world as being loci of information leading to a knowledge of God. His pointer to the work of John Helm, however, would infer explaining Calvin as does Helm. Helm's work is a stream of interpretation that majors on the noetic effects of sin. John Helm and John Beversluis, building on Helm's ideas, developed a mediating position on the discussion of natural revelation, including the *s.d.*, and how successful it is or isn't in getting through to humanity.

¹⁴² Ibid., 70.

¹⁴³ Ibid., n. 41.

John Beversluis has recently stated that Plantinga, the Reformed Epistemologist (see chapter 6) has misunderstood Calvin's teaching about the *s.d.* His criticism is another way to assert that insufficient account has been taken of the noetic effects of sin.¹⁴⁴ His objections were particularly to Plantinga's exposition of the early part of the *Institutes* and that Plantinga was failing to notice that Calvin was talking *about pre-fallen humanity*. In answer to this it seems clear that the time when people are failing to honour God and being condemned by their own testimony is obviously not pre-fall but during this present post-fall period. Also the reference to God's repeatedly shedding "fresh drops" and ever renewing this memory of his majesty is across a large span of time. It must be history after the fall and not just pre-fall. Plantinga responded to Beversluis on this issue by saying that applying this passage in Calvin only to the pre-fall time is mistaken as the descriptions given are not possible "unless the *sensus divinitatis* is working in current people, even one not in its pristine state."¹⁴⁵ So it appears from these arguments as well as a direct reading of Calvin, that Plantinga has nuanced his latest work to represent Calvin here accurately and consciously.

Despite Plantinga's refutation of Beversluis, Paul Helm recently continued Beversluis's theme from a slightly different angle. It is that Calvin can be viewed as arguing *a fortiori* (downstream from the evidence) about the *s.d.* - that it may have been implanted in humanity in pre-fall creation but which still evidences itself within human behaviour in these times after the fall.¹⁴⁶ This allows Helm nonetheless to see Calvin's comment as being about the pre-fall mechanism when the *s.d.* was pristine, even though its evidence is being tracked at the later period. Helm views Calvin as believing that this natural knowledge of God is either smothered or corrupted by the fall. He quotes Calvin as saying:

¹⁴⁴ John Beversluis, "Reforming the Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (April 1995): 193-7. This was before Plantinga's *WCB* was written and Plantinga there does answer him. See below.

¹⁴⁵ Alvin Plantinga, *WCB*, 172, n. 7

¹⁴⁶ Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 223.

Experience teaches that the seed of religion has been divinely planted in all men. But barely one man in a hundred can be found who nourishes in his own heart what he has conceived; and not even one in whom it (the seed of religion) matures, much less bears fruit in its season [cf. Ps. 1:3]. Now some lose themselves in their own superstition, while others of their own evil intention revolt from God, yet all fall away from the true knowledge of him.¹⁴⁷

This is congruous with the editorial notes in *The Library of Christian Classics Volume XX Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill. The editorial comments, some of which are carrying forward the work of previous European editors of the *Institutes*, especially Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, have not accepted the straight forward reading of Calvin as Plantinga was later to do. Starting at the heading: “Chapter III The Knowledge of God has been Naturally Implanted in the Minds of Men,” McNeill has one such note that reads:

“*Hominum mentibus naturaliter . . . inditam.*” The revelation of God “within” man (ch. Iii) is extinguished by human sin (ch. Iv). The same is true of that which comes to man “from without” through God’s signs and tokens (*insignia, specimina*) in external nature (v. 14). Thus these chapters, iii-v, require for full understanding of Calvin’s doctrine of man: as created, I. Xv; and as ravaged by sin, II. I-v.¹⁴⁸

What McNeill is saying is that, however you read Calvin here in Chapter III, you will come to another opinion once you read Chapter IV. McNeill further comments in his very next footnote back at Chapter III in response to the mention by Calvin of *the s.d.*:

“*Divinitatis sensum.*” This term and “seed of religion,” used immediately below (cf. I. Iv. 1), refer generally to numinous awareness of God, and are closely related to conscience, which is a moral response to God. Cf. I. i. 3 and Comm. John 1:5,9. On verse 5, Calvin writes: “There are two principal parts of the light which still remains in corrupt nature: first, the seed of religion is planted in all men; next the distinction between good and evil is engraved on their consciences.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Calvin, *Inst.* I.iv.1.

¹⁴⁸ The Library of Christian Classics, 43, n. 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43, n. 2.

The footnotes appear committed to the agenda of not allowing Chapter III to speak on its own but to insist that the impact of Chapter IV overpower it to conclude that there remains no successful testimony to God's true existence within humanity. Either careful observation shows this to be an accurate pointer to Calvin's overall thought, or one must suppose of Calvin's thought that the witness to God's existence is received so that human sin can react to it to produce vain ideas and repress this true knowledge? The first choice is that the witness of the *s.d.* is extinguished or just not received at all whereas the second is that it is reacted to *because it has been successfully received*. To ascertain which of these very close interpretations is true to Calvin's ideas, a closer look at Chapter III has already been made and now a fuller look is needed at both Calvin's Chapter IV and also his ideas as in the quoted commentary of John 1:5. This Chapter IV has the heading: "The Knowledge of God Stifled or Corrupted, Ignorantly or Maliciously" and the fuller quotation is:

Superstition

Experience teaches that the seed of religion has been divinely planted in all men. But barely one man in a hundred can be found who nourishes in his own heart what he has conceived; and not even in one in whom it matures, much less bears fruit in its season [cf. Ps. 1:3]. Now some lose themselves in their own superstition while others of their own evil intention revolt from God, yet all fall away from true knowledge of him. As a result, no real piety remains in the world. But as to my statement that some erroneously slip into superstition, I do not mean by this that their ingenuousness should free them from blame. For the blindness under which they labor is almost always mixed with proud vanity and obstinacy. Indeed, vanity joined with pride can be detected in the fact that, in seeking God, miserable men do not rise above themselves as they should, but measure him by the yardstick of their own carnal stupidity, and neglect sound investigation; thus out of curiosity they fly off into empty speculations. They do not therefore apprehend God as he offers himself, but imagine him as they have fashioned him in their own presumption. . . .¹⁵⁰

Calvin is *not* here denying that the divinely implanted conviction is successful, but rather commenting on what a sinful humanity does with that testimony. He is describing human sinful response in terms of its pride, arrogance and rebellion rather than any incapacity to receive the witness. It is noteworthy that Calvin here gives no indication supporting the idea

¹⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* I.iv.1

of humanity having such an infinite ontological distance from God so as to preclude any natural contact or understanding. In fact just the opposite, *for Calvin speaks of God offering himself*. The sinful human condition wilfully does not “apprehend God as he offers himself.” This is consistent with the already given explanation of the connection between the *sensus divinitatis* and the *semen religionis*. Human sin, in rebellion against the divine witness in the *s.d.* corrupts this into the *s.r.* and results in all the variety of human religion. Of course this would not be very politically correct today but it is what Calvin is saying. The two terms indeed concern/describe the same original divine input but coming to very different outcomes because of the rebellious power of human sin. A more full reading of Calvin’s commentary on John’s Gospel chapter 1 presents a similar description of how sinful human nature treats the revelation of Christ to all the people of his creation. Calvin wrote:

The life was the light of men. I deliberately disregard some other interpretations, which disagree with the evangelist’s meaning. I think that this is a reference to that part of life in which men surpass the other animate creatures. It is as if he were saying that the life given to men is not life in general but life united with the light of reason. Moreover, he separates men from the others, because we are more aware of God’s power by feeling it in us than by looking at it from a distance. Thus in Acts 17.27 Paul tells us not to seek God afar off, since He reveals Himself within us. And so, when the Evangelist has put forward a general consideration of the grace of Christ, to persuade men to give it closer attention, he shows what was given to them in particular – that is, that they were not created in the likeness of beasts but, endowed with reason, they held a higher rank. Furthermore, since God effectually illuminates their minds with light, it follows that they were created to the end that they might know that He is the author of such a unique blessing. And since this light streamed forth to us from the Word its source, it should be as a mirror in which we may see clearly the divine power of the Word.

5. And the light shineth in the darkness. The objection could be raised that men are called blind in many passages of Scripture and that the blindness for which they are condemned is but too well known. For in all their reasoning they peter out miserably. For whence come so many labyrinths of errors in the world but because men are led by their own understanding only into vanity and falsehood? Yet if no light is visible in men this witness of the Evangelist to the divinity of Christ is destroyed. For, as I have said, the third step was that in the life of men there is a something far more excellent than movement and breathing. The Evangelist forestalls this question by warning us at once that the light given to men in the beginning must not be assessed by their present state, since in this marred and degenerate nature light has been turned into darkness. And yet he denies that the light of reason is completely put out; for in the darkling gloom of the human mind there still shine some sparks of that brightness.¹⁵¹

Calvin is not speaking here of the *s.d.* but rather of his interpretation of how the enlightening that Christ gives to every person (perhaps at birth) is the light of reason which separates them from the animal kingdom. However, his exposition concerns how this light of human reason is affected greatly by sin, but nonetheless is still there in existence so he can sum up at the end by saying: “His statement that the light shines in the darkness is not at all meant as praise of corrupt nature but rather to deprive ignorance of excuse.”¹⁵² It is a wilful ignorance. In a parallel way this sinful human nature, in Calvin’s thought, would react against the witness that comes from the *s. d.* There is the turning of it into the seed of false religion but without implying that the *sensus* has ceased to work.

One can sympathize with the commentators who suggest that Calvin’s later opinion can be taken to overcome the earlier mention of the natural knowledge of God, for some of what Calvin says lends itself to that effect. Near the end of Chapter 5 and just before Chapter 6 whose heading is: “The Need of Scripture as Guide and a Teacher in coming to God as Creator” Calvin in Chapter 5, Section 14 writes:

In vain for us, therefore, does Creation exhibit so many bright lamps lighted up to show forth the glory of its Author. Though they beam upon us from every quarter, they are altogether insufficient of themselves to lead us into the right path. Some sparks, undoubtedly, they do throw out; but these are quenched before they can give forth a brighter effulgence. Wherefore, the apostle, in the very place where he says that the worlds are images of the invisible things, adds that it is *by faith* we understand that they were framed by the word of God (Heb, 11:3); thereby intimating that the invisible Godhead is indeed represented by such displays, but that we have no eyes to perceive it until they are enlightened through faith by internal revelation from God.¹⁵³

But if nature’s giving testimony is to render people “without excuse” then the witness must be registering on the human mind. The sparks being quenched bring blame to the quenchers!

Those quenchers are the very human minds that are receiving the testimony of “the sparks”.

¹⁵¹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. John Part One 1-10*, trans. T.H.L. Parker, 12 vols, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 11-12.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵³ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.v.14.

This culpable action would be the *semens religiones* being the outcome of the suppression of the *s. d.* Paul in *Romans* 1:18-20 expresses some similar elements:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (NKJV).

Calvin's labour to point out how unbelieving people are without excuse indicates his reliance on Paul's exposition in *Romans*. As has already been said, Calvin in the *Institutes* has sought to be biblical above all. The suppression of the witness of nature is evidence of the witness having been received.

Now also, Calvin is certainly presenting the dire need for the revelation of the Scriptures. But this is because the need is not only that peoples' ignorance be dismissed, but also in that culpable people are warned that their deliberate ignorance is placing them in harm's way of judgment. It is blameworthy ignorance because the witness had been successful. The work of the Spirit and the special revelation of the Scriptures is necessary because of the sinfulness of heart that has refused the truth already given, received and suppressed.

Helm's chapter on Natural Theology and the *s. d.* concedes that Calvin does contain a tacit recognition of what could be called "natural theology." For example, Helm recognizes that Calvin presents a form of the cosmological argument for God's existence. But Helm again attempts to ameliorate this indication of natural theology by repeating his misguided suggestion that Calvin devalued the input from natural revelation because of the noetic effects of sin. Helm is equating "the seed of religion" with the "sense of the divine" too simplistically without expositing how Calvin has used them together. The two terms may be of the one entity/capacity, but they are not saying the same things about it. Helm's interpretation is:

Calvin has a great interest in the place that the SD plays in moral accountability, little or no interest in rationality. Perhaps in his remarks about the SD Calvin is not providing us with the materials for constructing an alternative epistemology to

strong foundationalism nor consciously alluding to mechanisms of belief formation. His claim is not that strong foundationalism is wrong. It is more radical than that: that the noetic effects of sin are universal and, humanly speaking, are ineradicable; the recommended remedy is not the development of an alternative epistemology, but the knowledge of God the Redeemer freely given to us in Christ.¹⁵⁴

There are both some accuracies in this comment as well as some misapplications. Calvin is writing before the days of the Enlightenment and its epistemological sophistications and Calvin would not have seen himself distinguishing between a strong or a weak foundationalism. Helm is correct in that Calvin's interest is more about establishing a knowledge of God. But the weight of that insight goes in the opposite direction to which Helm is putting it. The logical outcome of that recognition is that Calvin must be viewing the *s. d.* as successfully operating despite the presence of human sin. Otherwise there would be no reason to talk about it in that context and no explanation for guilt and all the negative effects involved in the suppression of that knowledge and witness that God has made certain that everyone still has.

Calvin's emphasis on human sin is indeed enormous. This makes it even more noteworthy that he presents the operation of *the s.d.* in Chapter III, and continues to speak about the concept but with help of the terms *semens religiones* in Chapter IV. Calvin's understanding of sin is of an active rebellion, pride and arrogance. It does not emphasize as most important that which the Barthian stresses - an infinite ontological distance between humanity and the creator. Calvin's presentation may have discontinuity and true distance of humanity from the divine realm, but not with a style that would not allow the witness of God to succeed in getting through. The operation of the *s.d.* is such that the sinful rebellion has much to react against! This aspect of the human heart's capacity, now called *the semens religionis*, operates to produce the religious aberrations, world-wide and various, about which Calvin speaks. There has to be a received knowledge against which the rebellion works. This understanding of sin sets the scene for Calvin to speak using both terms, the *s.d.* and the *semens religiones*.

¹⁵⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 240. By "strong foundationalism" Helm means the Classical Foundationalism against which Plantinga has reacted, and by "weak foundationalism" Helm means Plantinga's own position with some basic beliefs and other non-basic beliefs making up one's knowledge structure.

In summary, the objections of Beversluis and Helm are unconvincing and do not upset the conclusion that John Calvin had room for a natural knowledge about God and that the terms *sensus divinitatis* and the *semen religionis* are central to, and a part of, his exposition. All this knowledge together funds a “natural theology” as long as one understands that terminology not to be about knowledge sufficient for salvation. The knowledge of God as Creator and the One to whom we are all accountable also needs the special revelation by which we can understand more fully how it is the creator who has become the redeemer.

Why Calvin's Interpreters Differed so Greatly

The differences across Calvin's interpreters are not so major when one considers the consensus, that overall Calvin proposed a knowledge of God largely based on special revelation as found in the Scriptures. Rather, the disagreement was mostly due to the degree they saw him including a natural knowledge of God alongside that, and one that is still extant after the entrance of human sin. Although today one might take an objective evaluation and say the later interpreters of Calvin were, each in their own way, reading their ideas back into him, the fault is not all on their side. Calvin himself had wrestled with the constituents of his own theology and there were some tensions unresolved that make room for such varied interpretations. In Calvin we glimpse the societal influence of humanism and the progress of western thought and we will see that continued influence in the next chapters of this thesis.

It is doing Calvin a disservice to simply say that his legacy was due to the introduction of a more humanistic approach to Christianity, because there was something far stronger at work in him. This was Calvin's commitment, while being a man of his times, to allow the teachings of the scriptures to moderate and condition their impact. In Calvin's case, although he did not major on personal conversion but was more teaching about the church, he nonetheless read and taught the Scriptures from the standpoint of having had a personal experience of Christian conversion.

Some might argue that “evangelicalism” began with the contributions of the Reformation and the later revivals such as those in the times of Jonathan Edwards, the Wesleys and George Whitefield. And it was these latter, and not Calvin, whose major

emphasis was on the need for a personal moment of Christian conversion.¹⁵⁵ It is true that the element of conversionism came to the fore with these later writers and revivalists. But this is not to mean that conversionism did not exist before then, but just that the Great Awakening occurred amongst people who had so drastically needed that emphasis and this drew out preaching that restored it to be a constituent of the gospel. One cannot ignore that Calvin drew so much from Augustine whose writings centuries before incorporated Christian conversion as the fountain head of true godliness. Also it is not that Calvin did not mention his personal experience: he did this in the Introduction to the Commentary on the Psalms with the words:

'And first, since I was obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, yet I pursued them with less ardor.¹⁵⁶

So then, Calvin, humanist though he was, nonetheless displayed that evangelical trait of moderating all influences according to how they matched the Scriptures. And this is the Scriptural teaching that stressed that a person needed to have undergone a conversion to be a Christian at all. This is relevant in knowing how to interpret Calvin, given the influence of humanism visible in his times and in his work.

There is at work here something that is at the heart of evangelicalism: that it seeks to reinterpret the unchanging biblical truths in terms of the times present and simultaneously be sure to only take those things that come through the grid of the Christian gospel.

Summary

John Calvin's *s.d.* is a natural capacity that belongs to "humanity as created" and which implies the existence of some kind of "extra sense" other than the well-known five

¹⁵⁵ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730's to the 1980's* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3,12. "Bebbington's quadrilateral" includes the emphasis on conversion as one of the elements of the evangelicalism that emerged in the times of Whitefield and Wesley and Edwards. The four elements of evangelicalism are biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism.

¹⁵⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms Volume 1*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library

senses. There is no mention of any special organ of the body and Calvin does not seek to explain exactly how or where in the human makeup the *s.d.* is effected. This “sense of the divine” is nonetheless a natural capacity that thrusts up belief in God. It is *a sense of God*, not just the end product of human thought or rational argument. Such belief in God is not irrational belief, even though it was not necessarily the result of rational reasoning. That is, the *s.d.* causes immediate belief in God, not necessarily as the consequence of arguments being followed, though reason *post facto* may well substantiate and strengthen it.

According to Calvin, people everywhere had belief in God as their default starting point, and only by the repression of this input of the *s.d.* might they fail to believe in God or believe, but with a corrupted concept of the deity. Calvin’s accompanying term, the *semen religionis* (seed of religion), explicated such a result. The *seed of religion* explained for him the origin of the diverse religiosity of humanity as encountered everywhere around the world. The operation of the *s.d.* fitted in with other teachings of Calvin that theologians would subsume under the heading of *natural revelation*. Indeed, although Calvin’s mention of the implanted human capacity is sufficiently explicit to give it a name (the *s.d.*), it is nonetheless just a part of his overall presentation of this natural way of knowing about God.

Further to that, it is to be noticed that in the balance of things, Calvin’s *emphasis* is that the knowledge of God as creator is received through the scriptures rather than majorly through the operation of an *s.d.* or any other avenue of natural revelation. Calvin does recognize the pure operation of natural revelation - as seen by his exposition of Paul’s sermon in Acts 17 at Mars Hill. Paul cites the Athenians registering this input in their own poets. But his exposition of natural revelation through the *Institutes* does not really rest on arguments analogous to Paul’s method at Mars Hill. Rather the balance of material in the *Institutes* shows a rest on the declaration of the scriptures. Calvin could be blamed for the common practice of today’s Christians. When proving natural revelation, Christians tend to run straight to Psalm 19 and similar passages and prove natural revelation from the scriptures. They sometimes even do this without any hint of realisation that such a proof is immediately taking away the dependence on natural revelation to prove itself. This may be the result of how in Calvin’s thinking the “instigation of the Holy Spirit” vouches safe the “great things of the gospel” and this has so enormously out-trumped the much weaker force of the lower tier of

natural revelation. Nonetheless, despite all of the above, Calvin has left his estimation of any “divine sense” in the existence of an extant *s.d.*

Overall Calvin has a two tiered approach similar to that of Aquinas but, unlike Aquinas, Calvin’s reliance is not on the philosophical science to bring the unity of understanding. Whereas Aquinas placed both inputs (from both tiers) under the digestion of the natural human ability to philosophize – the genius of tier one – Calvin does the opposite. He submits even the input of the human ability to read from creation about the creator to the imprimatur and correction of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. Calvin’s exposition that would be his second tier, although similar to Aquinas in that it is the place of revelation, has swung the weight almost fully over onto this second tier. Where he has gone further is in the role of the Holy Spirit to vouchsafe those understandings and hence set up this spiritual phenomenon to take the role of integrating the whole. As with Aquinas (and no doubt with some credit belonging to Aristotle) Calvin has continued the advance of recognizing as important the recognition and acceptance of nature. But certainly unlike Aristotle although to some extent similar to Aquinas, Calvin has respect for the doctrine of creation. This all fits in with Calvin’s much more severe attitude to the all pervasive effect on human nature of sin.

CHAPTER 4

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758) and Evangelicalism

An Exposition of the Use of the “New Sense” in Jonathan Edwards

The Task of this Chapter

This will be the fourth instance of a “divine sense” or a “sense of the divine” of this thesis. The survey across the six chosen instances is to highlight that the divine sense *in its broadest terms* is not really new but has repeatedly appeared across history, though in varied philosophical dress. Calvin’s *s.d.* was the particular model of such a divine sense that had first motivated this investigation. The aim then was to discover what he meant by it and whether it was unique to Calvin. Then the purpose matured to seek the development of the divine sense across history.

Jonathan Edwards wrote about a *new sense* experienced by Christians, concurrent with, or subsequent to their Christian conversion, and also sometimes mimicked in people, not yet converted, but under the sway of a revival of religion. He identified that, during a movement of the Holy Spirit, people experienced an “awakening” which had the possibility of leading to their conversion. This is talking about the conversion of the heart to Christ, not so much or necessarily the conversion from one religion to another. He understood people, as a consequence of Christian conversion, to be in possession of something new. This he called “the new sense” and the most immediate purpose here is to elucidate what exactly Edwards understood was the new element in their experience, and to the degree that it might be another

illustration in history of the recurring “divine sense.” Explaining Edwards’ ideas will require setting out his progress from a Puritan heritage to where he finished as an intellectual writer as well as a participant in the Great Awakening and how his legacy includes the ongoing and developing New England Theology as well as the emerging Evangelicalism. He maintained strong Reformed theological foundations but also sponsored an experientially focused theology consistent with revivalism.

At this juncture the chapter will proceed to spell out Edwards’ starting points, as bequeathed to him by his time in history and the heritage that was his, coming from a revivalist family with Puritan backgrounds. The purpose of this very short historical background is to bring to the surface the motivation he had for his life’s interest and the beginnings of what drove him to his ideas of the *new sense*.

The Historical Setting

In 1703 Jonathan Edwards was born at East Windsor, Connecticut,¹⁵⁷ an English Protestant settlement in North America. It was a couple of centuries after Columbus’ first discovery of the Americas in 1492. Pope Alexander VI, on news of their discovery, had the following year of 1493 given the Americas to Spain on the proviso that they converted the natives to Christianity. The Christianisation of the Americas up to the 1700s thereupon had been led by the Catholic wing of the Church. Colonisation and mission were closely connected. Although the Spanish and Portuguese Catholic influence had been large in the Americas, by the 18th century, colonisation along the eastern seaboard of North America included distinct English Protestant colonies of which New Haven, the broader area enclosing Connecticut, was one.

¹⁵⁷ Connecticut today is the southernmost state of the most North-East area of the United States and of the original “New England.” It has the Connecticut River running through it.

Life in eighteenth-century New England was more of the character of British society than that which we picture today as “American”. Marsden explains: “Eighteenth-century Britons viewed their world as monarchical and controlled by hierarchies of personal relationships.”¹⁵⁸ Edwards’ family were intellectual aristocrats involved in the ministry and the leadership of their New England communities. Although migrants to the new world could be motivated by adventure and economic opportunities, some English religious dissenters, with frustrated religious hopes, also saw fresh opportunities in the colonies for their particular emphases, free from the restraints and persecutions of their home-land. The presence of a significant number of Puritans in the Protestant colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America is a significant indicator of this deeper motivation. Puritans were the major proponents of the Reformed Tradition and their agenda included the aim of realising a little more of the ideal relationship between Church and State. They wanted to reform the State as well as the Church and more thoroughly set up the kingdom of God on earth. The Geneva experiment under Calvin had been a forerunner. Leith records:

The mainstream of the Protestant Reformation did not reject the idea of Christendom or of the parish church. Calvin thought, as did the Westminster Assembly a century later, that the parish was the best arrangement for local congregations. Calvin knew that Christendom was an illusion; but instead of rejecting the idea, he sought with great vigour to make it a reality, to see that church and community were at least coextensive in Geneva.¹⁵⁹

Calvin was attempting to establish this vision of theocracy in Switzerland as he was unable to do this in France. Observers everywhere saw his experiment to be vulnerable to the overall politics of the broader environment. Migrants to the American colonies hoped to establish their kind of theocracy in the open new world when that had had proven it politically too difficult in the old.

¹⁵⁸ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁵⁹ John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition. A Way of Being the Christian Community* (Atlanta: John Knox press, 1977 and 1981), 24.

This aim did not prove so easy to fulfil, as in Edwards' time the North American colonies were still mostly defined by local moveable and yet unsorted boundary lines between clashing colonial interests of the French and the English, with the Indians often on the side of the French or otherwise somewhere in the middle. This competition of Protestant and Catholic communions had often been worked out around the world by political coup d'état, or open warfare, or repeated persecution of unwelcome minorities. The fragile hold that Protestant communities felt they held on their territories was well illustrated by the plight and then the flight of the Protestant Church of France. Persecuted Huguenots took this scenario to many places around the world including New England in the days of Jonathan Edwards.¹⁶⁰ New Haven was not very far from French, Catholic colonies and at that time England and France were as often close to war as they were to peace.¹⁶¹ So Protestant communities were occupied with survival, as well as with the preservation of their essential character. Religious revivals were one way that the godly integrity of their communities could be restored against the constant slide away from old connections.

The Edwards Family Line

The model of Church/community life prevalent at the end of the seventeenth century in New England was one wherein the chief figures were the Pastors/intellectual leaders of the community. They held deep concerns to restrain any societal irreligious trends and one method was the call for a revival of religion. Amongst these Pastor/intellectual leaders Solomon Stoddard (1643 – 1729) was a commanding figure of big stature with a gift for persuasive oratory. He preached without notes or wig and was renowned as a successful evangelist. His church at Northampton, the site where eventually his grandson Jonathan would lead a revival, was a Congregational Church.

¹⁶⁰ Following Louis XIV's revocation in 1685 of the 1598 *Edict of Nantes*.

¹⁶¹ It would take until the 1760's for England to defeat France in the Americas.

“Extreme Protestantism” was more visible in the colonies than in the old country. In the melding of influences and boundaries, the Congregationalists took in many ex-Puritans. These included the Stoddard and the Edwards families. Township politics involved openings for the leaders of the gathered churches (such as Congregationalists) to also lead in the colonies. Marsden writes of Stoddard as the “most renowned man in the promising valley of the Connecticut River”¹⁶² who was understood as the one aspiring to be the “Pope” of the Connecticut Valley. Stoddard ministered to second generation Puritans in Northampton. They continued to be Puritans in political mindset but nestled in to “the church of the state” by being Congregationalists. These continued much of their original doctrine and agenda - nestling in best with the politics of the given society.

The young man who married his daughter was Timothy Edwards (Jonathan’s father) who in turn became known for being the next most successful pastor for seeing revivals in his own congregation. Timothy’s son, and Stoddard’s grandson, was Jonathan Edwards. Marsden records about three generations involved in revival ministry:

Timothy Edwards [Jonathan’s father] was an effective preacher of revival. According to Jonathan’s later estimation, of all the pastors in the region, only his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, oversaw more local awakenings. In his famous account of the “Surprising Work of God” of 1734-35 in Northampton [written by Edwards of the revival under his own ministry at Northampton], Jonathan recorded that there had been “four or five” outpourings of the Spirit in “my honoured father’s parish [East Windsor, Connecticut], which has in times past been a place favored with mercies of this nature above any on this western side of New England, excepting Northampton.” So the father more directly than the grandfather set the footsteps in which Jonathan would try to follow. Timothy’s reputation as a revivalist eventually faded in the light of his son’s prominence.¹⁶³

Jonathan’s revivalist reputation, due to the power of the awakening it brought and also to his writings contributing to the intellectual growth of American culture, eventually surpassed both father and grandfather. Stoddard’s daughter, Esther, who was Jonathan’s

¹⁶² Marsden, *A Life*, 11.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25.

mother, was a particularly able-minded woman and Jonathan and his sisters represented a family of gifted children. The combination of the sharpness of mind with aptitude in intellectual pursuit and the penchant for spiritual ministry in the pulpit was the legacy of the family line. Jonathan Edwards is an example of a leader bequeathed by both nature and nurture, but also of what can come about by the putting together of deep thinking with spiritual experience. This was the combination of characteristics that would propel Jonathan Edwards to the place of significant influence in his times.

An Early Presbyterian Pastorate

In spite of his Congregationalist background, Jonathan Edwards at age nineteen took a Presbyterian interim Pastorate in New York City from August 1722 till May 1723. New York brought exposure to a broader range of people with diverse religious understandings. He experienced growth in ministry practice while continuing to expand his mind. He stayed with keen Christians who were recent immigrants from England. The son, John Smith, was one year ahead of Jonathan at Yale College¹⁶⁴ and a brilliant student.¹⁶⁵ The family were central in a closely knit small church that took in Jonathan, hoping to make him their permanent pastor. Even then at nineteen he must have displayed his enormous preaching and intellectual potential. This was timely when he needed both an opportunity to lead and also receive stimulation from broader than home circles.

This New York period of vigorous Christian enthusiasm and expanding intellectual and social stimuli saw Edwards keep a personal diary of his growth in sanctification and thought. The diary records the extreme ups and downs of his spiritual struggle.¹⁶⁶ After that couple of

¹⁶⁴ The college which later became Yale University. The charter was given for the establishment of an educational institution in 1701 and eventually renamed "Yale College" after one of its beneficiaries in 1718.

¹⁶⁵ Marsden, *A Life*, 46-48.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-58. This personal spiritual diary was later to become material used in a more deliberate *Personal Narrative*. What these records reveal is that although Edwards had experienced in mid year 1721 what

years of growth along with awareness of personal inconsistencies, it was difficult for him to return to home under the weight of his father's expectations. He was expected to take a pastorate of greater potential near to their home. He had seen sufficient vicissitudes to fuel either an ongoing doubt concerning his own spiritual standing or of the proper basis by which such should be calibrated. The Puritan background taught that assurance was found by viewing the evidence of one's consistent Christian walk. Given also his grandfather Stoddard's and his father's preaching for conversion which then could be confirmed by one's Christian walk and experience, Edwards was very naturally working through his own exact conclusions on the matter. This ultimately was that assurance of salvation was in one's "new affections". This certainly is where he ended up. Perhaps his uneasiness about being ready to stand on these developing ideas and fearing a consequent confrontation with his family authorities lay behind his reluctance to yield to his parents' pressure to take on a more formal role of being the Pastor of the Church near home. On the other hand, it may have been due to his acute awareness of his personal struggles and his impressions of his own lack of consistency in Christian experience.¹⁶⁷

Puritanism and its Gospel

The issue that Edwards faced concerned the locus of one's personal assurance of being a Christian. It became one of the essential pieces of grit in Edwards' developing oyster of

he would later relate in *Personal Narrative* as his time of conversion, in the immediately following years of taking the interim pastorate in New York he went through both great heights of religious experience and also the lows of personal failure and inconsistency. Later on, returning home after this New York time, and again under the strict definitions of his father's household, doubts came to him about the genuineness or depth of this conversion. It was not because of his continued sinful failures, which Reformed theology taught as expected of everyone, but the fact that the experience of the joy of the Lord and the sense expected of a converted person was not sufficiently continuous for him to erase the possibility that this was not just another episode of spurious religious effects rather than a genuine "conversion." The fact that Marsden puts all of this period in a chapter entitled "The Pilgrim's Progress" tells of his interpretation of Jonathan's experience as very normal for a young Christian man growing in his faith and walk.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 55-8. According to Marsden, this was a period of conflict with his parents that could possibly be explained by such disagreement.

ideas. The issue comes from the very heart of the Reformed faith. Muller¹⁶⁸ wrote about the development of the Reformed faith from after the Reformation and up to 1725, which date is coincidentally midpoint in Edwards' life. Muller describes this overall development period as follows: "The post-Reformation development of Protestantism can be divided, for the sake of convenience, into three periods: early, high, and late orthodoxy."¹⁶⁹ One of Muller's theses is that Reformed Christianity did indeed stay orthodox all the way through: that is, it did not greatly deviate *doctrinally* from its launching trajectory in the Reformation. Muller does assert, however, that it grew, *developed and adjusted to the changing intellectual climates*. Edwards lived in what Muller identifies as the third era of the "High Orthodoxy" of the Reformed faith.¹⁷⁰ This period ran in two stages from around 1640 through 1685 to 1725 and the period is the background tradition, immersed in which, Edwards experienced spiritual formation.¹⁷¹ Presbyterianism and similar groups had carried the Reformed faith to many places around the world as also did Puritanism within the Church of England.

The origin of Puritanism in England was theological and political. The Puritans wished for a purer form of Church while staying within the Church of England. They desired purity in practices that reflected fully the Protestant theologies while accepting a political framework of the established Church. Despite persecution, the Reformed faith had experienced growth and maturation across a hundred years of progress to arrive at the climax of consensus found in the Westminster Confession of 1646. The Confession contained "Covenant Theology" which had become a part of the Reformed faith along the way but

¹⁶⁸ Muller, *PRRD*.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

¹⁷¹ This "High Orthodoxy", according to Muller, "then, did not create the Reformed doctrinal system; it modified, developed, and elaborated [the] extant system in relation to a changing intellectual environment. The early orthodox systems and compendia, with their lucid and neatly argued structures, provided, as it were the skeleton of the high orthodox dogmatics." *Ibid.*, 74.

especially from the contribution of Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575).¹⁷² Bullinger assisted the Reformation and lived long into early orthodoxy which began (according to Muller) at 1565 and so had a long contribution of covenantal ideas into Reformed orthodoxy.

Covenantal theology has been applied quite variedly. For some it meant a major emphasis on grace. For others the covenant is actually the vehicle to lock people in to an Old Testament styled commitment to obligations and works. Carr, representing a recent Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Michigan, acknowledged the contribution of Presbyterianism into Puritanism. He wrote about the role of covenant in these differing streams of Reformed or Presbyterian thought:

John Ball (1585-1640) has been regarded as ‘one of the fathers of Presbyterianism in England.’ The work, for which he is best known, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, was published posthumously in 1645 just three years prior to the *Confession*’s appearance. The *Confession* has numerous parallels to Ball’s covenantal position. Like the *Confession*, Ball recognizes the great distance that separates the Creator and his creatures for ‘where there is huge and infinite disparity, there can be no assurance of this so great a gift, but the certaine Word of God, and the assured Promise of him who doth never lie, nor change.’ A covenant for Ball is, ‘a free Promise of God, but with stipulations of duty from the reasonable creature.’ He further explains that a covenant implies two things: ‘For a covenant is...the one covenanting, the other restipulating or accepting....First, the giving of some future good. Secondly, the retribution of some performance. The first without the second, is no more than a Promise: the second without the first is no less than a Law....But when two persons upon these two parts concur (sic), it is that we call a Covenant properly.’¹⁷³

¹⁷² Heinrich Bullinger, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*. (1534). This idea of the covenant was not just of the biblical covenants such as between God and Abraham or the Sinai Covenant made with Moses. Rather it was idea of covenant as indispensable in describing relations between God and humanity and included a covenant of grace between the Father and the Son on the occasion of the fall of humanity. The Father promised the Son that if He, the Son, would come into the world and die for the sins of the elect then the Father would undertake to see that they would all come to the Son and be saved. Latourette, who wrote for a popular audience, described Covenant theology more simply and said that it “maintained that God had made promises to man but that they were conditioned upon man’s obedience to His laws. God’s laws, so this conception had it, are seen in the Scriptures. It was to enable men to read the Bible and know these laws that Tyndale undertook his vast labour of translation.” Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Vol. II. A.D. 1500-A.D.1975*, (1953; repr., New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 814. Some versions of Covenant Theology have three covenants, with the extra one being the “Covenant of Redemption”.

¹⁷³ Kevin C. Carr is quoting John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace: Wherein the Gradual Breakings Out of Gospel Grace from Adam to Christ are Clearly Discovered* (London: Simeon Ash, 1645), 3-4 in his master’s thesis, “Covenant Theology in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*” (Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, 2009). <http://www.firstpreshinckley.org/literature/WCF-and-the-Covenant.pdf> (accessed July 29, 2013), 11-12.

The Puritans taught that assurance was to be discerned only by the self-observation that you were keeping the law of God as articulated in the whole of Scripture including the Ten Commandments. The Puritan gospel, consequent from such a theology, was a grace message at its entrance but a works message in its continuance, inasmuch as while it preached approaching God by faith alone (hence based on grace and not works) to begin the Christian life, it promised sanctification and assurance on the basis of working hard to keep the law of God. This gospel evinced a strong legalism (reliance on the law), not for entrance to the Christian life, but for assurance that one had so entered. The Christian needed to *work hard to know* he or she was in fact in God's favour. This involved little inner experiential assurance (as testified by Thomas Brooks {1608-1680} quoted below). The Reformed Churches since then have responded varyingly to this legacy. For example, Engelsma from the Protestant Reformed Church, speaking against this aspect of a background in the Puritans and quoting Thomas Brooks, wrote:

‘Now though this full assurance is earnestly desired, and highly prized, and the want of it much lamented, and the enjoyment of it much endeavoured after by all saints, yet it is only obtained by a few. Assurance is a mercy too good for most men's hearts, it is a crown too weighty for most men's heads. Assurance is *optimum maximum*, the best and greatest mercy; and therefore God will only give it to his best and dearest friends. Augustus in his solemn feasts, gave trifles to some, but gold to others. Honor and riches, etc., are trifles that God gives to the worst of men; but assurance is that ‘tried gold,’ Rev. 3:18, that God only gives to tried friends. Among those few that have a share or portion in the special love and favor of God, there are but a very few that have an assurance of his love. It is one mercy for God to love the soul, and another mercy for God to assure the soul of his love.’¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ David J. Engelsma, *The Gift of Assurance*, http://www.prc.org/pamphlets/Pamphlet_109.pdf (accessed July 29, 2013). A pamphlet posted on the internet by the Evangelism Committee of the Protestant Reformed Church, South Holland, Illinois 60473, 2009. Engelsma is quoting Thomas Brooks, “Heaven on Earth: A Serious Discourse, Touching a Well-Grounded Assurance,” in *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, repr. 1980), 335. The quotation is given in part in J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 181.

Puritan scholar J. I. Packer says of Thomas Brooks, that he was “one of the greatest of the later Puritans” and one of the “finest Puritan minds.” Packer states that Brooks’ teaching on assurance “represent[s] the main current of Puritan thinking” and is the “particular” aspect of “the Puritans’ most valuable contributions to the church’s theological heritage” (see Packer, 179-180).

Puritanism was then a rigorous religion and strenuous to follow. It fitted in very well in the preternatural American scene, although change was imminent. This was Edwards' starting point from his background and which his very person fully represented: yet his ministry effectively established a significant departure from this aspect of the Puritan gospel. The key element introduced is the place of experience in giving inner assurance. His family ethos, personal experience and study of religious revivals had much to do in bringing this about.

This is seen in how Jonathan Edwards set out a theology to explain how true religion and genuine Christian experience could be recognized. This is the import of his *Religious Affections*, though the ideas are present in his other writings. It is also explanatory of *the new sense*. The editor of *Religious Affections* wrote:

The Starting point of the Affections is subtle. Edwards required a biblical picture of true religion as a model, and he found it in a word addressed to the early church during a time of persecution. He assumed that in a time of pressure, when faith is tried in the fire of persecution and disbelief, religion will appear in its true form. Consequently, he chose his text for the opening section (the part of the Affections most clearly in sermonic form) from 1 Peter 1:8, "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." From this text together with the historical context, he derives his conception of true religion as consisting in the affections of love and joy in Christ; the former rests upon a spiritual sight, since the object of love is unseen with ordinary eyes, and the latter is the fruit of faith. The nature of such joy is to be "full of glory" and to Edwards this meant a filling of the mind and the whole being of the believer with a sight, a sense, and a power from beyond nature. He further derives or, as the expression ran, "raises" from the text this doctrine: "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections"; . . . ¹⁷⁵

Edwards had found scriptural vindication for the supposition that the proof of genuine Christianity lay in the experience of these holy affections. Already it is visible that Edwards' idea of a "divine sense" or as he would word it a "new sense" was going to come from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit bringing Christian conversion. This naturally

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Edwards (1754), *Religious Affections* John E. Smith, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 12.

leads to the question as to whether Edwards, by this spiritual connection, was abandoning the respect for the study of nature and that which humanity is by virtue of creation.

John Locke, Baruch Spinoza and the early Modernity

The answer to this last question is a resounding “no” due to how Edwards accepted the trend of his times in the most recent philosophies that were maturing in the West.

Although he lived in the colonies, Jonathan Edwards was well connected with the intellectual developments of Europe. Marsden’s picture is that Edwards was of a:

precocious teenage intellectual who immersed himself in the literature of the emerging British Enlightenment, the world of Locke and Newton and of Addison and Steele, Edwards was confronted with how hopelessly quaint, dated, and even laughable the provincial world of East Windsor would look to British sophisticates . . . ¹⁷⁶

Marsden’s analysis is quite a revision of the default picture bequeathed by the earlier Perry Miller (1905 – 1963),¹⁷⁷ whose description of Edwards was more the romantic, American, frontiers man spending time in the forests, occasionally facing the Indians, but interrupted now and then by massive intellectual insights.

Edwards lived in an era that had begun to change from mediaeval preternaturalism into the Modern era. Rene Descartes - the father of Rationalism - lived from 1596 till 1650. Baruch Spinoza’s short life (also a Rationalist) from 1632 till 1677 overlapped with the longer living John Locke (1632–1704). Locke is credited as one of the founders of Empiricism. Rationalism and Empiricism were leading, though rival, philosophies of the Enlightenment. John Locke, like Edwards, had been raised in a Puritan home. These new philosophies were not presented as contrary to religion. The practice of basing one’s ideas on either reason alone or on experience and experiment was introducing a major change. These philosophies were

¹⁷⁶ Marsden, *A Life*, 7.

¹⁷⁷ Perry G. E. Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939, 1954).

pivotal in the mindset dawning in the early Enlightenment that swept the intellectual field of the Western world. These changes affected conservative religionists as well as more radical thinkers –indeed of all who were seeking to adjust to their times.

More precisely, all these Enlightenment thinkers desired to base knowledge on *self-evident starting points* rather than just the givens from church, tradition or Bible. For Locke experience was the foundation of knowledge.

Edwards' theories fit in well with this reliance on experience. His ideas bring together a conservative listening to the Christian Scriptures with a sharp acumen for observation and classification of experience. He applied it particularly to the knowledge of one's assurance of salvation, and secondly to assess whether a given revival experience was from God or otherwise. Central to the book *Religious Affections* is Edwards' delineation of the "Twelve signs of Gracious Affections" that help one to calibrate whether the given religious experience is of God (and his grace) or not. A person, having undergone a genuine Christian conversion, would then experience these "holy affections" and a visible love for God and enjoyment of spiritual things. These were the "proof of the pudding" along with other aspects of living of a life according to the requisites of the Scriptures. The affections of the heart, understood as Edwards did, proved that one was indeed a converted Christian.

Ambivalence in Jonathan Edwards' Usage of "the New Sense"

Across his writings Edwards has used the term "new sense" ambivalently.¹⁷⁸ He sometimes uses the term in a nontechnical way but at other times in a technical way of an entity that he himself defines in his writings. The nontechnical usage is due to his seeing no other way to convey his intended meaning other than to take words and press a "new sense" onto them so that they should not be understood merely in their original fashion, but, due to

¹⁷⁸ Across the 96 occurrences of "new sense" found in a search of Yale University's *Works of Jonathan Edwards on line*, there are incidents both of Edwards talking of a "new sense" in a technical way and also of a nontechnical, but normal, everyday meaning of something just taking on a new slant.

fresh circumstances, are “understood in some new sense”. The idea here of “new sense” is where the words merely mean something further than, novel to, or differing from, the ordinary understanding.

An instance is in *The Freedom of the Will* where Edwards addresses the issue of the sovereignty of God and the ability of humanity to act with a God-given free will. He is intent to defend the Reformed theology view of the Sovereignty of God and the associated idea that salvation is all of grace, where this concept of grace includes strong dosages of election. Many shallow contributors to this age-old debate have started from one or other side of the antinomy of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility; asserted too quickly a corollary onto the other side without recognizing that in the Scriptures both are givens. Edwards is not evoking this antinomy idea; as his contribution to the issue is early in the development of that debate. Rather he is demonstrating that misunderstanding can be the result of the ambiguity of terms such as “necessary”, “impossible”, “irresistible” or “unable” when the context has shifted from the ordinary *outward* human life scenario to an understanding of the *inward* decision or inclination of the will. Outward circumstances may often have hindrances present contrary to one’s intentions but the inward inclinations are another matter altogether. Edwards, discussing the exact meaning of what it is to “will” something, and talking about terminology in general said:

4. It follows from what has been observed, that when these terms "necessary," "impossible," "irresistible," "unable," etc., are used in cases wherein no opposition, or insufficient will or endeavor, is supposed, or can be supposed, but the very nature of the supposed case itself excludes and denies any such opposition, will or endeavor; these terms are then not used in their proper signification, but quite beside their use in common speech. The reason is manifest; namely, that in such cases, we can't use the words with reference to a supposable opposition, will or endeavor. And therefore if any man uses these terms in such cases, he either uses them nonsensically, or in some new sense, diverse from their original and proper meaning. As for instance; if a man should affirm after this manner, that it is necessary for a man, and what must be, that a man should choose virtue rather than vice, during the time that he prefers virtue to vice; and that it is a thing impossible and irresistible, that it should be otherwise than that he should have this choice, so long as this choice continues; such a man would use these terms "must," "irresistible," etc., with perfect insignificance and nonsense, or in some new sense, diverse from their common use; which is with reference, as

has been observed, to supposable opposition, unwillingness and resistance; whereas, here, the very supposition excludes and denies any such thing: for the case supposed is that of being willing, and choosing.¹⁷⁹

Ramsey, the editor of *The Freedom of the Will*, clarifies the issue well with his commentary:

To continue to use these words in the same sense when conversant about the internal act of volition itself makes perfect nonsense, for here there is no supposable opposition. If a man wills, he wills or is preponderantly inclined. Whatever impediments may confront him when he goes into action, there is no natural difficulty or necessity or inability about the willing itself. Yet the words continue from long association to call up notions of opposition that may be irresistible. For want of abatements and changes in the meaning of words adapted to their new usage and "for want of due consideration, men inwardly entertain that apprehension, that this moral necessity must be against men's wills and sincere endeavors. They go away with that notion, that men may truly will and wish and strive that it may be otherwise; but that invincible necessity stands in the way" (p. 354). This is the mistake Arminians make when they dispute with Reformed divines. Edwards wants it observed that, consistent with his definition of philosophical, moral necessity, all such words are used "in some new sense, diverse from their common use." They are contrived "terms of art."¹⁸⁰

Notice how "in the same sense" is contrasted with "in some new sense". This usage in a nontechnical fashion can occur when he is talking about any term in some new circumstances that need it to be understood in some way different from the usual.

Speculative or Sensible Knowledge

Within one of his notebooks entitled "The Miscellanies"¹⁸¹, which particular notebook he began in New York when just 19 or 20, he kept some of his growing thoughts on theology and philosophy. These "The Miscellanies" entries often addressed what can now be seen as a central theme for Edwards – how to recognize a real work of the Spirit as distinct from what

¹⁷⁹ Paul Ramsey, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1: Freedom of the Will* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 151. (underlining mine).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 39. (underlining mine)

¹⁸¹ The other notebooks were: "The Mind," "Natural Science", and "The Scriptures". "The Miscellanies" had included the philosophy of the mind until Edwards decided to start a new notebook with that particular matter. He began "The Mind" when he wanted to specialize some of the content of "The Miscellanies".

was merely a human contrivance or experience.¹⁸² In his Entry 782 of “The Miscellanies”, he gives the term “sense” a special meaning, useful to his categorisation of ways of thinking and understanding. He distributes human knowledge into what he calls either “speculative” or “sensible”. Speculative knowledge includes when it is a thought process merely operating on signs (symbols) that we give to the concepts rather than fully calling up the actual concepts. This he calls *mere cogitation*. There are other reasons for a thought to be only speculative too. Different from this *mere cogitation* is *apprehension* wherein the mind “has a direct *ideal view* or *contemplation* of the thing thought of.”¹⁸³ Edwards wrote:

An ideal apprehension or view of things . . . , is what is vulgarly called a having A SENSE. 'Tis commonly said when a person has an ideal view of any thing of this nature, that he has a sense of it in his mind, and 'tis very properly so expressed.¹⁸⁴

So here an understanding is “sensible” is that the mind is handling it by having the full view of the concept contemplated in it. Edwards repeated and elaborated:

An ideal apprehension or view of these things is in vulgar speech called having a sense of them; and in proportion to the intensive degree of this ideal apprehension, or the clearness and liveliness of the idea of them, so persons are said to have a greater or lesser sense of them, and according to the easiness or difficulty of persons receiving such a sense of things, especially things that it much concerns them to be sensible of, are they called either sensible or stupid.¹⁸⁵

Now this is a special use of the word “sense” with a more precise meaning, but as yet is not the full technical meaning that Edwards gives to the *new sense*.

¹⁸² This is a biblical distinctive as the Gospel of John 1:11,12 talks about “becoming the children of God” on receiving Christ as being a birth from God rather than from human desire or passion or will.

¹⁸³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Series*, V.18: “The Miscellanies”: 501-832, ed. Ava Chamberlain (New Haven: Yale University, 2000), entry 782.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Edwards' Understanding of the Heart

The task here is to set out Edwards' special definition of "sense" and follow on to discuss his "spiritual sense" and then finally his "new spiritual sense" or *new sense*. But first a second caveat is needed: that Edwards is seeking to escape a strict dichotomy that casts human rational thinking and human emotion as represented respectively as either "the head or the heart." These terms, as commonly understood today, posit "understanding and reason" as matters of the head, whereas "feelings and emotions" are matters of the heart. Edwards rather posits understanding both in the heart as well as in the head. He defines two "faculties" in humanity: "the faculty of understanding" – figuratively represented by the head – and a "faculty of the will" – figuratively represented by the heart. The first faculty of understanding is when there is mere cogitation or "all understanding of things that don't consist in or imply some motion of the will" The second, the "faculty of the will", figuratively represented by the heart, is so much deeper within the person. Here in this faculty the understandings are now not just theoretical or objective but connected to the inclinations, the preferences, and the will. These constitute the "affections". So the heart is the seat of the affections in the sense of not just the emotions but also the person's deeper understandings, inclinations, preferences, loves and commitments.

The word "affections" brings only to our twenty-first century minds a question of emotion and feeling rather than understanding with reason. The picture on the front of a popular edition of *Religious Affections* (no doubt an editor's placing) is of a pretty blonde girl smiling and clapping her hands, while enjoying a modern day worship fest. Placed immediately under the Heading "Religious Affections", this picture totally misleads readers who come with such twenty-first century clear-cut but limited categories.¹⁸⁶ Edwards wrote in *Religious Affections*:

¹⁸⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Vancouver: Eremitical Press, 2009).

God has indued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns and views and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined to 'em, or is disinclined, and averse from 'em; or is the faculty by which the soul don't behold things, as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called the *inclination*: and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the *will*: and the *mind*, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*.¹⁸⁷

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* carries both meanings: Edwards' understanding of "heart" as indicating the deeper thinking and willing of the soul is listed with wording: "2. . . . mind, intellect; seat of inmost thoughts, = soul". Then also is a more modern definition: "3. Seat of the emotions, esp. of love, opp. *head* as seat of intellect. . . ." ¹⁸⁸

Now Edwards' definition of "the heart" and its affections joins with his use of the term "sense" to give a "sense of the heart" and takes us a step closer to the meaning of the *new sense*. Neither "the sense of the heart" nor a "spiritual sense" will be the full concept of the *new sense* although the *new sense* is both of these! There are three specific scenarios of a "sense" caused by the Holy Spirit. Of interest to Edwards where the Spirit works on the heart are: (i) the influence of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person in a time of "awakening" which might or might not lead finally to a Christian conversion; (ii) the newness of heart a conversion/regeneration experience brings and (iii) the post conversion spiritual sightedness of a Christian as the outflow of his or her "regeneration" (conversion). Edwards' understanding is that the Holy Spirit working on the heart leads to "a spiritual sense". It is a "sense" because it is knowledge of the heart, and it is spiritual because of the work of the Spirit.

¹⁸⁷ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, (Smith) 96.

¹⁸⁸ J.B. Sykes, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Seventh Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 460.

Edwards' Spiritual Sense

A major reason Edwards' theories of a *new sense* are taken to be about "an extra sense" is his often heard assertions regarding a "spiritual sense". This spiritual sense is beyond the capacity of normal, though fallen, humanity to produce. In his *Miscellanies* 782, Edwards discusses when "sensible knowledge" occurs. He views that it is possible for ordinary human nature to have sensible knowledge about religion and about temporal things where the person's experience had involved those areas. But to have sensible knowledge about eternal things was, by virtue of the topic, beyond their normal reach. He wrote:

But yet by reason of the natural stupidity of the soul, with respect to things so diverse from all the objects of sense, and so opposite to the natural disposition of the heart, 'tis found by experience that men never will obtain any very considerable sense of them, without the influence of the Spirit of God assisting the faculties of the human nature, and impressing a lively sense of them. But as to the other, viz. a sense of divine things with respect to spiritual good and evil, because these don't consist in any agreeableness or disagreeableness to human nature as such, or the mere human faculties or principles, therefore man, merely with the exercise of these faculties and his own natural strength, can do nothing towards getting such a sense of divine things; but it must be wholly and entirely a work of the Spirit of God, not merely as assisting and co-working with natural principles, but infusing something above nature.¹⁸⁹

Edwards, in the same place, goes on to describe occasions when the Spirit of God produces these spiritual impressions on the fallen, natural humanity and they include the conviction occurring during a revival moment of an individual's awakening. His picture is very challenging to theologians and historians of faith, if they believe that God has spoken both in the inspiration of the Scripture and in the central historical facts of the gospel. That which is learnt there (in the inspired Scriptures or "the great things of the gospel"), Edwards would say is yet only speculative knowledge and not necessarily sensible knowledge in the case that their learning is only academic and beyond their real experience. Without the work

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellany 782" in *The Miscellanies: 501-832*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Series*, ed. Ava Chamberlain, vol.18 (New Haven: Yale University, 2000), 462-463.

of the Spirit eternal things are beyond the natural man. So a theologian working within the Christian tradition, if he or she does not have the Spirit of God, would in fact only be having speculative opinions. Then when the Spirit of God becomes involved this speculative knowledge could be turned into sensible knowledge which is a true “spiritual sense” of the same ideas. Although a person could have sensible knowledge of normal human things, when it comes to eternal matters it is imperative that there is also the Spirit for the experiencing of sensible knowledge. But even yet this “spiritual knowledge” is not necessarily the *new sense*. The theologian could come under conviction from God but in stubbornness not want to admit that he was not a converted Christian at all. The conviction could be thwarted by his unwillingness to break to the conviction. So, although it was a “spiritual sense” that came upon it, it did not continue through to become the *new sense*. When, however, it is the *new sense* it will also be a “spiritual sense”. To understand why a person could have sensible knowledge about some things that exist within the normal orbit of human life but not necessarily a spiritual sense on those matters needs another caveat.

Interpreters, such as Carol Ball,¹⁹⁰ too quickly supposed that Edwards’ view was of a radical other-worldly “spiritual sense” like a “spiritual sixth sense”. This they did in a lack of realisation that Edwards did not entirely mean “spiritual” as nonphysical or super-human or other-worldly. Under such a definition the mistake generated is to see a spiritual sense as over against the product of normal human senses. Any acceptance of the empirical base for knowledge would then be irrelevant. Edwards rather sees calling something “spiritual” because it is not “carnal”. The spirituality is an addition to the normal human platform and not a Platonic leaving behind of the physical/human. This is a very important distinction.

In *Religious Affections* Edwards lists twelve signs that spiritual experience is from God. The affections produced have to be “spiritual” to be from God. Edwards’ understanding

¹⁹⁰ Carol Elaine Ball, “Jonathan Edwards’ Spiritual Sense as a Complement to Locke’s Everyday Sense Experience” (master’s thesis, The University of Queensland, 2004).

of “spiritual” is more biblical than a later idea of “spiritual” being non physical. John Smith, writing as an editor penned:

The initial sign is based upon the principle that only those affections arising from influences that are *spiritual*, *supernatural*, and *divine*, can be regarded as genuine. The exposition and defence consists entirely in showing the biblical meaning of these three terms. By *spiritual* Edwards means “sanctified” in opposition to “carnal,” which signifies the natural or unsanctified man. He was attempting to recover the ancient meaning of spiritual as opposed to later understandings. What is spiritual, he says, is not what relates to the spirit or soul of man, as the spiritual part of man, in opposition to the body”¹⁹¹

Smith continued:

It is the self as a whole which is spiritual or is born of the Spirit. Moreover, what is spiritual does not have this character because it is incorporeal or because it has to do with immaterial things; the term “spiritual” means a relation of the integral self to God and not a special aspect or part of the self standing over against the body. Edwards thus gives expression to the principle just mentioned as forming a common background for all the signs. The Spirit dwells according to its own nature in those who are truly spiritual, and while the natural man may be subject to operations of the Spirit, he is in no sense an abode of the Spirit. ¹⁹²

Carol Ball interpreted Edwards’ “spiritual sense” errantly when she wrote:

Since Locke limited his field to the five natural senses, he similarly limited the reasoning process to natural reasoning. On the other hand Edwards’ concept of a special additional sense with its own peculiar experiences developed logically into a spiritualized process of reasoning. ¹⁹³

Problematic here is the “special additional sense”. This is separating the spiritual sense from every other sense. Ball herself does elsewhere, however, note Edwards’ attitude to the “spiritual sense” as a permeating of natural processes. She wrote:

He [Edwards] had a profound trust in human reason enlightened and disciplined by his inward ‘spiritual sense.’ He believed his “spiritual sense” has a conditioning and purifying effect upon the cognitive powers of the mind. ¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, (Smith) 24-25.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹³ Carol Elaine Ball, “Jonathan Edwards’ Spiritual Sense. . .”, 70.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

Ball is in effect writing about the scriptural definition of “spiritual” without realising it. She is describing Edwards’ idea of how the input of the Spirit is to condition and purify the natural cognitive powers and this is exactly what is at the heart of sanctification.

Then Ball quotes Edwards to say:

The new principle God infuses sanctifies the reasoning faculty and assists it to see the clear evidence there is of the truth of religion in rational arguments in two ways: it removes prejudices and so lays the mind more open to the force of arguments and it positively enlightens and assists it to see the force of rational arguments by adding greater light, clearness and strength to the judgment.¹⁹⁵

This quotation is good and shows the same truth that her previous statement implied about the work of the Spirit to sanctify our natural powers. There is more clarity in the more recent Yale edition of Edwards’ *Miscellanies*. Starting the same quotation a few sentences earlier, it reads:

That spiritual light that is let into the soul by the Spirit of God, discovering the excellency and glory of divine things, it not only directly evidences the truth of religion to the mind, as this divine glory is an evident stamp of divinity and truth; but it sanctifies the reasoning faculty, and assists it to see the clear evidence there is of the truth of religion in rational arguments. And that two ways, viz, first, as it removes prejudices and so lays the mind more open to the force of argument; and also secondly, as it positively enlightens and assists it to see the force of rational arguments, not only by removing prejudices but by adding greater light [underlining mine].¹⁹⁶

Note the idea of “sanctifying the reasoning faculty”. Edwards’ idea of spiritual is not “nonbody” or “nonhuman” but rather the sanctifying of that which is the human. To be spiritual is to be *sanctified away from being carnal*. This is a biblical idea of being spiritual and is far removed from the Platonic notion of being lifted away from the bodily influence. There is reference to the body in the word “carnal” because it comes from the Latin *carnālis* (of the flesh). This is the human condition because of sin and due to the absence of the Spirit of God. The body is the victim of sin but not its cause. Notice the difference is that Platonism

¹⁹⁵ Jonathan Edwards, “Miscellany 628,” in Harvey G. Townsend (ed). *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from His Private Notebooks*. Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1955, 251, all as quoted by Ball, *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁹⁶ Jonathan Edwards, “Miscellany 628” in *The Miscellanies: 501-832*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Series*, ed. Ava Chamberlain, vol.18 (New Haven: Yale University, 2000), 156-7.

associated corruption with bodily existence somehow by definition. Some streams of Christianity may have continued that idea, escaping to asceticism or other forms of chastisement or rejection of the body, but true Christianity seeks to redeem the body along with everything that is human. Rather, biblically, spirituality is about all of humanity - body, soul and spirit - being sanctified. To be sanctified renders one to have a “spiritual sense”. Secondly note that the picture of “light gaining entrance” is one of Edwards’ favourite metaphors for the *spiritual sense*, especially when what is seen is the glory and excellency of God. In the sermon, *A Divine and Supernatural Light*, Edwards says:

I will proceed to show . . . what this spiritual and divine light is. It may be described: a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the Word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature, than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He don’t merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing; but there is a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness. There is not only a speculative judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account; or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.¹⁹⁷

Of course Ball’s translation has interpreted the pronoun “it” as going back to “the new principle” which may be a good connection but not a good translation. The better translation by Yale refers to the new light being the spiritual sense that, coming on the person, allows them to grasp the meaning and the arguments that were there all the time in the word of the gospel. The evidence was present in the Word of God, but the human mind in prejudice and carnality had not seen it. A non-converted or carnal person may read the words of the

¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light. Immediately imparted to the soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine,” in *Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733, Vol.17*, ed. Mark Valeri (New Haven: Yale University, 1999). A sermon on Matthew 16:17, preached at Northampton 1734.

gospel but be in need of the Spirit to bring the spiritual meaning “to light”. When the human rationality is sanctified by the Spirit it is able to have a new sense of that to which all the evidence had pointed. And this new sense is spiritual. This new spiritual sense is the truth which the entrance of the light allows now to be seen. This quotation of Edwards reads as not only just a spiritual sense but also the very *new sense*.

Edwards, as did John Wesley and George Whitefield, majored on the necessity of the new birth. This central aspect of their preaching became a hallmark of the First Great Awakening. New birth, as a supernatural event, was needed for any possibility of participation in the kingdom of God. The idea goes back to Jesus in John’s gospel, chapter three. “Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.” In *Religious Affections* Edwards wrote:

And natural men are represented in Scripture as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual being; and therefore conversion is often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead. and a work of creation (wherein creatures are made entirely new), and becoming newborn children. From these things it is evident, that those gracious influences which the saints are subjects of, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, altogether of a different kind from anything that men find within themselves by nature, or only in the exercise of natural principles; and are things which no improvement of those qualifications, or principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting them to higher degrees, and no kind of composition of them, will ever bring men to; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from everything that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances; but also in kind; and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by *supernatural*, when I say, that *gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural* (italics mine).¹⁹⁸

Edwards is clearly seeing this supernatural spiritual sense to be included in the outcome of the new birth. Also note that he is talking about a new understanding and a new vision rather than a new faculty. He continues in the same passage from *Religious Affections*:

From hence it follows, that in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints, through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward *perception or sensation* of their minds, entirely

¹⁹⁸Edwards, *Religious Affections*, (Smith) 204-5.

different in its nature and kind, from anything that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified.¹⁹⁹

Here these gracious influences Edwards calls a “new spiritual sense.” He wrote:

If grace be, in the sense above described, an entirely new kind of principle; then the exercises of it are also entirely a new kind of exercises. And if there be in the soul a new sort of exercises which it is conscious of, which the soul knew nothing of before, and which no improvement, composition or management of what it was before conscious or sensible of, could produce, or anything like it; then it follows that the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation; and here is, as it were, a new spiritual sense that the mind has, or a principle of new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses (underlining mine);²⁰⁰

By that he does not mean an extra sixth sense or an added faculty, but rather both something new being sensed (a spiritual sense), because of a new platform, foundation for this inward perception or sense. It is the spiritual vision that is being sensed, now on the basis of the presence of a new nature. The consequent product experienced in the mind is indeed new, *and in appearance is as though it is another sense*, but it has come about because of a new principle of operation that the mind is now been subjected to through the supernatural work and presence of the Holy Spirit. It is a new principle applied to the old senses. Admittedly this is a fine line of distinction, but Edwards was at pains to draw the nuance. He draws attention to the closeness of nuance between the idea of a new faculty for perception as compared to a new principle of operation undergirding the existing senses. So the new principle of operation caused by the connection with the Holy Spirit is giving the new perceptions and sensations.

But just to make sure we are not by that last statement tipped toward the wrong side of those two nuances of meaning, all in the same general passage in *Religious Affections*, he adds:

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties, but are new principles of nature. I use the word “principles,” for want of a word of a more determinate signification. By a *principle of nature* in this place,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 205.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 205-206

I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular manner or kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind; so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will. (underlining mine)²⁰¹

By the presence of the Holy Spirit, the heart is made new and therefore has new understandings and a changed will. Previously, in the pursuit of clarity, to describe the new spiritual sense, he set in opposition (perhaps “apposition”) a choice between of a “faculty” and the “principle”. Now he also sets in opposition the “faculties” and the “foundation”. He likes to use positively all the words: sense, principle, foundation. While qualifying the new spiritual sense by their use, all the while affirming there is no new faculty. He is pushing deeper the concept of newness to include more the meaning of second word in each pairing (not faculty but sense, principle and foundation). The newness of the sense is in the principle, or in the foundation of the nature, but still within the original faculties. This is the *new sense* or *new spiritual sense*.

Edwards’ own Conversion and the Issue of His Life

Jonathan Edwards was particularly concerned to discern the difference between human experiences springing out of the fallen humanity and that from a regenerated heart. His interest was on two scores: his need for personal assurance of his own conversion; and the need to demonstrate whether revival experiences were the work of God or not. There is a subtle nuance here: something could be a genuine work of God – such as the revivals under Solomon Stoddard or under his father Timothy Edwards - but still be drawing a response that finally proved to be a spurious conversion. Humanity, as in the “old man”, the “unconverted

²⁰¹ Ibid., 206.

man”, “the carnal man” can be swayed or moved in a revival and mimic the appearance of someone properly converted. Thus a person could have “an awakening” under the power of the Spirit but it prove transitory - their display of religious affections still not that which comes from a permanent “new sense”. This is because of not yet breaking with the carnal nature. Edwards judged himself to so have undergone two such occasions of “awakenings” without conversion in earlier movements of the Spirit under his father’s ministry. His first was at the age of nine and another in teenage years. In revival times there could be many people moved to contemplate Christian things who do not yet show that they are fully converted.

Whether these spiritual effects culminate in a full conversion or not, two things are the clear facts nonetheless: (i) the movement can be truly of God; yet the response is still from the carnal, unregenerate humanity; (ii) only at or after the conversion does the response come from the newly regenerate person. Nearer the end of his life, Edwards was forced to look back on how readily his earlier mindset had jumped to conclude a person as converted because of revival expressions exhibited. His rejection as Pastor from the Northampton church triggered this recalibration. He analysed why he had been finally rejected from the Northampton pastorate and consequently changed his estimate of the point of balance drawn as to when conversion has actually happened amongst people swayed in a revival. He was responding to consideration about how so many people had been under the sway of the revival earlier but later act so badly against the one who was at the centre of it. The issue was exactly where to draw the line between expressions of an awakening and evidence of the permanent presence of the *new sense* - between identifying a mere conviction (a spiritual sense from people convicted but not yet converted) and the *new sense*. Marsden wrote:

Despite his respect for his grandfather, Edwards believed that the Northamptonites “had got so established in certain wrong notions and ways in religion, which I found them in and never could beat them out of.” Particularly, they were too ready to stress “the impressions on the imagination” that they took to be their conversion experiences and too unwilling to see “the abiding sense and temper of their hearts” and the “exercises and fruits of grace” as the true

evidences of regeneration. Edwards acknowledged that, being young, “I was not thoroughly aware of the ill consequences of such a custom” and as much admitted that he was taken in by the town’s emphasis on the excitement of supposed conversions. Had he been more mature at the time of the awakening of 1734-35, he would have insisted on testing the spirits more carefully. Although “there were numerous instances of saving conversions” he confessed, “the number of true converts was not so great as was then imagined.”²⁰²

The danger of supposing oneself converted when only merely moved is that such false confidence establishes a “trust in the flesh” rather than awareness of total bankruptcy that Edwards saw as “the broken heart” – the requisite that God would not despise.

Edwards’ Psalm 51 sermon on the “broken heart” from an exposition of the experience of the Old Testament King David makes a straight line to this point. Edwards says:

1. I would show what is a broken heart. Tis not every heart that is melancholy and distressed about spiritual things. By that broken heart that is spoken of in the text is not meant an unregenerate heart under terrours and awakenings of conscience and under a sense of wrath. Those things are often times caused in order to a true and [Godly] brokenness of heart, but they in themselves are not it. . . A person may be under great terrours of conscience and strong awakenings and yet have a very hard heart, a very stubborn rebellious heart, a heart that is obstinate refusing to yield. It may have no saving impressions made upon it and may obstinately refuse to yield to God. Yea may in a very presumptuous manner quarrel with God and rise against him.²⁰³

Edwards distinguishes a true “broken heart” from a misdiagnosis of an essentially good thing – people coming under the conviction of the Spirit even if not yet arriving at a broken heart. But worse than a misdiagnosis that fails to recognize that the conviction did not issue in a conversion would be to be deceived by spurious religious experiences and fervour that did not come because of true conviction at all. Instead it is always possible for someone to be moved in their humanity by mere psychological factors and false emotions.

Deceptions from the evil world might aim to mar and spoil a revival. The movement might be a good work of God, but marred by evil scars. Another sinister purpose could be to inoculate people against eventually discovering the real thing. Indeed in Edwards’ two earlier

²⁰² Marsden, *A Life*, 372. Chapter 22, “The Crucible,” is all about this re-examination of this issue.

²⁰³ Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, no. 275, Psalm 51:17.

awakening instances which he later judged as not a true conversion/regeneration, the instances came with accompanying spiritual delights and affections. These spiritual delights and affections lulled Edwards into thinking he was fine. When they did not persist, it proved to Jonathan's calibration that the real conversion had not yet occurred.

So to follow mistaken, or inadequate measuring guides - either the behavioural ones set out by the Puritan traditions, or the emotion and drama of participation in a time of an awakening as under the ministries of his grandfather and father - was dangerous in that they lulled people into no longer seeking and finding the quintessential Christian beginning of being born again. Edwards believed this as having happened to him. He had undergone twice what would he later supposed to have been spurious conversions before the final third and lasting occasion of an awakening issuing in a permanent possession of the *new sense*! Only after the third did he become assured because of the enduring spiritual affections which had become a continued presence with him. Edwards looked back at his journey into being a converted man with the description:

I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood; but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change, by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation; and was abundant in duties. I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious talk with other boys; and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure; and it was my delight to abound in religious duties. I, with some of my schoolmates joined together, and built a booth in a swamp, in a very secret and retired place, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods, where I used to retire by myself; and used to be from time to time much affected. My affections seemed to be lively and easily moved, and I seemed to be in my element, when engaged in religious duties. And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight, as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, V.16: Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

None the less, Stephen Stein wrote of the young Edwards' spiritual struggles:

A young Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) penned the following private resolution in the closing months of 1722 serving as a supply minister in New York City: "*Resolved*, To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same."¹ Diary entries the following year document his persistence and the difficulties he encountered in pursuit of that goal. On January 14, for example, he experienced "spiritual insight" while reading Romans 8. On May 12, after returning to his home in East Windsor, Connecticut, he chided himself for having "lost that relish of the Scriptures" that he had known earlier.² Subsequent months witnessed renewed delight in biblical study and meditation, as well as continuing problems in maintaining his resolve.²⁰⁵

Edwards can only be commended for trying to distinguish between spurious religious experiences and the similar appearance of a genuine young convert still learning how to walk after the Spirit. His exposition of Psalm 51, which elaborates further than does the actual Psalm, attempts to get into these sort of fine distinctions.

A broken heart is a heart that has its carnal confidence and support broken. Natural wicked men in general have some carnal supports and confidences wherewith they do as a whole keep their hearts whole. Without something to trust in men will be in a desperate condition. Many trust in the good things of this world. They have a high opinion of creaturely enjoyments and trust in them for happiness. Some make it in their honours, others their profits or their pleasures of the world. They glory to trust and to supply and satisfy their souls. They don't see the vanity of these things . . . and when they are told of another world and are put in mind of the wrath of God that he has denounced against all the workers of iniquity and how he has threatened eternally to damn all such, still they find something to trust in to support themselves with against those awful declarations.
.....²⁰⁶

Here Edwards is building on his definition of carnal versus spiritual.²⁰⁷ along with the pre-understanding that (1) although some Wesleyans and general Arminian Protestants take the new birth (regeneration) as a New Testament development, the Reformed perspective more

²⁰⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, V.15: *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 1.

²⁰⁶ Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, no. 275, Ps. 51:17. This wording of this sermon has been hard to decipher in places. To make it more readable, the punctuation has been corrected and some guesswork or approximation is present in this rendering. The overall meaning is clear. [...] are used where a word has been added to increase the clarity.

²⁰⁷ See editor John Smith's comment above about Edwards' meaning of "spiritual", with footnote .

sees regeneration as also available in Old Testament times, and (2) if the new birth was available in King David's era, that it had not already happened to David prior to his fall with Bathsheba.²⁰⁸ Only these assumptions could render appropriate Edwards' exposition of a *new sense* out of David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. Edwards' use of the Psalm to assert his teaching about the new affections being the centre of the *new sense* does makes sense if one understands these theological issues and takes the teaching as more than a general truth about repentance and God's quickness to accept the contrite heart. Of course it is a common practice for preachers to speak of the New Testament experience of Christian conversion from Old Testament passages. Edwards continued in his sermon describing the broken heart:

By a broken heart is meant a heart that is wounded and broken, dissolved with godly sorrow for sin. No kind of disposition or exercise that the heart can be in before conversion is that brokenness of heart that God will not despise but is [be]that sacrifice that God will accept. Nothing can be acceptable to God in a natural man and delight in [God delighting in?] that goes before conversion. [Conversion] may be necessary in order to brokenness of heart . . . whatever steps there are towards it before yet the heart is not truly broken till gracious sorrow. It is broken with gracious sorrow. The text speaks of a gracious brokenness of heart, which . . .²⁰⁹

The wording just here in the record of the sermon is obscure in places, but the overall thrust is clear: *that none of the preparation toward the heart being broken constitutes that ultimate brokenness*. Rather the brokenness will be an act of God's grace. This is "grace" not in the Roman Catholic understanding of a sacramental power communicated to enable us to better respond – i.e. a synergism-, but rather an in-breaking of God's miraculous act despite our condition of sinfulness and not based on our co-operation – i.e. a monergism.²¹⁰ This is

²⁰⁸ If one restrains oneself from using the technical language of "regeneration" and "new birth" then there is a far broader consensus of Protestants who subscribe to the idea that there is necessary a work of the Spirit before any movement toward God is possible, whether in Old or New Testament times.

²⁰⁹ Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, no. 275, Ps. 51:17.

²¹⁰ Mark Valeri as editor of *Sermons and Discourses*, is commenting on another of Edwards' sermons - *A Divine and Supernatural Light*. He reveals the monergism of Edwards' ideas by this description of them: "God . . . must bestow the Holy Spirit by his own sovereign initiative before individuals can have a right perception of him. Because revelation comes only from God's self-disclosure to the elect, natural reason or any other human means alone cannot be said to convey spiritual knowledge, In the short but quite powerful Application, Edwards asks his auditors to decide whether they have received divine light and exhorts them with reminders

the point in the sermon of the true brokenness being said to be a “godly sorrow” – produced by God by his grace and Edwards transitions to call it “gracious sorrow” and a “gracious brokenness”.

Edwards’ “monergistic” ideas, nonetheless, do not mean that there are no happenings within the human heart prior to the regeneration. Otherwise the whole of Psalm 51’s idea of moving towards having a broken heart is nonsensical. In fact Edwards opens the door to a more reasonable understanding (from the non-Reformed perspective) by underlining the place of the gospel. He speaks to show that the most powerful mover toward finding this place of contrition and a broken heart is the demonstration of God’s grace in the gospel and the presentation of the beauty and glory of God himself.

The new affections may be the evidence of a spiritual conversion, but coming after God accepts the sacrifice of the broken heart! The powerful gospel revelation of the beauty of God and his excellence along with the depth of our sin against such an excellent Saviour is that which will drive a person to properly have a broken heart. Edwards says:

Tis an apprehension of the glorious excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the evil of sin as against God that breaks the heart alone [that] truly breaks the heart – when a sinner comes to have his eyes opened to see how excellent a being he had sinned against, how good a God and how reasonable [was] that obedience he required of him and how it becomes the human to love him and adore and serve him and what an excellent saviour has been sinned against, dismissed and rejected and dishonoured. This breaks the heart. Such a discovery as this has immensely more power, more power to break the heart than all terrifying considerations whatsoever the terror the threatening and terrors alone of the Law may be wont break the rock adamantine hearts of men. They may be like hard, hard blows upon the heart may pry pain the heart and put it into great distress, but if they be, but still the heart will remain hard if it has nothing else. One glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has more power to break the heart than beholding hell fire with all the devils and damned souls in it would do [and] have without it. The still small voice of the gospel has more power to break the heart than the mightiest thunders of Mt. Sinai. . . .²¹¹

that this light is not only morally pleasing and joyful but the means of conversion and salvation.” The sermon was first delivered in Northampton in August 1733. It was printed in Boston in 1734 by Samuel Kneeland and Timothy Green under the heading of *The Reality of Spiritual Light*.

²¹¹Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, no. 275, Ps. 51:17.

Edwards remains a good representative of the Reformed tradition which defines the grace of God as linked to election in a way that does not have overly much room for the human side of the response of faith. Edwards, nonetheless, also is a forerunner of the next eras of Protestantism in America - New England Theology and Evangelicalism. These do make room for the human side of Christian experience. A consensus on the delivery of the gospel, as in mass evangelism and revival, do achieve a degree of sympathy between the Reformed and other more Arminian outlooks. By his elevation of how the gospel presents the glory of God as more powerful than the conviction from the laws of Mt. Sinai, Edwards makes way for the era of evangelicalism that will encourage participation amongst Arminian, Wesleyan and Reformed traditions under such a gospel coalition.

The New Sense and the Sensus Divinitatis

John Calvin does indeed mean some extra human capacity to “sense” God. Despite the name “new sense”, Edwards, as this thesis has interpreted him, does not. The reason is twofold: first because in some cases, Edwards has his attention on what is sensed. A major emphasis of his is the apprehension of the beauty, the wonder, the holiness and the power of God; secondly when Edwards has in mind the individual’s capacity so to sense the beauty, etc. of God he has in mind not an extra human capacity but the fact that the whole human operation of mind and particularly the heart has been placed on a new basis because of the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit.

This thesis, in earlier chapters, concerning a model of how the knowledge of God is built up, has stressed the significance of two possible tiers. The contrast of these two tiers was first contrasted between Plato and Aristotle. It was seen in exactly from where Plato saw the knowledge of the divine world was obtained (the realm of the Forms) as compared to how Aristotle attributed this access to the divine realm as found in reasoning over the natural things of the observed world. Then Aquinas put those two tiers into one model by following

Aristotle's lower tier of natural observation and human reasoning and then adding a secondary tier of revelation. Aquinas, nonetheless, had the emphasis on the lower tier of human rationality as to be "in charge" of putting together the inputs from both levels. What this thesis saw was that both Aquinas and Calvin still reported on some immediate, intuitive knowledge of God that evidenced itself within humanity.

In Aquinas, following Aristotle, this recognition was not necessarily the burden of his theories. So they were inadvertent witnesses to what was very similar to Calvin's later idea of the *s.d.* Although Calvin's theories were majorly on the second tier – the knowledge of God through the Scriptures, there was not absent from his teaching both the mention of the *s.d.* and also the working of the Holy Spirit. Calvin's *s.d.* is an operation from the first tier of a two tier model, but he has switched the major role of the synthesis of all to the higher tier of the revelation through the Scriptures. Now Edwards' *new sense* is all about what would be the second tier, were he to have made much mention of what actually is his first tier. He does have recognition of the normal operation of humanity in what would constitute that first tier. It is by this fact that he has made a large contribution to the development of the ideas of the Enlightenment through people such as John Locke to the stream of thinking that was developing in North America where he lived and beyond. Indeed Edwards has emphasised the natural faculties of the human mind as never being left behind despite the addition of the information of the Scriptures and the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a part of Edwards' genius – the setting of conservative Christianity based on "the great things of the gospel" in a thoroughly acceptable empirical framework. This is the case in that his proposal of the *new sense* is about the addition of the work of the Spirit to the natural framework of the operation of the normal senses. The result in Christian conversion and revival movements he wrote extensively as to how these could be observed. This means that he has the two tiers kaleidoscope into one. But Calvin's model has the two tiers kept separate and so the *s.d.* is not in Calvin a spiritual operation. It was a capacity of a normally operating humanity and

therefore visible in effect in all humanity. From the Christian perspective unconverted people are not alive spiritually. Edwards, however, mostly means a new understanding produced upon the whole of one's individual humanity being put on a new platform due to the working of the Holy Spirit. Edwards is not about adding a new faculty.

This leads to the most significant difference between the ideas of Calvin and Edwards. It is that Calvin was speaking of a universal natural capacity while Edwards delineated supernatural features due to the Spirit and not in the general population. Calvin does speak elsewhere in his *Institutes*²¹² about the Christian experience of being brought to certainty about the truth of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit but this teaching is away from his discussion of the *s.d.* The commonality of Calvin and Edwards as writers is that both seek to explain belief in God out of an internal operation within the human experience, and both do make a place for the work of the Holy Spirit in the overall explanation of Christian faith. Whereas in Aquinas and Calvin, the "sense" being investigated was in the first step and the supernatural contribution of the Holy Spirit, or knowledge by revelation as in the case of Aquinas, was a matter of the second step, in Jonathan Edwards' both the steps are being talked about together with the first step not being explicit but implicit in his commitment to the rational use of one's senses. The second step is a combination of that acceptance of normal human faculties with the work of the Holy Spirit providing a new foundation that gives a "new sense" to the understanding.

Edwards wrote often about the new perceptions thus exhibited, but also talked about the mechanism that produced them as though it were an added *sense*. This led him to use the word "sense" ambivalently. When today we mention the five natural senses and follow on speaking of a *spiritual* sense, the mind jumps to interpret an extra "spiritual sixth sense". This is not the same as an adjustment of meaning to be "in a different or new sense." The former is talking about an extra capacity "in the spiritual dimension" while the latter is

²¹² *Institutes*, I, vii, 80-81.

about a new shade of meaning. Edwards is about the latter, but due to the Holy Spirit. He is not proposing that humanity has an extra capacity or faculty that no one before has spotted. The “newness” he is speaking of is definitely an addition due to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and only truly in converted Christians. At this level of examination of the particulars, Edwards’ *new sense* then is not another instance of Calvin’s *sensus divinitatis*! Edwards’ writings may not always remind the reader of it, but there is the assumption of the natural platform of human senses or *human faculties* with which we all come into the world. If Calvin were correct about the existence of some *sensus divinitatis*, then this would be a part of what Edwards was assuming as present in the heart as a part of that natural faculty.

When for Edwards, the “newness” is about that which is sensed, he has a particular vision in mind. The new affections are the vision of the glory and the beauty of God and the wonder of his person. These are enlightened by the revelation coming by the gospel declaration of what this God has done for undeserving sinners. These are sensed not just from the mind in an indifferent and objective manner, but from the heart with a deeper apprehension that includes the willingness to be committed, and the inclination of the will to obedience to the glorious person of the vision. Also, this newness is due to *a gracious giving* of this new platform, this new principle - a new basis for the original faculties of humanity. The new platform is not worked up by the efforts of our fallen humanity without the Spirit.

Edwards would call such works from the fallen humanity the product of our carnality. The new platform is given entirely out of grace. It is effected by the permanent possession of the Holy Spirit who comes at regeneration (i.e. conversion). Because a person either has the Holy Spirit or does not, the transitioning is not a gradual matter and all that the human effort of preparation can do is to bring the person to the place of being cast on the mercy of God. It is like King David whose sin was too grave for animal sacrifices to atone. In the total absence of any defence he is humbled to the place of the broken heart as a candidate for God acting totally out of grace.

“Carnal” is what humanity is without this gift of grace and by which humanity may still be empowered after the reception of the grace but before sanctification has had sufficient effect to take them past their behaviour set in the days of the old nature. “Spiritual” is when sanctification takes a person increasingly beyond the works of the flesh and into the fruit of the Spirit. In this way, the *new sense* is about the utterly new. But it is not an alternative, extra sense on top of the normal human capacities, but rather the new conditions and the new platform for the still very human operations.²¹³ The newness comes from the new principle by which humanity operates as more fully human than it has ever been able so to be before. This is a part of basic biblical teaching that humanity cannot be humanity as God originally intended without a permanent relationship with and connection to God.

The Holy Spirit is the Person of God who brings God to us. That is, Edwards is not speaking of a suspension of normal and natural, rational capacities to participate in the *new sense*, but that the addition made by a Christian conversion makes all the difference so that humanity can now be what it always was intended eventually to be. The spiritual dimension enables the natural and rational to operate properly and gain the sense that they could never have had without “the instigation of the Holy Spirit.” In having this meaning, Edwards is following Calvin’s general teaching and staying within the tradition of the Reformed faith quite precisely.

²¹³ The *new sense* does not make one *less human* but just the reverse, more truly able to be what humanity has always been intended to be. The theological test of this is to look at Christ. He had the Spirit “without measure” which, if one wanted to stay within the understanding of orthodoxy, did not lessen his humanity. He remains the measure of humanity for us. The basic lesson is that it takes God to be a man as man was intended to be. The *new sense* is not incompatible with the fullness of humanity.

Chapter 5:

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN and Catholicism

An Introduction to John Henry Newman

On the 21st February, 1801 John Newman, a London banker, became the father of John Henry Newman - the first of his six children. His wife, Jemima Fourdrinier, came from a line of French Huguenot refugees.²¹⁴ The Newman family were evangelical and Calvinistic Anglicans. The child, John Henry Newman, began a journey of life and thought that was marked by unexpected developments and change. It took him from that evangelical background, having experienced a conversion to Christ in his teens, to being swayed more by early modern thinking in his young adulthood; but then to become a leader of the Anglo-Catholic movement in Oxford that was a reaction against the rising influence of liberalism in the Church of England. In 1845 he became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church which eventually in 1879 made him a Cardinal under Pope Leo XIII. He died eleven years later in 1890.

Across his lifetime Newman maintained a deep interest in how people came to believe in God and accept Christian doctrines. A typical example from his public sermons in Ireland in 1856 was when addressing a church at the time of the feast of St. Thomas he made the aim of the sermon: “to set before you, my Brethren, as far as time permits, how it is, humanly

²¹⁴ John Calvin (vrai nom Jehan Cauvin) worked in exile in Switzerland. His legacy in France since the 1530s were Calvinistic Protestants who became persecuted by the dominant Catholic society. Known as Huguenots by the 1560s, almost a half a million had fled France by the time of Newman’s birth in 1801 because of religious persecution. They migrated to Protestant nations, of which England was one.

speaking, that a man comes to believe the revealed word of God, and why one man believes and another does not.”²¹⁵ Ian Ker wrote: “. . . the justification of religious belief always remained the subject which was closest to his heart and which was never far from his thoughts throughout his life.”²¹⁶ But his was not the usual philosophical mindset that prosecuted epistemological interests. Dulles summed up Newman’s approach to questions of faith with the words: “Whereas the evidentialists emphasized the objective data, Newman is mainly concerned with the knowing subject.”²¹⁷ In this aspect of turning to the subject, Newman illustrated a theme of his times as seen in the Romantic Movement.

In 1870 at the age of 69, his major work on this topic was published: *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Chapter 9 is entitled *The Illative Sense*. Although this “Illative sense” is about the human capacity to come to a conclusion on any matter under consideration, it has particular application to how a person can come to believe in God and accept the truths of the gospel and the creeds of Christianity. This Thesis Chapter’s investigation is as to whether this Illative Sense is another occurrence of “the Divine sense”.

Interpreting John Henry Newman’s Writings

In surveys of Newman and his writings, there are some contrasting ways that he has been received. In 1909 Castle wrote:

One of the Parisian daily papers recently held a voting contest to ascertain who, in popular opinion, was the most celebrated Frenchman. The result, which was overwhelmingly in favour of Pasteur, is significant in its indication of the power of scientific achievement over the modern imagination. In an age of

²¹⁵ John Henry Newman, “Dispositions for Faith,” *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, Sermon 5, Note 61, published by The National Institute for Newman Studies in 2007, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/occasions/sermon5.html> (accessed August 14, 2012). One of Eight Sermons preached before the Catholic University of Ireland, in 1856, 1857, being the first year of the opening of its Church.

²¹⁶ Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (U.S.A.: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 35.

²¹⁷ Avery Dulles, *John Henry Newman* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 40.

materialism, the ability to control matter, the discovery of new chemical combinations, of new applications of electricity, are all important. Yet in 1890, at the death of Cardinal Newman, the English and American press united in extolling the one man of the century who had devoted his life, his thoughts, his transcendent literary genius, exclusively to spiritual matters. Newman, too, seemed to have captured the popular imagination. Since his death nineteen years have passed. Today his name is still familiar, but among the majority of Catholics he is little more than an honored name; and among Protestants he is regarded as a writer of admirable prose who would have been a great man had he not, from some incomprehensible reasons, abjured the faith of his father and mother.²¹⁸

Now, a century later, there are still opposing interpretations of Newman. Two factors contributing to this bifurcation of opinion are immediately apparent. One is his defection from Protestant to Roman Catholic which brought upon him reactionary interpretations from partisan observers. The other is that his profuse writings about his inner world and its progress of thought provide the major proportion of the available information which then naturally calls for calibration. So there have arisen varied interpretations of the motives for his move from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism and varied acceptance of his own explanations of these. These also occasion opposite opinions as to his intellectual integrity.

A third factor contributing to the difficulty in understanding Newman, which is not as quickly visible until one has made a sustained study of his ideas, is that Newman's interests are not in being systematic nor in being a purist in any one discipline. He follows his own direction melding in influences from a variety of sources. His ideas in any given discipline are not clear according to normal principles of that study. He has a genius in his thinking but not in clarifying matters within traditional categories.

A major work of Newman that traces the development of his intellectual thought is *Apologia pro Vita Sua* which in 1864 and 5 was his autobiographical reply to novelist Charles Kingsley's public attack on his personal motives and integrity.²¹⁹ The Protestant interpretation

²¹⁸ William Richards Castle, Jr., "Newman and Coleridge," *The Sewanee Review* 17, no. 2 (April, 1909): 139, published by The John Hopkins University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27530969> (accessed June 12, 2012).

of Newman tended toward doubting the sincerity of his motives. Notwithstanding any accuracy in their estimate on his underlying malaise about the locus of divine authority, their analysis is spoiled where it fails to take notice of what Newman was actually saying and the visible development of that thought. In a copy of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* given by the original owner and retained by Moore College Library there is on a final blank page a pencil written explanation of Newman (possibly) by that original owner of the copy or a presumptuous reader. It has this simplistic interpretation of him:

“N. had a v. Sceptical mind. At first the Evangelicalism of Mr Mayers, with its emotional basis. But when Whatley and Hawkins made him start thinking that soon collapsed. He found himself with no settled convictions. He “began to prefer intellectual excellence to moral”.

He was shaken out of this by illness and bereavement. In despair he looked for some convictions. Froude led him to an authoritative teaching church. He believed the articles of the Christian faith because the Church taught them. He accepted the dogmas on the authority of the Church. Without an infallible authority to proclaim truth he did not know what to believe, and this is why he reacted so violently to any attack on the dogmatic authority of the church.

When the leaders and authoritative spokesmen of the church repudiated the infallible dogmatic authority which N. Had ascribed to her, he went to Rome, which claims just that authority.”²²⁰

Newman, however, did not finally retract the event of his conversion to Christ at the age of fifteen, even if the slant placed upon it may have varied. In *Apologia* he wrote:

“When I was fifteen, (in the Autumn of 1816,) a great change of thought took place in me. I

²¹⁹ Larry K. Uffelman, “Charles Kingsley: A Biography,” essay in *The Victorian Web*, (2002), <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/kingsley/ckbio.html> (accessed August 5, 2012). Uffelman writes “when, in 1864, Kingsley issued an ill-considered broadside in *Macmillan's Magazine*, asserting that ‘truth, for its own sake had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy . . . [and] Father Newman informs us that it need not, and on the whole ought not to be; that cunning is the weapon which Heaven has given to the saints wherewith to withstand the brute male force of the wicked world which marries and is given in marriage,’ Newman was offended. An exchange of letters ensued which resulted in Newman's pamphlet *Mr. Kingsley and Dr. Newman: A Correspondence on the Question Whether Dr. Newman Teaches That Truth is No Virtue*. Instead of letting the matter drop, Kingsley flailed out in his own pamphlet: “*What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?*” A Reply to a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Newman. In his pamphlet Kingsley foolishly broadened his charge: not only had Newman made a statement he denied having made and which Kingsley was unable to locate, Newman had also lived a dishonest life. Newman's response was *The Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.”

²²⁰ Comment written in the back leaf of John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of his Religious Opinions* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), a volume once belonging to P. Ingham (with a date written 24.6.46) and donated to Moore Library (now number 3 2042 00010486 3). It is also possible that a student or professor borrowing the book wrote it in later. In any case, it represents a candid interpretation of Newman's change to Catholicism.

fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured."²²¹ So the conversion at 15 was scarcely just "an emotionalism that collapsed" due to a little bit of later thinking - as the summary in pencil in *Apologia* implied. This personal conversion was not an event that suffered a later reversal, but rather Newman's thinking expanded and calibrated his own important experience.

This summary pencilled comment in the back of Moore College Library's copy of *Apologia*, though simplistic, is not as harsh on Newman's integrity as some others are, but nor does it give him much credit for development of thought through his life time apart from recognizing the moves motivated by seeking a secure locus of divine authority and the difficult circumstances of his denominational commitments.

An even more severely critical interpretation of Newman is that of Turner who analysed the Newman of the period just before his conversion to Rome and spotlighted indications of what he suspected were Newman's ongoing psychological motivations. These worked at first to hinder Newman allowing others to change to Rome, explicating Newman in psychological terms rather than due to his acting on the sincerity of his developing thought.

Turner says:

Within the Littlemore coterie, conversions (to Rome) threatened to destroy, and eventually did destroy, the family like situation he had created for himself. Conversion of anyone in or near his close circle of acquaintances removed them from his direct influence and company and undermined his self-defined religious vocation of edification. Without exception he fought against the impulse and deplored it when it was realized. In this respect, he reacted to people

²²¹Newman, *Apologia*, 24. The copy in hand to bring quotes is a Riverside Edition under the general editorship of Gordon N. Ray, with an introduction and notes by A. Dwight Culler, Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston, (1956). Hereafter referred to as *Apologia*. In note ² A. Dwight Culler's editorial comment is relevant: "Newman's conversion, which he ever regarded as the most important event of his entire life, happened in these circumstances. On March 8, 1816, his father's bank failed, and during summer, while the family moved to Hampshire, where Mr. Newman was to manage a brewery, Newman stayed on at school. Here he fell seriously ill and during his convalescence was much in the company of one of the masters, the Rev. Walter Mayers, a devout evangelical. The conversion which followed was so definite an experience that Newman could date its first and last days as August 1st and December 21, 1816. Writing in 1885, he said, "Of course I cannot myself be the judge of myself; but speaking with this reserve, I should say that it is difficult to realise or imagine the identity of the boy before and after August 1816. . . . I can look back at the end of seventy years as if on another person."

pursuing their emotions toward conversion as he had to earlier companions following their emotions into matrimony. In both situations, he ceased to be the center of their attentions and affection.²²²

No doubt Newman suffered from the presence of lesser motives, as it is human nature so to do, but these *as explanations* must be balanced against the visible progression of his overall thought. Turner is seeking to exercise the role of an historical scientist keeping his autonomy as an interpreter of the facts who does not necessarily believe all the testimony of his sources.²²³ But that can be overdone. One should no more automatically doubt them as blindly accept them. Turner's analysis is overly affected by the awareness of the conflict between Protestant and Roman Catholic interests and the presence of Newman's psychological needs while not sufficiently taking notice of the continued progress in his thought. It amounts to his estimating Newman as a little person in intellectual and moral stature and very disingenuous in his dealings with people. Nonetheless Turner is not alone in so interpreting.

Quinn, in a journal review of Turner's book, extols Turner's historical analysis of Newman and says:

"Will the Real John Henry Newman Please Stand Up?" might be the subtitle of this landmark volume. Newman remains an enigma and Frank M. Turner comes closer than any historian of modern times in putting the pieces together on this brilliant, baffling, contradictory figure.²²⁴

Quinn states of Newman's move to the Rome, contrary to the *Apologia*:

The discrepancies abound. For many years the standard-bearer for Anglo-Catholicism, Newman's formative years were spent in an evangelical

²²² Frank M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 595.

²²³ Van A. Harvey identified four interrelated aspects of the ideal of a modern historical enquiry. They were: "the radical autonomy of the historian; the responsibility he has for making his arguments and statements capable of rational assessment; the need to exercise sound and balanced judgment; the need to use his critically interpreted experience as the background against which sound judgments are made about the past." *The Historian and the Believer*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 38.

²²⁴ Frederick Quinn, review of *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* by Frank M. Turner, *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (Winter, 2010): 247-251, 247-8.

setting. His conversion to Roman Catholicism is trumpeted a century after his death, but the actual event was vastly different from the one portrayed in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, where an increasingly isolated Newman assiduously ignored his longstanding, fiercely energetic assault on “that imbecile, inconsistent thing called Protestantism.”²²⁵

Chadwick, although also an Anglican, has a more generous interpretation of Newman. With Newman’s progression of thought in mind, Chadwick wrote:

Let us take Newman as deep in his heart he felt himself to be . . . as a mind of unity; growing, articulating, arranging, acquiring new truth from mediating on old truth or even, though more rarely, from new information found in books; but a man with the same mind all his life; the same despite one conversion at the age of fifteen and another conversion at the age of forty-four; a mind with principles formed early, and then expanded, adapted, recast, and yet recognisably the same principles – so that some of his best writings on subjects which he treated in books as a Roman Catholic is found in books which he wrote as a Protestant. This is not to say that the mind stood still; never was a mind so unceasing in motion. But the motion was always growth, and never revolution.²²⁶

This present thesis recognizes, along with Chadwick (the 1968 Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University and at one time its Vice Chancellor), the unity and overall progress in Newman’s thought. Newman’s thinking is done a disservice to rely so much on observations of his psychological motivations so as to entirely discount his own explanations of the development of his thought. It also means that we should not shut Newman in to some of his earlier statements when later ones are more mellow.

The controversies surrounding the Tractarian movement and the angers against him and self-justifications by Newman concerning his denominational affiliations are better allowed to recede into the background. A more important focus can be drawn on the progress of his thought. Indeed Newman’s failure to be an immediately received representative of the status quo options of any one time is probably because he was being more led by his own thinking than by any motivation to take advantage of the religious/political openings offered at these various turning points. Also, his being shut off, or having to shut himself off from the partisan clamour of outward voices purporting to talk about the phenomenon of faith, might

²²⁵ Ibid., 248.

²²⁶ Owen Chadwick, *Newman* (Oxford and New York: University Press, 1983), 5.

have been the fortuitous circumstance to allow him to attend to inner and subjective witnesses which were continuing voices addressing his life's interest of why and how people have faith.

Interpreting the times of John Henry Newman

The societal and intellectual context occasioning Newman's teaching was the onset of "modern" thought.²²⁷ Geivett sees a philosophical point of departure into "Modernity" being the writings of Rene Descartes (1596-1650)²²⁸. Some writers distinguish more particularly between "the Enlightenment" and the broader period that this precipitated called "Modernity". Others just talk about "Modernity". Geivett's definition of "Modernity, Modernism and Modern" is "whatever is characteristic of the Western intellectual tradition during the 'modern period' (the period following the Reformation era)."²²⁹ This is taking "Modernity" in a very general, inclusive and summary way. Weatherby, talking about "Modernity", says that Newman was "faced with an important choice in regard to it; he had to decide whether to come to terms with it or to oppose it, and he chose to make terms."²³⁰

²²⁷ Harold L. Weatherby wrote: "Any valid estimate of the work of John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890) must take into account his place in English theology and literature, with particular reference to what we now generally consider as 'modern thought'. . . . The medieval edifice was collapsing in England during those very years in which Newman's own thought was taking its characteristic shape, namely, in the eighteen-twenties and thirties. Moreover during the later decades of the nineteenth century, while Newman was developing his own distinctive theories of dogma and belief, the subjectivism, individualism, and relativism which constitute the lineaments of modern thought were also defining themselves and gaining the political, philosophical and theological ascendancy which they still occupy." *Cardinal Newman in His Age: His Place in English Theology and Literature* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1973), 1.

²²⁸ Descartes wrote a major work on the method of finding scientific truth under the title *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences* at Leiden in 1637.

²²⁹ R.D. Geivett, "Modernism/Modernity" in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Gavin McGrath, W.C. Campbell-Jack and C. Stephen Evans, (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 437-440.

²³⁰ Weatherby, *Newman*, 1.

Modernity: The Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement

Modernity came in like an arriving wave of the sea. There were early breaking points and sometimes a reforming of the wave and then another breaking again. When Newman was born in 1801, the Enlightenment (the preceding 17th and 18th centuries and often known as “The Age of Reason”) had been a first breaking. But that was now at Newman’s time a wash and surge of water not with the same strength as the same initial threat but regathering together to form a wave again. Reflecting from our standpoint today, the Enlightenment (along with the earlier Renaissance) represents a great step forward for human thinking away from the superstitions of the Middle Ages and into an era led by the sciences and still with us. Before the Enlightenment, the general time period previous to it which had followed the fall of the Roman Empire, was sometimes termed “the Dark Ages”. Some historians studying this medieval period do not appreciate that nomenclature but, nonetheless, the fact that the term “Enlightenment” was coined suggests people saw it as a time when the windows of knowledge and reason were opened and western society moved many steps into the light. Anyone living in Newman’s times would naturally believe with the rest of society that a move into the light had come with the “Enlightenment spirit” and then also that naturally along with it were reactions to some of its facets. This reaction is the Romantic Movement. It was the reforming wave of Modernity which Newman rode so well.

This is so because, from the viewpoint of the 19th century, the “Age of Reason” no longer glowed with all round positivity.²³¹ People perceived there to have been an overdoing of the rationalisation and “the pulling apart for examination” of the elements of life’s mosaic so that the panorama of the whole had been pushed out of sight insensitively. The Romantic

²³¹ For example, the first period of Industrialisation in Britain was generally between 1760 and 1840 and although this brought a massive increase in the amount of secondary goods and services produced with an attendant rise in the average living standard, there were a lot of societal losses as well: child labour, social dislocation, pollution in overcrowded cities, living in a world of machines, new extremes of wealth and poverty, worker exploitation, inadequate housing, and resulting political conflict.

Period was in this sense negative and reactionary, or perhaps better said, a qualifying and correcting movement, aimed to reinstate the whole. Romantic emphases were medicinal to common people in their experience of the harshness of life, especially as these had been justified in the name of advancement and enlightenment. The Romantic movement was most visible in the arts and in poetry and those aspects of life that spoke to the hearts of people. Religion and hymnology was a big part of that.

The Romantic Movement is usually dated between the years 1780 and 1830.²³² This means it was a dominant force precisely in the time of Newman's spiritual formation. One could say that Newman's thinking exhibits a great sympathy with this reaction to the rationalisation of the Enlightenment. The timing of his life put him in the perfect place to catch the reforming Modernity wave. Some²³³ see a background for Romanticism in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who emphasized the self-defining freedom of the individual and the love of nature. Newman's poems and writings illustrate a high place for nature. Others see Kant's transcendental idealism as a forerunner. The philosophy of Kant (1724-1804) taught that we cannot deal directly with the outside world but only with our ideas of it. His philosophy was a soft form of idealism, in that it was not inconsistent with believing in the existence of the objective "real" world but just that we cannot sensibly have any knowledge of it. Rather our knowledge is actually about our own impressions and sensations. This turned the focus back onto the subjective just as successfully as other kinds of more rigorous idealism.

The Romantic Movement, unlike the harder forms of idealism, did not need a hard commitment to a denial of the existence of the real world, but just that the aesthetic or spiritual world was the most important. It advocated choosing a concentration on the subjective and the feeling; on the personal and the individual. Clearly Newman's ideas were

²³² J.H. Elias, "Romanticism" in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Gavin McGrath, W.C. Campbell-Jack and C. Stephen Evans, (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 623.

²³³ Robert Ergang, *Europe from Renaissance to Waterloo* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1954), 641.

focused in that direction by his concentration on the mind that believes rather than the matter that is believed. John Henry Newman's life span from 1801 to 1890 surrounds the most influential years of the Romantic Movement and his overall themes can be understood in Romantic terms.

The wave of "Modernity" was reforming in its Romanticism mode and still looming high when Newman had to ride it. There would be many manoeuvres necessary for a rider to avoid being dumped by the wave to face the sharks below. Weatherby,²³⁴ with his nomenclature, distinguishes between the intellectual and political movement in society ("Modernity") and the overflow into a Doctrinal move away from orthodoxy ("modernism"), which distinction was possible even at the earlier years of "Modernity's" influence. Certainly Newman was carried along by "Modernity" but able to dodge much of Modernism.

Modernity, Idealism and the Romantic Movement

The Romantic Movement was a reaction to the cold sterility perceived as the fruit of Rationalism and Empiricism which focused on fact rather than feeling, the outward rather than the inward and the objective rather than the subjective, the material rather than the spiritual. Romantic poets, writers and philosophers contributing to the Romantic movement include William Wordsworth (1770-1850); Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) in Britain; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832); George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831); Freidrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), in Germany. Hegel and von Schelling were German Idealists. Goethe was an artist, a poet and a literary man and also a politician. Wordsworth and Coleridge were poets although Coleridge was also a philosopher and the person most attributed with bringing German idealism and Romantic sentiments to Britain.

²³⁴ Weatherby wrote: "When I use "modernism" or "modernist" in lower case and in quotation marks, I refer to matters philosophical and political rather than doctrinal. When I refer to doctrinal heresy of that name, I use *Modernism* or *Modernist* with an initial capital and no quotation marks." *Newman*, 11, n.2.

Coleridge and Newman never actually met and Coleridge died when Newman was only 33 years of age. But the movement of Romanticism was nonetheless very influential on Newman. The turning of attention back onto the subject was what Newman was himself doing in reaction to “Modernity’s” philosophies making objective truths harder to accredit. There was a commonality of reaction being made by the Romantic Movement and Newman. Philip C. Rule had amassed considerable observation points to assert the similarity of thinking between Coleridge and Newman. The heart of being a Romantic is in the opposition to some of the major emphases of the Enlightenment. Rule says:

The third period, [of English theology showing both Protestant and Catholic influence] extending roughly from 1688 to 1833, is, from the viewpoint of writers like Coleridge and Newman at least, a dark age theologically speaking, however much it may have deserved the title of The Enlightenment or The Age of Reason in the minds of others. While not everything that happened during this period was theologically bad, Newman for one had little respect for it.²³⁵

Rule makes a strong point about the parallel method employed by Newman and Coleridge, in that both drew from English predecessors. Both skipped the Enlightenment period and went back more to Renaissance times and the thought of the Caroline Divines. Rule said:

While little substantive or sustained scholarship in the twentieth century has been devoted to these writers of the Anglican tradition, two men who flourished between the death of Edward VI and the accession of William of Orange, they captured the interest and attention of both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Henry Newman in the early nineteenth century and of T. S. Eliot in the twentieth. What these three men found in the group of writers loosely defined as "Carolines" is, in fact, part of what I want to explore today.²³⁶

²³⁵ Philip C. Rule, *Newman and the English Theologians*, 2004, www.ewtn.com/library/HUMANITY/FR89403.TXT (accessed August 12, 2012). The three periods Rule was talking about were:

I. “The first major period of Anglo-Catholic thought extends from 1533 to approximately 1600. This is the era of reformation theology.

II. In March, 1533, Henry VIII, with the Pope's hesitant approval, appointed Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury.”

III. “from these late scholastic thinkers, Hooker and Field, to Bishop Edward Stillingfleet who died in 1699.” “extending roughly from 1688 to 1833,”

²³⁶ Ibid.

Ian Ker also correlated the thought of Newman with that of Coleridge. He saw the two running parallel and that Newman had found some of his own ideas well represented by Coleridge. It was not so much that Coleridge had been a direct influence, as supposed by Philip Rule.²³⁷ Ker wrote in a review of some of Philip C. Rule's writings: "In a 29 March 1835 diary entry, Newman noted, 'During this Spring . . . I have for the first time read parts of [Coleridge's works] – and am much surprised how much I thought mine, is to be found there. (*The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* [Clarendon, 1981] 5:53)." ²³⁸

The literature about Newman and Coleridge's connection, nonetheless, do show an enormous variation of opinion as to how important is this Romantic connection.

Rule describes what appears to be a general movement to turn away from the recent rationalism to venerate the writings of those prior to the Enlightenment. He says:

It might be well to point out here that the general period to which Newman and his companions returned was one that captured the interest of most of the English Romantic writers who flourished between 1798 and 1830. In the <Apologia>, discussing an article he had written in 1839, Newman acknowledges the influence of Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Samuel Coleridge on the religious sensibility of the age. He writes that:

After stating the philosophy of the time, as it presented itself to those who did not sympathize in it, the Article proceeds to account for it; and this it does by considering it as a reaction from the dry and superficial character of the religious teaching and the literature of the last generation, or century, and as a result of the need which was felt by both the hearts and the intellects of the nation for a deeper philosophy, and as the evidence and the partial fulfilment of that need, to which even the chief authors of the then generation bore witness.

I am increasingly convinced that to understand fully the larger significance of Newman's return to the writers of the seventeenth century we must see it as a specific example of a general return, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, to the cultural and religious thought of the English Renaissance. A generation before Newman, Samuel Taylor Coleridge led the way in this leap across the period of roughly 150 years separating the Renaissance from the early nineteenth century. In her pioneering edition of Coleridge's writings, published and unpublished, on the seventeenth century, Roberta F. Brinkley points out that "by both his theories and tastes [Coleridge] was predisposed to prefer the seventeenth

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ian Ker, review of *S. J. Coleridge and Newman: The Centrality of Conscience*, by Philip C. Rule, *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 1 (Autumn 2005):190-191.

century to the eighteenth." "Throughout his comment," Brinkley continues, "there is an assumption of a distinct period of English culture extending from the reign of Edward VI to the Revolution of 1688 . . ." She further points out that unlike subsequent generations of literary scholars and historians Coleridge "did not distinguish the [seventeenth century] sharply, in the modern manner, from the Elizabethan age." Thus, like Newman after him, Coleridge focused on the post-controversial, pre-rational English theological writers.²³⁹

David Goslee has written in 1996 an entire monograph²⁴⁰ tracing what he sees as the threads in this connection. The book detailed much but simply followed the conclusion of Owen Chadwick who sees Romanticism in the general background of Newman and as an ongoing mindset that he carried with him. Chadwick wrote:

Newman's earlier years were the age of romanticism. He was touched by the spirit that found the ruins of monasteries poetic and exalting. When he wrote about monks, he wrote about them with an idealised happiness which was not always very historical, but which spoke volumes about his idea of life.²⁴¹

Rik Achten, on the other hand, writes for a German publisher about Newman and particularly about the philosophies that had affected his thought but makes no mention of Coleridge or the Romantic Movement.²⁴² As with the matter of how trustworthy was Newman's integrity, so here the issue boils down as to whether Newman's own report can be trusted. Newman himself wrote, when defending his ministry against critics:

After thus stating the phenomenon of the time, as it presented itself to those who did not sympathize in it, the Article [written by Newman] proceeds to account for it; and this it does by considering it as a re-action from the dry and superficial character of the religious teaching and the literature of the last generation, or century, and as a result of the need which was felt both by the hearts and the intellects of the nation for a deeper philosophy, and as the evidence and as the partial fulfilment of that need, to which even the chief authors of the then generation had borne witness. First I mentioned the literary influence of Walter Scott, who turned men's minds in the direction of the middle ages. "The general need," I said, "of something deeper and more attractive, than what had

²³⁹ Rule, *Newman and the English Theologians*.

²⁴⁰ David Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996).

²⁴¹ Chadwick, *Newman*, 7.

²⁴² Rik Achten, *First Principles and our Way to Faith. A Fundamental-Theological Study of John Henry Newman's Notion of First Principles* (Frankfurt/M., Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1995).

offered itself elsewhere, may be considered to have led to his popularity; and by means of his popularity he re-acted on his readers, stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten, and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas, which might afterwards be appealed to as first principles.”

Then I spoke of Coleridge, thus: “While history in prose and verse was thus made the instrument of Church feelings and opinions, a philosophical basis for the same was laid in England by a very original thinker, who, while he indulged a liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian, yet after all installed a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth.”

Then come Southey and Wordsworth, “two living poets, one of whom in the department of fantastic fiction, the other in that of philosophical meditation, have addressed themselves to the same high principles and feelings, and carried forward their readers in the same direction.”²⁴³

Clearly Newman sees himself, Walter Scott and the Romantics as together on the same agenda, if not on Christian doctrines, at least on the preferred philosophy for England. So even if Newman was not influenced directly by Coleridge, he is aware of his input into the intellectual milieu as also that of Wordsworth. It seems that Newman, by his own statement in *Apologia* is very much on the wavelength of the Romantics. The Romantic Movement is one of the aspects of Modernity and Newman accepted it.

North America, in contrast, accepted the first part of the modern philosophies but did not move on into the full effects of the Romantic Movement until quite some lag of time after Europe. The Princeton Movement in North America fits in with this reluctance to accept the Romantic ideas for that period of time. In their cases, the Christians continued with the early aspects of Modernity but had to draw a line and refuse to continue to follow on into Idealism and its approximation in the Romantic Movement. Possibly this accounted for the over emphasis on the objectivity of the Christian faith and of the biblical revelation that also led these Fundamentalists to a lack awareness of some of the subjective areas of Christian experience.

²⁴³ Newman, *Apologia*, 107.

So then the question is as to whether this move to the subjective delivered Newman from the sharks stalking those who rode the wave of Modernity? The answer to that will be contested, depending on how you see his influence of Vatican II. Also in Newman's turn to the subjective he was not keeping his distance from the Doctrinal "Modernism" as well he supposed. Interpreting faith more in terms of the subjective was also at the centre of the new departure of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who is considered by many to be the father of Modernism, the doctrinal form of liberalism. Was the focus of Newman on the subject ultimately going to open the door of English Christianity to the liberalism he saw himself as opposing?

Newman also had in common with the Romantics an emphasis away from the abstract/the universal and back onto the concrete/the particular/the individual self. He did not want to argue from some abstract idea into an assertion of what human thought could or could not do with meaning (as Kant) but rather accept what humanity did do and reason from that starting point. Newman's thought was a "reasoning curiously concrete, founded on two ideas: 'I am what I am, or I am nothing,' and recognition, in conscience, of the voice of God."²⁴⁴ But even though Newman may have been mistaken in some of his understandings, it is also possible that in an unexpected way history can take an ironical turn. It is possible that the ambiguities of his life's steps took him into a position to become acutely aware of the place of human experience to believe in God.

The Forces behind Modernity

Where had the wave of Modernity been generated? Rene Descartes (1596-1650) wrote a little less than two centuries before Newman (1801-1890).²⁴⁵ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of*

²⁴⁴ Castle, *Newman*, 139-152.

²⁴⁵ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy records of him: "Descartes has been heralded as the first modern philosopher. He is famous for having made an important connection between geometry and algebra, which allowed for the solving of geometrical problems by way of algebraic equations. He is also famous for having promoted a new conception of matter, which allowed for the accounting of physical phenomena by way

Philosophy mentions his philosophical writings and their usefulness to give science a good footing, but Descartes' work also was responding to the crisis of uncertainty, created by the Reformation schism, about the starting point for knowledge.

A notable characteristic of Descartes is his search for certainty. He was not a sceptic but did use doubt as a method to mine for indubitable facts. His philosophical influence, along with that of empiricists such as John Locke (1632-1704), would be to propose an answer to the uncertainty created by the Reformation schism about exactly where certain starting points for our knowledge could be found. These self-evident starting points for knowledge superseded the reliance on the authority of either the Church or the Bible. This was the earthquake that began the upthrust of forces creating the wave of Modernity.

This early era of Descartes, two centuries before Newman, saw many good scientific contributions in the discoveries of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642); Johannes Kepler (1571-1630); and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). In Protestant theology there also were strides forward in the clarification of distinctions between natural and special revelation that had been previously championed by Aquinas. There was the development of a complete Protestant system of doctrine in the work of the Calvinists. Evangelical enthusiasm thrived during this initial development and the surge of scientific discovery did not hinder the march of the gospel and the enthusiasm of the growing Protestant movement (in Germany immediately described as *evangelisch*).²⁴⁶ The general consensus of Protestantism was then what would be, by today's definitions, overwhelmingly evangelical.²⁴⁷ Protestantism was not split, as today exists, by a demarcation between evangelicalism and liberalism. Indeed, Protestantism and

of mechanical explanations. However, he is most famous for having written a relatively short work, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (*Meditations On First Philosophy*), published in 1641, in which he provides a philosophical groundwork for the possibility of the sciences." <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-works/> (accessed May 19, 2013).

²⁴⁶ Later in English speaking countries, "evangelical" would be a term which is a subset of the overall group called "Protestants".

²⁴⁷ This is so for two reasons: the first in light of the tautology between being a Protestant and being evangelical, and the second, because today's nonevangelical Protestants are following impulses that came out of modernity and these were yet to take hold.

evangelicalism were then one and the same thing. Newman had his evangelical background, and although on his move to Roman Catholicism he had much to say against the Protestantism he had left, this did not include a rejection of essential gospel truths or the reality of his own experience of faith. Newman's Protestant/Catholic struggles did not touch this evangelical centre. Similarly Newman, wanting to go against the flow of liberal philosophies, struggled with the modern sympathies to which he had yielded.

The evangelical movement has been said to have begun in the 1730s ²⁴⁸ with the ministry of John Wesley, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, but at that time its coming into visibility was because of particular emphases of aspects of the gospel that just then were being neglected. Also the evangelicals just then stood out in their enthusiasm in contrast with those who were more formal in their religion. After periods of declension, times of revival brought renewal of the experience of personal conversion and the pursuit of holiness, and those who enjoyed this experience were known as "evangelicals". ²⁴⁹

On the Continent evangelical forebears included the Moravian Brethren, led by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and were sometimes known as "Schwärmer" (enthusiasts). This was not a complimentary word amongst balanced and restrained people. Whereas today we think of the evangelical movement mostly in contrast to more liberal doctrinal tendencies, in the eighteenth century the particular distinction carried by the term focused not primarily on faith rather than scepticism, but on fervour rather than formalism. The enthusiasm, however, sometimes came with fanaticism and was in contrast to more

²⁴⁸ So argues one interpreter of the history of the evangelicals: David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁴⁹ The 1730's and 1740's were the decades in which the Great Awakening brought personal conversion to many Protestant religious people in Europe and the United States. In 1792 William Carey published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. Evangelicalism was a matter of the love and spread of the gospel. C.H. Spurgeon lived 1834-1892. The rise of Higher Criticism in Europe was an 18th and 19th century phenomenon. It became an issue in the 1880's when Spurgeon drew attention to the inroads of the Documentary Hypothesis and other such theories into Baptist life (Downgrade Controversy). Later it was hotly contested in North America in the 20th century. That an "evangelical" was someone contrary to higher criticism is a nineteenth and twentieth century development rather than in the earlier times of the Great Awakening.

intellectual and respectable approaches to the same religion. With the currency of emotion and enthusiasm and unrestraint being the picture of an evangelical, Newman, as he headed into a career of an intellectual and formal representative of the church, was always going to be conflicted. The conflict was not with the central truths of Christianity. Evangelicalism would eventually find across the nineteenth century, especially in North America, philosophies from Scotland that would aid it escape from sheer emotionalism.²⁵⁰ This was a connection to realism, whereas Newman continued to carry the influence of idealism

Newman and Liberalism

Newman was carried forward by the influence of the Romantic movement and its affinity with philosophical idealism whose ultimate end would issue in the liberalism of Schleiermacher and the reinterpretation of Christianity away from the traditional focus on doctrinal truth. Owen Chadwick, writing of Newman in the Oxford “past Masters” series nonetheless describes him as “the first theorist of Christian doctrine to face the challenge of modern historical enquiry.”²⁵¹ The lag in these intellectual mileposts between Descartes’ beginning and Newman’s response to the historical sciences is fully understandable in terms of how long it took for the Rationalism, Empiricism and the ensuing science of the next centuries to issue into the awakening of the historical consciousness in the nineteenth century and for the resulting threat to conservative religious beliefs to be registered.

Modernity’s new methods of knowing were only gradually recognized by the Christian Church as a threat. Newman’s story of his own development of faith is one of his

²⁵⁰ Later in North America, the Princeton movement combined conservative evangelical attitudes with rigorous intellectual doctrines per favour of the philosophies of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and the Scottish Common Sense Realism (Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson and Dugald Stewart, all out of the 1700’s Enlightenment in Scotland.) A line of Princeton theologians, the last of which was B.B. Warfield (1851-1921) held up a conservative attitude to the Bible in an intellectual manner that was in contrast to the evangelical emotionalism of the revivals; the rationalism of the higher criticisms in biblical research; and the liberal theological ideas permeating a new outlook amongst many of the Protestant denominations in the United States.

²⁵¹ Chadwick, *Newman*, 1.

dealing with the new ideas as they appeared. Newman had drunk deeply from the wells of John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). So he himself was the child of Modernity. His own writing career was right at this early arrival of the threat to Christian knowledge that these contributions brought and which Newman had been digesting. His evangelical conversion at fifteen had happened when he was confronted with the early parts of this sort of intellectual contest. His Anglo-Catholic time was another step in his consideration of Modernity's challenges. By the time of his becoming a Roman Catholic, Newman had further calibrated the teachings of the modern philosophers according to how they also reflected on the Roman traditions. He wrote in the Irish setting:

If we were to ask for a report [presumably by Roman Catholics] of our philosophers [presumably Protestant], the investigation would not be so agreeable; for we have three of evil, and one of unsatisfactory repute. Locke is scarcely an honour to us in the standard of truth, grave and manly as he is; and Hobbes, Hume, and Bentham, in spite of their abilities, are simply a disgrace. Yet, even in this department, we find some compensation in the names of Clarke, Berkeley, Butler, and Reid, and in a name more famous than them all. Bacon was too intellectually great to hate or to condemn the Catholic faith; and he deserves by his writings to be called the most orthodox of Protestant philosophers.²⁵²

It was the applications of the new methods of science to the study of history that was the point where many theologically orthodox Christians found difficulty in adapting to "Modernity." That is, the aspect of Modernity that was to threaten the Christian Church and its basis in the Revelation of God was, according to Van A. Harvey, not just because of the ideals of the developing modern historiography²⁵³ alone, but that they would be prosecuted by

²⁵² John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated: In Nine Discourses*, (1852): 319, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24526/24526-h/24526-h.html> (accessed February 14, 2013). (The "presumptions" are mine).

²⁵³"The radical autonomy of the historian; the responsibility he has for making his arguments and statements capable of radical assessment; the need to exercise sound and balanced judgment" Harvey, *Historian*, 68.

a mind “informed by the new way of looking at the world created by the sciences.”²⁵⁴ Van A.

Harvey wrote:

It was inevitable that the methods of critical historical inquiry would be applied to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and that there should emerge what was shorthandedly called "the historical-critical method." This was not so much a single method but a series of questions that could only be answered by using critical historical thinking.

When, by whom, and for what purposes were the texts written? What sources did the authors use? What do the texts tell us about the self-understanding of the community that preserved them? To what extent are the historical narratives in the texts reliable and constitute historical knowledge?

Just raising these questions threatened, naturally, those Jews and Christians who believed the Bible to be divinely inspired and, therefore, historically inerrant. And, since the answers to those questions contradicted traditional answers, the fundamentalists in these religions attacked what they called "the higher criticism." The Roman Catholic Church established a Biblical Commission to assure that no Roman Catholic scholar would advance any historical conclusion incompatible with church doctrine. But it was not long before liberal Protestant and even some Roman Catholic scholars saw that it was futile to resist the new biblical scholarship, and so they appropriated it, with some even arguing that it placed genuine Christian faith on a sounder historical footing.²⁵⁵

In the philosophical disciplines modern thought had followed David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with a pessimism and depression about the nature of truth and how little about the metaphysical world could be meaningfully discussed and believed. The historical sciences added the threat that troubled Newman the most. It was about how we could know of spiritual things if such acidic tests were brought to bear upon our trust in the Scriptures. Modernity and its new outlook had started with such high hopes for finding knowledge and in scientific discoveries this had continued apace, but in the matters of metaphysics and religious faith the transcendentalism of Kant particularly led to such a dead end and Modernity's new scientific- historical methods was returning a paucity of certainties.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Van A. Harvey, "Religious Belief and the Logic of Historical Inquiry," *Free Inquiry, Secular Humanist Bulletin* 28, no 1 (August 2012), http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=library&page=harvey_28_1 (accessed February 14, 2013).

In seeking to establish the existence and nature of God according to these new historical scientific methods, it appeared Modernity resulted only in resignation.

Newman was well versed in these developments and his thinking sought a way to establish the validity of faith in God. His heart response was almost directly the opposite of that of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who struggled with the same questions raised by Modernity but decided not to believe in the traditional Christian doctrines of the deity of Christ and his vicarious sacrifice for the sin of the world. Interestingly, in this sense Newman was not the same as Schleiermacher, who was to become known as the father of modern liberalism. Yet in another sense both found their different answers in a similar way of turning away from the objective facts known to the subjectivity of the knower. Schleiermacher, by so doing, catered for a “Christian faith” that disbelieved the essentials of the gospel and Newman found a way to believe those essentials.

English society experienced a very powerful fear in the face of hearing of events in France. The fear was that what had occurred in the French Revolution might come across the English Channel. The *liberalism* many in England feared was immediately political and social. These aspects of Modernity were of course all tied in together. On the Continent the liberalism that Newman opposed continued to develop. From the Tübingen School in Germany were coming radical ideas that completely reinterpreted Christianity. D.F. Strauss (1808 – 1874) was a contemporary of Newman and his first German edition of *The Life of Christ Critically Examined* came out in May, 1835.²⁵⁶ Van A. Harvey commented:

. . . This new revolution in scholarship, it seemed to some, was merely the ideological expression of the political tide of liberalism that was inundating the Continent, and of which the French Revolution was the living and horrifying consequence. It is no wonder that a defender of the old order like John Henry Newman should have equally abhorred Strauss’ *Life of Jesus*, the French flag, and Tom Paine’s *Age of Reason*, which he kept locked in his safe, lest it stain the imagination of his students.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Ibid. Harvey wrote of Strauss that “after a thousand or so pages of reasoned historical argument in his *Life of Jesus*, took pen in hand and chartered a theological program for the future in which the doctrine of the Incarnation was to be supplanted by the idea of the deification of humanity.

²⁵⁷ Harvey, *Historian*, 7.

Newman's hymns prove his continuing acceptance of orthodoxy and a resistance to theological liberalism. This liberalism, which Newman resists, is interesting in that it is an example of the problems caused everywhere by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Not only were there the individual losses of orthodox doctrines, but also a loss to the original wholeness of the Church with its message. So Newman's Romanticism had its motivations, but he did not want to be involved with a replacement of the traditional Christianity. Newman's Romanticism commendably refused to displace the Christian answer with one from within the philosophy itself.

Newman's "nonliberalism" is exhibited strongly with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity and of the authority of the Church as seen in the words of *Firmly I Believe and Truly*.

Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly
Manhood taken by the Son.

And I trust and hope most fully
In that Manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly
Do to death, as He has died.

Simply to His grace and wholly
Light and life and strength belong,
And I love supremely, solely,
Him the holy, Him the strong.

And I hold in veneration,
For the love of Him alone,
Holy Church as His creation,
And her teachings are His own.

And I take with joy whatever
Now besets me, pain or fear,
And with a strong will I sever
All the ties which bind me here.

Adoration aye be given,
With and through the angelic host,
To the God of earth and Heaven,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The hymn has statements of “trust” and “holding in veneration” and giving “adoration”. This acceptance of traditional doctrines is also seen in *Praise to the Holiest*.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God’s Presence and His very Self,
And Essence all divine.

O generous love! that He, who smote,
In Man for man the foe,
The double agony in Man
For man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren, and inspire
To suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

In an era when rationalism had made anything hard to “firmly believe”, Newman’s hymns offer certainty in traditional doctrines. He also translates some of the old hymns from early ages showing both his respect for their contents and also the connection to the Church of all ages.

Looking more deeply, the aspect of *liberalism* that Newman resisted was the result rather than the actual philosophies causing them. The politics of revolution is one aspect of

Romanticism that Newman did not espouse, as also any religious belief or societal practices that abandoned solidarity with the ancient church heritage. The arriving philosophies were so different from the old world's mediaeval understandings. This was the wave of Modernity Newman was facing. It threatened to dump him or he could ride it. The effects of it in how the church related to society were not pleasing to Newman, but his modern philosophy did not really suit the old styles he adored. His conservatism and illiberality were religious, sociological and doctrinal, but not philosophical. He actually was philosophically more of a liberal himself than he realised, but he was not marching to the extreme beat of the liberalism of the Continent. Yet religious and societal *liberalism* was becoming harder to resist in isolation from philosophical aspects of modern thought.²⁵⁸ Chadwick does not think that Newman correctly grasped the true meanings of liberalism at all. He wrote:

The fact is, what Newman denounced as liberalism, no one else regarded as liberalism. And this led to misunderstanding. Men supposed that Newman was illiberal because he kept saying so, and because he refused to recant when he was pressed. People supposed that the young bigot of 1834 must be the essential Newman. But no one who reads his later works, or ponders his private letters, can possibly think this to be true.²⁵⁹

What Newman meant by “liberalism” is human rationalism militating against the revelation of God. Newman's own nuanced understanding of “liberalism” in the *Apologia* is:

²⁵⁸ The inevitability of society moving on philosophically is proven by the overall development of history. Changing of times is visible across all ages. Amongst today's church fellowships, some remain conservative in culture and religious expression to the extent of being out of step with their times, as illustrated in dress and music. Then eventually and sometimes painfully a change comes. Complicating this are the changes theologically/philosophically/ethically that also come along, going in various directions depending on both the times outside the church and also the input from their particular ministers. In the minds of everyday people these two elements – culture and theology - are not always distinguished or understood in their relationship. Some strange mixtures result. Some congregations are very conservative religiously but less conservative in their theology without their people being aware of it. These congregations sometimes totally misunderstand the actual intellectual/theological positions from which their clergy can be ministering. The decibels of the organ music are more telling than the missing or erroneously present tones of the doctrines. The exact opposite misunderstanding happens with evangelistic entrepreneurs who seek to be contemporary in culture but conservative in theology. Styles of music used sometimes have led the Christian public to conclude that these evangelists were radical when in truth their ministries had been exemplars of the Old Time Religion. John Henry Newman had his own mixture of both being some steps away from the old orthodoxy while still retaining the heart of it and this all with a wish to retain many of the cultural aspects from the long history of the church.

²⁵⁹ Chadwick, *Newman*, 74.

Whenever men are able to act at all, there is the chance of extreme and intemperate action; and therefore, when there is exercise of mind, there is the chance of wayward or mistaken exercise. Liberty of thought is in itself a good; but it gives an opening to false liberty. Now by Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of Revelation. Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word.²⁶⁰

Perhaps Newman did have his own definition of “liberal”, but he does have a plausible explanation of the mental processes occurring as Christian thinkers move away from orthodox truth. This is another example of Newman not utilizing usual definitions and categories but following his own notions. The phenomenon addressed, when talking about thinkers becoming more liberal, is a very common human experience of contextualizing one’s beliefs with the culture of the day, but retaining orthodox essentials. In the Christian religion there has always been the need to follow two leading guides: one in having a healthy intellectual attitude of always being ready to think again and the other of staying true to the faith “once delivered to the saints”. Faith taken on without thinking is a faith not applied to our full humanity, while faith not defended from shallow or uninstructed thinking is ever in danger of losing the gifts of revelation.

Romantic Indicators

To understand Newman then, the need is to choose relevantly from among the various aspects from which the Romantic movement is characterised. A parallel examination was

²⁶⁰Newman, *Apologia*, 271.

done by Mark Noll on Charles Wesley's hymns. When setting out to study the Romantic aspects of Wesley's hymns, Mark Noll wrote:

But it is doubtful whether any word, with perhaps the exception of "Christian," has been used so casually and promiscuously as "Romanticism." Romanticism has been praised as the mode which excels all others in the capacity "den Geist des Autors vollst ndig auszudrucken," and it has been dismissed as "ein Krankheit." For the purposes of this paper, Romanticism, however, is to be considered a neutral term, neither adulatory or pejorative. It will be used in its literary connections to signal the shift in values from formalized and stylized diction to simplified, "natural" diction and from strict convention in poetic forms to a liberation from any set of mandated forms. In broader, more inclusive human terms Romanticism will be used to describe the heightened awareness of the self as a source of literary or other creative expression.²⁶¹

Noll had to deal with the body of Charles Wesley's literature which was mostly hymnology. So the structures of verse were important to his agenda. Newman was more of a writer of prose and the preacher of sermons, but did pen some poems and hymns. Noll had some working assumptions about the effects of the Romantic Movement on poetry:

It is the working axiom of this paper that at certain times and in certain places a liberal infusion of "Romanticism" is necessary in order to re-establish the proper role and function of the heart or spirit in the heart-mind-body nexus that is man. These periodic infusions may be reactions to cultural sterility, literary servility, or religious conformity.

The second axiom of the paper is, however, that an excessive application of Romanticism, an unrestrained pursuit of the values here characterized as Romantic, can be most disastrous-leading to such an emphasis on the individual and his own creations that no realities outside the self are considered valuable, the self is exalted to be the only source of valid experience, the external world and external persons are demoted to a meaningless place in the individual's cosmos, and spontaneous feeling totally displaces rational thought.²⁶²

Noll distilled for himself an agenda of questions to answer:

- (1) To what extent were Charles Wesley's hymns infusing Romantic tendencies into the religious world of his day?
- (2) To what extent was this infusion beneficial to the Church?
- (3) To what extent did Wesley sell out to Romanticism, that is, become a religious enthusiast, abandon rationality and communicable propositions in

²⁶¹ Mark A. Noll, "Romanticism and the Hymns of Charles Wesley," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 195-6. The first quotation ("to express fully the spirit of the author") is from F.W. Schlegel, in M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), 374, no. 37. The second quotation ("a sickness") is a famous dictum of Goethe.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 196-7.

exchange for a non-cognitive, mystical afflatus heading toward an ultimate, howbeit ever so religious, solipsism? ²⁶³

With Wesley as with Newman, there is both the evidence of the presence of Romantic influence but also a higher influence in that both are bringing Christianity to the Romantic age just as much as Romanticism is influencing their Christianity. This is touching the real question being asked here. The answer is that both of these things are happening with Newman. He is Modernity's child but also bringing to Modernity Christianity's answer. The balance of these needs to be recognized.

No doubt, there are numerous aspects of Romanticism useful to delineate its essence. The Romantic Movement is not exactly easy to define. A collation of varying descriptors gives a list of emphases as being on: the individual, the sublime, nature, organicism, supernaturalism, a spirit of revolution, imagination, the mysterious and mysticism. This last is very visible in the work of Newman.

Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of a study group at the 1970 Newman Congress, sent a message there to Leon Lommel containing the words: "Newman also teaches us to discern the invisible through the visible, for 'what we see is but the outward shell of an eternal kingdom; and on that kingdom we fix the eyes of our faith.'"²⁶⁴ Pope Paul VI goes on to say about Newman:

"Rooted in the heart of the mystery of existence variable as the sky, changeable as the wind, turbulent as the ocean, the penetrating meditation of Newman leads him little by little - *one step is enough for me* - to the *Kindly Light* whose brightness clears up misunderstandings and doubts, and whose certitude is the source of serenity for the mind and peace for the heart."²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Ibid., 197-8.

²⁶⁴ Pope Paul VI, "Newman Congress: The Wealth of Cardinal Newman's Thought," May 17th, 1970 [L'Osservatore Romano (English edition), 4 June 1970 (114)] www.newmanreader.org/canonization/pope (accessed May 3, 2013). Pope Paul VI is quoting Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* IV, 13; trad. A. Roucou Barthelemy, in *Pensees sur l'Eglise*, Paris, Cerf, *Unam Sanctam* 30, 1956, 20.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

Clearly, just at this point, the Pope's perception of Newman is focused on his mysticism. His references here in italics are from the poem "the Pillar of Cloud". The significance of this title should not be missed. It is an Old Testament reference. The Children of Israel were being led of God through foreign and inhospitable wilderness territory in a way parallel to how Christians often feel is their journey through the world. But they were comforted by the presence of a "pillar of a cloud" at day and a "pillar of light" at night which went before them. The poem is all about the supernatural and mystical leadership of God through dangerous territory. It later became a hymn.

Newman wrote "the Pillar of Cloud" in the first instance as a poem as a young 32 year-old priest: frustrated in circumstances in Italy away from home, having been held up by three weeks of sickness and when at last able to set out for home had to endure being held up again in a small boat becalmed for another whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio. So in 1833, apparently still in convalescence on the becalmed boat, Newman penned the words:

Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile, which I
Have loved long since, and lost awhile!

The sense of the supernatural is in the prayer to be led; in the mention of angel faces, which some interpreters think belong to two close relatives who had died and are smiling and watching on from heaven; in Newman's recurring theme of light in the darkness are very much Romantic overtones. It is clear that whereas Newman may have retracted from some of the cerebral elements of Modernity and its rationalisation - the

impulse from its first breaking wave - he was well set up to be swept along by the Romantic surge that followed.

The hymn shows not only the influence of Romanticism on Newman but, perhaps even better still, it reveals Newman's penchant to bring an answer to the feelings of his generation. The Romantic Movement is well known to capture the feeling of fragmentation – as shall be discussed below – but along with that sense of fragmentation is a sorrow that when all the parts are added together they still are left with one short of a whole - hollow and empty - and so the Romantic Movement had a darker, pessimistic, philosophical side to do with the ruin that happens in life and the despair attached to that fragmentation and ruin. But Newman's poems and hymns seem to go past the sense of ruin and the darkness of depression to a hope - either in the intervention of God here and now in the specific human dilemma, or, if not now, then in the next world in the after-life, in heaven, where God answers our sense of fragmentation and ruin. So in this way Newman is not finally Romantic with its ruin and despair being all-dominating, but he is speaking to the feelings of people in the Romantic movement with a Christian hope.²⁶⁶

Newman's Most Important Romantic Motif

Some movements go as quickly as they come, and society, once having seen through the emphasis, seems well inoculated against it. Other movements may cease from being the dominant outlook, yet thereafter remain an important part of the overall mosaic. This seems to be the case with both the Enlightenment and the Romantic movements and interestingly varied balances of these influences are seen when the lives, the ethos and the expressions of

²⁶⁶ An interesting sequel showing how people understood the hymn was at the 1909 mining disaster in Britain at the West Stanley Colliery, "The Burns Pit". 168 miners perished due to underground explosions. A group of 34 were still alive in total darkness in a pocket of air when one of them began to hum "Lead Kindly Light". Two panicked and left the group and died of gas poisoning, but the others were encouraged and joined in with the words, "Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom, lead thou me on, The night is dark, and I am far away from home". After many hours all but one of these lived to be rescued.

those who are involved in the Communicative Arts are compared with those who philosophise or teach about them. The latter sometimes exhibit a stronger dose of the contribution from the Age of Reason, whereas the former more represent Romanticism. Nicholas Wolterstorff, a scholar with a background in both the arts and in philosophy, talks about how he changed his understanding about art and aesthetics away from the dominant interpretation of the times. This dominant school of thought sees art as “instrumental” and a part of his change was due to a deeper realisation about the legacy of the Romantic Movement. Wolterstorff, now in his eighties was a visiting lecturer on Art and Aesthetics at Biola University, and said there about the 19th century German/English Romantics:

The 19th century romantics had an analysis of Modernity. They were the first secular analysts of Modernity. That is, the first people to say that - the end of the mid 18th century thereabouts - “something new is happening in the world, in the western world.” It wasn’t just, you know, changes, but something brand new. A modern world was coming to birth. And here is what the Romantics said about the modern world. “What characterises the modern world is that it splits apart old unities. It fragments society” and argues that “this fragmentation of society is stimulated by what it calls rationality.” That is to say, by our constantly asking, “What are different means to achieving these ends?” - so called instrumental thinking.

The English poet John Keats puts it like this in one passage, “The Modern World”, oh, he’s going to use the word “gnomed”. “Gnomed” is: - he’s turning little German gnomes²⁶⁷ that live in the Black Forest: he’s turning gnomes into a verb here, “gnomed”. He’s going to speak about the gnomed mine: a coal mine that has little gnomes living in it. He is also going to be speaking about philosophy. But take my word for it, he doesn’t really mean philosophy. I mean he does mean philosophy but not what we mean by philosophy. He means *natural science*. Here’s what he says, he’s talking about Modernity: “It empties the gnomed mine, and philosophy unweaves the rainbow.” Do you see what’s going on there? Philosophy *unweaves* the rainbow, pulls it apart, fragments it. Empties the gnomed mine, removes all the mystery, all the little gnome figures are gone. That’s Modernity - fragmentation. Once upon a time unity, now everywhere fragmentations, social fragmentations, psychological fragmentations. That’s the romantic analysis. To this day it’s the basic sociological tradition. But, so the romantic said, but, art, is the “social other” and the “socially transcendent”. In art we have unity rather than fragmentation. In art we have imagination rather than rationality. And in art we have the mysterious instead of the calculable. And then a great many Romantics added this, and in virtue of being “socially other” and “socially transcendent” in virtue of that, art has the potential of saving us from what we need saving from. Namely, fragmentation, excessive rationality, lack of

²⁶⁷ *Gartenzwergen* is German for little garden gnomes, symbolic of the presence of imaginary figures in our world.

imagination and so forth. That's the Romantic view, the Romantic social analysis. And then this picture of art coming into its own is incorporated into that grand sociological picture. Apart from that, oh well so let me, I was once talking to an English teacher at one of the Christian colleges about these matters, and here's what she said, I think it's a near quotation from one of the Romantics that she said, "Nick you know, poetry knits together the tattered fragments of our existence."²⁶⁸

Now one of the features of Newman's work is the lack of a boundary line between his "poetry" or his hymns and his prose. They really seem all of a piece as a body of literature. They are all vehicles for his theology which he sees in a Romantic way expressing his life-long agenda of bringing it all together. What Wolterstorff said about Romanticism and poetry can be seen in Newman's poems and hymns and indeed in the overall good that permeates his writings. He is seeking to "bring it all together" and present a Christianity that offers a salvation that is just that.

An example is *The Dream of Gerontius*, written in 1865 as a narrative poem, and which concerns the progress of a soul from death to salvation. It includes a section of peacefulness which illustrates mysticism. Also there are other Romantic features such as the elevated sense of the individual self.

I went to sleep; and now I am refresh'd,
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;
Nor does one moment differ from the next.

The reference point is the experience of the self and the finding of one's true self which is a Romantic motif; also the absence of any special form, such as iambic pentameter, is consistent with the Romantic freedom from such strictures.

²⁶⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "From the Uselessness of Art to the Use of Art" a public lecture given at Biola University and uploaded onto YouTube 21st Feb, 2012. The quote is 9:30-14:00 minutes in from the start of the lecture. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMTbl-OGHUY> (accessed April 24, 2013). Inverted commas, quotation marks, and italics are guesses made in listening as to where his emphases of speech were implying.

The aspect of Romanticism, however, that for our analysis is most important in understanding Newman is not exactly in these more visible characteristics, but rather the presence of a deeper intention to seek the whole rather than dwell on the parts. In the Enlightenment stress on the objects to be known and the rationalisation that saw them understood in their parts, Newman's desire to turn rather to the knowing subject was accompanied by a return to the whole rather than the parts. He was not so much working to repudiate the Enlightenment philosophy that so pulled things apart, as he was spending his energy giving an answer to the need it brought. Newman's life was repeatedly to demonstrate his willingness and ability both to take on the new in the current philosophies and culture and also to step away when that approach had gone too far from his deeper more enduring instincts. This explains Newman's moves: he tended not to fight the philosophical winds coming upon him but rather sought to erect shelters for himself and for his people. The Anglo-Catholic movement that he helped to found was deeply an attempt to reconnect the Protestant Anglicanism with its own strong line of "Catholic" history. Perhaps the move into Roman Catholicism was connected to that attempt.

"The Illative Sense" of John Henry Newman

So the societal and intellectual context calling forth Newman's teaching had been the predicament of Modernity seeking - rather unsuccessfully when it came to metaphysical things - to show how people can judge propositions as certain under the strictures of those philosophies of the times. The main problem was the modern insistence on taking the paradigm that applied well to the physical sciences and mandate it for all knowledge. The success of the scientific enterprise in bringing to human living so many wonderful discoveries had increased the power of such assumptions about this modern trajectory of thought. This was especially true in the early days of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries just before Newman came on the scene.

Newman had lived and worked in the period influenced most by the Romantic movement and he followed its surge in many respects. He particularly sought to see the issues of life and belief from the perspective of the whole rather than to leave the question of belief in tatters due to the rationalisation of Modernity. Whereas the rationalisation of the early Modernity pulled everything apart, Newman wanted to look at humanity's experience as a whole and when he did so he saw that our human minds did indeed have a way to become certain. He wrote:

Earnestly maintaining, as I would, with this latter school of philosophers, the certainty of knowledge, I think it enough to appeal to the common voice of mankind in proof of it. That is to be accounted a normal operation of our nature, which men in general do actually instance. That is a law of our minds, which is exemplified in action on a large scale, whether *à priori* it ought to be a law or no.²⁶⁹

These ideas were not contrary overall to Modernity, but were Modernity expressed through the Romantic movement from which he was inspired. So he has come up with a way to see belief occurring, not by focus on the objective facts believed but on the subjectivity of the believer.

This fitted in with how Newman was committed to be a child of this Modernity and how, at the same time, he sought a certainty for his faith in God. He had tried various ways to achieve this across his life, but the developments of Modernity had increasingly made *certainty* in metaphysical entities more and more a scarce commodity. Then Modernity itself expressed recognition of this situation in the Romantic movement. This provided Newman a vehicle with which to emphasize the finer things of life, the aesthetic and the religious. It gave a precedent for turning away from the objective concentration that early Modernity had brought to concentrate on the knower rather than that which is known. Though one might not go along with all of Newman's particular ideas, one can see in the grand scale of things, the justification of his growth and direction. His culminating work in which he set out these ideas

²⁶⁹John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), 9:344.

was *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* and was written across twenty years and finished in 1870.²⁷⁰

Yet in the face of all of this, to Newman, everyday human experience nonetheless was replete with examples of *certitude*. The explanation for this phenomenon of certitude, Newman believed, must then lie elsewhere than in the *formal* processes of thinking and argumentation approved by Modernity.²⁷¹ Newman wrote:

Especially have I found myself unequal to antecedent reasonings in the instance of a matter of fact. There are those, who, arguing *à priori*, maintain, that, since experience leads by syllogism only to probabilities, certitude is ever a mistake. There are others, who, while they deny this conclusion, grant the *à priori* principle assumed in the argument, and in consequence are obliged, in order to vindicate the certainty of our knowledge, to have recourse to the hypothesis of intuitions, intellectual forms, and the {344} like, which belong to us by nature, and may be considered to elevate our experience into something more than it is in itself.²⁷²

Here Newman is not willing to accept an exit from the problem by recourse to some of our knowledge coming to us by intuition. Modernity discussing the objective truths would not allow it. Newman was not abandoning his modern rational commitments and applied them first to the outward and objective level of *certainty* of propositions but proposed the working of the mind had other resources. These were not away from rationality as his continued reference to the involvement of inference and assent in his *Illative Sense* showed. This he explicated by proposing a differentiation between the mind reaching *certitude* and the person arriving at *certainty*. He wrote: “*Certitude* is not a passive impression made upon the mind

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Americo Lapati, *John Henry Newman* (New York: Twain Publishers, 1972), 107. Lapati wrote: “The *Grammar of Assent* was published in 1870. Ten years previously, however, Newman had considered a work on ‘the popular, practical and personal evidence of Christianity-i.e., as contrasted to the scientific, and its object would be to show that a given individual, high or low, has much right (has as real rational grounds) to be certain, as a learned theologian who knows the scientific evidence.’⁷⁶ For not only the *what* of belief but the *how* of belief had preoccupied his mind for many years. With his reading in Bishop Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* about 1823 that probability is the guide of life, Newman became profoundly concerned with “the question of the logical cogency of faith”⁷⁷ A few years later he wrangled with the concepts of certainty, certitude, the “assemblage” of concurring and converging probabilities.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Newman to Dr. Meynell, Jan 23, 1860, in W. Ward, *Newman*, II, 113. ⁷⁷*Apologia*, 7. ⁷⁸Ibid., 13-14.”

²⁷²Newman, *Grammar*, 9:343-4.

from without, by argumentative compulsion, (*italics mine*).”²⁷³ Rather there was a human sense that provided it from within.

This was the “Illative Sense” - a capacity to achieve *certitude* about matters not absolutely proven. He differentiates between *certainty*, on the one hand as a quality belonging to propositions and addressed by Modernity’s methods, and then on the other *certitude* which is a mental state about the certainty of those propositions and brought about by the mind’s *Illative Sense*. The outward accumulation of evidence increases the actual objective probability of a conclusion being judged as *certain* but the human mind is the architect of and locus where the inferences are subjectively made which can lead to the step of *certitude*. *Certainty* at best is approximated by a balance of probabilities, but *certitude* can be complete.

Newman took persons who said that they were ‘certain’, but he understands their lack of exactness of language and that they had actually arrived at *certitude*. He wrote: “how it comes about that we can be certain is not my business to determine; for me it is sufficient that certitude is felt.”²⁷⁴ The faculty for doing these two steps of *inference* and *assent* is what he called the “Illative sense”. It had to do with the coming to a conclusion or decision and by “sense” he meant an innate human mental capacity so to do. Newman explains:

... the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in a concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection or virtue of which I have called the Illative Sense, a use of the word “sense” parallel to our use of it in “good sense,” “common sense,” a “sense of beauty.”²⁷⁵

Newman had not set out to answer an epistemological call in a rigorous way. He was not proposing theories explaining the absolute possibility of beliefs as much as extrapolating

²⁷³ Ibid., 9:344.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 9:343.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 9:345.

from the visible nature of how humans do indeed believe many things. At the beginning of Chapter 9 he states:

My object in the foregoing pages has been, not to form a theory which may account for those phenomena of the intellect of which they treat, viz. those which characterize inference and assent, but to ascertain what is the matter of fact as regards them, that is, when it is that assent is given to propositions which are inferred, and under what circumstances.²⁷⁶

Newman is making observations that humans are able to make a decision and say that something is *certain* but mean by that word that they had achieved *certitude*. He is right that this is what they are meaning, but in their minds they also hold that their certitude is about something that is also certain. Were any person to suspect that they only had certitude and not certainty then their certitude would evaporate and they would have neither. In other words, the distinction between the words is appropriate, but to say that people might have one knowing they do not have the other would be to be not honest with themselves. Newman's ideas are perceptive about the psychological processes of decision, but fail to recognize that he is saying nothing about having true knowledge. Jay Newman (not connected to J.H. Newman) writes on this point in *Grammar* as though he, Jay, would be happy to accept that coming to belief had two such parts, and then he quotes Newman again to say:

I am not proposing to set forth the arguments which issue in the belief of these doctrines, but to investigate what it is to believe in them, what the mind does, what it contemplates, when it makes an act of faith.²⁷⁷

But is there here a sleight of hand, or should we say a sleight of mind? By aiming not to address the issue with epistemological rigour, Newman has allowed himself the space to turn attention toward the knower and ignore the status of what is to be known. He is accurate in his observation of human nature that we all are well able to achieve certitude in many more instances than Modernity's methods would allow. Newman correctly recognizes that human behaviour can overrule the best of any formal theory. Modernity may have said

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 9:343.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., *Grammar*, 93-94.

that one can only know a certain way, but the weight of how everyday people did not live out that stricture cannot be ignored. But on the other hand Newman's clinging to those methods of Modernity to speak of certainty only in terms of probability while making *certitude* something different does not answer or explain how it is that in some instances we all are able to know that what we know is a certain fact. This seems a bit of a short fall on the part of Newman. He would not want to have to admit that his *certitude* is only a psychological state rather than true belief?

Rather than making this division between *certainty* and *certitude* it would have been more helpful if there had been available to him the epistemology of the next chapter of this thesis. There the division that works better is between some beliefs being known by a reasonable understanding of the probabilities and other beliefs being known basically. Newman's words tacitly admit that what he is doing is not actually arriving at the goal of showing how through the *Illative Sense* that we arrive at a true belief in God. Newman says that a proposition that is a statement of faith can be taken up in two differing ways. One way is as the theologian does which is to test how true it is. The other is to accept or assent to the statement as an act of religion. Newman said:

To give a real assent to it is an act of religion; to give a notional is a theological act. It is discerned, rested in, and appropriated as a reality, by the religious imagination; it is held as a truth by the theological intellect.²⁷⁸

There is here a separation between "reality" and "truth" that is the measure short of the goal. On one hand Newman will not let go of the Modernity sponsored formal way of arriving at *certainty*, yet he is also proposing another route to a different goal which he calls *certitude*. This distance between the two is too high a price to pay to keep Modernity's formal methods in place while also accepting the evidence of human experience that there is another way to come to the decision of what Newman calls *certitude*. He says:

²⁷⁸ *Grammar*, 93 quoted by Jay Newman, *The Mental Philosophy of John Henry Newman* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 66.

Certitude is a mental state: certainty is a quality of propositions. Those propositions I call certain, which are such that I am certain of them. Certitude is not a passive impression made upon the mind from without, by argumentative compulsion, but in all concrete questions (nay, even in abstract, for though the reasoning is {345} abstract, the mind which judges of it is concrete) it is an active recognition of propositions as true, such as it is the duty of each individual himself to exercise at the bidding of reason, and, when reason forbids, to withhold. And reason never bids us be certain except on an absolute proof; and such a proof can never be furnished to us by the logic of words, for as certitude is of the mind, so is the act of inference which leads to it. Every one who reasons, is his own centre; and no expedient for attaining a common measure of minds can reverse this truth;—but then the question follows, is there any *criterion* of the accuracy of an inference, such as may be our warrant that certitude is rightly elicited in favour of the proposition inferred, since our warrant cannot, as I have said, be scientific? I have already said that the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection or virtue of which I have called the Illative Sense, a use of the word "sense" parallel to our use of it in "good sense," "common sense," a "sense of beauty,"²⁷⁹

Finally, the question is to be answered as to whether *the Illative Sense* is an example of the sense of the divine or not. One aspect by which Newman's proposed sense does measure up is that he has addressed a human capacity and not one that is supernatural or beyond the realm of that which creation has given us. In this it differs from the divine sense understood by the ancient Greeks, but is more in line with the *sensus divinitatis* proposed by John Calvin. Where it differs from that of Calvin is that Newman is looking at a general capacity to come to a conclusion on any matter. He sees humanity as having this concluding power which also may be applied in the theological question of the existence of God or belief in God. So Newman's *sense* very much is doing the same job as that of Calvin, but in a more general and diffused way. Newman's *Illative Sense* then needs to be coupled with revelation from God (through some other avenue or just through the searchings of human reason) to achieve the same upthrust of belief in God that Calvin's *s.d.* is said to achieve. Newman finished his chapter on the *Illative sense* by saying:

²⁷⁹ Ibid., *Grammar*, 9:344-5.

Theological conclusions, it is true, have often been made on antecedent reasonings; but then it must be recollected that theological reasoning professes to be sustained by a more than human power, and to be guaranteed by a more than human authority. It may be true, also, that conversions to Christianity have often been made on antecedent reasons; yet, even admitting the fact, which is not quite clear, a number of antecedent probabilities, confirming each other, may make it a duty in the judgment of a prudent man, not only to act as if a statement were true, but actually to accept and believe it. This is not unfrequently instanced in our dealings with others, when we feel it right, in spite of our misgivings, to oblige ourselves to believe their honesty. And in all these delicate questions there is constant call for the exercise of the *Illative Sense*.²⁸⁰

That is, the *Illative sense* is not in itself revelatory or possibly to be considered as a part of natural revelation. But when there is revelation of any type occurring, then the *Illative sense* would come into operation and be a part of how humans are able to “receive the message”.

Newman’s idea of the *Illative Sense*, when read and pondered, seems plausible as a description of the human concluding process. The idea itself is not an example of *the Divine Sense*, but is certainly consistent with such a possible entity existing. Newman’s *Illative Sense* can in Newman’s mind be operative when the only information coming is that which has passed by Modernity’s check point. But there is nothing to stop other inputs bypassing that checkpoint and being added into the person’s belief set by Newman’s *Illative Sense*.

If the *Illative Sense* were to be analysed in terms of a first or second tier example, it is too general to be characterised as one or the other. It is merely about people being able to come to a decision and does not have sufficient notion of being a revelatory event or a sense of God to be taken as a *divine* sense at all. Rather, it is a good exposition of *a human* sense. Newman’s *Illative Sense* certainly could fit in with the existence of the *s.d.* but is not in itself a similar idea as such.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9:383.

Chapter 6

ALVIN PLANTINGA (1932-) and Reformed Epistemology

One of my chief interests over the years has been in philosophical theology and apologetics: the attempt to defend Christianity (or more broadly, theism) against the various sorts of attacks brought against it. Christian apologetics, of course, has a long history, going back at least to the Patristics of the second century A.D.; perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that, from a philosophical point of view, Christians and other theists have nothing whatever for which to apologize.²⁸¹

Alvin Plantinga's career has been singularly successful in aiding Christian thinkers to move onto the front foot in intellectual circles by championing the rationality of believing in God. Plantinga is an epistemologist who has built on ideas from both Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and John Calvin (1509-1564) to support the possibility of belief in God from sources other than the sufficiency of rational evidence. These can be seen as "having warrant" or "being epistemologically justified" in the face of many modern opinions to the contrary. In particular he utilized the possibility of there being within human nature a capacity which Calvin called the *sensus divinitatis* ("s.d." in this thesis). Plantinga wrote:

Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin concur on the claim that there is a kind of natural knowledge of God (and anything on which Calvin and Aquinas are in accord is something to which we had better pay careful attention). . . . we can usefully see Calvin's suggestion as a kind of meditation on and development of a theme suggested by Aquinas. According to the latter, "to know in a general and confused way that God exists is implanted in us by nature."²⁸²

²⁸¹ Alvin Plantinga, "A Christian Life Partly Lived. Alvin Plantinga" in *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 68-69.

²⁸² Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 170. Plantinga is quoting Aquinas from *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, 1, ad 1. In *Summa Contra Gentiles* Aquinas adds: "There is a certain general and confused knowledge of God, which is in almost all men. . ." (Book III, Chapter 38).

Interestingly, Kelly James Clark believes that Plantinga's "Reformed Epistemology" is "likely the position that Calvin held"²⁸³ Probably Calvin would not own that idea. Clark comes at Reformed Epistemology from a description of what it does *not* do: "It is the position of Reformed Epistemology . . . that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order to be rational." There is some truth in this when the ideas of modernity limit the source of the possible evidences that could be considered as appropriate for rationality. Calvin, however, wrote at least half a century before the Enlightenment in Europe and its subsequent "modern" agendas. Reformed Epistemology has arisen as a correction to Modernity and is about the possibility of basic beliefs arising from a wider range of sources than that which Modernity allowed. Belief in other minds would be basic but not exactly in the same manner as belief in God can be a basic belief.²⁸⁴ As seen in Chapter Three of this thesis, the wording of the *s.d.* gives the idea of a natural human capacity that "senses" God in a way analogous to how the physical world is "seen" by the five senses. This is the idea of an inward, natural sense designed to give belief in God. This is an alternative route of evidence – "the sense of God". Calvin also denoted it as a *sensus deitatis*²⁸⁵ – the sense of deity. And too there is the connected *semen religionis* ("*s.r.*") - the seed of religion. These terms work together in Calvin's writings to spell out a natural capacity in all humans to generate a concept of God with an immediate belief in his existence. By reference to the *s.d.* in tandem with *the s.r.*, Calvin explicates how sinful human repression of the witness of the *s.d.* constitutes the *s.r.* which is then the source of the divergent religious viewpoints evident around the world. Calvin utilized these terms to

²⁸³ Kelly James Clark, "Reformed Epistemology Apologetics" in *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 267.

²⁸⁴ Plantinga did earlier write on belief in other minds to alert our thinking that we do not accept all beliefs rationally as required by hard foundationalism. He introduces the idea a broader set of basic beliefs and includes the parallel between belief in other minds and belief in God. Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

²⁸⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes* III.3

explain the ubiquity of religion throughout human history. This description is not contrary to Clark's introduction to Reformed Epistemology, but just emphasizes the positive side of the evidence coming from the *s.d.*, rather than the negative of not coming from other arguments, reasonings or evidences.

Reformed Epistemology

This movement in philosophy amongst theists sprang up around the career of Plantinga as he joined with other philosophers with Calvinist connections: Nicholas Wolterstorff, George Mavrodes and Kenneth Konyndyk, who have contributed to the philosophy of religion and philosophical theology concerning the rationality of Christian faith. This school of philosophical thought, that has arisen around their ideas, is called "Reformed Epistemology" because of its Calvinist background. Whereas "Reformed"²⁸⁶ is a term belonging to a classification of Christian traditions and their theologies, "epistemology" is a branch of philosophy. In a general explanation, it is a philosophical movement that can *coexist* with an acceptance of a theology based on the revelation of God consistent with the Scriptures.

Although there are a number of motifs for which "Reformed theology" is known such as the centrality to the system of predestination and the sovereignty of God;²⁸⁷ or the need to "reform" not just the Church but also the State²⁸⁸ or perhaps the use of Covenants

²⁸⁶ "Reformed" theology is a subset of Reformation theology. The Reformation sought to base its foundations in the revelation of God rather than in the ideas of men. Karl Barth is a good example of "Reformed" at this level. Reformation theology is the original Protestant impulse to base your religion/theology on the Word of God, rather than speculations or traditions of the church or, in the Liberal Protestant tradition, the upthrust of European Christian culture. There is really no parallel thing as "Reformed" Epistemology, but what is known as "Reformed Epistemology" is a philosophical understanding that does not come from that revelation but nonetheless is consistent with a theology based on revelation and seeks to show that such a theology is not epistemologically unacceptable. That is, it aims not to prove the Reformed theological outlooks associated, but merely show that such concepts of God can be held within a respectable epistemology. So "Reformed Epistemology" is about the interface of a theological commitment with a philosophical task (epistemology) and concentrates on the philosophical side of that interface.

²⁸⁷ The chief item stressed by John Calvin (1509-1564).

²⁸⁸ Made prominent by Huldrych (or Ulrich) Zwingli (1484-1531).

such as the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace²⁸⁹, the deepest attribute that is at the heart of these other emphases is the conviction that what we believe needs to come from God by his revelation rather than human ideas groping after God. It is an awareness of the helplessness of fallen humanity without that disclosure from and intervention of God at his own initiative. Usually this attitude is visible in a high regard for Christian Scriptures. John Calvin is referred to by Reformed thinkers as one very notable theologian and Church leader who sought to steer Protestant Christianity into all the doctrines that Scripture teaches. But the establishing of belief on the basis of Revelation through the Scripture or through the Church is the very thing rejected by the Age of Reason. Persons so doing were viewed as not measuring up to “modern” standards of rationality. This was the background thought in the world of Modernity at large when Plantinga was being nurtured in a dedicated Calvinistic setting in the scenario that drew out his life’s work. He said:

I can’t remember a time when I wasn’t a Christian and can scarcely remember a time when I wasn’t aware of and interested in objections to Christianity and arguments against it. Christianity, for me, has always involved a substantial intellectual element. I can’t claim to have had a great deal by way of unusual religious experience, although on a few occasions I have had a profound sense of God’s presence; but for nearly my entire life I have been convinced of the *truth* of Christianity. Of course the contemporary world contains much that is hostile to Christian faith: according to much of the intellectual establishment of the Western World, Christianity is intellectually bankrupt, not worthy of a rational person’s credence.²⁹⁰

In Plantinga’s words resounds his awareness of representing the minority report in the trial of Christianity by the modern mind.

The Organization of the Chapter

²⁸⁹ The extra biblical Covenant of Grace was an idea introduced by Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575).

²⁹⁰ Alvin Plantinga, Self-Profile in “Alvin Plantinga,” in *Profiles: An International Series on Contemporary Philosophers and Logicians*, vol. 5, ed. J. Tomberlin and P. Van Inwagen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1985), 33-34.

This is the final case study of the thesis with an example of the Divine Sense. It is not a new example, but suitably an application of John Calvin's digestion of Aquinas' idea that within humanity there was a natural knowledge of God. The application is to the field of epistemology.²⁹¹ This chapter covers the experience of Plantinga as he wrestled as an epistemologist / philosophical theologian about the reasonableness of the Christian faith. Across the years much of Plantinga's attention has been concentrated on handling the challenge from the existence of evil as well as the evidentialist's objection to the theistic claim due to the insufficiency of evidence. Plantinga developed his themes across a long career, beginning as a young student until today when he continues in his eighties. The long maintained focus is one reason for the eventual success at answering these challenges. He has addressed numerous issues in the philosophy of Religion and this thesis will ignore most of them, but has elected to mention only those issues, which when addressed, added to the development of Reformed Epistemology and the answer to the Evidentialist's challenge.

Although not exclusively so, the chapter will give more weight to Plantinga's mature thought as represented by his writings once he had arrived at Notre Dame University, including this trilogy of books around the concept of "warrant". "Warrant" is Plantinga's preferred word to name that which turns true belief into knowledge and Plantinga's theory of warrant for the theistic claim involves the mention of the *s.d.* Hence the relevance to our thesis.

This limitation about his extensive writings includes stopping after the development of the trilogy of books on warrant by the year 2000. Plantinga has continued to

²⁹¹ Peter D. Klein in "Epistemology," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains: "Epistemology is one of the core areas of philosophy. It is concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge. Epistemology has been primarily concerned with propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge that such-and-such is true, rather than other forms of knowledge, for example, knowledge how to such-and-such. There is a vast array of views about propositional knowledge, but one virtually universal presupposition is that knowledge is true belief, but not mere true belief. For example, lucky guesses or true beliefs resulting from wishful thinking are not knowledge. Thus, a central question in epistemology is: what must be added to true beliefs to convert them into knowledge?" <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/P059> (accessed April 15, 2013).

write since then but the address of this thesis concerns the development of Reformed Epistemology which was well achieved with those three books.

Plantinga's epistemology addresses how people might come to believe in God without reliance on argument or evidence, although he is not merely talking about fideistic²⁹² belief. Some of the things believed may indeed have no other grounds on which they can be affirmed, while others, although believed apart from reasons and evidences, might still be accessible to being supported that way. The driving issue for him is the rationality of Christian faith and he addresses first of all the more general case of theism and then later the particular Christian themes contained in what Jonathan Edwards termed "the great things of the gospel".

Plantinga utilizes Calvin's concept of the *s.d.* to defend the more general case of rational theism. His fully developed epistemological model is a twostep version going past consideration of the *s.d.*, to a second step which particularly addresses Christian belief. It is called the "extended Aquinas/Calvin model". This second step involves what he calls "the instigation of the Holy Spirit" and is secondarily relevant to this thesis after the most important first step of the model. The second step is why his final Book of the trilogy is called *Warranted Christian Belief*.

The important point to note at this juncture is that the *s.d.* is an idea of some component within humanity *as created* (the word "natural" is applied even if this is not a physical entity), whereas the mention of the "instigation of the Holy Spirit" is to move beyond the normal to the supernatural - phenomena not common to all humanity. Plantinga's use of Calvin's idea of the *s.d.* appears at first blush to be because of the aptness of the idea, as a possibility, to the needs of his epistemological model. There was not in the first step of the model much need to explicate Calvin's full theories.²⁹³ The amount he draws from Aquinas

²⁹² Fideism is when faith is not connected at all to reason.

and Calvin is sufficient to have in hand a possible idea for his epistemology.²⁹⁴ This is not entirely the case when it comes to the second step: that is the extended model. It is a solid representation of Calvin's genius in the role given to the Holy Spirit in the vouchsafing the gospel propositions contained within the scriptures.

The progress of this chapter will follow the development of Plantinga's thought through his formative years of teaching philosophy on into the flowering of his writing career while stationed at Notre Dame University. This progress is visible in his many articles and books published through the years to the final trilogy of books about warrant. As said above, the issues which have most travelled with Plantinga across the entire time are twofold: the challenge to theism made from the existence of evil, particularly when God is also construed as all good, all knowing and all powerful. This challenge, along with the evidentialist objection to a theism as being based on insufficient evidence, has been the grit in the oyster useful to bring about the pearl of Plantinga's ideas. This second issue is the one that is mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis as the interest of this writer in learning how to present Christianity to unbelievers.

The modern claim that the Christian faith is irrational has been presented in a number of ways: as an *a-priori* assertion that theistic belief does not fit with what can be properly known, or that the idea of God itself does not make sense; or due to *a posteriori* considerations that the theistic claim is inconsistent with other facts known about the world; or finally because it is a belief called for on the basis of insufficient evidence. This last has repeatedly caught the attention of Plantinga while earlier he also addressed numerous issues relevant to belief in God.

²⁹³ More accurately said: Plantinga's use of Calvin's ideas is not outside the range of interpretations regularly given to Calvin, but his immediate interest is in the very idea itself. When later discussing proper basicity and the need to move away from the strictures of Classical Foundationalism, the input from Calvin's teaching will be seen to have been a major influence.

²⁹⁴ Following Plantinga into the second step of his model concerning the "instigation of the Holy Spirit" would cover more biblical detail and, hence, mean a lot more area that the ideas could be compared with Calvin's interpretation of Scriptures.

Plantinga's Philosophy Training and Career Development

Plantinga trained at a number of institutions both Christian and secular²⁹⁵ and then, once in possession of his Ph.D., became a Professor of Philosophy in 1958 at Wayne State University. There, the Philosophy Department was very congenial and inclusive while quite antichristian in outlook. This proved useful for Plantinga in his development, especially as he had to defend rigorously the rationality of believing in a good, omnipotent and omniscient God and also acknowledge the presence of evil in the world. He left Wayne State in 1963, nonetheless, to return to Calvin College now on the Faculty, having in mind the goal of pursuing what it is to be a Christian philosopher. This appeared to some, Plantinga was aware, a backward step away from the larger secular institution of a State University or perhaps a retreat into a sheltered existence amongst the believers, but already by then Plantinga's preferred methodology was to join communally within a group of philosophers and for this to work the need was for a common Christian agenda. He wrote: "Scholarship in general and philosophy in particular is in large part a communal enterprise: promising insights, interesting connections, subtle difficulties – these come more easily and rapidly in a group of like-minded people than for the solitary thinker."²⁹⁶ Calvin College afforded the opportunity to do this within a group of *Christian* philosophers. Indeed, it was during his nineteen years teaching there and being immersed in such a Christian community of philosophers that he wrote the *Free Will Defense* article that shot him into national notice for writing answers to the varied attacks on Christian belief.

The Problem of Evil when God is seen as all Good, all Knowing and all Powerful

²⁹⁵These include: Jamestown College, Harvard University, Calvin College, Michigan University and Yale University, this latter from where he later returned and graduated with his Ph.D. in 1958.

²⁹⁶ Plantinga, *Philosophers Who Believe*, 66.

In 1955 J. L. Mackie had published “Evil and Omnipotence”²⁹⁷ in the Oxford journal *Mind*, which made a strong case against the rationality of theistic belief. It was ten years later, while working at Calvin College, that Plantinga published in 1965 his most noticed, major answer to this question: “The Free Will Defense”²⁹⁸ which, although not the final thing he would have to say on the topic, nonetheless began his move toward prominence in the field of philosophy of religion.²⁹⁹ Plantinga maintained his thrust in this line of reasoning across a number of years and in 1974 he refined it with a restatement in *God, Freedom and Evil*. He began:

In what follows I shall focus on the Free Will Defense. I shall examine it more closely, state it more exactly, and consider objections to it; and I shall argue in the end that it is successful. Earlier we saw that among good states of affairs there are even some that not even God can bring about without permitting evil. These are good states of affairs that don’t include evil; they do not entail the existence of any evil whatever; nonetheless God Himself can’t bring them about without permitting evil.³⁰⁰

In 1993, after having in 1982 moved on to the University of Notre Dame, Plantinga, in giving an intellectual testimony again, took the opportunity to be specific about some of the further development of his thought. Some of the wording of the 1985 testimony appears again in this 1993 *The Christian Life Partly Lived*, but with added elaboration:

²⁹⁷ J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind* 64 (April, 1955): 200-212. The idea is about a problem of logic in holding as true together four propositions: God is omniscient and would know of any evil in the world; God is omnipotent and able to stop evil occurring; God is benevolent and would want to take evil from the world; there is evil in the world.

²⁹⁸ A. Plantinga, “The Free Will Defense,” in *Philosophy in America*, ed. M. Black (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 204-220. Plantinga sets out to answer the logical inconsistency perceived in positing all the four propositions in the note above. His argument roughly is about what it *is not possible for God to do* - that is God, even being omnipotent, could not create a world with free creatures that are guaranteed never to choose evil. So an omnibenevolent God, might possibly create a world, not yet containing evil, but which has a principle of free will written into it such that some of the creation are free moral agents capable of demonstrating moral goodness and development, but also capable of turning toward evil. This is exactly what the Scriptures record in the creation of the angelic hosts, some of whom used their opportunity to rebel against God and eventually took this evil as a part of the temptation to humanity who was created in the same position of opportunity, being made with free will.

²⁹⁹ So assessed by Timothy Fenner Lytle, “Properly Basic Beliefs: An Analysis of Plantinga on Human Knowledge of God” (PhD. diss., University of Georgia, 1989), 1.

³⁰⁰ Alvin, Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 29.

Many of these claims (of the objectors to theism) strike me as merely fatuous – the claim, for example, that “man come of age” can no longer accept supernaturalism, or Bultmann’s suggestion . . . to the effect that traditional Christian belief is impossible in this age of “electric light and the wireless.” . . . Three sorts of considerations, however, with respect to belief in God have troubled me and have been a source of genuine perplexity: the existence of certain kinds of evil, the fact that many people for whom I have deep respect do not accept belief in God, and the fact that it is difficult to find much by way of noncircular argument or evidence for the existence of God.³⁰¹

Plantinga continues that he had since satisfied himself with respect to the third consideration about circular argument whilst preparing and writing the book *God and Other Minds*,³⁰² and that the second consideration arising from the existence of many respected nonbelievers was mitigated when he realized there were many important issues of life about which the experts were not in any agreement. The first consideration about evil has, however, remained a major concern for him.

In this intellectual testimony, looking back across time, he further explained about the problem of evil:

. . . suffering and evil can occasion spiritual perplexity and discouragement; and of all the antitheistic arguments, only the argument from evil deserves to be taken seriously. But I also believe paradoxically enough, that there is a *theistic* argument from evil, and it is at least as strong as the *antitheistic* argument from evil. . . . What is genuinely appalling . . . is not really human suffering as such so much as human wickedness. This wickedness strikes us as deeply perverse, wholly wrong, warranting not just quarantine and the attempt to overcome it, but blame and punishment.

But could there really be any such thing as horrifying wickedness if naturalism were true? . . .³⁰³

Plantinga’s address of the problem of evil has been a continuing “work in progress”. Of interest is how it has intersected with another main agenda item which is to answer the

³⁰¹ Plantinga, *Philosophers Who Believe*, 69.

³⁰² Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

³⁰³ Plantinga, *Philosophers Who Believe*, 68-73. This quotation here is just the bare bones of Plantinga’s six page discourse. The purpose of this thesis chapter is more to move on to discuss his answers to the evidentialist objection to Christian faith, which requires an understanding of Plantinga’s concept of justification.

evidentialist's objection to theism further fermenting the development of Reformed Epistemology.

A Christian Philosopher in Community

Plantinga's agenda on moving to Calvin College in 1963 had also been to work out what it is to be a Christian philosopher in community. The Christian commitment of the Institution put this into practice, but their philosophical agenda, while so doing, was to address other issues of the time. Plantinga states these as including for him: the Metaphysics of Modality; the Problem of Evil and the development of his ideas toward his Reformed Epistemology.³⁰⁴ But he wrote later that it was only following his subsequent move in 1982 from Calvin to Notre Dame University that he had the opportunity to address *intellectually* that question of how to be a Christian philosopher, and he taught courses concerning it. He actually went back as a visitor and taught some of that course work at Calvin College. This explicit development of the ideas of how to be a Christian Philosopher he did more consciously at Notre Dame as well as continuing to address the challenge raised by Evidentialism and the refinement of the concept of rationality involved in his Reformed Epistemology.

From a wider point of view, a Christian Philosopher has cause to be properly in Community *with the world* equally as having times to be a Christian philosopher in community with like-minded Christians, if the aim is to develop a thorough Christian response to current issues. Indeed Plantinga's career appears a good model of both. The tension between the two needs - of being related well to the world and also having connections in Christian community where one's faith is renewed and supplied - is one of the ever present realities of Christian living. It was while Plantinga was in Community broader

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 77.

than Christian (and he described it as a helpful community) that he was further stimulated to face the issue of explaining belief in the existence of God despite the very evident evil in our world. Equally, it was in the Christian enclave amongst like-minded philosophers that Plantinga's epistemology flourished.³⁰⁵

Noetic Structure, Proper Basicity and Classical Foundationalism

Plantinga uses the term "noetic structure" from *noeo* in the Greek "to think or understand". All thinkers have noetic structures and these contain all that they believe in varying degrees of certainty. Epistemology has two major ways that these beliefs are webbed together: foundationalism or coherentism. The latter does not have certain beliefs at the bottom of the noetic structure, but just a set of beliefs sufficiently coherent with each other to provide that foundation. Foundationalism has a set of *basic beliefs* that form the foundation, and each of these is there in the basic set because they are certain, even while not based on inferences from other beliefs. So foundationalism usually comes with some assumptions as to what has constituted the basicity of those beliefs. That is what made them certain without their needing underpinning evidence or inferences. This is to talk about the "proper basicity" of those foundational beliefs. Classical Foundationalism is a certain way of restricting that proper basicity which, although it originally may have come from classical antiquity, was particularly championed by the Enlightenment thinkers.

Plantinga left Calvin College and moved to Notre Dame in 1982. The first publication of a work in which Plantinga had been a major writer, while at Notre Dame, was *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (hereinafter *RBG*).³⁰⁶ From its co-editorship

³⁰⁵ This, of course, is my point of view as the observing writer and not necessarily Plantinga's.

³⁰⁶ Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University Press, 1983). [Hereafter reference will be made to Plantinga's article "Reason and Belief in God," (16-93) as "*RBG*" and then page numbers will be to the pagination in the overall book: *Faith and Rationality*]

by himself and Nicholas Wolterstorff with whom he had worked at Calvin, and the sheer weight of the development of thought exhibited in Plantinga's own lead article *RBG*, it is clear that this is a culminating work of all the progress of thought in the Christian community of philosophers at Calvin College. It would take another solid time period at Notre Dame for the trilogy of books on "warrant" to be forthcoming.³⁰⁷ The titles of this trilogy of books have in common the word "Warrant".

Warrant for Plantinga is that which turns a true belief into knowledge. The use of this word "warrant" is partially to provide an alternative to the use of the word "justification" in that role. It is not that Plantinga was moving away from such a notion, so essential to Epistemology and of course to "Foundationalism", but that he wanted to define more exactly what it actually was that turned true belief into knowledge. Plantinga had explained much of this in *RBG* (which did, as above said, come out after his move to the University of Notre Dame, but the contents of which is much the work of his previous time at Calvin College), but there remained a good opportunity to place this achieved grasp of the entire epistemological issue into a presentation of how *Christian* faith can be seen as rational. This is what the trilogy of books surrounding "Warrant" aimed to achieve.

So, in the issues represented in the first two of the trilogy of books, there is explication of the concept of what exactly constitutes rationality as it had been known as "rational justification". Looking back in 1993, the year the first two of the trilogy came out, elsewhere he wrote:

The atheologian claims that belief in God is *irrational* – because he thinks it conflicts with such obvious facts as the existence of evil, perhaps, or because there is evidence against it or because there is no evidence for it. When he makes this claim, just what property is it that he is ascribing to theistic belief? What is rationality and what is rational justification? What does it mean to say that a belief is irrational? The central topic of *God and Other Minds* is "the

³⁰⁷ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: the Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Plantinga worked and taught at the University of Notre Dame 1982-2010.

rational justification of belief in the existence of God as he is conceived in the Hebrew-Christian tradition” (p. vii). I was really considering the evidential objection to theistic belief, without explicitly considering or formulating it. I argued, in brief, that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat; since belief in other minds is clearly rational, the same goes for belief in God. What I wrote there still seems to me to be substantially true, although now I see the issues in a broader context and (I hope) more clearly. But even though the topic of the book is the rational justification of theistic belief, there is almost no consideration of the protean, confusing, many-sided notion of rationality.³⁰⁸

The difficulty with the concept of rationality, Plantinga believed, had to do with backdrop assumptions commonly held in the foundationalist approach to knowledge that has been a feature of Western Christian thought bequeathed by the Enlightenment. As becoming visible in these words of Plantinga written in 1993, he believed he had come to see clearly how he was unable to continue as a fully-fledged “*Classical Foundationalist*”. He had a key to clarify his answer to the evidentialist challenge due to insufficient evidence and also develop his reply to the problem of evil. Plantinga wrote:

In *God and other Minds* I assumed that the proper way to approach the question of the rationality of theistic belief is in terms of argument for and against the existence of God. Following contemporary fashion, furthermore, I thought a *good* argument (either theistic or antitheistic) would have been more or less conclusive, appealing to premises and procedures hardly any sensible person could reject. This assumption is part of a larger picture, total way of thinking of the main questions of epistemology, which has come to be called “classical foundationalism.” Like everyone else, I imbibed this picture with my mother’s milk; and the conclusion of *God and Other Minds* is really that from the perspective of classical foundationalism, belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat.³⁰⁹

This does not mean at all that he wanted to depart from the general foundationalist structure of some propositions being accepted basically and others then built on them by steps of reason and inference. What he was rejecting was the particular way in which the Classical Foundationalism chose its set of basic beliefs.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Plantinga, *Philosophers Who Believe*, 73-74.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

³¹⁰ The causes of this move are set out well in *RBG*.

The Book (*Faith and Rationality . . .*) had eight main articles and the leading one was by Plantinga himself with its article title also worded: *Reason and Belief in God*. This article, he explains in its introduction, is structured to trace the “confluence of three streams” which are (a) his reflections on the evidentialist objections to theistic belief; (b) his considerations of Thomas Aquinas’ position on faith and reason and (c) his reflection on the Reformed objection to Natural Theology. The content of this book and Plantinga’s article which takes the leading position, is quite comprehensive on the overall topic, but chiefly Plantinga is arguing for the idea that belief in God is for some “properly basic”. Evans commentates:

He wants to show that it can be “entirely acceptable, desirable, right, proper, and rational to accept belief in God without any argument or evidence whatever.”

This notion of “proper basicity” is explained by Plantinga in terms of the concept of a person’s “noetic structure,” which is simply the set of propositions a person believes, together with certain epistemic relations that hold among him and these propositions.” In a typical noetic structure, some propositions will be believed on the basis of others. Obviously in many cases a belief which is the basis for another may be itself based on some other belief. Those philosophers which Plantinga terms “classical foundationalists” – and on this point Plantinga is in sympathy with classical foundationalism – maintain that this “basing” relation cannot constitute an infinite series. Actual people must therefore believe some things which are not based on other things they believe. If it is rational for them to hold these beliefs in that manner, then Plantinga terms such beliefs *properly* basic. The claim that belief in God is properly basic is therefore a claim that it is reasonable to include belief in God as part of the foundation of a person’s noetic structure.³¹¹

The Evidentialist Objection to Belief in God

The evidentialist objection has come from philosophers such as W.K. Clifford, Brand Blanshard, Bertrand Russell, Michael Scriven and Anthony Flew who in Plantinga’s words “have argued that belief in God is irrational or unreasonable or not rationally acceptable or intellectually irresponsible or somehow noetically below par because, as they say, there is *insufficient evidence* for it.”³¹².

³¹¹C. Stephen Evans, “Kierkegaard and Plantinga on Belief in God: Subjectivity as the Ground of Properly Basic Religious Beliefs” in *Faith and Philosophy* 5/1 (January, 1988), 25-26. ² *RBG*, 39; ³ *RBG*, 48.

³¹² Plantinga, *RBG*, 17.

Foundationalism had its beginnings in Ancient Greek thought but was particularly sponsored by the Enlightenment thinking, and Plantinga believes it important to rigorously understand that connection. Plantinga wrote:

It starts from the apparent cleavage between those beliefs you accept on the evidential basis of other beliefs, and those you accept in the *basic* way- accept, but not on the evidential basis of other beliefs. One attributes to Aristotle the property of being the fountainhead of foundationalism . . . Aristotle and some of his medieval followers are classical foundationalists- *ancient* classical foundationalists, as I shall call them, to distinguish them from such modern classical foundationalists as, for example, Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and a thousand lesser lights. Modern classical foundationalism, obviously enough, has been the dominant tradition in epistemology, in the West, since the seventeenth century.³¹³

Leading philosophers of the Enlightenment (1660's – 1770's) were Rene Descartes (1596-1650) initiating Rationalism and John Locke (1632-1704) who championed Empiricism (knowledge comes from experience as a result of the senses). These philosophies appeared at that time to be competing interpretive schemes. Perhaps this was because of the intellectual insecurity coming out of the Reformation (Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 and the Reformers induced a schism in the Western World about authority for knowledge.)³¹⁴ The schism was: should our knowledge starting points come from the church and its representatives or directly from the scriptures as interpreted by the individual conscience? Both Descartes and Locke and those that followed in their streams were intent on providing self-evident starting points that did not rest on the assertions of either the church or the scriptures. They desired the basis of their knowledge structure to be on absolutely certain foundations. Back in their time, Rationalism and Empiricism may have appeared to be

³¹³ Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 68.

³¹⁴ Evans asserts that Nicholas Wolterstorff in *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996) "claims that classical foundationalism has its origins in the cultural anxiety that characterized the fracturing of the medieval tradition, the intellectual and religious conflicts that appeared with the Reformation and the scientific revolution." C. Stephen Evans, "Externalist Epistemology, Subjectivity, and Christian Knowledge: Plantinga and Kierkegaard" an unpublished paper given at a conference in Europe and sent personally to the writer in 2003. The sources of the Enlightenment are, of course multi-factorial, but the intellectual insecurity coming out of the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution would have been enormous.

offering opposite ideas, but in fact they had a lot in common when compared to where previous Western intellectual thought had rested.

Their competition lay in how Rationalism wanted these first “axioms” to be supplied by Reason alone whereas Empiricism was based on these arising out of the experiences produced through our senses. This is not to say that Empiricism was not equally committed to reason as was Rationalism, but that it saw the starting points, before the reasoning broke in, as the result of sense experiences rather than the reflection and reasoning of the thinker. Both philosophies were intent on how we could know for sure and not be vulnerable to scepticism. Rene Descartes took on a sceptical attitude of doubting everything as a method for the direct purpose so that he could discover those things that were “indubitable” – not capable of being doubted. These would be his basic postulates on which the rest of his knowledge could be built up. In the case of Locke, the basic propositions were those that came as a consequence of sense experiences. “Empirical Science” comes from when science recruited Empiricism as its philosophical underpinning. Both Rationalism and Empiricism relied on the use of rational thought (with a little ‘r’) in the building of knowledge by steps of logic from the basic statements to the rest of the inferred propositions.

This meant that in Foundationalism there were two types of propositions knowable: those that were basic and forming that foundation and those that were built by inference from those basic axioms. Classical Foundationalism, as furthered by the Enlightenment thinkers, required high certainty of its basic beliefs and that this meant “the prime candidates are beliefs that are either self-evident, incorrigible (in the way beliefs about a person’s own mental states are often alleged to be for that person) or evident to the senses.”³¹⁵

The Probabilistic Argument from Evil and its Connection to Proper Basicity

³¹⁵Ibid.

Since Plantinga had argued in 1965, successfully some have thought, against the original claim that the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent and all good God is logically inconsistent with the existence of evil in the world, another version of that objection has arisen speaking rather about the improbability of God existing, given large amounts of evil being evident in the world. In a fifty-one page long 1978 article³¹⁶ published in 1979 by *Philosophical Studies* Plantinga gives his reply to this version of the argument. He does set out the briefest of summary of this in *RBG*.³¹⁷ He lists four propositions with which to analyse the issue:

- (1) God is the omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good creator of the world
- (2) There are 10^{13} turps of evil
- (3) God is the omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good creator of the world, and it is not within his power to create a world containing more good than the actual world contains but fewer than 10^{13} turps of evil.
- (4) If A entails B and B is improbable on C, then A is improbable on C.

The fourth is a familiar theorem of probability calculus. The third is the fruit of his non-probabilistic answer to the problem of evil in *The Free Will Defense*. Now Plantinga says:

The objector's claim is that proposition (1) is improbable given (2), where the turp is the basic unit of evil and is equal to $1 / 10^{13}$ of the total evil in the world. The objector may say: "Perhaps *some* of the evil is necessary to achieve certain good states of affairs, but there is so *much* evil, much of which seems on the face of things, utterly gratuitous. The objector claims, therefore, that (1) is improbable or unlikely, given (2)."³¹⁸

In replying to the objection by discussing these four above propositions, Plantinga adds in one of his conclusions from the above-mentioned paper "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil" to the effect:

- (5) It is quite implausible to suppose that (3) above is improbable or unlikely given the truth of (2).³¹⁹

³¹⁶Alvin Plantinga, "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil," *Philosophical Studies* 35 (1979): 1-53.

³¹⁷ Plantinga, *RBG*, 21-24.

³¹⁸Plantinga, *RBG*, 21-22.

Notice the double negative statement about probability. His previously written *Free Will Defense* article was about possibility – the very possibility of the case that God was unable, despite his omnipotence, omniscience and all goodness, to create a world with the degree of goodness³²⁰ (or more than it does now have) without allowing evil – at levels less than the present stipulated 10^{13} turps. Then because of (4) it is implausible to suppose that (1) is improbable given the truth of (2).

This argument in *RBG* handling the probabilistic argument, Plantinga calls his “low-road reply”. In the final pages of “The Probabilistic Argument from Evil” in section “VIII. Evil and Foundationalism,”³²¹ Plantinga suggests some other corollaries to the whole issue. These are relevant to how he follows on in *RBG* with what he calls “the high-road reply” to the question. This “high-road” approach asks how the objector’s argument might follow on if one stipulated for the sake of the argument that a person does believe that (1) was improbable given (2). Then he or she may, nonetheless, still accept both (1) and (2) because there could possibly be another item of knowledge, (say j)³²² when teamed together to make (1) and (2) and (j) to have the result that (1) is true. This is so because (j) has outweighed (2) which the person does nonetheless still grant. Plantinga illustrates the logic of this by referring to the Frisian life guards.³²³

(5) Feike is a Frisian, and 9 out 10 Frisians cannot swim

And

³¹⁹ Here in my Chapter, only I have called it (5) to draw attention to it as an extra proposition. The underlining is mine.

³²⁰ There is a higher degree of goodness with the possibility of creatures rising to use their free will toward the good. Along with this further opportunity for good is the possibility of their choosing evil.

³²¹ Alvin Plantinga, “The Probabilistic Argument from Evil,” *Philosophical Studies* 35 (1979): 47-51.

³²² This introduction of (j) is simplifying the outlay of Plantinga’s argument while faithfully following its logic.

³²³ Plantinga is an American, but his family background is from the Dutch province of Friesland.

(6) Feike is a Frisian lifeguard, and 99 out of 100 Frisian lifeguards can swim;

It is plausible to hold that

(7) Feike can swim.³²⁴

Now the only way the objector's argument could work would be that (2) could be a part of some available "appropriate body of total evidence", to use Plantinga's suggestion for the objector. So Plantinga says the case is: (1) is improbable with respect to this relevant body of total evidence. (2) on its own is insufficient to prove that the theist is being irrational to accept (1) as there might well be a number of other propositions being held in the appropriate body of total evidence that swing(s) the decision in the opposite direction. Plantinga calls this total evidence set:

T^s is the theist's *evidential set*. This is the set of propositions to which, as we might put it, his beliefs are responsible. . . . Perhaps these are propositions the theist *knows* to be true, or perhaps the largest subset of his beliefs that he can rationally accept without evidence from other propositions, or perhaps the set of propositions he knows *immediately* – knows, but does not know on the basis of other propositions. However we characterize this set T^s , the presently pressing question is this: Why cannot belief in God be itself a member of T^s ?³²⁵

Plantinga then addresses this question that is at the heart of Foundationalism: "What sorts of beliefs, if any, is it rational or reasonable to *start from*? Which beliefs are such that one may properly accept them without evidence, that is without evidential support of other beliefs? One who offers the probabilistic argument from evil simply *assumes* that belief in God does not have that status; but perhaps he is mistaken."³²⁶ In "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil" Plantinga concludes that the atheological project based on an inductive argument from evil as an objection to theism, particularly when aimed at showing the theist to be "irrational

³²⁴ Plantinga, *RBG*, 22-23.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

or noetically below par” is “totally misconceived.”³²⁷ Plantinga has raised the issue as to what makes for “proper” basicity. Present within the objector’s argument, like a Trojan horse, are some unrecognized and unproven assumptions that will decide the war.

Classical Foundationalism and Evidentialism

Plantinga’s argument is quite deep and thorough as he seeks to show from where these assumptions have come. They are a part, he teaches, of what is the very nature of Classical Foundationalism, especially as it is restated by Aquinas, Descartes and Locke. So Plantinga’s development of thought in *RBG* then follows with a survey of the starting assumptions of the “Evidentialist” who is such because he or she is a Foundationalist. Such Evidentialists require a sufficiency of evidence to allow a thinker to adopt theism and still qualify as rational. The quotation that many have loved to give is that of W.K. Clifford whom Plantinga also quotes: “Whoso would deserve well of his fellows in this matter will guard the purity of his belief with a very fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it should rest on an unworthy object, and catch a stain which can never be wiped away.”³²⁸

He adds that if a

belief has been accepted on insufficient evidence, the pleasure is a stolen one. Not only does it deceive ourselves by giving us a sense of power which we do not really possess, but it is sinful, because it is stolen in defiance of our duty to mankind. That duty is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from a pestilence, which may shortly master our body and spread to the rest of the town.

And finally:

To sum up: it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

Foundationalism proposes classification into two types of propositions: those that are basic and those that are built ultimately by steps of logic on that “foundational or evidential set.”

³²⁷ Plantinga, “Probabilistic Argument,” 48.

³²⁸ W.K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief,” *Lectures and Essays*, (London: Macmillan, 1879): 83.

When a person asks for people to believe only according to the weight of the evidence, and he or she also holds in mind a “noetic structure” that is according to Foundationalism, then the evidence that is allowable is only the support that might come from that evidential set of basic propositions. What colours the whole enterprise is the understanding as to the conditions for inclusion in that basic set. Classical Foundationalism is strict about these rules and if these are not followed then their axiomatic status is questioned; they are not regarded as properly basic and the entire noetic structure of belief is regarded as irrational. Also it is possible for a person to have properly basic beliefs in their basic set but they allow themselves to believe other propositions that are neither properly basic nor based on steps of logic from those that are properly basic, then these items of belief are regarded as being held irrationally.

Being an evidentialist is really an outcome of being a thorough foundationalist of one sort or another with the acid question being about what is allowed or not allowed into the evidential set of properly basic propositions. In the tradition of classical foundationalism, the assumption always has been that belief in God was not allowed into that evidential set. As Plantinga says:

The existence of God, furthermore, is not among the propositions that are properly basic; hence a person is rational in accepting theistic belief only if he has evidence for it.³²⁹

In Classical Foundationalism Plantinga says:

The only properly basic propositions are those that are self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses. Since the proposition that God exists is none of the above, it is not properly basic for anyone; that is, no well-formed noetic structure contains this proposition in its foundations.³³⁰

Given the exclusion of belief in God from being self-evident and since God is not known through the five senses, then the outcome is inevitable that belief in God does not have supporting it much evidence.

³²⁹Plantinga, *RBG*, 48.

³³⁰*Ibid.*, 59.

Flew insists on a presumption of Atheism as the starting point of any discussion³³¹ and Michael Scriven asserts that a rational person has an obligation to be an atheist if finding himself or herself to be holding insufficient evidence for the existence of God. So Plantinga succeeds in showing that the evidentialist position is tied to classical foundationalism. This form of foundationalism is defined by the strict way it stipulates the evidential set.

Aquinas and Foundationalism

In treating Aquinas and the issue of how we know about God, Plantinga feels that Aquinas is somewhat ambivalent in his writings with regard to whether the only method to know God is on the basis of evidence. On one hand Plantinga sees Aquinas drawing from Aristotle an outlook that is definitely showing the colours of classical foundationalism.

Aquinas proposed a distinction between two types of truths. There is scientific knowledge – *scientia* – which is called “understanding” and this is inferred from what is seen to be true. These understandings/ truths are in contrast to the first principles which are seen immediately to be true rather than needing to be inferred. This is the Classical Foundationalist position of basic truths or axioms and then truths inferred by logic and reasoning or theorems to provide the remainder of our knowledge. Plantinga says:

Aristotle suggests that the principles of science must be *self-evident*; and Aquinas sometimes seems to follow him in holding that *scientia*, properly speaking, consists in a body of propositions deduced syllogistically from self-evident first principles – or perhaps *scientia* consists not just in those syllogistic conclusions but in the syllogisms themselves as well. Logic and mathematics seem to be the best examples of science so thought of.³³²

The basic truths are the First Principles (introduced second above) and the *scientia* (introduced first) from which we get the word “science” as that which comes to us through the

³³¹ Flew has changed his mind, as to exactly what he believes, several times and eventually settled on believing that there was some intelligent design behind the universe. Antony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

³³² Plantinga, *RBG*, 40.

sylogisms. The axioms or first principles are known *immediately* whereas the theorems built up knowledge and are known through understanding.

Aquinas adds to these first principles knowledge which he calls *scientia naturalis* whose subject matter, Plantinga says, is changeable material objects. The name he gives to this added amount of knowledge might seem a little misleading, implying that it is a part of the built-up inferred knowledge. Plantinga's interpretation of Aquinas rather includes objects seen changing in the breeze outside the window, which would be examples of perceptions that are *immediate*. This actually is a foreshadowing of empirical science that is based on observation or information coming through the senses. It is spotting more foundational items. That is, these immediate truths Aquinas is talking of are actually adding to the first principles, although reasonings based on those perceptions would then belong to the category of inferred truths. So, though included in the *scientia*, these objects known more immediately through the senses could be grouped with the axioms known immediately. They are not dependent on steps of inference and reasoning. Plantinga's summary then of Aquinas' views is that:

The basic picture of knowledge is this: we know what we see to be true together with what we infer from what we see to be true by arguments we can see to be valid.³³³

Aquinas also does respect coming to belief in God via being the recipient of revelation. Plantinga interprets this (rightly) as believing in God "on God's authority." Aquinas distinguishes this from what we would today call "fideism" – the idea that faith is independent of reason - by saying that the rationale for it to be acceptable to believe something on God's authority is because of the evidences such as "the wonderful cures of illnesses" or "the raising of the dead"³³⁴ that have supported the prophecies received. Without our having the evidences to support our believing, the prophecies of the Scriptures would be

³³³ibid., 44.

³³⁴ibid., 45.

for us to “believe foolishly”. The presence of these evidences, according to Aquinas, sets this acceptance on God’s authority apart from the fideism of the followers of Mohammed who believe their prophecies without such convincing proofs. So then, once again this is a belief on the basis of evidences. In this part of Aquinas’ writings this is a good forerunner to classical foundationalism - not a surprising fact given foundationalism’s distant past origin in Aristotle and Aquinas having drawn so much from Aristotelian philosophy.

So, on the one hand, Aquinas can be read in the colours of classical foundationalism, while on the other he also makes statements in his writings about an intuitive knowledge of God. It is these places in Aquinas that have provided the original quotations Plantinga was able to pick up and use to find a similar conception to Calvin’s mention of a *s.d.* Plantinga says in preparing to quote such a place from Aquinas:

“ . . . I should point out that there are suggestions of another line of thought in Aquinas: he sometimes suggests that there is a sort of *intuitive* or *immediate* grasp of God’s existence:”

It remains to investigate the kind of knowledge in which the ultimate felicity of an intellectual substance consists. For there is a common and confused knowledge of God which is found in practically all men; this is due either to the fact that it is self-evident that God exists, just as other principles of demonstration are – a view held by some people, as we said in Book One – or, what seems indeed to be true, that man can immediately reach some sort of knowledge of God by natural reason. For when men see that things in nature run according to a definite order, and that ordering does not occur without an orderer, they perceive in most cases that there is some orderer of the things that we see. But who or what kind of being, or whether there is but one orderer of nature, is not yet grasped immediately in this general consideration. (SCG, III, 38)”³³⁵

Plantinga concludes: “Aquinas would also hold, presumably, that someone who has such immediate and intuitive apprehension of God’s existence is not irrational in believing that there is a God. It is not entirely easy to see how to fit this suggestion into his generally Aristotelian way of looking at the matter; perhaps here we must see Aquinas as an early Calvinist.”³³⁶ These areas of Aquinas aside, the majority of his established theory concerning

³³⁵Ibid., 47.

³³⁶Ibid.

the knowledge of God follows Aristotle and the ideas at the heart of classical foundationalism.

The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology

The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology is also the title of a 2009 book by Michael Sudduth.³³⁷ The title is a little misleading about the direction of the book as Sudduth, on the overall, is intent on delivering Natural Theology from these objections. Sudduth asserts that the objection is threefold: from the immediacy of the knowledge of God; from the noetic effects of sin and from the logic of theistic arguments.³³⁸ Plantinga does address the question of “Natural Theology” as being an attempt to “demonstrate the existence of God”. This would be the use of arguments as, for example, were Aquinas’ five arguments for the Existence of God.³³⁹ He cites a long history of such attempts in Anselm, Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. Although, he says, since Kant the interest has dimmed somewhat, it is still maintained especially amongst Roman Catholic scholars. This is consistent with much Roman Catholic dependence on the tradition that comes from Thomas Aquinas in what was his first tier pathway to a knowledge of God. Amongst Protestants B.B. Warfield stands out in contrast to those opposing Natural Theology. Warfield championed an intellectual attitude³⁴⁰ to knowing the existence of God via good reasons as well as the usual Reformed dependence on the place of Special Revelation. Plantinga himself is in the stream of Reformed thinking that has depreciated Natural Theology. He surveys representative

³³⁷ Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited; Burlington VT, USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009).

³³⁸ Ibid., in the opening abstract.

³³⁹ Arguments (i) from Motion, (ii) from Efficient Causes, (iii) from Possibility and Necessity (Reductio argument), (iv) from Gradation of Being, (v) from Design.

³⁴⁰ In the U.S.A. in Warfield’s era the influence of Baconian Induction and Scottish Common Sense Philosophy prevailed amongst the centres for education.

Reformed theologians of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921),³⁴¹ John Calvin (1509-1564), and Karl Barth (1886-1968), Plantinga draws out their common attitude that belief in God, in their view, need not be based on argument. He says:

Barth joins Calvin and Bavinck in holding that the believer in God is entirely within his rights in believing as he does even if he does not know any good theistic argument (deductive or inductive), even if he does not believe there is any such argument, and even if in fact no such argument exists. Like Calvin, Kuyper, and Bavinck, Barth holds that belief in God is *properly basic* – that is, such that it is rational to accept it without accepting it on the basis of any other propositions or beliefs at all.³⁴²

The issue here for Plantinga is mostly with “natural theology” understood as argument based, rather than the very existence and efficacy of “natural revelation”. The three (Barth, Calvin and Bavinck) do have in common that they reject the place of arguments as the basis for faith in God. This is Plantinga’s style of recruiting support as broadly as possible in the same way he found support in both Aquinas and Calvin for a naturally implanted *s.d.* There is a large difference between Barth and the other two, as shall be presently shown.

Sudduth, writing in 2009 has brought to the discussion a tighter set of definitions. Sudduth traces convincingly that the Reformed tradition has indeed included some good and positive use of Natural Theology, but then by a more accurate set of definitions calls this “natural theology α ” - a natural knowledge of God due to the very constitution of humanity and distinguishes it from the use of arguments and reasoning to establish the existence of God, calling this “natural theology β ”. His book, further along, validates “natural theology β ” only when it is done from a Christian perspective. This is similar, but not exactly the same as in Alister McGrath’s 2008 book *The Open Secret*.³⁴³ McGrath, unlike Sudduth, is more dismissive of the original Reformed tradition of accepting natural theology, and not viewing

³⁴¹ A forerunner to Cornelius Van Til’s Reformed Apologetics. See Laurence R. O’Donnell “Neither ‘Copernican’ nor ‘Van Tilian’: Re-Reading Cornelius Van Til’s Reformed Apologetics in the light of Herman Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*” *TBR* 2 (2011): 71-95.

³⁴² Plantinga, *RBG*, 71-72.

³⁴³ See pp 91-92 of this thesis and notes 139-143.

favourably Calvin's use of the *s.d.* Assessing McGrath's "new vision" is relevant just here.

McGrath expositors John 1:1-18 as his rationale for ruling out any understanding of God before being confronted by the incarnation truths. His interpretation reads:

This prologue sets out the intellectual foundations of an incarnational approach to natural theology. It opens by laying out a doctrine of creation, in which supreme emphasis is placed on the *logos* – the word, which brought all things into existence. There is no notion here of "natural theology" as an antecedent conceptual system. Instead, we find the idea of the illumination of an otherwise shadowy, opaque, and ambiguous creation through the same "Word" that originally created it, and subsequently entered into it as the "Word became flesh." The prologue continues by declaring that the one who has made the God known also enlightens our minds so that we may see him reflected in the creation. . . .

The divine light of the *logos* allows us to "see" the created order in the proper way, so that human limitations in discerning the divine might be overcome.³⁴⁴

This exposition owes some of its direction to the version of Scripture which McGrath's book has just cited, which is The New Revised Standard Version. Verses 1-4 read:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (underlining mine).

Notice how the turn of phrase "what has come into being in him was life" leans toward seeing the incarnation as the time when the Word became the light to all people. Without meaning to decry the impact of the moment of the incarnation of Christ, nonetheless, this is not the only way John 1:3-4 has been interpreted. An alternative interpretation is that the verse is speaking of the Word eternally possessing life and ever light to creation due to his being that

"Word".³⁴⁵ There is a question about the punctuation added to the original Greek and the

³⁴⁴ McGrath, *The Open Secret*, pp 172-173.

³⁴⁵ See Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), 81-83. On the range of interpretations possible see D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991), 118-119.

impact of it on exactly where verse 3 and its ideas should end and verse 4 begin. The English Standard Version, which is also a revision of the 1971 RSV reads:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (underlining mine).

Verse 4, under this ESV translation remains a more open statement about the Word's relation to all creation as possibly something that has ever been the case from the beginning, rather than life coming into being, due to the incarnation. The nuance is hard to pick, but the difference is enormous. McGrath is seeing evidence for there being no ministry of the eternal word as the light of all men outside of/prior to the incarnation. But the light giving ministry of the word is not a product of the incarnation.

In fact the incarnation is more the product of the eternal Word. The ESV reading leaves open the interpretation that the Word has had this ministry enlightening all objects/persons of his creation from the start of things being created. What this means for revelation is that all revelation has, as its deepest explanation, its source in the Word of God. Natural revelation is included too, or else it would not be revelation at all. The problem with McGrath's "incarnational approach" to natural theology is that, in understanding the term "natural revelation" as compared to "special revelation" he puts too much weight on the words "natural" or "special" and not enough on the word "revelation." Special revelation is not the only outflow of the eternal "word of God". All revelation comes from the Word, including that through nature. This is more truly a "Trinitarian approach".

Michael Sudduth writes about the issue of whether "Trinitarian Descriptivism should be allowed to impact the task of defining what is "Natural Theology". The idea is that a revelation of the true God has not been obtained if the God revealed is not Trinitarian. Firstly this objection can be answered by reference to how the Scriptures self-evidently set themselves to be about *progressive revelation* of God across time, the revelation of the Trinity

being more visible in the New than in the Old Testament. Secondly, it is more important to understand that it was the Trinitarian God who was so revealing, than to demand that every revelation come with a developed concept of the Trinity included. Understanding the eternal Word of God to be behind the revelation through nature is more a Trinitarian thing to do than demanding that the incarnation is necessary and the Trinity more visible before and Natural Theology can be done.³⁴⁶

John Calvin's understanding of revelation fits in with there being room for Natural Revelation understood by all even if they have had no impact from any special revelation. He consistently then has the interpretation of John 1:3-4 that pictures the eternal Word always giving light. His exposition of John 1:3-4 shows this. He wrote in his *Commentaries*:

4. *In him was life.* So far, he has taught us that all things were created by the Word of God. He now likewise attributes to Him the preservation of what had been created; as if he were saying that in the creation of the world His power did not suddenly appear only to pass away, but that it is visible in the permanence of the stable and settled order of nature – just as Heb. 1.3 says that He upholds all things by the Word or command of His power. . . .for the simple meaning is that the Word of God was not only the fount of life to all creatures, so that those which had not yet existed began to be, but that his life-giving power makes them remain in their state. For did not His continued inspiration quicken the world, whatsoever flourishes would without doubt immediately decay or be reduced to nothing. In short, what Paul ascribes to God, that in Him we have our being and move and live (Acts 17.28), John declares to be accomplished by the blessing of the Word. It is God, therefore, who gives us life; but He does so by the Eternal Word.³⁴⁷

Following this thought through, one comes to see how right it is to posit that there is “natural revelation”. How could there not be when it has been created by the word who “enlightens every man coming into the world.” The *s.d.*, placed within the human makeup, is a part of natural revelation.

³⁴⁶ Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection* . . . , 197-202.

³⁴⁷ T.H.L. Parker, trans. *Calvin's Commentaries: The Gospel According to St John 1-10* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1961), 10-11.

Barth has other reasons for not accepting any natural revelation and at the centre of this is his picture of the infinite ontological otherness of God and the extreme application of the centrality of Christ in revelation. Plantinga's listing of his three supports is just on their rejection of the place of rational argument – this being seen as the nub of natural revelation:

In rejecting natural theology, therefore, these Reformed thinkers mean to say first of all that the propriety or rightness of belief in God no way depends on the success or availability of the sort of theistic arguments that form the natural theologian's stock in trade. I think this is their central claim here, and their central insight.³⁴⁸

Although Plantinga is able to summon Barth along with Calvin and Bavinck to give this support for belief in God as available without recourse to other propositional foundations (and hence belief in God being basic) there is glossed over here the difference between why Barth so does as compared to Calvin. Barth wrote:

The Holy One who encounters the man who is so very different from Himself, and who does so in that unapproachable majesty, and therefore effectively, but who demonstrates and reveals Himself as the Holy One who in the fact that He sanctifies the unholy by His action with and towards them.³⁴⁹

Barth's acute awareness of the infinite ontological distance of God from humanity pictures the only contact possible in the special revelatory moment of God revealing himself to us in Christ. Note in this quote that God is "unapproachable" but that He also "effectively" demonstrates and reveals Himself and that this is in "His action with and towards them." Barth does accept the understanding that belief in God is unsupported by reason and evidences, but rather only happens in the self revelation of the Word in encounter. Stanley Hauerwas, commentating on Barth's *Dogmatics in Outline*, first given by Barth in post war Germany in 1947, wrote:

In the midst of his lectures at Bonn, Barth was asked if he was aware that many of the people at the lectures were not Christians. With his usual good humor and the sheer joy he found in theology freely done, Barth responded, "It makes no difference to me." Theology becomes a burden only when we take our unbelief

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 72.

³⁴⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley, vol.4 (Edinburgh:T&T Clark, 1958), 500.

seriously. Only faith is to be taken seriously a faith, moreover, that recognizes that “we are not nearer to believing in God the Creator than we are to believing that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. It is not the case that the truth about God the Creator is directly accessible to us and that only the truth of the second article needs a revelation.”³⁵⁰

Notice the term “revelation” is being applied only to “special revelation” here.

So, although Barth does indeed support the notion of belief in God that is not needing evidences or reasonings, his basis of this is different to that of Calvin. The difference is subtle and has to do with definitions of “revelation” and “special revelation”. Barth construes that the only real revelation is that which explicitly in Jesus Christ, either the actual incarnation in history or the moments of existential encounter with the Word in a person’s life. This makes the revelatory nature of God speaking through nature apart from special revelation an idea that is outside the possibility of his categories. Calvin, on the other hand appears to teach that the revelation of the Word is active through nature prior to Scriptures and the Incarnation.

Plantinga also sees classical foundationalism as a central difficulty. Foundationalism has at its heart two basic theorems as follows but that *classical* foundationalism had an added third as follows:

- (1) that in every rational noetic structure there is a set of beliefs taken as basic – that is not accepted on the basis of other beliefs,
- (2) In a rational noetic structure nonbasic belief is proportional to support from the foundations,
and
- (3) In a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ There is a record of a 1946 delivery by Barth in the ruins of Bonn University of a concise summary of his Church Dogmatics at popular level and interpretive of immediate history just passed. It is: Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959). Stanley Hauerwas wrote about this event in “First Things, Karl Barth *Dogmatics in Outline* 1947, March 2000” at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2000/03/karl-barthdogmatics-in-outline> accessed 7:46 am 05/07/14.

³⁵¹ Ibid..

Plantinga's three key Reformed thinkers (Bavinck, Calvin and Barth) all agree to accept (1); not object to (2) and decidedly reject (3). They reject the strictness as to what sort of beliefs would be allowed into the basic set of beliefs in the noetic structure. Reformed thinkers were/are contrary to leaning on reasons and arguments based on natural revelation to build knowledge of God in such a way that implies belief in God would be inappropriate in the basic set.

They wished to protect the possibility of starting with God in our thinking and working out from there. In fact one does not have to accept the understanding that natural revelation leads to or stands on the non-appropriateness of belief in God being in the basic set. The immediacy of knowledge that comes by revelation is the important point. It does not really have to make any difference whether that revelation is general/natural or special. Natural revelation, equally with special revelation can be the means of beginning with God. Where the variation occurs among the Reformed thinkers about the legitimate place for natural revelation, has to do with the degree to which each sees human sin to have blacked out the efficacy of that natural revelation. Barth, with his commitment to the infinite ontological distance of God away from humanity has an extra reason to not want any point of contact or ontological overlap between humanity and God. Barth's concept of human fallenness has to do with this ontological position into which humanity has been created. He pictures the early chapters of Genesis as speaking of what creation has put us into rather than a tracing of historical events. We, according to him, were created fallen.

Other pressures contrary to an acceptance of the efficacy of natural revelation can come from the tightness of a system of theology. The progress of the tightening of the Reformed dogmatic up till the Canons of Dort illustrates this. The popularization of "the five points of Calvinism" carried by the acronym TULIP expresses the logical connections between the elements including ideas of predestination and the idea that Christ died only for the elect. These ideas when tightly put together do not allow for what is implied by "general

revelation” which is another name for natural revelation. Alvin Plantinga’s heritage within the Reformed Church is one such group so committed and he is remarkably open in comparison to some.

A constant expected characteristic of Reformed thinkers is the honour given to the precedent of Calvin, whom they all say they follow, but who it is who has brought to the surface the place of the *sensus divinitatis* as a natural means whereby all people have a testimony to God’s Person and his power and, because of which, the belief in God can be included in the basic set of beliefs in their noetic structure.

The Conclusion of *Reason and Belief in God*

Plantinga concludes his chapter *RBG* by summing up his answer to objections to belief in God being properly basic. He continues that this does not necessarily mean that items of belief are held fideistically unless they also have no other support at all from evidences, arguments or reasons. Plantinga does not outlaw all possibility of reasons and evidences being marshalled to support beliefs, but just that belief in God does not need that reliance when it is properly basic. In most cases of theistic beliefs there may also exist such evidences or arguments which were not the causes for why they were accepted as basic beliefs in the first place, but because of the existence of these concomitant arguments the beliefs are seen not to be being held fideistically.

The Reformed Epistemology outlined in *RBG* is well developed in the sense that Plantinga has answered to dismiss the objections brought against theism because of the strictures of Classical Foundationalism. The important focus was this latter’s proscribing of belief in God being a possible contender for inclusion in the set of properly basic beliefs.

Now it remained for Plantinga to give a rounded presentation of just how items are chosen for the basic set and how belief in God might be included within that set. He also

wanted to go beyond the basic theistic claim and onto the particulars of the Christian faith. This he has done in the trilogy of books talking about “Warrant” that came out during his time at Notre Dame and subsequent to *Reason and Belief in God*. The first two were published in 1993 and the final one in 2000. By their reception amongst Philosophers of Religion there arose considerable acceptance of the Reformed Epistemology ideas such that John G. Stackhouse Jr. wrote in 2001 that Plantinga’s epistemology so far “seems to have met all of its contemporary challenges.”³⁵²

Warrant: the Current Debate and Internalism / Externalism

In *Warrant: The Current Debate*, Plantinga summarizes the scholarship up till 1993, making obvious the diversity, lack of consensus and general insufficiency of explanation of the concepts of rationality and justification. He seeks to make visible how these theories variously refract their heritage coming from classical foundationalism. They have assumptions to do with “justification”. Plantinga investigates the full range of offered theories and says:

“The main story of twentieth-century epistemology is the story of three connected notions: justification, internalism, and deontology. I propose to begin my study of contemporary views of warrant by examining some *internalist* theories of warrant; . . .”³⁵³

He surveys the contributions of Roderick Chisholm, Laurence Bonjour, John Pollock, William Alston, Fred Dretske, and Alvin Goldman. He tackles the option of Coherentism which does not insist on certainty for properly basic beliefs so each one is individually capable of supporting inferences toward other items of knowledge. Rather there are a group of propositions showing mutual coherence to form the requisite basis. “Coherentism” as a theory stresses this interconnectedness of a group of beliefs as the only available source of warrant

³⁵² John G. Stackhouse Jr., “Mind over Skepticism,” *Christianity Today* 45, no. 8 (June 11, 2001): 74.

³⁵³ Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 5.

for them. He concludes that coherence on its own is not enough to establish warrant. It should not be taken as a sole source of warrant whereby beliefs could be recognized as knowledge.

He wrote:

Coherentism is therefore to be rejected: coherence is not the only source of warrant. But what are the other sources? According to modern classical foundationalism (an extraordinarily influential picture dominating Western epistemological thought for nearly three centuries), they are *reason* and *experience* - but then both reason and experience are narrowly construed. On this view a proposition is properly basic if and only if it is either self-evident or else appropriately about one's own immediate experience . . . Any other propositions that are acceptable for you must be ones that are appropriately supported by propositions of these kinds.³⁵⁴

This is not to say that Plantinga does not see a place for utilizing the coherence of a set of beliefs, but coherentism for him is when there is supposed no basic beliefs at all but the only foundation is such a set of coherent beliefs. Many a policeman has concluded the suspect is lying and thereby deserving more intensive investigation when the statements the suspect makes are not totally consistent with each other. The credibility of the person to be believed on other statements is thereby impugned.

By the final chapters of the book Plantinga writes that he has found fault with all the “internalist” options and then moves to show the usefulness taking an “externalist” approach. But along the way he has to bring out with clarity exactly what the internalist/externalist divide is all about. He says:

The basic internalist idea, of course, is that what determines whether a belief is warranted for a person are factors or states in some sense internal to that person. . . Warrant and the properties that confer it are internal in that they are states or conditions of which the cognisor is or can be *aware*; they are states of which he has or can easily have knowledge; they are states or properties to which he has cognitive or epistemic access.³⁵⁵

Plantinga's description of the typical internalist is one whose understanding is that “warrant”, to use Evans' words “must be a quality that I can discern that I possess by

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 84.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 5

reflecting on my own mental states, those states said to be ‘internal to my consciousness.’”³⁵⁶

In contrast, Plantinga says:

The externalist, . . . holds that warrant need not depend upon factors relevantly internal to the cognizer; warrant depends or supervenes upon properties to some of which the cognizer may have no special access, or even no epistemic access at all. . . . On externalist views, warrant making properties are such properties (of a belief) as *being produced by a reliable belief-producing mechanism*, or *standing in a causal chain appropriately involving the subject of belief*, or *standing in probabilistic relation R to certain other relevant propositions*; and none of these properties is one to which we have the relevant kind of special access.³⁵⁷

Evans says it more precisely:

The externalist typically holds that what makes a true belief knowledge is that it is produced by a reliable process, one that normally produces true beliefs (as in reliabilism), or that it is based on an objectively good truth-conducive ground (William Alston’s view), or (as in Plantinga’s own view) be the result of “cognitive faculties functioning properly in a congenial epistemic environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at the production of true belief.”³⁵⁸

Plantinga then asks the question as to why epistemologists should have been so caught up with internalism and then he explains that it is the concept of justification coming out of the Enlightenment that entails internalism, because the active ingredient of “justification” is that it is a deontological term. The idea is of you being internally conscious that you have done your duty and so be “justified”. That is, being rational has to do with believing what you ought to believe or doing with respect to your beliefs that which is your duty.

Warrant and the Justification of Two Blondes

The need is to explain the way justification came out of the Enlightenment as a deontological term. Justification in Western usage is a word with a lot of background and weight from Christian thinking. The theological idea of justification is being made acceptable

³⁵⁶ Evans, “Externalist Epistemology . . .” 10.

³⁵⁷ *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 6.

³⁵⁸ Evans, “Externalist Epistemology” quoting Plantinga in *Warranted Christian Belief*, 498.

to God, or to be declared righteous in a court of law, or to be shown to have done one's duty and this lies heavily behind the history of the meaning of the word. In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament the word *Tsadaq*³⁵⁹ has the meaning "to justify" and from a variety of dictionaries the semantic range is: "to have a just cause, to be in the right, or to be vindicated as correct or as having done one's duty." In the Greek New Testament, the word is *dikaioo* and means "to render righteous" or "to be declared righteous". In both Testaments of the Bible the overall concept of justification is never far from an issue of relationship³⁶⁰ – to do what is right within a relationship or to be made to be in a right relationship or to be shown to have right behaviour and attitude with respect to a relationship.

Some teach the word/concept has particular application to the relationship of a covenant.³⁶¹ That is, to be righteous is to have done all that the covenant would require of you. This strongly brings in the idea of obligation or duty. The keeping of the law by the Jew, for example, was an obligation that the Sinai Covenant put upon him and was at the centre of his or her Jewishness. This "deontological" aspect of justification is what Plantinga believes is the way the Enlightenment thinkers were using the word "justify" with respect to whether a belief was justifiably being held by a person. Plantinga traces Descartes drawing from Augustine (*De Libero Arbitrio*) to give a classical account of "error" being due to a person *not doing their duty* in deploying the available knowledge before proceeding with an action. In the case of belief and knowledge, the right duty is to be careful not to make a supposition of the mind to be taken as a fact without there being sufficient evidence. The penalty for having

³⁵⁹ Strong's list no. 6662 צַדִּיק (tsaddiq) 'righteous'; Strong's 6663 צַדַּק (tsadaq) 'justify'; Strong's 6666 צֶדֶק (tsedeq) 'righteousness' www.logosapostolic.org. (accessed March 12, 2014).

³⁶⁰ In the O.T. there is a telling story of Judah and his daughter in law Tamar. Judah is not careful to see that the childless Tamar receives the benefit of the family obligation to help on the death of her husband :\that from the other men of the family one should take her as an extra wife and the child then born would inherit and carry on the name of the dead family member. When this is not achieved and Judah is uncaring, Tamar schemes to pretend to be a harlot who entraps Judah to unwittingly impregnate her. When her status with child becomes obvious she reveals who the father is and he, Judah declares that she Tamar "had been more righteous than he". That is, she and not he had fulfilled her obligations within the family covenant. This is illustrative of being justified by doing what was right within the relationship or covenant.

³⁶¹ Norman H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1983).

such beliefs for which you did not have sufficient evidence was to then be considered (or to have to know yourself to be) “irrational”. The duty of a rational person is never to allow beliefs stronger than their support “justifies”. The Rationalism as a philosophy or the rationalism as an ideal of respectable thought processes coming out of the Enlightenment did not retain the reliance on the Bible or the Church for the derivation of its “oughts” but had transferred them to this rationality.

The question of whether internalism or externalism is best followed in the establishment of when a true belief is also knowledge³⁶² can be illustrated by the contrast of characters in *The Vicar of Dibley*. One could imagine an episode in which the Vicar (Dawn French) has an opinion on how she is going to be the successful applicant for an advertised new appointment that is soon to be announced and discovers that her ditsy, blonde friend in the church (Alice Tinker acted by Emma Chambers) has the same belief and expectation that her Vicar will indeed be the chosen one. Then the plot unravels to show that they were both correct, but that the friend was not really *justified* in so believing but just had a wish and a guess, whereas the Vicar held the belief because she had received an important and trustworthy phone call concerning it from the hierarchy. We can compare the sense of justification of the belief of the girl with that possessed by the Vicar, although they both held what turned out to be a true belief. That is to say that the Vicar had knowledge and Alice just happened upon a true belief without any genuine justifying basis and therefore could be said to have not really *known* the information. This illustrates the need to be justified in your belief to render it as knowledge. Now in the illustration at hand, the ditsy, blonde friend, Alice, had the same true belief as the Vicar but without the television audience considering she had good evidence for it. That is, she had no justification for it by way of evidence or good reasons.

However, what if this were taken as an example of an internalist understanding of justification and it would nicely show how this can be a mistaken assurance. The Vicar knew

³⁶² This is my imaginary scenario from *The Vicar of Dibley* trying to understand Plantinga’s ideas.

she was right to consider she would get the appointment advertised, because she had received a phone call from the official denominational person. She had her reasons to be smugly sure. So the illustration is a comparison of a well-inferred belief which is knowledge with one that presents itself as basic but in a mistaken way.

Now someone learning about epistemology and foundationalism might be tempted to say: well the Vicar knew the fact by means of support and reasons (telephone call from the trusted source within the Anglican denomination), whereas the blonde had no such reason or evidence. Someone else watching the show might say: “Perhaps she knew it as a basic belief because she was truly intuitively gifted. Perhaps she had some immediate knowledge which required no reasons or evidence?” Alice might add reply to her doubters to speak about some internal ability that blondes have. She would be proposing that her belief was not based on reasons but a “blonde instinct”! The blonde might so believe of herself with full confidence. So internally she is in receipt of the insight that makes her see the belief as knowledge. But the way the television series is set up, the continuing audience realizes she only supposed the appointment was the vicar’s by whimsical love, intuition and hope. While she is congratulating herself on her “blonde insight”, in truth she believes her own stupidity about her intuitive powers. Too many previous episodes where she misunderstood scenarios have shown this to the television audience. In the end, in this episode she will be judged by that audience to be correct only by sheer good luck. Here the internalist explanation of how a belief might be knowledge when applied to something supposedly being basic is letting her down. Here of course is where the extra word “proper” is required. We need to discover which are the “properly basic beliefs” to be in the set of axioms or foundations.

Now the whole television series, the Vicar of Dibley, has ongoing humour around that fact that Alice, the blonde, believes many stupid things and often misunderstands because of the malfunction of her blonde mind! An objective analysis of T.V. also includes how well-chosen are some of the characters, so this is all a part of the charm of the series. Alice is the

last person to be spoken of as having a reliable practice of intuitively knowing varied matters. Her supposing herself to have knowledge is in fact being self-deceived or just stupid. (Emma Chambers must be a very skilful actress to pull this off so convincingly!) But this points us to the fact that we from an external viewpoint are in a better position to decide whether her intuitions could count for “proper basicity”. Saying that more carefully, the illustration shows that the process whereby there is warrant is not something necessarily visible to the person concerned. It may in fact be internal to their person, but not necessarily open to their subjectivity.

There is another TV series with a blonde who does week by week get it right! It is called *Medium*. The actress Patricia Arquette stars as housewife Allison Dubois who is portrayed as genuinely in possession of mediumistic knowledge. The show was produced from 2005 to 2011. If one watches that programme regularly, one notices that her premonitions are never wrong (in the story line). So when she has the mediumistic experience her premonition can be taken by us to be knowledge because we can externally see the process that reliably³⁶³ arrives at the truth. We are well placed to see from an external perspective that the processes that lead to her belief are reliable. So from an externalist theoretical point of view her intuitions could be taken seriously as basic beliefs. Given that we are following the story line as if true, are her beliefs then knowledge for us who are watching? Well they might be, but these are not basic for us. For us her beliefs so brought would be knowledge based on reasons and evidence – namely that she always gets it right which leads us inductively to believe she will get the next one right. For the medium Allison Dubois, however, they would be items of knowledge known basically due to the reliable process that is thrusting up the knowledge, but for us they are knowledge because of the evidence we have to support the statement of the medium. To differing degrees the police chief, the detective

³⁶³ “Reliabilism” is one word epistemologists have given to such an *externalist* theory of justification. Evans concludes Plantinga’s theories are an example of “Reliabilism” and when talking about the failure of Classical Foundationalism to be able to establish very many items of knowledge as certain, explains: “Plantinga therefore adopts a fallibilist version of foundationalism.” Evans, “Externalist Epistemology,” 14.

and the husband find themselves in our position. The plot makes much capital out of exactly what an epistemologically-trained person could spot as the difference between someone who knows something basically and others who are relying on the proposed truth being based on lines of evidence which rest on other beliefs.

Evans describes externalism well with the words:

The externalist typically holds that what makes a true belief knowledge is that it is produced by a reliable process, one that normally produces true beliefs (as in reliabilism), or that it is based on an objectively good truth-conducive ground (William Alston's view), or (as in Plantinga's own view) be the result of "cognitive faculties functioning properly in a congenial epistemic environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at the production of true belief."³⁶⁴

There is a reliable process occurring so that we, the television watchers, can believe (in the imaginary world of the plot) that the items of belief for Allison Dubois the medium have a respectable (to someone who believes in mediums) process, the operation of which can be understood from the external perspective to give the warrant that she has genuine knowledge. For us watching the show we can identify this external process for her that guarantees her belief to have been knowledge. In fact the very idea of mediumistic knowledge is a good example of knowledge coming by a justified basic belief that the medium supposedly has. Plantinga uses rather the word *warrant*. We are actually being *externalists* while so watching (in a believing way) because that which is giving the beliefs *warrant* is the fact of the due process that is appropriately working in its right way to lead to truth. Every week watching the programme you have that good process illustrated. In fact once she has her dream or vision, no matter how else the plot may make an appearance of explanation, we cannot be convinced about any other version of events aside from that which is Allison's interpretation of the vision or dream. Of course this illustration concerns something supernatural rather than Plantinga's suggestion of a natural phenomenon in the *s.d.* The illustration is most apt in picturing Plantinga's second step of his extended model where the

³⁶⁴Ibid., 10. Quoting from Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 498, where Plantinga is summarizing what he had achieved in *RBG*.

supernaturalism that is impinging on our otherwise natural world is not via a medium but by the “instigation of the Holy Spirit”.

Warrant and Proper Function

Because of the emphasis on the guarantee being found in the identification of proper process, Plantinga’s theories of epistemic warrant have been dubbed in the broader literature as “proper functionalism”³⁶⁵ which nomenclature Plantinga accepts and uses in the title of the second of his trilogy of books *Warrant and Proper Function*. In this thesis’s own illustration just above concerning the two blondes, one possible response (concerning the second T.V. series about a medium) might be influenced greatly by whether one has met with a genuine case of such a person. Of course, on the TV it was only an illustration requiring one to enter an imaginary story line. There is nonetheless a legitimate issue concerning supernaturalism when asking exactly what is a normal functioning of the human *mind* and how are “paranormal instances” to be understood? This illustration involving something paranormal or supernatural does not really suit Plantinga’s first step of his two step model as the first step is about a normal, or natural, human capacity to form beliefs. But again it needs be mentioned that neither Aquinas, Calvin nor Plantinga define exactly in what this “natural” capacity exists. By “natural”, earlier in this chapter, the herein suggested definition had to do with that which all humanity, *as created*, shared. That leaves the brain/mind issue open. In Plantinga’s second step about warranted Christian belief he is talking about humanity under the influence of the Holy Spirit and this would be to talk about humanity taken beyond what it ever could naturally be (under the same definition).

In *Warrant and Proper Function* Plantinga argues that it is important to discover what is the proper functioning of the natural, human, cognitive faculties and what is their right kind

³⁶⁵ Richard Feldman, “Proper Functionalism,” *Nous* 27 (1993): 51-65 and Ernest Sosa, “Proper Functionalism and Virtue Epistemology,” *Nous* 27 (1993):51-65 quoted by Richard Wingard, “Plantinga’s Proper Functionalism, Knowledge, and Rationality” (PhD. Diss., The University of Miami, 1997), 4.

of environment. It is not assumed necessarily that he is talking about a purely physical entity. There is no commitment to speak from a physicalist's or naturalist's perspective that the natural world is the only one in existence.

In his 1996 book *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith* Evans had distinguished two kinds of epistemology – the ambitious and the modest.³⁶⁶ Classical foundationalism would suit the ambitious, and Plantinga's theories the modest. But Evans also refers later in 2003, in "Externalist Epistemology . . ." to a third category which would be represented by Quine and called, in Evans' words: " 'epistemology naturalized,' in which the question of what knowledge is and how it is obtained is viewed purely as an empirical question, to be answered by psychologists and sociologists."³⁶⁷ This is really to take the question of knowledge totally reductionistically onto the physicalist's/naturalist's plane.

Plantinga has moved away from classical foundationalism, but has a solid metaphysical component of his beliefs without that meaning he is bringing to bear an occult/hyper charismatic understanding that aborts rigorous natural understandings by a too quick resort to supernatural explanations. He also still retains an overall foundationalism platform that concentrates on the human/natural world that also is compatible with a belief in God and the metaphysical world. Plantinga, true to the Reformed theological ethos which is usually not blatantly charismatic, presents a picture of a naturalness in epistemology, if not strictly "naturalism" that is embedded in an overall acceptance of the supernaturalism inherent in belief in God and the metaphysical world.

His book, *Warrant and Proper Function*, reviews a number of forms of knowledge such as the "knowledge of self, knowledge by way of memory, knowledge of other persons, knowledge by way of testimony, perception, *a priori* knowledge and belief, induction, and

³⁶⁶ C. Stephen Evans, *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith* (Oxford: University Press, 1996), 204-207. Evans refers to this as his own unpublished article "Externalist Epistemology . . ." 4.

³⁶⁷ Evans footnotes to W.V.O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalised," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69-90 and ed. Hilary Kornblith, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985).

probability.”³⁶⁸ These are all topics that do not necessarily plunge one into the metaphysical world, but nonetheless Plantinga has left that doorway open. In a very telling footnote comment (in a section about Reidian Foundationalism) Plantinga says:

Here we see an intimate connection between epistemology and metaphysics. The nose of the ontological camel pokes into the epistemological tent; for what you take to be properly basic will depend, in part, upon what sort of creatures you think human beings are.³⁶⁹

Warranted Christian Belief

The third book of the Trilogy is by far the most comprehensive. There is much recapitulation from the other two volumes, such as establishing how basic beliefs can be rational, reasonable, justifiable and ultimately warranted to be accepted - to the extent that they are formed by properly functioning cognitive faculties, operating in an appropriate environment for them, fulfilling a design plan that successfully can arrive at the truth. The apparent cluttering of such multiple qualifications comes about by Plantinga ruling out failures that offered counterexamples had illustrated.³⁷⁰

The chief agenda, however, is to apply all of this to the particular case of Christian beliefs. This is about the extension to the Aquinas/Calvin model now being applied to particular Christian beliefs being received because of the “instigation of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷¹ To achieve this, Plantinga needs to move forward into the second step of his epistemological ideas called “The Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model.” Therein, Plantinga follows Calvin and

³⁶⁸ See the blurb on the back cover of the Oxford University Press, 1993 paperback edition.

³⁶⁹ Plantinga, *WPF*, 183, n.9.

³⁷⁰ Plantinga, *WCB*, 153-161.

³⁷¹ This is not to say that any given belief must only and always be either foundational or not. The fact is that some beliefs can be believed foundationally and also be capable of receiving added support through reasons and arguments. The resurrection of Christ is an enormous example, about which one might agree with Hume and Plantinga that there is not sufficient evidence to establish it as fact given its high improbability. But after having been believed basically through another source, it may then be shown to be a rational belief that has reasons and evidences that support it.

Reformed thinking even further than occasioned by the first step. Here in the second step of his model the Calvinism lines are more easily spotted. The model well and truly lives up to being a part of “Reformed Epistemology”.

Where epistemology and Christian theology intersect is now not just in the theistic claim but also in “the great things of the gospel.” Belief in God, per se, now becomes not the heart of the issue but the prerequisite of the Christian gospel. Plantinga refers to Hebrews 11:6 which says:

If any man would come to God, he must first believe that He exists and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.

Plantinga takes belief in God as an imperative first part of Christian faith, but not the finality or even the major part of it. Even though it is an enormous and important part, Christian faith goes past the theistic claim to the doctrines surrounding the incarnation and the atonement and then the call to trust in the promises of God for one’s own person that are based on what was achieved by God’s acts in the incarnation and atonement. This trust is in response to the prior action of God in history in the events that are at the centre of the Christian gospel. So then faith and its outworking in the affections³⁷² is what is experienced when one fulfils the second part of the Hebrews verse and decides to “come to God”. God himself becomes for them the reward and the “rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.”

Where the connection to or similarity with Calvinism is seen is in the fact that this second step is never put forward by Plantinga as that which humanity *unaided* can achieve. The faith or its consequence in salvation³⁷³ comes as a gift from God. It is the working or the “instigation of the Holy Spirit”. Plantinga at this point agrees with the pessimism of Hume about believing the items of the Christian gospel. Hume had said:

³⁷² Similar to Jonathan Edwards “new sense”.

³⁷³ Internecine debates within Calvinism might exegete the famous scripture about faith in Ephesians 2:8-10 in opposite ways. Therein is described the “gift of God” as either the faith itself that brings one into it or the overall salvation into which one is brought. Plantinga is assuming the former of the two choices, which is very frequently taken by the Reformed tradition.

Upon the whole, we may conclude that the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one . . . Whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.³⁷⁴

Plantinga does not misunderstand Hume's scepticism, but agrees with his assessment about the difficulty of believing the items of the Christian gospel. Here the difficulty to have belief is not because of the poverty of any positive apologetics or because of the lack of evidence for these central tenets, such as the Resurrection of Christ, but that such an event is so enormously improbable that it seems unlikely that sufficient historical testimonies and proofs could be amassed to overcome the improbability. Plantinga says:

. . . Hume (sarcasm aside) is partly right: belief in the main lines of the gospel is produced in Christians by a special work of the Holy Spirit, not by the belief-producing faculties and processes with which we were originally created. Further, some of what Christians believe (e.g., that a human being was dead and then rose from the dead) *is* as Hume says, contrary to custom and experience: it seldom happens. Of course it doesn't follow, contrary to Hume's implicit suggestion, that there is anything irrational or contrary to reason in believing it, given the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit.³⁷⁵

Here Plantinga only says Hume is *partially* correct because in Plantinga's sight there is a greater body of evidence available for the Christian in the "instigation of the Holy Spirit". The work of the Spirit enables faith sufficient to believe "the great things of the gospel".³⁷⁶ The need for that help of the Spirit is not only because of the issue raised by Hume, but because humanity has shown its disinclination to accept the message of the gospel. One chief Calvinistic tenet is about the sinfulness of humanity affecting all areas of our humanity such that we are unwilling as well as unable to come to God on our own. The unwillingness and inability of the human heart necessitates divine help if ever we are to find God again.

³⁷⁴David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1956), 145. Quoted in Plantinga, *WCB*, 284.

³⁷⁵Ibid.

³⁷⁶This is a term that comes from Jonathan Edwards. See the earlier Chapter 4.

At this juncture our thesis aim and strictures of length need us to leave Plantinga, although his writing has continued past the completion of the trilogy of books on Warrant. However his theories in the second step of his fully developed epistemological position using “The Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model” do make a lot of sense in explaining not only about how people are predisposed to accept the Christian gospel because of the operation of the *s.d.*, but are then impressed so to do by the work of the Spirit of God as they receive the Word. The second step gives good reason why many go on believing through great difficulties generated by their individual circumstances or their awareness of the suffering in the world. For this thesis’s purpose the first step of his model is a beautiful application of the once again surfacing concept of the “divine sense” in general humanity. It explains how people all around the world have been predisposed to accept the Christian gospel. The second step is the other half of that application to the propagation of the Christian gospel. The acceptance of it is because of this “instigation of the Holy Spirit”. This may occur at a moment of a person reading quietly a Gideon’s Bible left in the motel drawer. A person had walked into the room with a mountain of questions but walked out of it the next morning with the beginning of a new relationship with God. It may happen while listening to a public proclamation of the gospel message or talking quietly with a Christian friend but the dynamic that is working is the Christian gospel when applied by the Person of the Holy Spirit.

The themes that Plantinga followed in the development of his model’s first step, namely in answering the problem of evil and the evidentialist challenge about insufficient evidence for theistic belief, has in the extended version of Plantinga’s model, an interesting addition. It is in the way the Holy Spirit actively promotes the gospel claims that include the love of God. That is, the *s.d.* predisposes the people to the existence of God and the “instigation of the Holy Spirit” actively promotes the reality of the gospel teaching. This promotion can be both before their conversion and an ongoing happening after it. There is “Christian assurance” for the believer. It is not merely in the assembling of good teaching for

the mind but it is also the inner work of the Spirit producing a strong conviction that these teachings are true. The Christian settles in the assurance of the truth. Plantinga is following Calvin closely to have this extended part of his model. It is perhaps one of the most important elements in Calvinism that the way to know the truth is in the work of the Holy Spirit bringing the truth of the Scriptures to bear.

This is particularly important in the context of persecution or suffering. When confronted with the closeness of evil, even worse than the philosophical idea of it, the second tier of the “The Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model” offers the distraught Christian an assurance that her or his God is a good God, despite all the opposite psychological pressures and rational arguments from an unbelieving world or within the mind of a hurt and distressed person. The test from such pressure is to lose belief, but if a person is in receipt of the work of the Spirit who adds conviction to the promises of the gospel then the outcome is the reverse. Instead of loss of faith, there is that spectacle of faith in the face of severe persecution that has been the hall mark of both the Apostolic witness in the first place and also the continuing history of the persecuted church down through the ages.³⁷⁷

An example is from the history of Western civilization going through the trauma of the twentieth century wars. The operation of the *s.d.* may have been sufficient for many in Europe who participated in Christian civilization prior to the great wars, but the suffering they knew led to loss of faith. But as well as the huge loss of faith there are significant examples of Christians who had once been so unable to continue belief or continue Christian behaviour.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ See for an example from our generation: Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001), *Tortured for Christ*. Living Sacrifice book Company. 1967.

³⁷⁸ Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983) an escapee from the Nazi Holocaust found forgiveness for the Germans through the help of the Spirit. She wrote: “Even as the angry vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him....Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness....And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives along with the command, the love itself.” *The Hiding Place* by Workman Publishing Paperback, 1974.

Then their experience of the work of the Holy Spirit gave an ability to forgive and to love, when they had only received hate; or to believe against all other pressures to be cynical. These often involve what is called “the comfort of the Scriptures” or the “comfort of the Holy Spirit.” This is all due to the reality of the ministry of the Spirit of which Plantinga’s second step in his model is a part.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has progressed across case studies looking for the “divine sense” in western Christian history. This could be seen in five of the six with Newman’s *Illative Sense* being more about a *human* sense than a divine sense. The project had been conceived to see from where Calvin’s idea of a “sensus divinitatis” had developed. That research aim was refocused to look at the varying instances of the more general idea of a “divine sense”.

Plato and the Church Fathers

A survey of pre-Christian philosophies reveals a strong interest and belief in the divine world and the existence of gods or a God. Platonism was the most successful of these philosophies at propagating its ideas in the centuries that followed. This was partly because it teamed well with Christianity. Platonism and Neo-Platonism taught that the soul had a “divine sense” due to its pre-existence in the divine realm. The idea of a “divine sense” was that there was something divine within the human makeup. The soul was more divine than the body and it had its abilities and memories of the divine world because of having come from there. So the “divine sense” in the first case study is not so much a human capacity to sense the divine, but divine qualities of the soul and divine inclinations and knowledge because of from where it had come.

The human longing for transcendence that people experience was interpretable by these descriptions of the soul and its longings to return to the divine realm. Platonic teaching saw the soul as not so much learning wisdom about absolute or perfect things but as remembering it from its previous experience in the realm of the Forms. Such wisdom was a

“divine sense”. Teaming with Christianity was possible in that Christians in a parallel way could explain their longings for heaven and eternity by understanding that they had a divine sense due to a little bit of God being in their soul. Christians did have the doctrine of creation, held first by the Jews and explicated from the Genesis account to understand that God had breathed into humanity of his spirit and this was how they had within them a touch of Heaven and its sympathies. Eventually across the next centuries this was to lead to a reinterpretation of Christian salvation and life in terms of ascent toward God and the “contemplation of God”. This expression was the fruit of this divine sense. It may not have immediately been seen in Christianity, but grew across the first five centuries.

The first “Apostolic” Fathers of the church were by definition closely connected to the life and manner of the original Apostles and were taken up with the evangelical nature of that first church. They did not display this Platonic “divine sense”, which is more evident in those who followed later. They, the Apostolic Fathers, were adamant on the *kerygma* they heard preached by the first ambassadors from whom they had learned directly. Their message was one concerning Christian salvation in horizontal historical categories. Christ was expected to return soon. Later generations of Christians would emphasize more the vertical categories of life below and life above. The first Apostolic Fathers, however, lived in a time when the Christian theology was not formulated at depth. Their raw beliefs were held in a shallow manner - not very well applied to the deeper levels of philosophies of their times. This was circumstantial to how they lived in perilous times and they were very aware of the possibility of death in the arenas. Some of their leaders were keen to follow the Apostles into martyrdom in order to gain “a better resurrection.” This they saw as the ultimate discipleship. But as the threat of persecution lessened and a more contemplative lifestyle allowed a more deeply considered faith, Christianity engaged with philosophy and so the later leaders, becoming better versed in current philosophic opinion, addressed this interface and increasingly were swayed by elements of Platonism and then Neo-Platonism.

Platonism/Neo-Platonism stimulated the religion of the first five centuries of Christianity to incorporate a mystical approach to knowing God. Neo-Platonism in particular was about movement to be incorporated into the One. The early mysticism had not at first been an anti intellectual mysticism. It encouraged philosophic contemplation as a means by which the soul could “ascend to God.” By the time of Augustine the church had mostly replaced the materialistic hope to do with a millennium on earth with a spiritual hope of life in Heaven.

The “divine sense” as it was understood in those early centuries was akin to how they also understood the concept of the image of God. This was on account of how their understanding of the divine sense coupled with the belief that God’s chief attribute was his intellect and that we were made in the image of God. Careful biblical exegesis shows the prevalent early opinion about the image of God was mistaken when specifying just one area of humanity or one distinct God-given role as being wherein it lay. Many attempts across church history to isolate a predominant area of humanity in which the image was caught conceptually missed this mark.

Also the cost for Christianity of teaming with Platonic theory was a lessening of the application of the doctrine of creation to the overall system. The starting point of development of this “divine sense” being that the soul is of itself spiritual as compared to the body. Early philosophical Christianity did not fully apply the biblical doctrine of the creation. The gradual assimilation of the full doctrine of creation, which really required that all of humanity be equally of creaturely status, explained the development and change of the concept of the “divine sense” in the human to in time be more about a human “sense of the divine”. Misunderstanding the *imago dei* as being about souls being a more divine component in humanity needed to be corrected.

The doctrine of creation was always represented in Christian teaching, but accommodated to the philosophies that taught that the soul was so much more important than

the body; that the image of God was mainly in the soul and that the human intellectual capacity was at the heart of it. The intellectual/spiritual contemplation of God was the method promoted to “ascend” toward the divine world. The upward journey of the soul and the contemplative life was co-joined in a mystical approach to Christianity. The bodily life was depreciated as the object of God’s salvation and the place of study of nature not given its appropriate nurture.

Yet for all of the breadth of how the “divine sense” was understood, nonetheless the “divine sense” continued to be illustrated in human history. The interpretation might have varied widely, but the phenomenon was there. Particularly relevant is the fact that the phenomenon started prior to the entrance of Christian teaching, so one cannot say that it was produced by the Christian ideas. The history of these early ideas is evidence from the beginning of Western intellectual history for the existence of some sort of “divine sense.” Because it was seen so clearly in Plato, it cannot be put down as caused by the Christian teaching, but comes from something in humanity that is there whether the Christian teaching moulds it or not.

Aristotle and Aquinas

Aristotle had been a student of Plato but did not continue to follow the postulation of the realm of the Forms. Instead he believed in starting his thinking from the physical order and working up by philosophical understanding to gain a “divine eye of the soul”. He believed he could understand the metaphysical world sufficiently to teach others. The particulars of his philosophical science were not so much the important focus for this thesis. The important point is that he applied them while holding a strong assumption of the metaphysical realities. This assumption was his version of a divine sense. It was not as obvious and explicit a “divine sense” as was Plato’s realm of the Forms, but equally indicates some very deep awareness of the reality of the metaphysical realm. So Aristotle’s philosophy

was not to dismiss the divine sense but *to accept the existence of that which it sensed without question*. Aristotle did not need the realm of the Forms, but rested in the sufficiency of the opportunity to philosophise from the natural world. By so doing he sowed seeds that eventually would answer some unfortunate consequences brought by Platonism. This was the decrying of the importance of the natural world and bodily life.

Aquinas majorly adopted elements of Aristotelianism and sought to develop a synthesis of it with that which he called “Sacred Science” or “theology”. The latter was knowledge that came from revelation, largely understood as the Scriptures. The two inputs were worked together by the use of the philosophical science and its methods of deductive logic. This reliance on the philosophical method brought a unity to his work. It was a synthesis of the philosophical science and the sacred science, but worked together by the method of the philosophical science. Some of the content was spoken to by both tiers. The “divine eye of the soul” came from the philosophical science and included a perception and perspective about the very nature of “being” or substance that God himself shared with every other substance.

Aquinas, following Aristotle, taught that the connection between God and man was best understood by analogy rather than equivocally or univocally. This alone catered for how different God was. This led to an emphasis on knowledge of God being available by steps of analogy from everyday objects and events of nature. Those parts of the Christian Church that have more followed Aquinas have developed a dual approach to ministry. It is either from the sacred science and so would be based on Scriptures or it is from the philosophical science. This latter could be, for example, a talk founded on this “analogy of being.” So a Catholic Priest might give a Sunday talk from the Scriptures or he might give a talk concerning a farm yard event. This latter would seem trivial or without authority to some who do not have that background understanding of the analogy of being, but when this prior understanding is present in mind, there is an understanding for its authority. Those necessary assumptions that

underpin the analogy of being are a part of what herein is being called an outcome of the “divine sense” in Aquinas. If human nature really does have an *s.d.* working then it would explain this mysterious ability to believe in God and the divine world when the information to go on is the sum total of the natural world. This is the divine sense in Aquinas rather than the incidental acknowledgement in passing of the implanted knowledge of God. The method of knowing about God thereby included what has developed in Christianity as “the analogy of being”.

In the case of Aquinas, this thesis concluded that the snippets about a natural implanted knowledge of God, as later quoted by Plantinga, were still credible as they were “testimony from a hostile witness.” Aquinas was actually trying to present the knowledge of God from the platform of philosophical science and the mention of the implanted knowledge of God was a passing admission. His five philosophical proofs of God’s existence are evidence as to where his overall balance of weight lay. He reluctantly admitted that there was also this implanted knowledge of God that produced a sort of confused picture of God’s existence. Rather it was an admission along the way that then could be taken to be strong evidence from a stream of thinking going in another direction.

What the thesis is suggesting is the possibility that the *s.d.* lay behind how Aquinas was assured of his reasoning based on the study of nature. This would support rather than obviate the place for apologetics and reasons in establishing the fact of God. There are many people who have been helped to a belief in God by those little talks about nature using the analogy of being.

John Calvin

Though John Calvin was one of the early Reformers of Christianity and inaugurators of the Reformed faith, his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were not just fiery, challenging theses that shook the world. Rather they were written across a quarter of a century most of

which came after he had set up his church model in Geneva. The purpose of the *Institutes* was to give a solid teaching foundation for the Reformed faith. A major element of this need was to provide an intellectual or doctrinal “knowledge of God.”

The structure of the *Institutes* includes the *s.d.* in a role of giving a witness to God without it being the means of coming to know Him in the deepest manner. This is to say that for Calvin, knowing God as Creator is always less than, but preparatory for knowing God as Redeemer. So in Calvin the fruit of the *s.d.* is a part of this preparatory operation and not the conduit of God’s redemption in its fullness. Although Calvin was not always complimentary of Aristotle’s ideas, he was indebted to him for the general swing away from Plato’s dualism, and in giving higher regard to the value of the created order. The humanist movement that was a part of Calvin’s background was partially due to the influence of Aristotle on the Scholastics.

An important observation about the *Institutes* is that the section mentioning the *s.d.* is part of Book I which is about “knowing God as Creator” which is not a large section of the overall work. Then on top of this, the major part of this first of four books is given over to how it is necessary to have the Scriptures to lead us to this knowledge. So Calvin’s theme is not knowing God through creation, but mostly knowing the God of Creation through the Scriptures! There is a parallel comment due here to that said about Aquinas. The Aquinas chapter of this thesis described his best version of a “divine sense”. It was something other than the natural knowledge of God. Aquinas’ reference to a natural knowledge of God was an admission while he was establishing another point. Similarly Calvin has told his readers about the *s.d.* and about the knowledge of God conspicuous in the creature’s natural experience. His headings tell the movement of his ideas: “The Knowledge of God Conspicuous in the Creation and Continual Government of the World”; and then “Scripture is Needed as Guide and Teacher for Anyone Who Would Come to God as Creator.”³⁷⁹

³⁷⁹ Chapter 6 of Book 1 of the *Institutes*.

This does not take away from the direct testimony he gives to the existence of the *s.d.*, but does help to keep his mention of it in proportion when understanding Calvin's overall teaching. He sees the ubiquitous operation of the *s.d.* and the *s.r.* to do with explaining how God has not left himself without a witness. And this witness of the *s.d.* is only a part of the overall "knowledge of God conspicuous in the Creation and Continual Government of the World".

Jonathan Edwards

Edwards' *new sense* appears dissimilar to Calvin's *s. d.* because Edwards' ideas are about something neither natural nor universal. Rather, quite to the contrary, the *new sense* is supernatural and spiritual and only known by a small subset of people who have experienced special effects from the Holy Spirit. "Christian conversion or regeneration" was a major topic for Edwards and he was involved in some of the most powerful movements of the revival of religion in the history of the Christian church.

Edwards' ideas can be easily misread but the thesis chapter on Edwards disclosed that the *new sense* was *not* about some sort of *extra* "spiritual sixth sense". Edwards was, in fact, committed to reading humanity as utilizing the given natural senses and employing the rationality normal to handling their input. Indeed, the explanation of much of Edwards' influence both in his day and later across the subsequent development of American intellect and religion, is because he provided a way to embrace both revealed religion with concepts of the spiritual and the supernatural, along with experiential knowledge.

This was serendipitous timing in intellectual history after the Enlightenment when emphasis was growing on experience as the foundation for knowledge. Edwards' synthesis accepted, rather than denied or superseded, the natural faculties of humanity. This is so

despite the way in which a first reading of his *new sense* has sometimes been received. What the *new sense* was about was that when the Holy Spirit was introduced to the operation of a person, that supernatural presence changed the whole platform of the operation of all the given senses. This brought about the person having a *new sense* about God and divine things. In this *new sense* the individual had a change of heart and will and had an entire set of new affections. This sort of experience was at the heart of both an individual's Christian conversion or the experience of participating in a spiritual revival. The conviction of the great truths of the gospel was accomplished by this *new sense* which therefore was more akin to Calvin's teaching about the place of the Holy Spirit in vouchsafing the teachings of the scriptures than Calvin's mention of the *s.d.*

The nearest to adding any support about the *s.d.* is that the *new sense* is built on the platform of normal and natural humanity, affected by the Holy Spirit, but nonetheless the humanity that would include an *s.d.* if it existed. This would explain how it is that all the witness of nature to the existence of God becomes very much stronger for a person who comes to Christian conversion. So the witness of nature to the existence and the wonder of God is most often noticed by people post-conversion rather than just being useful in leading them to faith.

Edwards continued to value the natural world and its experiences. He was much influenced by the philosophies of his times that included Locke. That is, Edwards continued the development of the philosophies of the Western world that would finally lead to a strong empirical science. Edwards by his seeking to explain human behaviour *as it was observed* in revivals bolstered the natural scientific method of investigation while also addressing spiritual experience as understood by conservative Christianity.

John Henry Newman

Newman is addressing somewhat the same phenomenon as the *s.d.* is aiming to explain. That is, he seeks to explain how it is that some people come to believe in God and others do not. But Newman's concept, that he has named *the Illative Sense* though seeking to answer the same phenomenon of the existence of Christian faith, is not spelling out the same concept as Calvin's. Calvin's concept is about a source of knowledge while Newman's is concerned with a human ability to handle knowledge coming in and being able to make a decision about it. Yet both are about the inner action of the mind. Newman's concept is particularly about the human ability to come to a decision when all the evidence available is not conclusive. It is addressing a particular stress caused by Modernity. Modernity had its strictures as to how you were to receive knowledge and what you could believe or not believe. Newman wanted to start with the fact that there are some things that people do believe and then to be able to explain why that is so. He reveals no idea about the operation of any *s.d.* Nonetheless, his *Illative Sense* is entirely consistent with there being an operating *s.d.* So his theories are evidence *of* an *s.d.* if not evidence *for* the *s.d.*

His theories are directed to differentiating between the possible *certainty* or otherwise of a proposition and the *certitude* that the human mind may come to about it. The certainty Newman had handed over to the outward objective analysis that Modernity was good at stipulating. Newman had come to adopt Modernity's latest ideas about degrees of probability and he bowed to Modernity's strictures about this. These strictures left people in a difficult position when it came to matters of faith. Newman had no answers to give to solve Modernity's uncertainties. He simply turned away from such an objective task to talking about the subjective person who has to make a decision. There may not be total outward certainty, but Newman believed that the human mind was still capable of making its decision with certitude.

Newman was influenced by Modernity's philosophies but did not always like where that took him or his society. He was tired of the rationalism and pulling apart of the earlier Modernity and so followed its latest answer which was Romanticism. He both communicated well with the modern person's dilemmas as Romanticism also did, but differing from the medicine that Romanticism applied, which left people in ruin and hopelessness, Newman gave a Christian answer to these in terms of the gospel and of the church and of eternity. The connection between the *sensus divinitatis* as proposed by Calvin and the *illative sense* as proposed by Newman is that the operation of the *s.d.* would explain how people can come to make a decision about God. Newman, however, was not aware of this idea. His theories are not the same as that of Calvin, but they are consistent with Calvin's *s.d.* being true. The *s.d.* in fact explains what Newman well describes.

Alvin Plantinga

The final Chapter 6 on Plantinga utilizes Calvin's idea of a *sensus divinitatis* in line with Calvin's delineation of it. Plantinga's epistemology has gained good acceptance in both philosophical circles as well as amongst the general Christian population who find his explanations helpful in explaining the actual way they hold their faith. As in the case of this thesis writer, it helped to explain the difference between how he had come to faith and how he presented it to others. The adjustment Plantinga's ideas has brought to the way basicity of propositions is determined has rescued foundationalism from obsolescence. The test of history has shown that the way that classical foundationalism was interpreted by the Enlightenment philosophies was inadequate. Their criteria for basicity (i) allowed for too few basic propositions to account for the amount of knowledge that general living demanded and (ii) that the proposition about God's existence had indeed implicitly been outlawed in a prejudicial way that cannot be justified, especially given the commonality of religious belief

everywhere in history and given the real possibility of normally operating human nature having the benefit of a *s.d.*

The only qualification to this statement necessary here is to say that Plantinga's "extended Aquinas/Calvin model" achieves a far better result again than the original work based only on the *s.d.* alone. The *s.d.* was sufficient an idea for Plantinga's rearguard epistemological defence against the evidentialist objection bringing the necessity of a judgment of irrationality. If the aim is to provide a stream of information that provides basic concepts to do with God, then the "instigation of the Holy Spirit" and his collaboration with the revelation of God in the Scriptures is so much more productive. In fact Plantinga's extended model actually best follows both Aquinas and Calvin!

Most theologians would recognize why that might be said of Calvin, but not many would readily come to the same conclusion about Aquinas. In the case of Calvin, it is a question of balance. Yes, Calvin does mention the *s.d.* and so the idea of that is possible enough to base the first step of Plantinga's model. But in the development of the thought of Book 1 of the *Institutes*, Calvin himself is in a hurry to arrive at extolling the benefit of the Scriptures. There is far greater weight on the second step to explain how Christians can come to certainty. For every one person who comes to believe in God because of what can be shown to be the operation of the *s.d.* there would be a hundred who have come to a quiet assurance by the comfort of the Scriptures. I think Plantinga knows this. The first step of his model is good as an apologetic rearguard defence against those who say that Christian belief is irrational. As such it has a very needed place. But it is the force of the explanation of the "instigation of the Holy Spirit" that is so useful in explaining *Christian* belief. As far as the affront that suffering is to maintaining the buoyancy of the faith, the work of the Spirit bringing the comfort of the Scriptures is an extremely important resource.

A Line Drawn

Thus far this conclusion has been about using Calvin's *s. d.* as a touchstone for the other five instances of the divine senses (of Plato, Aquinas, Edwards, Newman, and Plantinga). But the issue is also a developmental question. It is about drawing a graphed line through the points represented by its six chapters. The line on a graph is drawn approximately through the points and is generated by a function: the individual points may jump around because of unknown eccentricities and the line may not pass exactly through them, but suddenly a general shape of the graph becomes visible and the function is displayed. This thesis demonstrates that indeed such a trajectory across the thesis' instances is visible and does show the overall form of the divine sense. Perhaps there were in history other places of visibility of the *s.d.* for this line – such as in the teachings of Augustine and probably many others– but, nonetheless, in those investigated thus far it has sufficiently appeared.

The shape of the curve is due to the progression of Christian understanding assimilating the doctrine of the divine realm right from the beginning with Plato and ejecting some of the negative Platonic aspects. Platonism nonetheless remains in some of its aspects in agreement with Christian teaching. By utilising the two tiered structure begun with Plato's light on the second tier and then Aristotle's light on the lower first tier, the function began to appear. The fact that pre-Christian philosophers can have had any positive contribution to the growth of the truth sits alongside the fact that on their own they never fully arrived at it. It is not that they had no wisdom, but as the Scriptures say: "the world by wisdom knew not God (Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:21)." The Christian revelation alone enables this knowing of God. That there is wisdom in the world should be accounted for and this can be done from the perspective that Christian revelation brings. That is, the revelation brought by the Scriptures and Christian understanding of them has been explicated in this thesis when discussing the theories of Alister McGrath and his "incarnational approach" to natural theology. There were possible varying interpretations of John 1:1-5 and this thesis concurred with John Calvin that

the best understanding was to the effect that the eternal Word (the Son) from eternity shone forth the light (spiritual revelation) that was the light for creation as it came into existence. Thus all of creation gives revelation by it being from the hand of this light giving Word. Natural revelation can lay behind the possibility of people of all times having some wisdom and some awareness of God and his power. It is a part of the eternal ministry of the Word who has been with the Father from all time. Thus there is possible wisdom in the ideas of people such as Plato and Aristotle without compromising the statement of Paul: “the world by wisdom knew not God.” The second tier of our model of a knowledge of God has teaching that gives credence to all of these things.³⁸⁰

Stepping back from the particulars to the general idea that subsumes them all allows recognition of the overall “function” that generated the six chapters. The conclusion is that it is more natural for the human mind to believe in God than not so to do! Our thesis worked on only six cases but there are likely to be many more that could be found and far in excess of any counter examples that may be there as well. The repeated phenomena of humanity having some version of the “divine sense” across history induces the result. One can embrace humanity in its fullness and also believe in God. This testimony is there to be read in history. In terms of a test similar to the one the ex Marxist philosopher gave, as mentioned in the Thesis Introduction, the test that the *sensus divinitatis* allows for theism has been passed. The divine sense is present in our assumptions and speculative ideas, as in the case of Plato; it is straddling our reason as in the case of Aristotle and Aquinas, or nestled with our science and reason as in the theories of Edwards. It is the actually unrecognized explanation of our theories as in the case of Newman and finally the mechanism aiding not being the enslaved to evidentialism as answered by Plantinga. As fruit of the survey of these instances, the “divine sense” may have no *final* proof from history of its reality; but its repeated appearancel does support and indeed commend the notion that believing in God is a natural thing to do.

³⁸⁰ The early chapters of Romans and Acts 17 validate these statements and nonetheless are the words of Paul, the author of the statement in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “the world by wisdom knew not God”.

The turns and development in the graphed line show that belief in God, as investigated in Christianity, has not been well done in any model that only has one tier. This is talking about the tiers in attaining the knowledge of God. Plato's ideas had some good aspects and some bad effects (rejecting the body, devaluing the study of nature). Aristotle valued nature but although he displayed some commitment to the reality of the metaphysical world, he was not thereby able to say too much about it. Aquinas showed that so much more could be accomplished by a model that had both the tier of a natural knowledge of God and also that of the knowledge of God brought by revelation. Calvin followed that theme but with his emphasis on the second tier rather than the first. Edwards had both an acceptance of the use of our natural capacities and faculties as well as receiving the input from a spiritual revelatory source. He did not have them as "tiers" but conceptually they were there mixed in together. Newman's big heart for the people was obvious but he did not have much to help either them or himself. Yes, he could empathize with people having to make decisions on issues and he did offer the solace of the gospel and church doctrines to their difficulties of life and its tragedies but his theories did not explain the hard issues. He lacked what many of his critics understood and that was a method to pursue *certainty* about the source of authority. His decision making in his own life displayed that he was only coming to *certitude*.

Plantinga has set out a model for understanding the way to knowing or believing in God. As an epistemological model, this thesis has found some added support for it by this thesis' added recognition of the validity of the *sensus divinitatis* as well as commenting that the extended Aquinas/Calvin model is the one that has the greatest explanatory power about *Christianity* bringing belief. This is precisely because it utilizes the two tiers and the extended model explains the belief in the great things of the gospel as well as the simple existence of God.

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